

Swatantra ³³⁴Newsletter

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CENTRAL PARLIAMENTARY BOARD MEETING

The Central Parliamentary Board of the Party met in New Delhi on March 14.

KERALA

The problem of government formation in Kerala which was then being hotly debated was considered vis-a-vis our Party's attitude and the Board expressed its view that every effort should be made to ensure the functioning of democratic processes and that President's Rule, which was the last resort in the case of a breakdown of Parliamentary government, should be avoided as far as possible. The Board affirmed however that non-Communist Opposition parties should be given a chance to form a government and to test its stability by facing the new Assembly.

As readers are aware, subsequent developments culminated in the imposition of President's Rule and the non-Communist opposition parties were not given the chance to form a government and face the Assembly.

CIVIC ELECTIONS

While reaffirming the earlier decision of the Party that State units should be free to decide on whether or not to contest the civic and Jilla Parishad elections in the name of the Party, the Board expressed the view that the pattern furnished by our Units' attitudes in the Bangalore and Ahmedabad municipal elections, namely, that of participating under the aegis of a non-communist civic front and of fighting the elections on a civic programme was a happy model for other State Units of the Party to follow.

It was made clear that decisions of this nature should be the responsibility of State Committees or their Parliamentary Boards. This authority should not be transferred to District or other lower units, although the decision to contest elections to a particular body will naturally be based on a recommendation from the District or lower unit concerned.

BY-ELECTIONS

The Central Parliamentary Board took exception to the Board being either ignored or being informed

much too late of by-elections to Parliament and State Assemblies contested by State Units. This had led to costly mistakes resulting in the defeat of the Party's candidates in the absence of considered decisions.

The Central Parliamentary Board has therefore decided that recommendations in regard to contesting by-elections should be received well in advance to enable them to be considered. A Circular issued by the General Secretary in this connection outlines details of the procedure to be followed whenever a State Unit wishes to contest a by-election.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR 1967

The most important item discussed by the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board was the one dealing with the selection of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates for 1967 and their work.

A note on the procedure to be followed was adopted by the Board.

In essence the note sets out the following:

1. That every State Unit should have a State Parliamentary Board to devote its attention to all matters relating to the conduct of the Central Election campaign in that State.
2. The State Parliamentary Board will then have to decide as to which are the Parliamentary Constituencies in the State likely to be most responsive to our Party. Reasons in regard to each constituency so recommended have to be given.
3. The emphasis should be on "good" candidates, viz. the good character, personality and political record of the candidate and the candidate's suitability for, and acceptability to, the Constituency.
4. The recommendation regarding each candidate should be accompanied by details of the steps taken in regard to scrutinising the candidate's credentials and for ensuring that the candidate is generally acceptable to the Party's workers and to the Constituency in general.
5. The State Parliamentary Board should formally approve the recommendation before forwarding it to the Centre.

6. When such a recommendation is received by the Central Office, necessary inquiries will be instituted and the Office will submit its own report, along with the recommendations received to the Central Parliamentary Board.
7. To obviate delay, the Central Parliamentary Board has constituted a Sub-Committee consisting of the President, Rajaji, Mr. R. N. Singh Deo and the General Secretary which will go into the State Parliamentary Board's recommendations and the report of the Central Office. If the Sub-Committee is unanimous, the recommendation will be circulated to the members of the Central Parliamentary Board for approval.

A similar procedure has been outlined in the case of recommendation regarding Assembly candidates.

Briefly the State Unit is expected to:

- a. Set up a State Parliamentary Board,
- b. Prepare a list of constituencies where the Party should put up candidates, in order of priority,
- c. Recommend suitable prospective Parliamentary candidates,
- d. Recommend suitable prospective Assembly candidates,
- e. Recommend suitable field organisers at the Parliamentary Constituency level, who could be screened at the Centre and trained if found competent.

If State Units respond in the manner expected of them, there is no reason why the Party should not be able to put up a creditworthy performance at the polls in 1967 and achieve its objective.

ORGANISATIONAL TOURS

The General Secretary of the Party visited Orissa, Punjab, Gujarat and Rajasthan to confer with State leaders and be present at meetings of the State Committees and Parliamentary Boards. The visits were part of an effort to explain the decisions of the General Council and Parliamentary Board and place the Party's activities on the road to 1967.

