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Draft Minutes of the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held at 3 p.m. on January 27, 1968 at the Casino Hotel, Cochin.

Present:

Mr. N.G. Ranga - in the Chair
Mr. M. Ruthnaswamy, MP.
Mr. M.R. Masani, MP.
Mr. H.M. Patel, MLA.
Dr. R.C. Cooper
Mr. Dahyabhai Patel, MP.
Mr. N. Dandeker, MP.

Mr. T. Krishnamma Chaudhary)
Mr. C.R. Irani) by Invitation
Mr. Sundermani Patel)

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held in Madras on September 29, 1967, were confirmed.

1. Disciplinary Action against S.V. Kashimath, MLA:

The General Secretary reported that Mr. S.V. Kashimath, MLA, Chief Whip of the Party's Group in the Mysore Legislative Assembly had tendered an unqualified apology for his action in moving and getting enacted a Bill to enhance the salaries of Ministers and Legislators, in defiance of the directive of the Mysore State Executive and of the Leader of the Party's Group in the State Legislature.

The Board accepted the apology as recommended by the Mysore State Executive and decided to drop the matter.

In this connection, a letter from Mr. Sridharmurthy stating that Mr. Kashimath's apology should not be accepted, was considered and the General Secretary was requested to send a suitable reply in the light of the Board's decision.

2. Visit to Orissa by Members of the Board:

The Board was informed that Prof. Ranga, Mr. N. Dandeker and Mr. G. Latchanna had visited Orissa since the last meeting of the Board.

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

(a) Rajya Sabha

- (1) The General Secretary reported that apart from one candidate from Gujarat (in respect of whom there was already a commitment) and certain recommendations received from the Parliamentary Board of the Orissa Unit, all other Units which intended recommending candidates for the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha had asked for extension of time to enable them to come to arrangements with other democratic Opposition Groups in their respective State Legislatures.

In the light of this request, the Board decided to extend the time limit for the submission of recommendations upto 15th February. A Sub-Committee consisting of Prof. N.G. Ranga, Mr. N. Dandeker and Mr. M.R. Masani was appointed to consider and decide on recommendations received from State Parliamentary Boards.

(2) The following recommendations were approved:-

- (1) Orissa - 1. Mr. Sundermani Patel, MP,
 - 2. Mr. Krishna Chandra Panda

The General Secretary reported that Mr. Yatiraj Praharaj and Mr. Varanasi Jagannadham had appealed against the Orissa State Parliamentary Board's recommendations. After discussion the Board negatived the appeals on merits and asked the General Secretary to reply suitably to the two appellants.

- (ii) Gujarat 1. Mr. Babubhai Vaidya

The General Secretary reported on a misunderstanding that appeared to exist in the Gujarat Unit's Office regarding the precise nature of the commitment vis-a-vis Mr. Suman Patel who had been promised the second preference candidature for the Rajya Sabha election in 1968 or the first preference candidature in 1970. The Office Bearers of the Gujarat Unit were under the impression that if, for any reason, Mr. Suman Patel was unable to accept such nomination himself, he had the right to nominate some one instead.

In this connection, the General Secretary recalled in particular Mr. K. M. Munshi's letter of May 27, 1966 to Mr. Suman Patel embodying the agreement reached with him and the decision taken in this regard by the Central Parliamentary Board at its meeting on May 26, 1966. From this it was quite clear that if Mr. Suman Patel would not accept nomination, no right was given to him to nominate some one else instead.

Mr. H.M. Patel stated that he had not himself seen the copy of the letter from Mr. Munshi to Mr. Suman Patel till that (January 27) morning when he had perused the copy with the Central Office. He said that he would on his return call for the relevant papers and communicate further in the matter with the General Secretary, Mr. N. Dandekar.

As regards the advisability of putting up a second candidate at all, in the light of the Party's strength and negotiating position in the Gujarat State Assembly, it was decided that a second candidate should only be considered after making certain that the first candidate Mr. Babubhai Vaidya would be elected. The Sub-Committee appointed to approve Rajya Sabha Candidatures was asked to consider the matter carefully and to approve of a second Candidate from Gujarat after satisfying itself that this would not harm Mr. Babubhai Vaidya's prospects.

- (iii) Rajasthan

The General Secretary reported on the discussions he had with the President, General Secretary and the Treasurer of the Rajasthan Unit of the Party in regard to the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha, namely, that the State Unit was in favour of continuing the reciprocal arrangements with the Jan Sangh, whereby the candidates of the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party would alternate with mutual support. Thus, in the previous biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan in 1964 the Jan Sangh had lent support to the Swatantra candidate in 1966, so that on this occasion the Jan Sangh's support should be available for our candidate. This made it possible to send a member of the Swatantra Party into the Rajya Sabha. In this connection, the

reported assurance by Smt. Gayatri Devi to Thakur Mandhata Singh that in view of his agreeing not to contest in the General Elections in 1967 he would be the Party's candidate to the Rajya Sabha in 1968, was discussed. The General Secretary was asked to check with the Maharani and the Maharawal Saheb of Dungarpur, whether any such assurance was given and, if so, to consider the possibility of effectively implementing the assurance with the support of the Party's Legislators in the State Assembly.

