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Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Central
Parliamentary Board held at Kalki Buildings,
Madras, on May 31, 1968.

Present:

Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy (in the Chair)
Mr. R.N. Singh Deo
Mr. Laxman Singh of Dungarpur
Mr. B.P. Singh
Mr. G. Latchanna
Mr. H.M. Patel
Mr. Dabhyabhai V. Patel
Dr. R.C. Cooper
Mr. N. Dandekar

1. In the absence of Prof. Ranga, the senior Vice-President Prof. Ruthnaswamy took the Chair.

2. Prof. Ranga's absence:

The General Secretary read out a communication from Prof. Ranga explaining the reasons for his absence from the meeting. The Board recorded the letter and regretted his absence.

3. Minutes Confirmed:

The draft Minutes of the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held in New Delhi on April 13, were confirmed.

4. Procedure for consultations between Organisational and Legislative Wings:

The General Secretary reported that he was awaiting replies to a letter which he had addressed on this subject on 4th April to the Presidents of State Units and the Leaders of the Party's Groups in the various State Assemblies.

5. Mr. Masani's Resignation:

The General Secretary read out his letter of April 22, to Mr. Masani conveying the National Executive's unanimous wish that Mr. Masani should withdraw his resignation from the Central Parliamentary Board and the National Executive. He also read out Mr. Masani's reply dated 13th May, declining to do so. The correspondence was recorded.

6. Performance in Haryana Mid-Term Elections:

The Party's poor performance in the mid-term elections in Haryana was then discussed. The General Secretary reported that among the main causes were:

- (a) the absence of any established Party Organisation;
- (b) inadequate resources in men, money and vehicles;

- (c) the fact that most candidates depended excessively on local, communal and caste appeals, with little or no reliance being placed on Party literature, propaganda or principles;
- (d) the fact that many Senior Ministers of the Central Government (including the Prime Minister) participated in a whirl-wind campaign for the Congress Party, their main theme being the ouster of the "defectors" and the capacity of the Congress to provide a stable government which no "United Front" of Opposition Parties could possibly offer;
- (e) the unhappy experience of the 'understanding' with the Jan Sangh;
- (f) the heavy influx of jeeps and workers of the Congress Party from the Dausa Parliamentary and Chomu Assembly Constituencies fresh from their victory;
- (g) the pinning down of the leader (Ch. Hardwari Lal) to his constituency as a result of the powerful campaign mounted against him by the Congress Party; and
- (h) the peculiar and inexplicable phenomenon of almost every other Party singling out the Swatantra Party for attack.

Nevertheless, the Board noted with some satisfaction that while out of the 31 candidates put up by the Party only two were successful, as many as eleven came second and ten came third. There was also a substantial increase in the percentage of votes polled by the Party.

In this connection, the General Secretary conveyed to members some details of the votes polled etc. (Copy attached - Annexure A).

7. Cooperation with "United Opposition" in Haryana Legislature:

It was agreed that there could be no objection to the Party's two M.L.As. in the Haryana State Assembly cooperating with, but not holding any office in the United Opposition (led by Rao Birendra Singh) provided that:

- (a) its policies did not conflict with the Party's policies, and
- (b) the Party's identity was not submerged.

It was therefore decided that even while being members of the United Opposition, both M.L.As. of the Party in the State Assembly should retain independence of action and be guided to follow the Party line on controversial issues.

8. Performance in By-Elections:

- (i) Bijapur : The General Secretary referred to a letter on the subject received from the General Secretary of the Mysore State Unit of the Party (Mr. V.T. Sreenivasan) who stated in effect that while the District Committee and the candidate himself had not yet sent in any report, the impression gathered by the Joint Secretary

of the Mysore State Unit (Mr. Ganapaiah) was that one of the Party's own M.L.As had "played a dirty trick and become a fifth columnist" and that there was "no sense in nominating a candidate at the eleventh hour."

(ii) Dausa : The General Secretary reported that in a letter to him the Maharani of Jaipur had outlined the following reasons for the Party's defeat :

- (a) Wrong choice of candidate;
- (b) Lack of resources in men, money and vehicles;
- (c) Low polling due to the fact that it was the harvesting season;
- (d) Lack of Party Workers and the fact that in Rajasthan, the Party does not function.

In this connection, a report on the Party's performance in the Dausa and Chomu Assembly by-elections prepared by the General Secretary of the Rajasthan Unit of the Party in consultation with the State President was circulated to members (Copy attached - Annexure B).

9. Arising out of the discussion on the results of the foregoing by-elections, the Board decided that:

- (a) wherever by-elections were likely to take place, it was for State Units to take an early decision as to whether they wished to contest at all, having due regard to the fact that the Centre would not be able to extend any financial or other assistance;
- (b) candidates whose names were suggested by the State Parliamentary Board for approval by the Central Parliamentary Board should be members of the Swatantra Party; and
- (c) the Party's MLAs, and its workers and vehicles in all Primary and District Units in all parts of the State should be mobilised to assist in the by-election.