Rajaji, Prof. Raiga and Mr. Masani were at Dhenkanal (Orissa) between March 26 and 28 for the State Convention (reported elsewhere in this issue) On March 26, the General Secretary participated in meetings of the State Executive and the Selection Committee. Various matters relating to the forthcoming Panchayat and Assembly elections in the State were discussed at length and decisions taken. The Centre's wholehearted cooperation in assisting the Orissa Unit in its task was conveyed to the Office bearers and members of the Executive Committee.

The General Secretary was at Patiala on April 3 to attend a meeting of the Punjab State Executive.

Decisions ranging from the staffing of the Office to the Party's strategy vis-a-vis other political parties in the State were discussed. The General Secretary, who was accompanied by Party Treasurer Mr. C. Rai, tried to guide members on the decisions taken at the General Council meeting and suggested various ways for stepping up party activity. Concrete steps to tone up the State Office and accelerate the tempo of work were taken.

On April 7, the General Secretary was in Ahmedabad to interview prospective candidates and field organisers recommended by the State Unit. He also held discussions with the State General Secretary and others.

From April 10 to 12, the General Secretary was in Jaipur along with Mr. C. Rai to be of assistance to the State Executive and Parliamentary Board on how to go about the task of gearing up party activity and devising concrete steps to that end. He also talked to the Party's MLAs and addressed a meeting of the M.L.A.'s Club on the evening of the 11th April.

LIBERAL VICTORY IN CEYLON

In a message congratulating Mr. Dudley Senanayake on his Party's success in the Ceylon elections, Rajaji said: "I am sure that under your guidance Lanka will have a strong government in tune with modern liberal world policy and not become a spring-board for the subversive menace that seeks to hold all Asia in bondage."

Mr. M. R. Masani, General Secretary of the Party, told the press that the results of the Ceylon General Election represented "a victory of liberalism over Marxism." He added that this development gave cause for fresh hope to those who had been inclined

to believe that in the countries of Asia the drift towards State Capitalism and Communism could not be reversed. "The Ceylon elections show what can be done once people have had their fill of Statist policies", said Mr. Masani.

Regarding Mrs. Bandaranaike's defeat Mr. Masani felt that India had no cause for regret for "she sat on the fence when our country was being invaded by Chinese troops in 1962", and more recently she had "extorted from our Prime Minister a virtual surrender in regard to the status of persons of Indian origin in Ceylon."

VIETNAM AND INDIA

In an article written for *Swarajya*, Rajaji said that India ought to give full moral support to the United States in Vietnam, for it was "fighting not for pleasure or for some secret advantage, but to save non-Communist Asia from the consequences of a Communist victory". Rajaji maintained that India should support America in her own interest, if not in the wider interest, for if Vietnam was abandoned

to the Communists, neighbouring neutralist countries like Laos and Cambodia would fall and Thailand would be unable to resist Communist aggression. Rajaji added that Burma, too, would disappear into the Communist empire "with lightning speed". And this would bring Communism to the very gates of India.

SHEIKH ABDULLAH'S MEETING WITH CHOU

Speaking in Patiala on April 4, Mr. M. R. Masani, General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, "disapproved in very clear terms" of the step taken by Sheikh Abdullah in meeting Chou En-lai and "discussing with our enemy a matter that should have remained one of domestic concern."

Referring to the Kashmir dispute, Mr. Masani explained that the Swatantra Party's stand at the time of Sheikh Abdullah's release last year was that an amicable settlement should be arrived at between India and Pakistan "which would also be fair to the people of Kashmir." He pointed out that "unfortunately that advice was not heeded" and therefore an

opportunity had been lost and the situation had deteriorated.

Mr. Masani warned Sheikh Abdullah that toying with the idea of enlisting Chinese Communist sympathy and support for his cause could do no good to him or to the people of Kashmir, but it could, on the other hand, do a great deal of harm to the security of the entire sub-continent. Characterising the Chinese Communists as a "bandit regime," Mr. Masani said "it had on its hands the blood of Tibetans, Koreans, Vietnamese, Laotians and Indians. It was our country's enemy. It could never be a friend of freedom anywhere."