(iv) Other States

In view of inadequate voting strength there will be no Party candidates for the Rajya Sabha from the following States: Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

(b) Vidhan Parishads

The Board was informed that the State Units of Andhra, Madras, Mysore and U.P. had requested for extension of time to recommend candidates for election to the Vidhan Parishads for the same reasons as in regard to recommendations to the Rajya Sabha. The Board agreed and asked the Sub-Committee to take decisions in the matter as and when recommendations were received.

In so far as the other States were concerned, Assam, Gujarat, Orissa and Rajasthan had no Vidhan Parishads; while on account of inadequate voting strength in the Assemblies of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bengal, there could be no Party candidates in the elections to the Vidhan Parishads.

In so far as the Punjab was concerned, the Board was informed that there was a move to abolish the Vidhan Parishad.

4. Review of the Functioning of United Front arrangements in certain State Legislatures:

Andhra

The request by the Board at its meeting on September 29, 1967 to Mr. Latchanna that he should make efforts to get the Swatantra-led United Democratic Front to change its name so as to emphasize the major status of the Party, was recalled. Prof. Ranga, in the absence of Mr. Latchanna, assured the Board that there was no truth in the belief that the Party's identity had suffered as a result of the arrangements entered into with the dissident Congressmen in the Andhra State Assembly. On the contrary, he said the leadership of the Front by Mr. Latchanna had more or less emphasised the major status of the Swatantra Party.

Bihar

The Joint Secretary Mr. Sundermani Patel (who was present by special invitation) reported that during his recent visit to Patna, he had instructed the two members of the Party in the State Legislature not to support the efforts that had recently resulted in the overthrow of the United Front Government.

Mysore

The General Secretary reported that there was no report yet from the Mysore Unit concerning the advisability or otherwise of continuing cooperation with the Janta Paksha in the Mysore Legislature. The General Secretary was asked to pursue the matter further with the State President.

Rajasthan

Regarding the United Front arrangements in the Rajasthan State Assembly, the General Secretary Mr. Dandekar reported on the talks he had with the State President Maharawal Laxman Singh of Dungarpur who was also the leader of the Party and of the Front in the Assembly. Mr. Dandekar conveyed to the Board his impression that the Maharawal himself was not very happy about continuing with the arrangements which according to him had been entered into tentatively for a year and which would come to an end in March 1968.

The Board reiterated its earlier decision that the Party should resume its identity in the State Assembly and hoped that Shri Laxman Singhji would terminate the arrangement, soon after the Rajya Sabha elections. This, however, need not preclude the continuance of any limited arrangement with the Jan Sangh whether generally or in regard to biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha.

West Bengal

Joint Secretary Mr. C.R. Irani reported to the Board on the circumstances leading to our Party's lone MLA Mr. Rajendra Singh Singhi being invited to join the West Bengal Cabinet as a Minister of State. The Board ratified its decision (obtained by Circular) approving Mr. Singhi's action in joining the West Bengal Ministry.

Uttar Pradesh

The General Secretary reported on the developments in the U.P. Legislative Assembly since the last meeting of the Board. Arising out of the discussion and in the light of the General Secretary's report, the Board approved the immediate rejoining the Sanyukta Vidhayak Dal by Swatantra MLAs in U.P., but only so long as Mr. Charan Singh continued as Chief Minister.

In so far as the nomination of a minister in the S.V.D. Cabinet was concerned, it was decided to keep the matter in abeyance until the General Secretary discussed the matter further with the Party MLAs and the State Executive Committee.

5. Review of Developments in Haryana

The Board heard a report on the developments in Haryana resulting in certain leading citizens of the State joining the Party and the reconstitution of the Ad-Hoc State Executive with Chaudhary Hardwari Lal as Chairman.

The General Secretary reported that this significant development was in a large measure due to the efforts of the late Mr. Charanjit Rai.

In the light of the favourable atmosphere in the State for the Swatantra Party, the Board decided that the Swatantra Party should participate in the mid-term elections in a big way subject of course to the availability of :-

(a) good and suitable candidates, and

(b) adequate resources.

In so far as cooperation with other Parties was concerned, the Board emphasised that we should not take part in any so-called "United Front" arrangements and that our cooperation with other democratic Opposition Parties should be strictly limited to electoral arrangements. The contradiction issued by Chaudhary Hardwari Lal to a report that appeared in certain leading dailies that the Party in Haryana had joined in the formation of a United Front was noted with approval.

The following 5-man Sub-Committee was set up to consider and take decisions on all aspects relating to the Haryana mid-term elections:

1. Prof. N.G. Ranga,
2. Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy,
3. Mr. M.R. Masani,
4. Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel,
5. Mr. N. Dandekar.

