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Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board
held at the Vithalbhai Patel Bhavan, New Delhi on August 31, 1968

President :

Prof. N.G. Ranga (in the Chair)
Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy
Mr. Lakshman Singh of Dungarpur
Mr. B.P. Singh
Mr. H.M. Patel
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel
Mr. N. Dandekar

1. The Minutes of the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held in Madras on May 31, 1968 were confirmed.

2. Procedure for consultations between the organisational and Legislative Wings :

The General Secretary reported that he was still awaiting replies to his communications on the subject to the Presidents of State Units and leaders of the Party's Groups in the various State Assemblies. So far only 5 out of 12 had sent in their suggestions. Moreover, several aspects concerning the relations between the Organisational and Legislative Wings needed consideration. In view of this, the General Secretary stated that after he had consulted the Presidents/General Secretaries of State Units and Leaders of Legislature Groups, a sub-Committee could be appointed to go into the General Secretary's proposals on the subject.

3. Burwaha by-election

The meeting was informed that Mr. C.K. Bapna, who had been nominated as the Party's candidate in this by-election to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly (since held) had withdrawn his candidature.

4. Bill to Amend the Constitution:

It was recalled that Mr. Desai had earlier obtained the approval of the Board to a Bill which sought to empower the President/Governors to make nominations to the Rajya Sabha/Vidhan Parishads at their personal discretion. Mr. Desai felt, however, that this would be ineffective in practice.

The Bill for which he now sought the Board's approval was designed to abolish altogether the powers of the President/Governors to nominate members to the Rajya Sabha/Vidhan Parishads. The Board approved the proposal in principle and authorised the General Secretary to examine and approve the new Bill on that basis.

5. Consideration of the objectives, strategy and campaign regarding the mid-term poll in West Bengal, U.P, Bihar and Punjab:

(1) West Bengal:

The General Secretary reported on a discussion that he had had 23rd June in Calcutta with members of the Party in Bengal. At meeting, it was decided to set up an Organising Committee for Bengal. That meeting also discussed the Party's election strategy. The Board decided that the Party's effort in the ensuing mid-term elections should be limited to about 14 Assembly Constituencies comprising within the Parliamentary Constituencies of Malda and Jangipur, these being the two constituencies in which the Party had put up candidates

for the Lok Sabha and some candidates for the Assembly in the General Election (1967). Any addition to this number would need careful scrutiny and very careful consideration even if well-known local candidates of high standing, repute and acceptability were willing to contest as the Party's candidates. It was however agreed that if candidates came forward on a self-supporting basis, they could be given the Party's symbol provided they satisfied the other usual conditions that may be laid down.

In regard to electoral understandings or adjustments with other parties, it was agreed that :-

- (a) there could be no dealings with any of the parties comprising the 'United Front' ;
- (b) the Indian National Democratic Front (INDF) was also beyond consideration;
- (c) there may be some scope for electoral understandings with parties like the B.K.D. if they had any genuine strength provided they were not allied with the "United Front".
- (d) as regards P.S.P. and Jan Sangh (if they did not become allies of the United Front) the matter could be settled on local considerations; and as for the Paschim Banga Byabasayee Sammelan, who seem to have thrown in their lot with the INDF, the best policy would be to wait and watch.

The Board reiterated its view that the earliest and proper date for the holding of mid-term elections in Bengal would be February, 1969.

(2) Uttar Pradesh:

In regard to Uttar Pradesh, the Board was of the view that the Party's objective in the mid-term election ought to be :

- (a) to get in 25 or 30 of our best and most disciplined men into the State Assembly; and for this objective, to contest about 50 seats where the Party candidates had either won or did not do too badly in the General Elections (1967), plus about 20/25 other seats on merits; and
- (b) to endeavour to secure overall not less than 4% of the total valid votes cast excluding the votes of those of our candidates who may forfeit their deposit.

In regard to Electoral Understandings it was agreed that:-

- (i) there should be no truck with communists and extreme socialist Parties;
- (ii) as for the Jan Sangh, while an understanding on a state-wide basis was ruled out, there might be possibilities of coming to some arrangements on a local or constituency basis.
- (iii) regarding the B.K.D. the State President reported that the B.K.D. in U.P. was reluctant to enter into any over-all electoral arrangements or understanding

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with our Party in the mid-term election. However, informal and limited understandings might be possible and were being pursued by him.

The Board approved the objectives and strategy outlined above.

(3) Bihar:

The General Secretary reported that since the last meeting of the Board, the State Ad-Hoc Committee had been slightly modified with the appointment of Mr. Budhan Rai Verma as Convenor.

The Board decided that the Party's effort in the mid-term poll in Bihar should be a very limited one, based on our performance in the General Elections (1967). In regard to the selection of constituencies, the Board decided that the priorities should be as follows :-

- (i) where our candidates had won, or had come second;
- (ii) where our candidates had secured half of the votes of the winning candidate or at least 7,000 votes, whichever was less;
- (iii) exceptional constituencies,
 - (a) where popular candidates came forward to contest provided such candidates were wholly self-supporting and fulfilled other conditions that may be laid down; and
 - (b) where the organisation has now improved so greatly as to hold out prospects of success.

The policy in regard to electoral adjustments should be the same as that outlined for Uttar Pradesh.

(4) Punjab:

The General Secretary stated that he had no firm proposals to make just at present in regard to the mid-term poll in the Punjab as the Punjab Assembly was only recently dissolved. He reported however that certain tentative approaches had been made to him by certain political parties and groups in that State and that he would be in a position to report more fully on the situation obtaining in that State at the next meeting of the Board.