GAYATRI DEVI TO THE RESCUE

When Government grain shops in Jaipur ran out of wheat, Maharani Gayatri Devi opened a grain shop of her own. To procure the grain the Maharani had to send her agents to Kotah, where it was available at Rs. 62 to Rs. 63 per quintal. With transport and handling charges the cost in Jaipur came to Rs. 69. Nevertheless the Maharani sold the wheat at the Government ceiling price of Rs. 64 per quintal, incurring a loss of Rs. 5 per quintal. Since about 20,000 quintals have been sold, the total deficit is likely to be in the region of Rs. 1,00,000.

One would have thought that the authorities would have appreciated the Maharani's gesture in opening the subsidised grain shop; on the contrary they adopted an obstructionist attitude. When ration card holders approached Government grain shops for their

sugar quotas after buying wheat from the Maharani's shop, they were told: "If she sells you wheat, why doesn't she sell you sugar as well?"

It may be mentioned that although grain is available in government shops at Rs. 52 to Rs. 55½ a quintal, many people prefer to buy from the Maharani's shop since they can be sure that they are getting good, unadulterated wheat. Besides, the Maharani's shop has none of the many drawbacks of the Government shops, such as inefficient handling of food grains, harassment of customers, who are sometimes made to wait all day and are then turned away for lack of stocks, and arbitrary and unreasonable fixing of prices, which interferes with the free flow of grain from surplus to scarcity areas in the state.

THE DHENKANAL CONVENTION

Opening the first convention of the Orissa unit of the Swatantra Party at Dhenkanal, Rajaji said that India could grow prosperous only if her peasantry was prosperous; planning, he said, should be "from the village upward, not from Delhi down." Government, according to Rajaji, was attempting to achieve prosperity by unnatural means, like trying to grow a mango tree upside down.

The Party's Elder Statesman also felt that the Orissa unit of the party should give top priority to the task of ousting Congress from power, for Congress had "become rotten and, like a shopkeeper trying to hide his rotten goods," was attempting to cover things up — and failing to do so since the "stink was all over the place."

Referring to "ministerial misdeeds" in Orissa, Rajaji

stated that though Government might make rules for distribution of permits and licences, the distribution itself should remain in the hands of a free and independent judicial board. If such measures had been taken, Rajaji maintained, the ministerial crisis could never have arisen, since such a board would have prevented misuse of powers.

Rajaji said that India's foremost need was for Opposition parties to unite to throw Congress out of power. He cited the example of Ceylon, which had voted Mrs. Bandaranaike's government out of power even though her personal popularity was quite as great as the late Mr. Nehru's had been.

Rajaji further charged the Congress government with amending the Constitution in order to hasten the advent of socialism in the country even though the men who had framed the Constitution had deliberately taken pains to write Part III to prevent the ushering in of socialism. In its haste to socialise India, Rajaji compared Congress to an impatient cook who used ghee to light a fire — Congress, in its hasty quest for so-called "progress", was levying heavy taxes and

borrowing heavily from other nations in an effort to execute the Plans.

Mr. R. N. Singh Deo, President of the Orissa unit of the Party, condemned the reckless extravagance and the wasteful expenditure indulged in by the ruling party. He also felt there was far too much party interference in the administration as well as a great deal of corruption and misuse of authority.

Mr. Singh Deo asked Party members to be alert since "as the main Opposition party in Orissa you will realise that the impending Panchayat election and the next General Election will throw a great deal of added responsibility on our party organisation at all levels."

Prof. N. G. Ranga and Mr. M. R. Masani, speaking at the Dhenkanal Convention, promised that, if elected to power, the Swatantra Party would reduce taxation by half within two or three years. Mr. Masani also explained other priority objectives of the Party. These included: a two year holiday from Planning, all round decontrol, abandoning of permits, quotas and licences, and getting help from friendly Western nations for the defeat of Communist China.

NEWS FROM STATE UNITS

ANDHRA

The Executive of the State Unit at its meeting in Hyderabad on March 7 has taken the salutary decision to run three "political summer schools" in May to train workers of the Party.

The schools, which will be held in the districts of Guntur, Chittoor and Nizamabad, will have as principals Messrs. P. Koteswara Rao, P. Rajagopal Naidu and N. Vijayaraja Kumar, respectively.

BOMBAY

The Bombay Unit of the Party hit the headlines last month when it launched a signature campaign to lodge the citizens' protest against a proposal to discuss the Kerala problem in the Municipal Corporation.

A silent procession marched on the Corporation where a deputation waited on the Bombay Mayor and handed over to him 25,000 signatures from Bombay citizens stating that it was high time the city fathers refrained from discussing political issues and concentrated on the water supply position which required more urgent attention.

