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Draft Minutes of the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held at the C.M.A. Conference Room, Express Building, Churchgate, Bombay 20, on February 17, 1970.

Present :

Mr. M.R. Masani - in the Chair
Prof. N.G. Ranga
Mr. R.N. Singh Deo
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel
Mr. G. Latchanna
Dr. R.C. Cooper

By Special Invitation

Mr. H.M. Patel, President of the Gujarat Unit of the Swatantra Party
Mr. Liladhar Patel, Deputy Leader of the Swatantra Party in the Gujarat Legislative Assembly.

I. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held in New Delhi on August 29, 1969, were confirmed.

II. Absence of Jaideepsinhji

The President reported that Jaideepsinhji had written stating that he was not willing to serve on the Central Parliamentary Board. In this connection, Mr. Masani stated that he had explained to Jaideepsinhji that the Central Parliamentary Board, as nominated by the National Executive, was a representative body of Leaders of the Party's Groups in Parliament and major State Assemblies to attend to all matters pertaining to the Party in Parliament and State Assemblies and Councils. Consequently, Jaideepsinhji's nomination on the Central Parliamentary Board was on the basis of his being Leader of the Opposition in the Gujarat State Assembly and therefore the question of his unwillingness or otherwise to serve on the Central Parliamentary Board did not arise. Since Jaideepsinhji could not come to this meeting, the President had with Jaideepsinhji's concurrence invited Mr. Liladhar Patel, Deputy Leader of the Party in the Gujarat Assembly and had also invited Mr. H.M. Patel, President of the State Unit.

III. Functioning of the Party's Group in Parliament and State Assemblies

i. Poor Attendance and Indiscipline

The President reported on poor attendance by M.P.s and a certain amount of indiscipline that was evident among members of Parliament and cited two recent instances in the Rajya Sabha where our members had acted in a manner contrary to what was expected of them as Party members. The first was the poor voting by Party M.P.s during the election of the Vice-Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the second was when our members failed to support a Jan Sangh motion on Rabat.

ii. Pronouncements by the Party's Members of Parliament which are contrary to Party Policies

The attention of the Board was drawn to a letter from Mr. N.K. Sonani which stated that certain views expressed by Mr. Lobo Prabhu in the course of a discussion on a Private Member's Bill (purporting to make it compulsory for

all public sector undertakings to get all contracts approved by the Finance Ministry before either placing orders or making an agreement) were contrary to those expressed by him (Mr. Sonani) as the first speaker on behalf of the Party during this debate and were also not in consonance with the Party's policies. This had led to needless embarrassment.

The Central Parliamentary Board decided, after discussion, that once an accredited speaker of the Party took a particular position in conformity with the Party's policy and with the knowledge of the Party or its leaders, other speakers of the Party who followed should not take a contradictory position to the view expressed by the earlier speaker for the Party.

The General Secretary was requested to inform Mr. Lobo Prabhu of the above decision.

iii. Acting Chief Whip

The President informed the Board that Mr. Y.C. Gowd, who was the Party's Chief Whip in the Lok Sabha, was at present convalescing after a heart attack and this made it necessary for some one to officiate in his place.

In the context of the need to ensure better discipline and attendance, the Board advised the Party's Parliamentary Group to nominate an acting Chief Whip who would be capable of ensuring that such lapses as are mentioned above did not recur.

IV. Propriety of the Party's M.P.s and M.L.A.s attending Conferences of other Political Parties

The Board was informed that certain MLAs of the Party in Gujarat had attended the State Convention of the Jan Sangh in Rajkot and of the Ruling Congress in Bombay. Similarly, an MLA of the Party in Tamil Nadu had attended the Ruling Congress Session in Bombay.

The Central Parliamentary Board, after discussion, took the following decision:

"The Central Parliamentary Board notes with regret that some legislators of the Party in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have recently attended Conventions of other political parties.

Apart from creating doubts in regard to the loyalties of such legislators, their attendance at these Conventions creates confusion in the public mind and hurts the morale of Party workers.

