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Draft Minutes of the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board
held at the National Headquarters, Bombay, on January 3, 1972

Present

Mr. H.M. Patel - In the Chair
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel
Mr. Laxman Singh of Dungarpur
Mr. G. Latchanna
Mr. Madhu Mehta

By Special Invitation

Mr. N. Dandekar
Rajmata Gayatri Devi
Mr. N.K. Ganapaiah
Rajkumar R.Y. Ghorpade
Mr. Piloo Mody
Mr. M.N. Amersey
Dr. R.C. Cooper
Mr. B. Ratnasabhapati

The meeting condoled the deaths of Prof. P.J. Shroff, a leading member of the Party and Dr. Vikram Sarabhai. After adopting the following resolutions the Board observed a minute's silence in honour of their memory.

Condolence Resolutions:

Prof. P.J. Shroff

" The Central Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party is deeply grieved over the death of Prof. P.J. Shroff an esteemed member of our Party.

The manner in which he was snatched away from us makes his death even more tragic for us.

The Central Parliamentary Board conveys its heartfelt sympathies to Mrs. Shroff in her sad bereavement. "

Dr. Vikram Sarabhai

" The Central Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party deeply mourns the totally unexpected and sudden demise of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai.

He was a great scientist and a great patriot who strove indefatigably for ensuring that the progress of the country kept pace within its resources in the field of nuclear and space research. Dr. Sarabhai provided magnificent leadership to a brilliant team of young and promising Indian scientists whom his predecessor and he had gathered.

The Board conveys its heartfelt condolences to the family of the bereaved. "

Confirmation of Minutes:

The Minutes of the Central Parliamentary Board meeting held in Bombay on April 16, 1971, were confirmed.

Conflict with Pakistan :

The Board adopted unanimously the following resolution on the recent conflict with Pakistan :

" The Central Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party congratulates our Armed Forces for the magnificent manner in which they planned the defence of our country and implemented the plans with such praiseworthy determination, imaginativeness and efficiency. The people of India also deserve congratulations for the manner in which they closed their ranks and conducted themselves with a discipline that augurs well for the future of this country.

The Government of India also deserves well of the country for the cool confidence with which it faced the entire situation. "

Forthcoming Assembly Elections :

The Board then took up for consideration the Party's strategy for the coming Assembly Elections.

Schedule

Members were informed that though the formal notification of the Election Commission had not yet been received by the National Headquarters, the Chief Election Commissioner had at his Press conference in New Delhi on December 29, announced the following :

Polling will begin in the following eight States from March 5 to 11, viz.,

Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and the Union Territories of Goa, Daman, Diu.

In respect of the following States (which are under President's Rule) the Chief Election Commissioner stated that he had received no communication from the Central Government for the holding of elections, viz.,

Gujarat, Punjab, Mysore, West Bengal, and the Union territories of Manipur and Tripura.

Similarly, no communication had been received from the Central Government regarding holding of elections in Bihar.

Relations with Other Parties :

The question of alliances and electoral adjustments with other Parties was then discussed. Members were unanimously of the view that the Party should not seek or agree to any alliances or adjustments with other opposition parties at the national level.

In regard to adjustments at the State level, the Board decided that the Party's units at the State level were free, if they so desired, to enter into negotiations or arrive at electoral adjustments, it being made clear that these would strictly relate to adjustments of seats and would in no way involve common programmes or joint campaigning.

Punjab

In this context, the Board had before it, a letter from the President of the Punjab Unit of the Party, Sardar Bhupinder Singh Mann that though earlier (before the outbreak of the conflict with Pakistan) the State Unit had decided to go it alone, they were now forced to consider some kind of an alliance with the Akalis in view of the climate in the Punjab arising from the War, and the fact that elections were taking place so soon after the Conflict and at such short notice. The Board decided to permit the Punjab Unit to negotiate with the Akalis an adjustment of seats and to keep the National Headquarters informed from time to time.

Telengana

The President of the Andhra Regional Unit, Mr. G. Latchanna, drew the attention of the Board to a report on the Party's position in Telengana where there was a move on the part of democratic opposition parties to form a united front on the slogan of a separate state for Telengana to oppose the Ruling Congress.

The Telengana Regional Unit which was formed in November this year, desired to join this United Front which would be composed of various opposition parties and would fight the election on a common symbol and the slogan of a separate Telengana State.

The Telengana Regional Unit sought the Central Parliamentary Board's permission to join the United Front and to contest the elections on a common symbol which would not be the STAR. Mr. Latchanna clarified that though the Party's symbol would not be used, the Party's programme and its flag would be publicised in constituencies where the Party's members were contesting as United Front candidates.

The Board permitted the Telengana Regional Unit to negotiate with the other opposition parties in regard to such a United Front. At the same time, the Board made it clear that the Party should retain its identity and after the elections sit as Swatantra members in the Assembly.

Party Policies and State Manifestoes :

The Board was informed that the National Headquarters had so far received and approved the State Manifestoes of Gujarat, Bombay, Maharashtra and Delhi.