The Unit has warned that if the appeal to eschew politics failed then the Party would resort to demonstration and peaceful picketing to lodge the people's protest against the move to contaminate civic affairs with politics.

Presiding at a public meeting on March 29, Mr.

Chiranjit Rai, vice-president of the Bombay Unit, said that despite 17 years of Congress rule and nearly 13 years of planning, the common man still went hungry, lacked proper housing and lived in a state of uncertainty about his future.

Mr. Rai said that the time had arrived for people to decide whether they wanted to go the Gandhian way or the Russian way. Branding the Communist party as anti-national, Mr. Rai said that people should carefully examine the principles of the various parties and choose those parties which would preserve democracy, uphold the dignity of the individual and bring about prosperity in the country.

KERALA

Mr. N. N. Ananthanarayana Iyer had the honour of being the first Swatantra representative to be elected chairman of the Municipal Council, Palghat, defeating his Mulim League rival, Mr. R. Ahmed Ibrahim.

MYSORE

A Workers Convention was held on 4-2-65 at Kadaba Village, Gubbi Taluk in Tumkur District.

Mr. K. B. Jinaraja Hegde, President of the State Unit, inaugurated the Convention. Mr. P. H. Seshagiri Rao, Member of the State Executive presided over the Convention.

On arrival the leaders of the Party were received by the Workers and the Villagers. Mr. Hegde was taken in procession through the principal streets of the village seated on a cart drawn by 61 pairs of bullocks.

The Villagers of Kadaba presented an address to the State President.

Resolutions were passed opposing the 17th Amendment, Enhancement of Land Revenue, Food Control and State Trading, imposition of Hindi and Nationalisation of Bus Services.

At the Public meeting held in the evening, Messrs. P. H. Seshagiri Rao, Nuggehalli Shivappa, N. K. Ganapaiah, H. S. Venkataramiah and R. Narasimhiah addressed the gathering.

The success of the Convention was largely due to the initiative and enterprise shown by Mr. R. Narasimhiah, Party Organiser, assisted by his Co-Workers.

A Joint meeting of the State Council and the Executive Committee of the Mysore State Swatantra Party on March 13 reiterated the party's stand that land revenue should be totally abolished. Commenting on the Mysore Government's move to increase existing rates, the meeting pointed out that the government was ignoring the "thousands of objections forwarded to the Government by agriculturists." The meeting also condemned the failure of Government to place copies of the objections before the Assembly.

The Committee felt that an efficient rationing system was the best answer to the food shortage, and felt that this could be achieved without compulsory levies from growers and rice mills. At present, the meeting pointed out, there was a good deal of confusion in the working of the levy system.

In the matter of high prices, the meeting urged abolition of food zones and complete decontrol of foodgrains — these steps, it held, were certain to lower prices. The meeting also welcomed the appointment of Mrs. Sosan Panday of Bombay as organiser of the Women's Wing of the Party.

ORISSA

Mr. R. N. Singh Deo, leader of the Opposition, made a statement on March 7 calling on the people of

Orissa to observe March 20 as "demand day" to seek the appointment of a commission of enquiry into charges of corruption against the former Chief Minister and corrupt officials in the State.

A Statement issued jointly by Mr. Singh Deo, Mr. P. K. Das, (PSP) and Mr. N. Mahapatra (Ind.) demanded the publication of the CBI report against the former Chief Minister and called for a thorough inquiry into the matter. The signatories to the statement said it was to be regretted that the Prime Minister was seeking to avoid the appointment of an enquiry commission and persuade people to accept the central cabinet sub-committee's findings as final in the matter.

Mr. Deo and his co-signatories felt it was "absolutely undemocratic and highly irregular" to use the sub-committee's findings as an excuse to avoid setting up a proper enquiry commission. They categorised this attitude as a challenge to the people. The statement also condemned the "persistent attempt at secretiveness and evasion of responsibility by the Central authorities" in dealing with Orissa affairs.

UTTAR PRADESH

Mr. Dahyabhai Patel, MP, addressing a meeting of the Kanpur Press Club on March 27, said that Government's economic and taxation policies were responsible for hampering the country's industrial growth. Strongly opposing the plan for nationalising industries, Mr. Patel said that government enterprises were thoroughly mismanaged. He asserted that if Government had encouraged the private sector industries they could have progressed on healthy lines and provided more employment to the people. He pointed out that industries which were privately managed functioned much more efficiently than those run by government. He made it quite clear that the Swatantra Party was against statism in any form.

