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Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held at Vithalbhai Patel Bhavan, New Delhi, on Saturday 13th April, 1968.

Present:

Prof. N.G. Ranga, M.P. -- in the Chair
Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy, M.P.
Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel, M.L.A.
Mr. R.N. Singh Deo, M.L.A.
Mr. Laxman Singh of Dungarpur, M.L.A.
Mr. G. Latchanna, M.L.A.
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel, M.P.
Mr. H.M. Patel, M.L.A.
Mr. N. Dandekar, M.P. (General Secretary)

Mr. Jaideepsingh of Baria, M.L.A. (By Special Invitation)

1. The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held at Cochin on January 26, were confirmed.
2. The Board mourned the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King and observed a minute's silence in honour of his memory.
3. The President congratulated Prof. Ruthnaswamy on his re-election to the Rajya Sabha.
- 4.. (1) Action against defectors from the Party:

Arising from the above Minutes, the General Secretary reported on the letter received from the President of the Gujarat Unit of the Party, Mr. H.M. Patel drawing attention to the following who had defected from the Gujarat Legislature Party; and recommended that some action was called for on the part of the National Executive:

1. Shri Raisinhji Jadeja, M.L.A.
2. Shri Jagtabhai Parmar, M.L.A.
3. Shri Virjee Bhinji Dafda, M.L.A.
4. Shri Dahyabhai Jadav, M.L.A.
5. Shri Nagjibhai Arya, M.L.A.
6. Shri Vadilal Lalubhai Mehta, M.L.A.
7. Shri Lalbhai Kundiwala, M.L.A.

The President of the Rajasthan Unit of the Party informed the Board that there had been 16 defections from the Party in the Rajasthan Legislature, of whom 13 had gone over to the Congress. He agreed to forward the names of all these defectors to the Central Office of the Party.

After discussion the Board decided to recommend to the National Executive that all legislators (whether M.P.s., M.L.As., or M.L.C.s) of the Party who defect should be expelled from the Party and barred from readmission for a period of three years.

(ii) Orissa Freedom of Religion Act:

The General Secretary reported on his visit to Bhubaneswar on 3rd February and the discussion he then had with Mr. R.N. Singh Deo.

Since efforts to incorporate amendments to the Act might lead to unforeseeable complications, Mr. Singh Deo had assured that the substance of

the suggested amendments (designed to prevent the misuse of certain provisions of the Act) would be implemented through executive instructions at the appropriate levels. These instructions were presently being worked out. The Board noted with approval the action proposed.

(iii) Introduction of Bills by the Party's Members of Parliament:

Mr. P.K. Deo's communication explaining the circumstances leading to his having sponsored certain Bills in the Lok Sabha was discussed. The Board had at its previous meeting in Cochin on January 26 called upon Mr. P.K. Deo to withdraw the Bills since he had tabled them without the Board's permission.

Since there was no express procedure laid down requiring the prior approval of such matters by the Central Parliamentary Board, Mr. P.K. Deo's explanation was accepted. It was further agreed that the General Secretary should work out a procedure to be followed in this regard at the Central and State levels and submit his proposals at the next meeting of the Board.

5. Biennial Elections to the Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads:

- (1) The Party's performance in the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads were reviewed. The following results of the elections were noted:-

<u>State</u>	<u>Strength of SP Legislature Group</u>	<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Result</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Andhra	25	Mr. J. Chandramouli	Won	as a result of electoral arrangements with other Opposition Groups.
Assam	2	Prof. Martin Narayan Majaw	Lost	
Gujarat	56	Mr. Babubhai Vaidya	"	
Madras	22	Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy	Won	as a result of electoral arrangements with DMK
Mysore	15	Mr. H. Mahantaswamy	Lost	
Orissa	49	Mr. Sundermani Patel Mr. Krishnachandra Panda	Won "	As a result of electoral arrangement with the Coalition Party
Rajasthan	33	Mr. Mahendrakumar Mohta	Won	As a result of electoral arrangement with Opposition Groups.

Number retired : 3

Number elected : 5

Strength of Group in Rajya Sabha
(before biennial elections) 13

Strength of Group in Rajya Sabha
(after biennial elections) 15

<u>State</u>	<u>Vidhan Parishad</u>		<u>Result</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
	<u>Strength of SP Legislature Group</u>	<u>Candidate</u>		
Madras	22	Mr. Saw Ganesan	Won *	As a result of electoral arrangement with DMK
U.P.	17	Mr. B. P. Singh	Lost	

* In addition, Mr. G. Swaminathan was elected to the Madras Legislative Council from the Tanjore-Trichy Graduates Constituency.