10. Constitution Amendment Bill:

The Board considered a Draft Bill to amend the Constitution (copy attached - Annexure C) which Mr. C.C. Desai M.P. desired to table in the Lok Sabha. It was noted that the Bill was designed to provide for the exercise of personal discretion by the President/the Governors when nominating members to the Rajya Sabha/the Vidhan Sabha.

The Board approved the principle of the Bill and permitted Mr. Desai to table and move it at the next session of Parliament. The Board however cautioned Mr. Desai to examine the Indian Constitution carefully, before actually tabling the Bill, to see whether it was at all permissible to invest the President of India with power to exercise personal discretion in regard to any matter whatsoever.

11. Sponsoring and/or Supporting Official and/or non-official Bills:

The General Secretary's note (circulated earlier to members of the Board) on the procedure to be followed by the Party's MPs, MLAs and MLCs in regard to the sponsoring or supporting of Bills (official and/or non-official) in Parliament and State Legislatures was discussed. The Note was approved subject to requiring expeditious disposal of such matters whenever they came up for consideration by the Central/State Parliamentary Boards. (copy of final Note attached - Annexure D).

12. Party's Performance in Parliament:

- (1) A report prepared by the Parliamentary Office of the Party, highlighting the Party's activities during the Budget Session was circulated to members;
- (2) In reply to a query about the Party's non-participation in the meeting called by Government to discuss the "Approach to The Fourth Plan", the General Secretary explained that the decision to abstain had the support of the Party's Group in Parliament who preferred, instead, that the Leader of the Group should place on record the Party's objections to the Planning Commission's "Approach".

It was felt by the Group that it would be better to put on paper our views on the matter rather than attend such meetings which, while serving no useful purpose, gave rise to the erroneous impression that the Party had given tacit approval to the proposed "Approach" to future planning. At the same time, the General Secretary reassured the Board that the Party invariably agreed to serve on Select Committees which discussed specific issues arising out of particular Bills, e.g. the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill.

- (3) In this connection, Maharawal Laxman Singh, the President of the State Unit and Leader of the Opposition in the State Legislature in Rajasthan, asked for clarification as to what should be the attitude of the Party's Groups in State Legislatures when invited by State Governments to participate in discussions on State Plans. The Board felt that since such meetings at the State level involved discussion of specific projects, and of priorities between various projects inter se, there was every reason and justification for accepting such invitations at the State level.
- (4) In regard to Prof. Ranga's declining to participate in the deliberations of the National Integration Council convened by the Prime Minister, the General Secretary reported that he (Prof. Ranga) did so because it was the Party's view that this body ought not to be a sort of "official" organ of Government, nor should its meetings be convened by Government. It should be a non-official body composed of all elements in national life instead of being dominated by the Congress Party or the Government.

13. U.P. Mid-term Election:

Discussing the Party's strategy and objectives in the mid-term election in U.P. early next year, the General Secretary and the State President (Mr. B.P. Singh) explained the background in regard to the political situation in Uttar Pradesh.

The Board agreed that the Party's effort in the mid-term poll should be limited to those areas and constituencies where there were reasonable prospects of success and that a widely dispersed and ineffective effort on the scale last undertaken in the General Election (1967) should be avoided. General electoral understandings with leftist or communal parties should also be avoided, though there need be no objection to local adjustments. As regards the BCD, the possibility of a more comprehensive electoral understanding should be explored provided the BCD shed completely its alliance with the "United Front" in West Bengal.

14. West Bengal Mid-term Election:

In regard to West Bengal, where also a mid-term poll was likely in November 1968, the General Secretary reported that in response to a letter on the subject from the President (Prof. Ranga) to the President of India, urging the postponement of mid-term elections in West Bengal in view of the need to ensure stable conditions, the Home Minister had replied that this was a matter for Parliament to decide and that our Party was welcome to raise this issue at the next session. In this connection, the Board approved the position taken by the Party's Group in Parliament that there need be no hurry to hold mid-term elections in West Bengal.

The Board agreed, however, that as and when the mid-term poll is held, the Party's effort should be a very limited one of contesting a few seats within a compact area covering two or three parliamentary constituencies on the basis of past performance.

15. Support to Bihar Ministry:

The General Secretary's proposal that the Party's M.L.A.s in Bihar, while retaining their independence of action, should generally extend support to the Paswan Ministry was approved. Specifically, it was agreed that our M.L.A.s should be asked not to cooperate in any efforts at toppling the Ministry.

16. By-election from Burwaha Assembly Constituency:

The Board ratified the approval given by the General Secretary to the candidature of Mr. Chatrubhuj K. Bapna as the Party's candidate in the by-election to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly from the Burwaha Assembly Constituency, on a self-financing basis.

17. Discussion of Policy Matters:

Mr. H.M. Patel's suggestion that at future meetings of the Board a day should be set apart for more general discussion of major issues of national and state policy was accepted and the General Secretary was requested to give effect to this suggestion.

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