In reply to a question Mr. Patel said he had always stood for prosperity of the working class, but pointed out that in return for adequate wages workers should be ready to give honest and hard work in the larger interest of the nation's prosperity.

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from the General Secretary's desk

Dear friend,

I hope you have carefully gone through the front page article entitled "The Task Before Us" published in the March issue of the Newsletter.

The present phase is one of trying to translate these theoretical formulations into actual practice. In this connection, the Central Parliamentary Board at its meeting in Delhi on March 14 spelt out in detail the manner in which prospective candidates for Parliament and Assembly should be selected for appropriate constituencies. You will be able to peruse details about this procedure elsewhere in this Newsletter.

While the bulk of our members have accepted the soundness of this procedure, there are still some colleagues who raise their eyebrows at the thought of recommendations in respect of constituencies and prospective candidates made by State units having to be carefully scrutinised and screened at the Centre before the Central Parliamentary Board gives its approval. Sometimes questions are put as to whether local people are not the best judges in such matters and why the Centre should take so seriously its role of approving recommendations that come to them. How, it is asked, can people who are not familiar with local conditions be in a better position to judge their merits? These are legitimate doubts that need to be cleared.

In many democratic countries like Great Britain, it is the National Headquarters of the Party that chooses the candidate and it is the local units that are asked to confirm the choice. In such small countries there is only a two tier organisation — the National Headquarters and the Constituency unit. In our country, however, because of its size, a third tier has become necessary, namely, the State branch. It is the function of the State branch to function as a link between the Party at the Centre and the constituency branch. The existence of State units is undoubtedly an administrative necessity. As the General Council has decided, however, there is only one Swatantra Party in the country and it is that Party that has to take the necessary decisions on the recommendation of the local and State branches.

Quite apart from this being a sound organisational practice which experience elsewhere has endorsed, there are compelling reasons why a meticulous scrutiny on the part of the Central Parliamentary Board and its agencies becomes necessary. During the last General Elections and again during the last three years in the case of by-elections, it has been found that, where candidates are nominated hurriedly without proper thought, many of them have gone down in ignominious defeat, the repercussions of which have been felt by the Party not merely within that constituency but in other parts of India as well.

Where recommendations are made objectively, the task of the Centre is simplified. Unfortunately, there are several exceptions to such sound practice. Sometimes extraneous factors go into the recommendation of candidates. Even during the last few months, among the recommendations that have come up for approval to the Central Parliamentary Board, there has been more than one such case. There was, for example, a sitting M.L.A. recommended by the State Parliamentary Board for nomination as the Party's prospective candidate in a reserved seat. Within less than a month of this recommendation, the gentleman in question deserted the Party and joined the Congress Party! What would have happened if the Central Parliamentary Board had blindly and without scrutiny accepted the recommendation? Would the faces of our colleagues in that State not have been even redder than they are?

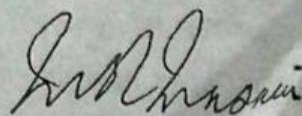
There is another case where the Central Parliamentary Board, at the end of last year, without the scrutiny that the General Council has now decided on, accepted the nomination of a prospective Parliamentary candidate made by a State Parliamentary Board. In the result, a very senior sitting member of the Assembly from that constituency has resigned from the Party, which has thus had to bear a serious loss. Would this unfortunate development not have been averted if the Central Parliamentary Board had before it a report that one of the senior members of the Party in the constituency was strongly opposed to the recommendation?

There is yet a third case of a State Parliamentary Board changing its candidate at two successive sittings, and a fourth one where, after a candidate had been recommended to the Centre, the candidate declined the honour!

Can it then be doubted that, in certain cases, adequate thought and care are not being given to the very serious business of selecting a candidate? Indeed, the proper selection of a candidate is half the job of a successful election.

In the light of this situation, the Central Parliamentary Board would be failing in its duty to the Party and the responsibility with which it has been entrusted by the General Council if it were to fail in making a careful probe into each recommendation and satisfying itself in a detached and objective manner that the decision is one which will bring credit and success to the Party.

Jai Swatantra!



(For Private Circulation)