

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held
at the Vithalbhai Patel Bhavan, New Delhi on February 16, 1969 at 10 a.m.

Present:

Prof. N.G. Ranga

- in the Chair

Smt. Gayatri Devi of Jaipur

Mr. Lakshman Singh of Dungarpur

Mr. B.P. Singh

Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel

Dr. R.C. Cooper

Mr. H.M. Patel

Mr. N. Dandekar.

1. The Minutes of the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held in New Delhi on November 24, 1968 were confirmed.

2. Arising out of the Minutes

(a) The General Secretary reported that pursuant to the preference indicated at the last meeting of the Board in regard to the printing of the Party's symbol (on ballot papers) against a grey background, he had obtained from the Election Commission specimen ballot papers printed in that way. However, as he found the result to be totally unsatisfactory he had rejected it and decided to make no change in the present background of the symbol. The Board approved.

(b) The President reported that the Speaker of the Lok Sabha had not replied to his communication conveying the Central Parliamentary Board's concern in regard to unruly scenes in Parliament. Mr. Dahyabhai Patel who had similarly written to the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha on the subject also reported that there had been no reply. This was noted.

3. Reviewing the Party's performance in two by-elections

(a) The Board noted with satisfaction that, though unsuccessful, the Party's candidate in the Ankleshwar Assembly by-election in Gujarat, Mr. H.G. Patel, had retained the substantial support he had secured in the last General Elections.

(b) The Board while noting that in the Nagercoil Parliamentary by-election Dr. Mathias had polled almost the same number of votes as in the General Elections which he had contested as the Party's candidate, was of opinion that his contesting on this occasion as an Independent (on the "Scales" symbol) had resulted in the Party's losing an excellent opportunity to popularise the Party's symbol and policies. In this connection, the General Secretary reported on the circumstances leading to Dr. Mathias' contesting as an Independent despite his own advice conveyed telegraphically (after the failure of certain "united front" arrangements which alone could have necessitated his standing as an Independent) that Dr. Mathias should contest as a Party candidate on the Star symbol.

4. The Board reviewed the Party's performance in the Mid-term elections in the States of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

(1) The Board congratulated the following successful candidates :

Bihar	- Mr. Yashwant Kumar Choudhary	- Dalsingsarai
	Mr. Shatrumardhan Shahi	- Iauriya
	Mr. Tej Narain Yadav	- Baheri

Uttar Pradesh:

Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh	- Banwapur
Mr. Munshi Lal Chamar	- Karhal (R)
Mr. A.G. Hashmi	- Sadullanagar
Mr. Ram Charan	- Bah (R)
Mr. Ahmedullah Khan	- Thakurdwara

Punjab:	Sardar Basant Singh	- Dakala
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The Board noted that the election in the Lambi (R) Assembly Constituency where the Party had set up a candidate had been postponed to the first week of March due to the death of one of the contesting candidates. A tabulated statement of the Party's performance as compared to the General Elections of 1967 was circulated to members (attached).

(2) As the Board felt it would be premature at this stage to make a considered assessment of the circumstances leading to the disappointing performance of the Party's candidates, it was decided to undertake this at the next meeting of the National Executive (to be convened to discuss this and also general organisational matters) after obtaining full data, reports and comments from the concerned State Units of the Party.

(3) Meanwhile

(a) The Board decided that the elected legislators of the Party should in general support all efforts to establish stable Governments in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab provided that such governments did not include the SSP or the Communists. If invited to join in a coalition government, the Party's Groups should first obtain the approval of the Central Parliamentary Board before responding to such invitations.

(b) The Board presumed that Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh would be elected leader of the Swatantra M.L.As in Uttar Pradesh. And as regards Bihar, the Board advised that Mr. Yashwant Kumar Choudhary should be the leader of the Party's Group in the State Assembly in view of his continued loyalty to the Party through the years.

5. The General Secretary reported that in Haryana, one of the two Party M.L.As, Mr. Narain Singh, had defected and had subsequently sent in his letter of resignation from the Party. It was therefore proposed to expel him from the Party for gross indiscipline and disloyalty. In regard to the other M.L.A., Mr. Joginder Singh, the General Secretary said that the position was not clear and that there had been no communication from him. As a matter of fact even the State President Choudhary Hardwari Lal was in the dark about Mr. Joginder Singh's intentions.

The General Secretary also reported that Choudhary Hardwari Lal had won his Election Petition in the High Court.