The Board requests the Party's MLAs, MLCs, and MPs not to :

- (a) attend Conventions of other political parties,
- (b) address meetings from the platform of other political parties, and
- (c) issue statements or sign memoranda jointly with members of other political parties,

without the prior permission and approval of the appropriate Party authorities."

V. Forthcoming Biennial Elections to the Rajya Sabha

The following members of the Party in the Rajya Sabha would be retiring in March this year :

- (i) Gujarat .. Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel

- (ii) Orissa .. Mr. B.K. Deo
- (iii) Rajasthan .. Mr. Devi Singh
- (iv) Tamil Nadu .. Mr. S.S. Mariswamy

Recommendations

(i) Gujarat

On the recommendation of the Gujarat Parliamentary Board of the Party, the Central Parliamentary Board unanimously nominated Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel, leader of the Party in the Rajya Sabha, as the Party's candidate in the biennial elections. It was decided that all the 55 MLAs of the Party in the Gujarat State Assembly should be asked to cast their first preference votes for Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel. In regard to the use of their Second Preference Votes, the State Parliamentary Board was asked to make its recommendation on or before 7th March for consideration by the Central Parliamentary Board. It also decided, with the concurrence of Mr. Liladhar Patel, the Deputy Leader of the Party in the State Assembly, and Mr. H.M. Patel to announce Mr. Dahyabhai Patel's nomination to the Press.

(ii) Andhra

On the recommendation of the Andhra State Parliamentary Board of the Party, the Central Parliamentary Board approved the nomination of Mr. H.R. Sayoji Rao as the Party's candidate. In this connection, the Leader of the Party in the State Assembly, Mr. G. Latchanna, gave reasons why despite our inadequate strength, the State Parliamentary Board had wished to set up a Party nominee and said that he hoped for our candidate's success with the support of 3 Jan Sangh MLAs and 13 MLAs belonging to the Congress Organisation in the State. In this connection, he requested the Central leadership to speak to Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the Jan Sangh and Mr. Sanjiva Reddy of the Congress to enlist their support. Prof. Ranga agreed to speak to Mr. Vajpayee, while Mr. Masani said that he would speak to Mr. Sanjiva Reddy.

(iii) Orissa

The recommendations of the State Parliamentary Board were then taken up for consideration. The following facts in respect of these recommendations were noted :

- (a) that of nine persons on the State Parliamentary Board, seven were present and of these, three were themselves candidates and therefore did not participate in the discussion.
- (b) that the State Parliamentary Board had recommended three names in the following order of preference :
 - (i) Mr. B.K. Deo
 - (ii) Mr. Yatiraj Praharaj
 - (iii) Mr. Kshetra Mohan Panigrahy
- (c) that appeals had been received against the above decision from the following :

Mr. K.M. Panigrahy
 Mr. Yatiraj Praharaj
 Mr. V. Jaganathan
 Mr. Hari Har Das

The Board heard Mr. R.N. Singh Deo, President of the Orissa Unit and the Leader of the Party's Group in the State Assembly. With his concurrence, the Board decided to refer the matter back to the State Parliamentary Board for further consideration. It called upon all members of the Orissa State Parliamentary Board to be present at a meeting that would be convened to review the matter and to make their recommendation. If only one name was recommended, the President, in consultation with Prof. Ranga and the General Secretary, was authorised to take a decision. If however more than one name was received, then the matter would have to be settled by the Central Parliamentary Board either by a Circular or at a duly convened meeting.

In this connection, Mr. R.N. Singh Deo recommended that the second preference votes of the Party should be cast for a nominee of the Jana Congress who were the Party's coalition partners in the State Government. This recommendation was approved.

Rajasthan

The Board had before it a letter dated 9th February from the President of the State Unit, Smt. Gayatri Devi, to the effect that as part of the understanding with the Jana Sangh in the State Legislature, our votes this time would be cast for a Jan Sangh nominee in return for their having supported our candidate in the biennial election to the Rajya Sabha held in 1968.

The arrangement was confirmed by the Board.