(2) The circumstances leading to the defeat of the Party's official candidate in Gujarat, Mr. Babubhai Vaidya, were discussed. Since the matter was to be considered the following day by the National Executive, no decisions were taken.

Mr. Latchanna reported that judging by the narrow margin of victory of the Party's candidate from Andhra, Mr. J. Chandramouli, it was evident that some Party MLAs had not voted for him.

(3) Arising out of the recent experience in regard to elections to the Rajya Sabha, the Board felt the need to work out some kind of consultative procedure between the organisational and Legislative Wings of the Party especially in regard to the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Council elections. The General Secretary was requested to evolve a suitable informal procedure (in consultation with the Presidents of State Units and Leaders of the Legislature Groups of the Party in the various State Assemblies) for consideration at the next meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board.

6. Haryana Mid-Term Elections :

The Board reviewed the progress made with the Party's preparations for the mid-term elections in Haryana to be held on May 12, 1968. The General Secretary reported that so far some 35 candidates had been approved and that in any event, the figure was not expected to exceed 40.

The General Secretary stated that undertakings were being obtained from candidates that in the event of their wanting to leave the Party, they would resign their membership of the Assembly and seek re-election.

In regard to understandings with other democratic Parties in that State for the purposes of this election, the General Secretary stated that he had recently been approached by the Jan Sangh and that he and Mr. Hardwari Lal were negotiating the terms of possible cooperation. The General Secretary further said that under no circumstances would the Party have any truck with the Communists.

Regarding the attitude the Party should take in the matter of working with other democratic Parties in the State after the mid-term elections in regard to such matters as the formation of a Government, the Board decided that no commitments should be entered into with any Party at this stage but that the Party should act in accordance with whatever was in the people's interest in the light of the post-election situation and developments.

7. By-Elections

- (i) Bijapur Parliamentary Constituency - the Board approved the change of candidate from Mr. A.B. Patil (previously approved by Circular) to Mr. K. B. Patil.
- (ii) Dausa Parliamentary Constituency - The Board approved the candidature of Maharajkumar Prithviraj from the Dausa Parliamentary Constituency. The Board expressed surprise when informed by the President of the Rajasthan Unit, Maharawal Laxman Singh of Dungarpur, that Maharajkumar Prithviraj was not even a member of the Party and that no commitment had been taken from him, before assigning him the Party's symbol, that, if elected, he would at least become an associate member of the Party in the Lok Sabha.
- (iii) Chomu Assembly Constituency- In the light of the circumstances explained by the President of the Rajasthan Unit the Board approved the recommendation of the Rajasthan State Parliamentary Board permitting Mr. Tikaran Paliwal the use of the Party's symbol though he was contesting as an Independent candidate. The State President made it clear however that no commitment had been taken from Mr. Paliwal that he would join the Party's Group in the State Assembly.

8. Relations with the S.V.D. in U.P.

In the light of the earlier decision of the Central Parliamentary Board at Cochin on January 26, that the Party's Group in the U.P. Legislature should withdraw from the S.V.D. in the event of Mr. Charan Singh ceasing to be its leader, the Central Parliamentary Board recommended to the National Executive that in view of the resignation of Mr. Charan Singh as Chief Minister and the subsequent developments leading to the present situation in UP, there was no longer any justification for continuing our association with the S.V.D. which also contained a large contingent of communists. The Party's Group in U.P. should therefore leave the S.V.D. altogether and should not participate any longer in any of their deliberations, whether in Committee or in general body meetings.

In the event of any kind of verification to ascertain the respective strength of the S.V.D. and the Congress Party, the Swatantra Group in the U.P. Legislature Assembly should abstain from giving support to either side and remain completely neutral.

9. Parliamentary Matters.

- (a) Leadership of the Party's Group in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

The Board decided to recommend to the Parliamentary Group of the Party that the following decision should be taken in regard to the leadership of the Party's Groups in the two Houses of Parliament.

- (i) Lok Sabha - the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Party's Group in the Lok Sabha should be elected by the Party's Members of Parliament (Lok Sabha) to hold office from now upto the end of the life of the present Lok Sabha in 1972.

- (ii) Rajya Sabha - the Leader of the Party's Group in the Rajya Sabha should be elected by the Party's members of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) to hold office till the next biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha in 1970.