6. The General Secretary reported on the discussions held with the Jan Sangh in December and January. He said that the initiative had been taken by the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra for the Swatantra Party and by the Rajmata of Gwalior for the Jan Sangh. After narrating the developments during the talks which ended in complete failure, the General Secretary stated that in view of inaccurate press reports and undesirable speculations concerning the talks, he issued a press statement on 4th January 1969 putting the whole matter objectively and in proper focus, viz.

- a. That the discussions were concerned primarily with evolving electoral understandings between the two Parties in connection with the then ensuing Mid-term Elections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh;
- b. That a further objective was to evolve, if possible, a working arrangement whereby the Parliamentary Groups of the two Parties could henceforth sit together as one combined Opposition Group in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha;
- c. That there was no question of any "merger" of the two Parties, whether within or outside Parliament; and
- d. That since the talks concerning electoral understandings were unsuccessful, all further discussion on other matters were discontinued because of the pre-occupation of all parties with the mid-term elections.

In this connection the General Secretary drew the attention of the Board to a letter from Mr. M.R. Masani dated 30th January 1969, recalling the past experience of negotiating with the Jan Sangh and the decision taken by the Party's National Executive in Cochin in January 1968 that apart from understandings on specific matters like electoral adjustments, mutual support in biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads, etc. the Swatantra Party should no longer continue its efforts to seek a closer relationship with the Jan Sangh.

The General Secretary then referred to certain statements concerning national integration made in a long press interview by the head of the R.S.S., Mr. Golwalkar, wherein he had urged the need for all religious minorities to accept Hinduism. He had also stressed that the division of Hindu Society into four major castes (varnas) was not by occupation or by their qualities but by birth, resulting from their Karma in their previous lives. This had naturally provoked the wrath of all right thinking persons, parties and groups. The General Secretary added that since the Jan Sangh was the political arm of the R.S.S., these views of Mr. Golwalkar were of great significance.

On a careful consideration of all aspects of the matter the Central Parliamentary Board reiterated the National Executive's decision (taken at Cochin in January 1968) not to undertake any further negotiations with the Jan Sangh except in regard to electoral adjustments and mutual support in elections to the Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads.

The Board also decided that in the light of past experience, the Party's Members of Parliament and Office bearers of the Party's Parliamentary Group should not involve themselves in any such negotiations without the prior approval of the Central Parliamentary Board; and they should also not issue any press statements concerning this subject.

The Board requested the General Secretary to circulate this decision also to State Units with a suggestion that they too might usefully follow the same line in their own States in regard to any negotiations at the State level.

7. The Business coming up before the Budget session of Parliament was then taken up for consideration.

(a) It was decided that the Party should oppose :

- a. the proposed Bill to replace the Bonus Ordinance
- b. the proposed Bill to replace the Customs Ordinance.

The Board reiterated its earlier decision that :

- i. the Monopolies Bill should be treated on merits; and
 - ii. the provisions in the Company Law Amendment Bill to abolish the Managing Agency system should be opposed while those relating to the abolition of contribution to Political parties by Joint Stock Companies should be supported.
- (b) In regard to the Motions of No-Confidence moved by the Communist Parties and the S.S.P., the Board decided that the Party should not stand up in support of the motion at the time of its admission and should also abstain when it was put to vote.
- (c) The Board considered Mr. C.C. Desai's request for permission to move a Bill to amend clause 334 of the Constitution seeking to extend the reservation of constituencies for Scheduled Castes and Tribes for a further period of fifteen years beyond its present date of expiry in January 1970. After considerable discussion, the Central Parliamentary Board decided to refer the matter to the National Executive and to the Party's Members of Parliament.

8. Arising out of the Supreme Court's decisions setting aside the election of Mr. Manubhai Amersey from the Banaskantha Parliamentary Constituency and of Mr. Kanti Prasad Yagnik from the Mehsana Assembly Constituency (both in Gujarat), Mr. H.M. Patel informed the Board that the Gujarat Executive of the Party had decided to recommend Mr. Manubhai Amersey if he desired to stand again as the Party's candidate; and that in regard to the Mehsana Assembly Constituency, the Gujarat Executive recommended that Mr. Kanti Prasad Yagnik be nominated if he wished to contest, but subject to ascertaining the wishes of the local party organisation in the Constituency.

The Board authorised the General Secretary to approve the above recommendations upon receipt of definite proposals from the State Unit.

9. The Board noted with regret that the Party's member Mr. Raghubir Singh of Bissau has resigned from the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly without obtaining the Party's permission to do so. The Board recommended to the National Executive that suitable disciplinary action be taken.

The meeting then terminated.