VI. Matters coming up before the Budget Session of Parliament

i. Autonomous Board for the Issue of Permits and Licences

The President, Mr. Mnsani, informed the Board that at Rajaji's request, he had tried to persuade certain other democratic Opposition Parties to move a non-official resolution during the last session of Parliament on the need to set up a quasi-judicial board to administer permits and licences. This non-official Resolution did not come up on the agenda of Parliament.

The Board decided that in the light of Rajaji's suggestions, the Party's Group in Parliament should be asked in cooperation with like-minded Parties to move a non-official Resolution in the Budget Session, to the effect :

- (1) that the administration of Permits and Licences in the mixed economy now in force should be entrusted with full autonomous authority to a non-Party Board of economists and statesmen of experience, to function independently of Government as a quasi-judicial body.
- (2) that the advice of this Body should be considered by the Government with respect to the conduct of all economic affairs and placed before Parliament and the general public.

ii. Statements by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mr. R. Khadilkar attacking the Judiciary

The Central Parliamentary Board took serious note of the derogatory statements made by the Prime Minister and Mr. R.K. Khadilkar recently in connection with the Supreme Court Judgement on Bank Nationalisation. The Board feared that in the coming weeks and months, there would be increasing attacks on the judiciary and therefore called upon the Party's M.P.s not only to draw the attention of the Lok Sabha to the statements of Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Khadilkar but also to be vigilant and resist all attempts that may be made in Parliament to denigrate the judiciary and destroy their independence.

VII. Preventive Detention Act in Orissa

The Board noted with regret that the Orissa Government had been compelled to promulgate an Ordinance to replace the Preventive Detention Act at the Centre which had lapsed. In this connection, it heard a report from Mr. Masani on the talks he had had with the Advocate-General of the Orissa Government and also his correspondence with Mr. Singh Deo. Mr. Singh Deo outlined the reasons which had compelled the State Government to promulgate the Ordinance.

The attention of the Board was drawn to the following facts :

- (i) that the Ordinance was similar to the Ordinance promulgated by the Andhra and Maharashtra Governments,
- (ii) that the Party had always opposed the concept of Preventive Detention and our spokesmen in Parliament had opposed the Act on the ground that the Party opposed depriving the citizen's fundamental right to constitutional remedies. At the same time, the Party had indicated its willingness to support reasonable measures to meet threats to the country's security and had demanded the banning of parties which had extra-territorial loyalties.

While noting the fact that the Orissa Ordinance was slightly different in as much as a passing reference had been made to the Naxalite menace, the Board felt that the Ordinance contained provisions which the Party had opposed on the floor of Parliament. In this connection, the President suggested drafting of an Act which would replace the Ordinance on the lines of the Unlawful Activities Bill. After some discussion Mr. Singh Deo agreed to consider any suitable draft that the C.P.B. might make available. Meanwhile, the Ordinance would have to be replaced by an Act by the middle of March.

VIII. By-election in Kerala

At this stage, two representatives of the Kerala Unit, viz., Mr. Johnson Vallikkappen and Dr. V.V. Anthony, were invited to join the discussion. Explaining why the Kerala Unit desired to set up a candidate in the by-election to the State Assembly from Kottarakara, where the present CPI Chief Minister was a candidate, they said that Kottarakara had been returning non-communist candidates to the Kerala Assembly. This time, the non-communist Parties being in a coalition with the Right Communists were not likely to set up a candidate. On the other hand, the Marxist Communists were supporting an Independent. Thus the electorate would be compelled to choose between two Communist candidates without any third candidate belonging to any democratic party. In fact, the Kerala Unit's purpose in publicising their desire to contest was to compel one of the democratic parties to put up their candidate. They gave the assurance, that if a third candidate belonging to any democratic party was set up, the Kerala Unit would withdraw from the contest.

While appreciating their reasoning, the Board agreed to keep the matter open and to consider any appropriate recommendation that might be made by the Kerala Unit. Such a recommendation, if any, should be received immediately after the date of notification.

IX. Report by Members of Parliament

It was decided that Members of Parliament should be asked to submit monthly reports of their work in the constituencies to the National Headquarters. Such reports would give an idea of the extent of attention being paid by our MPs to their electorate.

The meeting then terminated.