6. Review of the functioning of the Party's Group in Parliament and the State Assemblies:

Parliament

- (a) Prof. Ranga reported on developments in the last session especially the unseemly and unparliamentary scenes witnessed in both Houses of Parliament. The Board reiterated its concern over the apparent inability of the Speaker in the Lok Sabha and the Chairman in the Rajya Sabha effectively to control the proceedings in the House and to safeguard its dignity.

Arrears of Subscription

The Board noted with regret that certain members of the Party in Parliament had failed to pay their dues to the Group in time and requested the General Secretary to write to the members concerned requesting them to clear their arrears quickly.

(b) State Assemblies

- (i) The circumstances that led the Party's Group in Rajasthan to abstain from attending the Legislative Assembly at the time of the Governor's address and the walk-out by our Group from the Gujarat Assembly before the Governor's address were discussed. Prof. Ruthnaswamy, Mr. Masani and Dr. Cooper felt that such extra-constitutional "protest" procedures were improper, whereas Prof. Ranga felt that each case had to be considered on its own merits. Mr. Dandekar thought that a "walk-out" may involve discourtesy but not "abstention".

(ii) Gujarat

Mr. H.M. Patel stated that the reports in the Press of a schism in the Party in the State Assembly were exaggerated. He conceded however that one or two members may not be very happy with the present arrangements in the Assembly Party especially in regard to the leadership.

In this connection, both Prof. Ranga and Mr. Masani reported on the meetings that they had separately with Mr. Vadilal Ialubhai but with no great success. Mr. Dandekar expressed the view, which Mr. Patel also strongly urged, that matters of this kind should be left to the State Executive to resolve and that he (Mr. H.M. Patel) with Shri Bhailalbai Patel, would strive to iron out such difficulties as existed. This was agreed to.

(iii) Orissa Freedom of Religion Bill

The contents of Mr. R.N. Singh Deo's Note on the circumstances leading to the enactment of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act 1967 were communicated to the members of the Board. Mr. Dandekar referred to certain amendments to Section 2 of the Act which, he thought, would cure the major defects.

The Board noted with concern that there was considerable disquiet in the country as a result of the enacting of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967. It was unfortunate that the Central Parliamentary Board was not consulted before such a legislation having all-India repercussions and concerned with the basic principles of the Party was brought forward in the Orissa State Legislature.

The Board authorised the General Secretary to discuss with the President of the Swatantra Party in Orissa the changes necessary in the Act to make it generally acceptable.

7. Consideration of Business before the Budget Session of Parliament

- (i) The following Resolutions in connection with legislation that would come up before the Budget Session of Parliament were adopted unanimously:

BANKING LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL

" The Central Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party, having examined the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, has come to the conclusion that the provisions of the Bill constitute an excessive measure of interference with the functioning of banking companies and give almost unlimited powers to the politicians and bureaucrats in office to meddle in the affairs of banks and to exercise a power of patronage which would on the one hand, prevent the banks from functioning in the interest of the depositor, the shareholder and the national economy and would, on the other, open the door to massive corruption and political jobbery. The Bill will further inhibit the flow of savings into the banking system and the process of monetisation of the rural areas. 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 depositors and shareholders of banks to campaign vigorously in defence of their rights".

MONOPOLY & RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES BILL

" The Swatantra Party has always been opposed to monopoly, whether in the State or the private sector, and would welcome the introduction of genuine and reasonable anti-monopoly legislation which would seek to prevent those

concerned from exploiting a monopolistic situation. The Central Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party, having examined the Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices Bill now before Parliament, is alarmed at finding that the provisions of the Bill have to a large extent little to do with combating monopolies but are so designed as to give Government all manner of arbitrary authority over all industrial and trading concerns regardless of whether or not they are monopolies. The Bill bears little resemblance to the draft legislation recommended by the Das Gupta Commission on Monopolies. If enacted in its present form, the Bill would prevent this country from enjoying the benefits of technological progress and economies of size on the one hand, and would place everyone engaged in industry, trade or services at the mercy of the politician and bureaucrat to whose arbitrary whims and fancies the Bill provides neither a judicial nor any other check. The Board, therefore, calls upon Swatantra Members of Parliament to fight this pernicious Bill, while making it clear that the Party stands for opposition to monopoly in whatever sector it may raise its head".

(ii) The Board noted with concern that two Bills involving major issues of policy had been moved by Mr. P.K. Deo, a member of the Party's Group in the Lok Sabha without the Board being consulted. The Board decided to call upon Mr. P.K. Deo to withdraw both Bills viz.,

(a) Bill for the Impeachment of State Governors, and

(b) A Bill to amend the Constitution to provide for an Assembly vote before the appointment of a Chief Minister.

(iii) The Board called upon the members of the Party in both the Houses of Parliament to oppose the following Bills that were being moved by the S.S.P. Group in the Lok Sabha viz.,

(a) a Bill to abolish Privy Purses;

(b) a Bill to terminate the guarantees to members of the ICS regarding their emoluments, service conditions, pensions, etc., and

(c) a Bill to enfranchise all those above 18.

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