(b) The need for an Upper House in States without one :

In response to an inquiry as to what should be the Party's stand in regard to the demand for an Upper House in those States where there was none such, it was felt that the Party should not press this demand. However, in so far as the Rajya Sabha itself was concerned, the Board was of the definite opinion that since Indian Parliament was the supreme and sovereign legislature in India, it should continue to be bicameral.

(c) Review of the Party's Performance So Far in the Current Session of Parliament.

(i) Kutch Award :

The President, Prof. Ranga, referred to the position taken by the Party in the two Houses of Parliament in regard to the Kutch Award and said that although the Party's Group had supported the Opposition motion of "no-confidence" for other reasons, it had at the same time supported the Government's acceptance of the Kutch Award. He reported that the Party's spokesman Mr. Keshabhai Patel had made a good speech supporting the Award as a binding international obligation, notwithstanding that it was an unfortunate Award resulting from the fact that the Government had tied its own hands by the wide terms of reference to the Tribunal which it had accepted.

In this connection, Mr. H.M. Patel drew the attention of the Board to the fact that in Gujarat public opinion was against acceptance of the Award and that he himself was the Convenor of an All-Party Committee to oppose acceptance of the Award. The Gujarat Unit of the Party had at a meeting of its State Council adopted a resolution opposing the Award. In the light of Mr. H.M. Patel's explanation and the circumstances obtaining in Gujarat, the Board recommended to the National Executive that the Gujarat Unit of the Party be permitted to take a different attitude (made possible by the 21st Principle of the Party). At the same time, the Gujarat Unit was asked not to involve the Party in a Satyagraha or any other form of agitation that might take place. Members of the Party were however free in their individual capacity to take part in such forms of protest.

(ii) West Bengal Developments

The Board approved the position taken by the Party's Group in Parliament supporting the Governor's action in dissolving the State Assembly and calling for mid-term elections.

(iii) Indian Residents in Kenya with British Passports.

Mr. H.M. Patel reported that feelings in Gujarat were running high in regard to the Government of India's stand of not permitting those Indians with British passports to come to India.

The President, Prof. Ranga, explained the position adopted by the Party in Parliament that for the present the Party should not make such a demand but call for a meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers to evolve a satisfactory solution of the problem.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Party should support the demand for an early meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers to prevail upon the British Government to honour its obligations and to find a solution to the problem. The Board was also of the view that the Government of India should not refuse entry into India to those unfortunate people.

(iv) Punjab

The Board approved the position taken by the Party's Group in Parliament in (a) disapproving the manner in which the State Legislature had been prorogued by the Speaker; and (b) demanding the dissolution of the State Assembly and the holding of mid-term elections in that State.

(v) Insurance (Amendment) Bill

The following resolution on the Insurance Amendment Bill was unanimously adopted :

" The Central Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party having examined the Insurance (Amendment) Bill 1968, has come to the conclusion that the provisions of the Bill constitute an excessive measure of interference with the functioning of insurance companies. They can even be forcibly amalgamated or merged into the Life Insurance Corporation all in the name of "public interest." The Bill will shake the confidence of the insuring public in insurance altogether, immensely increase the power of the politician and the bureaucrat to meddle in the affairs of insurance companies and extend a power of patronage to government that would open the door to massive inefficiency and corruption. The Board therefore calls upon the Party's Members of Parliament vigorously to oppose the Bill when it comes before the two Houses of Parliament and to seek to eliminate as much of the mischief in the Bill as may be possible, and calls upon insurance agents, and the insuring public to campaign vigorously in defence of their rights."

Miscellaneous

The President, Prof. Ranga informed the Board that on the request of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr. Masani had with the Parliamentary Group's approval agreed to continue for one more year as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Similarly, he had accepted, with the Group's approval, the Railway Minister's invitation to serve on a high-powered Committee to inquire into the recent frequent major Railway Accidents.

10. Mr. Masani's Resignation

The Board considered Mr. Masani's letter of resignation from the Central Parliamentary Board. In this connection, the General Secretary read out to the Board Mr. Masani's reply, in response to the President's invitation to attend this meeting of the Board. Mr. Masani in his reply had stated inter alia that he regretted his inability to accept the President's invitation as he felt that his presence might be misinterpreted as an effort to influence the Board's decision in the matter of the action to be taken in regard to the situation in Gujarat. He had also reaffirmed his decision not to withdraw his resignation.

The President read out certain extracts from Rajaji's letter of 12th April to Mr. Masani in which Rajaji had requested Mr. Masani to withdraw his resignation. In the light of the discussions that ensued, the Board unanimously decided to request Mr. Masani to withdraw his resignation.

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