After some discussion the Board decided that despite the situation created by the recent conflict with Pakistan and the kind of atmosphere now prevalent in the country no changes were warranted in the National Manifesto adopted at the Baroda meeting of the General Council last November.

At the same time, it was felt a supplementary note highlighting certain aspects of the Manifesto and dealing with issues of current relevance should be prepared and circulated to State Units. In this connection the following points were discussed for inclusion in the note :

1. Compulsory Military Training :

There should be compulsory military training for all college students for a period of two years.

2. Urban Ceilings :

There was not enough information available in regard to the nature of the ceilings and the manner in which it was sought to be implemented. While the Party's fundamental position continued to be one of opposition to the concept of ceilings, the Party had, in the light of ceiling legislation already passed in the various States, demanded :

- (a) that there should be no further lowering of ceilings, and
- (b) existing land reform legislation already on statute books should be speedily implemented.

Rajaji's suggestions :

The General Secretary reported that he met Rajaji in Madras on January 1, and discussed Party matters with him.

During the discussions, Rajaji had suggested that the following points needed to be highlighted, viz.,

1. the defence of the Constitution,
2. exposing the evils of permit licence quota raj,
3. stress the need for increasing production.

On the Board's request, Mr. Dandekar agreed to draft the Supplementary Note incorporating these and other points of current relevance.

Finance :

The Board discussed the raising of funds for the forthcoming elections. Mr. H.M. Patel, Mr. N. Dandekar, Mr. Manu Amersey and Mr. Madhu Mehta reported that they were finding it difficult to persuade even those who had helped the Party in the past, to contribute this time. However, they said that they were doing their best but felt that State Units should make a more intensive effort to collect funds locally.

The Board decided to advise State Units that in the light of the limited resources that would be available, State Parliamentary Boards should, as far as possible, consider only those constituencies where the Party had an even chance.

Constituencies and Candidates :

The General Secretary reported that while no specific recommendations of constituencies and candidates had been received, some states had given a general indication of the constituencies they wished to contest. The Board then undertook a State-wise assessment of the Party's position.

Rajasthan :

The President of the State Unit, Rajmata Gayatri Devi said that the State Unit would have to make a bid for power; in her view, going a third time to the people and saying that the Party merely wanted to ensure a strong Opposition, would not help the Party's chances in the elections as the Party would not be taken seriously.

Andhra :

The State President, Mr. G. Latchanna said that in the 1967 elections, the Party had emerged as the leading Opposition Party in the State Assembly, annexing 29 seats. He felt that State Units had every hope of doing as well, if not better, because apart from the Communist Party (Marxist) in the coastal areas, there was no other Party which could pose a serious challenge to the Congress (R).

Mysore

The President and General Secretary of the Mysore Unit who were present at the meeting said that the plans for putting up a large number of candidates, which they had made before the outbreak of hostilities with Pakistan, had had to be curtailed due to the kind of atmosphere prevailing in Mysore and also the fact that elections had been so hastily called.

Gujarat :

Mr. H.M. Patel reported that so far the State Parliamentary Board had decided to seriously consider putting up 75 candidates in the State on the basis of our performance in the 1967 elections. The atmosphere in the State with the rapid disintegration of the Congress (O) was beneficial to the Party and could be taken advantage of provided adequate financial support was available.

Bombay :

Mr. Madhu Mehta reported that the Party hoped to contest one or two seats in the city and 3 to 4 seats in Maharashtra.

Punjab :

The President of the Punjab Unit had in a letter stated that in collaboration with the Akali Dal, they might be able to set up 10 candidates.

Madhya Pradesh:

The President and the General Secretary reported on the efforts being made by Mr. P.K. Deo and Maharawal Laxman Singh of Durgapur. While Mr. P.K. Deo was making a serious effort in the Chattisgarh area, Mr. Ram Dayal Singh who had been entrusted with the task of investigating the possibilities of setting up suitable candidatures in certain districts in the Malwa, Bundelkhand and Indore divisions, had not yet submitted his report.

Rajya Sabha By-election :

The Board's attention was drawn to an impending by-election to the Rajya Sabha from Orissa State Parliamentary Board's recommendation of Mr. K.P. Singh Deo as the Party's nominee.

In this context, the Board also had before it a telegram from Mr. Tribikram Tripathy, the Joint Secretary of the Party stating that he had personally inspected the enrolment registers of Orissa State Unit at Bhubaneswar and had found that Mr. K.P. Singh Deo's name did not figure either as a worker or life worker of the Party.

In the context of the fact that Mr. K.P. Singh Deo had not only been the Party's member in the Lok Sabha from 1967-71, but had also contested the 1971 elections as the Party's candidate to the Lok Sabha from Dhenkanal, it was decided that the General Secretary should ascertain from the Orissa State Office whether Mr. K.P. Singh Deo was a member of the Party on the date of nomination viz., 3rd January. If the answer was in the affirmative then the Board's approval should be conveyed.

The meeting then terminated.