(5) General:

In order to enable expeditious but considered decisions to be taken on all aspects relating to the mid-term elections in the States mentioned above, the following Sub-Committees were nominated by the Board in respect of each of these States with the President (Prof. Ranga) and the General Secretary (Mr. Dandekar) as ex-officio members of all these sub-committees :

(a) West Bengal:

Mr. Sundermani Patel, M.P.
Mr. D.N. Patodia, M.P.

(b) Uttar Pradesh:

Mr. B.P. Singh
Sardar Ram Singh, M.P.
Mr. Girirajsharan Singh of Bharatpur
Mr. M.R. Masani

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(c) Bihar:

Mr. R.N. Singh Deo
Mr. Parmanand Kejriwal
Mr. Sundermani Patel

6. Review of the Party's Performance in Parliament:

Prof. N.G. Ranga reported on the Party's performance in Parliament. Arising from his report and the discussion that followed the Board approved the position taken by the Party in

- (a) abstaining from Mr. Madhu Limaye's motion concerning Mr. Morarji Desai's son;
- (b) opposing the Gold Control Bill;
- (c) pleading for an early end to the Press Employees strike by recommending unit-wise negotiations between employers and employees;
- (d) opposing the Patent's Bill;
- (e) denouncing Soviet aggression in Czechoslovakia and condemning the Government of India for abstaining from voting in the Security Council on the subject.
- (f) criticising the Soviet Union for supplying arms to Pakistan and condemning the Government for refusing even to express regret over the Soviet action, and
- (g) supporting the demands of the Hills people of Assam for greater autonomy or a separate State.

In regard to legislation likely to come up in the next session of Parliament the Board considered the following :-

(i) Mr. Nath Pai's Constitution Amendment Bill and Mr. Mohammed Inam's amendment thereon:-

The Board reiterated its opposition to Mr. Nath Pai's Bill to undo the Supreme Court's judgement on Fundamental Rights and approved the amendment moved thereto by Mr. Mohammed Inam, member of the Party's Group in the Lok Sabha which sought to add the following proviso to the Bill, namely, that Parliament shall have powers to amend the Constitution "except the provisions of article 12 to 35 contained in Part III of the Constitution (dealing with Fundamental Rights) which can be amended by a duly constituted Constituent Assembly."

In this connection, the Board noted that an amendment to Mr. Nath Pai's Bill (requiring a Referendum to be taken for the amendment of Fundamental Rights) had been tabled jointly by Mr. Meghrajji of Dhurangadhra and Mr. M.R. Masani, which had already been approved.

(ii) Company Law (Amendment) Bill :

The General Secretary Mr. Dandekar drew the attention of the Board to a request from Mr. C.C. Desai, M.P., and a member of the National Executive seeking freedom of action on the floor of the Lok Sabha Stat both as regards speaking and voting in connection with the Company Law (Amendment) Bill, which sought to abolish:-

- (a) political contributions by companies; and
- (b) the Managing Agency system.

On both these matters Mr. C.C. Desai expressed his firm conviction that as a matter of conscience he personally must support the Bill.

The Board after considerable discussion agreed to permit Mr. C.C. Desai freedom to support the abolition of political contributions by companies.

But in so far as abolition of the Managing Agency System was concerned, the Board decided that no such freedom could be given since the matter related to a question of the system of management. It was and should remain the prerogative of shareholders; and not for Government to prescribe the kind of management a Company should have. Free and competitive Enterprise was a fundamental principle of the Swatantra Party and there should therefore be complete freedom for the owners of business enterprises to choose whether they should be set up as proprietary concerns (owned and managed by individual proprietors or the family or a firm), or as companies whether private or public, and in either case whether managed directly by their Boards of Directors or through Managing Agents or Secretaries and Treasurers. The proposed Bill interfered with this fundamental principle. Hence, the Board regretted its inability to permit Mr. C.C. Desai to support the Government's Bill in this regard.

In this connection, it was noted that the Parliamentary Group of the Party had already decided to oppose the abolition of the Managing Agency system. It was also noted that once any interference was permitted with the freedom of the owners/investors to choose the form or system of management for industrial and business enterprises, the inevitable consequence would be interference by the Government with the form of management of agricultural farms, leading to statutory imposition of Co-operative or even Collective farming instead of farms which were privately owned and managed as such.

- (iii) The Board endorsed the Parliamentary Group's decision not to accept the Planning Commission's invitation to participate in discussions on the Fourth Plan in the light of the Party's fundamental opposition to the present pattern of Planning.

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Miscellaneous Matters:

- (i) Koduru Assembly by-election (Andhra Pradesh):

The General Secretary reported that the President and General Secretary of the Andhra State Unit had requested the Central Parliamentary Board to appoint a Sub-Committee to consider the State Parliamentary Board's recommendation of a candidate which would take some more time to finalise.

The Board while appreciating the manner in which the Andhra State Parliamentary Board was going about the selection of a candidate authorised the General Secretary (Mr. Dandekar) to take appropriate decision as soon as a recommendation was received from the Andhra State Parliamentary Board.

- (ii) Jalore Assembly By-Election (Rajasthan):

The Board considered a request from the General Secretary of the State Unit that for certain reasons the State Parliamentary Board desired some more time to recommend its candidate.

The Board authorised the General Secretary (Mr. Dandekar) to take appropriate action as soon as a recommendation was received from the State Parliamentary Board.

8. National Labour Commission:

The President (Prof. N.G. Ranga) informed the Board that he had been invited as a member of Parliament to convey his views on matters pertaining to labour and trade unionism to the National Labour Commission. The President stated that he did not wish to tender evidence to the Commission since in his view no purpose would be served as the Commission was comprised of ideologically committed persons. The Board approved the position taken by Prof. Ranga.

9. The meeting then terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chair.