

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATES

SATURDAY, 22nd AUGUST, 1925

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OFFICIAL REPORT



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Saturday, 22nd August, 1925.

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber at Eleven of the Clock, and the President (the Honourable SIR ALEXANDER FREDERICK WHYTE, KT., K.C.S.I.) took the Chair.

MEMBERS SWORN :

Mr. Maurice Webb, M.L.A. (Bombay : Nominated Official) ; Mr. Ganendro Prosad Roy, M.L.A. (Offg. Director General of Posts and Telegraphs) ; Mr. Rama Shankar Bajpai, O.B.E., M.L.A. (Offg. Director of Public Information) ; Mr. Roland Graham Gordon, M.L.A. (Bombay : Nominated Official) ; Mr. Eyre Gordon, M.L.A. (Central Provinces : Nominated Official) ; Mr. Alexander Langley, C.I.E., M.L.A. (Punjab : Nominated Official) ; Diwan Bahadur Tiruvalangudi Vijayaraghavacharya Avargal, M.B.E., M.L.A. (Madras : Nominated Official) ; Mr. Vombatkere Panduranga Rao, M.L.A. (Madras : Nominated Official) ; Mr. Cyril Walter Gurner, M.L.A. (Bengal : Nominated Official) ; Mr. Charles Borthwick Chartres, M.L.A. (Associated Chambers of Commerce : Nominated Non-Official) ; Mr. Louis T. Maguire, M.L.A. (Nominated : Anglo-Indians) ; Syed Majid Baksh, M.L.A. (Burdwan and Presidency Divisions : Muhammadan Rural), and the Reverend Dr. Earle Monteith Macphail, C.I.E., C.B.E., D.D., M.L.A. (Madras : European).

DEATHS OF MR. C. R. DAS AND SIR SURENDRA NATH BANERJEA.

Pandit Motilal Nehru (Cities of the United Provinces : Non-Muhamadan Urban) : Permit me, Sir, before we proceed to the business for the day, to mention the great national and irreparable loss that the country has suffered since we dispersed in Delhi. The relentless hand of death has removed two great and towering personalities from the public life of India and plunged the whole country in the deepest sorrow. The first victim it claimed was Chittaranjan Das, the great founder and leader of the Swaraj Party. He was cut off in the prime of life, in the midst of a brilliant career of devoted service to the country. His great qualities of the head and the heart, his intense patriotism, his unbounded charity, his stupendous sacrifice, are well known and appreciated throughout the civilized world, and I make bold to say that you will find no instance in history of a more complete self-effacement in the service of the motherland. It was at a time when his natural gifts were rewarded by a phenomenal success in life that his great soul rose above the temptation of

[Pandit Motilal Nehru.]

personal gain. He spurned aside the fortune that was his and chose poverty to devote himself and his whole life to the service of the country. His patriotism, Sir, was not confined within narrow limits but was broad-based on his love for humanity. I will beg permission to lay before the House the high ideal which he put before himself in his own eloquent words. What he said in his last public utterance was this :

“Nationalism is merely a process in self-realization, self-development and self-fulfilment. It is not an end in itself. The growth and development of nationalism is necessary so that humanity may realise itself, develop itself and fulfil itself, and I beseech you, when you discuss terms of settlement, do not forget the larger claim of humanity in your pride of nationalism. For myself I have a clear vision as to what I seek. I seek federation of the States of India, each free to follow, as it must follow, the culture and traditions of its own people, each bound to each in the common service of all, a great federation within a greater federation, a federation of free nations whose freedom is the measure of service to man and whose unity is the hope of peace among the people of the earth.”

Such was the Prince among men, Deshabandhu, of his loving country, who is no more. Sir, closely associated as I was with him and his work, his loss is a great personal blow to me. The Swaraj Party feels the loss of their distinguished leader as they do the loss of a revered and beloved head of the family. India, in whose service he laid down his life, mourns his loss as one of her greatest sons.

The second great blow which has fallen in this interval is the death of Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, rightly known as the Father of Indian Nationalism. He belonged to that distinguished band of patriots who established the Indian National Congress from which all subsequent activities have grown. It was he who first roused the people from their lethargy and the educated classes to a realisation of their sense of duty to their country by his matchless oratory and his indefatigable work among the people. Sir, permit me to refer to a personal incident. I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to publicly acknowledge my debt of gratitude to him. When I was only a schoolboy it was he who first fired my imagination by his fervent oratory. In the later seventies he was touring the country educating public opinion to demand simultaneous examinations in India and England for the Indian Civil Service. I heard his great speech at Allahabad and so impressed was I with that speech that I followed him after that from town to town to hear and hear again his oration. In later years I had the privilege of working with him in the National Congress. In still later years I had the misfortune to differ from him on certain public questions, but whether I agreed with him or not I always had the same respect, the same admiration for his patriotism and his services to the country. Sir, I think I am voicing the feelings of all Members of the Swaraj Party when I say that we in common with the rest of India grieve for the loss of Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea to the country as the loss of a true and great patriot. I will ask Honourable Members of the House to request you to send a message of condolence and grief of this Assembly to the families of the two departed great men and to express our sympathy with them in their great bereavement.

Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer (Madras : Nominated Non-Official) : Sir, with your permission I would like to associate myself with the eloquent tribute which has been paid this morning to the memory of two great men

whom this country has lost. I did not have the privilege of meeting Mr. C. R. Das during his lifetime, but though he came into political life comparatively late, when he did enter public life he threw himself into it with unbounded fervour and made extraordinary sacrifices for the interests of the country. When he renounced his practice at the Bar he enjoyed a large income which few would have had the inclination to give up. By his spirit of self-sacrifice and by his devotion to the country he obtained a sanctity in the popular mind of Bengal, and he has set a shining example of patriotism to his country. To me and perhaps to many others it is a matter of regret that his career was cut short just at a time when his views were undergoing a change in the direction of co-operation.

The hand of death has been busy among the great men of Bengal and the loss that Bengal has sustained is irreparable. In Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea not only Bengal but India has lost one of the greatest figures in the political history of this country. For fourteen years of his public life, which covered the entire period of the political awakening of India, he has been most active. He was endowed with marvellous gifts and he dedicated his life to the service of the country. His long and early struggles, his sufferings and the sacrifices he made for his country, together with his matchless eloquence made him the ideal of the people of this country for many, many years. He had an unquenchable optimism and an unstriving faith in constitutional agitation. With his great tenacity of purpose his strenuous work and his high aspirations he set an example of burning patriotism and unremitting effort to the cause of India. He was one of those great men who, after the institution of the Indian National Congress, watched it and guided its course with wisdom over a period of over 30 years. His loss is one which this country can ill afford. He died full of years and full of honours, and though it was in the natural course of things, it must be a source of regret to all, and India is vastly poorer by his death. In him we have lost a leader, a patriot, a politician and a friend. The story of his life, which he was fortunate to write, in which he reviews the crowded events of his long life, must be a source of inspiration to one and all in this country.

The Honourable Sir Alexander Muddiman (Home Member) : Sir, it is not fitting that I should remain silent on an occasion like this, particularly as the two personages to whom such feeling reference has been made from other parts of the House, belonged to the Province which I regard as my Indian home. It is a curious circumstance that the hand of death should have fallen on the two protagonists of the Bengal situation, and that within so short a space of time so remarkable actors on that stage as Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea and Mr. C. R. Das should have passed away. On an occasion like this it is not for me, nor do I propose to say aught regarding the public careers of those we have lost. Death silences the voice of criticism ; it awakens the voice of regret. Two personalities who represented entirely different schools of thought have been taken from us and the world is the poorer. They have gone, and Bengal and India have lost leaders of men. As to their differences, I am one of those who believe :

“ They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate :
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.”

[Sir Alexander Muddiman.]

And there, Sir, I should have left the matter. But I feel I have a duty of friendship to discharge, and I cannot let the death of Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea pass without a reference of a more personal character. In his death I deplore the loss of a personal friend, a man whom I had known for more than twenty years, for whom I had a great admiration and a great liking. I have been in touch for many years with this Central Legislature of yours and had therefore been naturally brought into close relationship with my deceased friend. I had hoped we might once more have seen him, if not in this Assembly, at any rate in the other Chamber of the Legislature, and might have heard that magnificent voice rolling out his stately and well-framed periods, which seemed to date from an era which is lost to us now. He had indeed something of the older world ; a touch of Victorian grandeur lingered around him, and I deplore, as I am sure the House must deplore, the break of a tradition, the termination of a link with the past. Sir, I associate myself with the proposal that has been made to you.

Mr. M. A. Jinnah (Bombay City : Muhammadan Urban) : Sir, I associate myself with the feelings of sorrow which this House has expressed at the death of two of the greatest sons of India. I have not very much to add to what the previous speakers have already said, but I am sure that my Party entirely associates itself with the profound expression of sorrow and grief at the death of these two great patriots. Sir, I might say that I learnt my first lessons in politics at the feet of Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea. I was associated with him as one of his followers and I looked up to him as a leader. He commanded the utmost respect of a large body of people in this country and of my humble self. Sir, as far as Mr. Das is concerned, he was a personal friend of mine. I have enjoyed his hospitality, and he was one with whom I worked for many years. I feel that in the loss of these two great men, Bengal, nay India, has suffered an irreparable loss. And on this occasion I should like to say this, that these were leaders in this country for whom the Muhammadans had the greatest respect, and they commanded the confidence of the Mussalmans as much as any Mussalman leader. Sir, the only lesson I feel that we might draw from the careers of these two great men is this, that in unity lies salvation ; and I hope that the two schools of thought that they represented, which took them away on different roads, no doubt with the best of intentions, according to their convictions and honest convictions to walk on different roads, will now learn a lesson and walk on one road.

Sir Darcy Lindsay (Bengal : European) : Sir, I desire to associate myself and my European colleagues with this motion. I regret that I had not the honour of a personal acquaintance with Mr. C. R. Das, but I knew of him as a brilliant lawyer and a great patriot who gave his life to the country he loved so well. We have perhaps not always seen eye to eye as to procedure, but our goal, I venture to think, was one and the same, and it is our sincere regret that he has been cut off in the prime of life before realising his heart's best desire. Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea I can claim as a friend of many years' standing. He is best known as the Grand Old Man of Bengal, a fighter of many battles on behalf of his Province and against considerable odds. He was always a generous foe, if I may use the term, to those who crossed his path, and a real good friend to others, a man of great determination, a gifted orator who held his audience thrall by his wonderful power

of speech, at one time gentle as the cooing of the dove, to be raised to the fierce roar of the tiger when he wanted to drive home his point. To the memory of both these gallant sons of Bengal we join in paying homage. The loss to India as a whole and to Bengal in particular is indeed great.

Mr. President : Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly : The political life of a nation requires for its service every variety of human talent. The two commanding personalities whose passing we to-day regret were endowed by Providence with qualities and talents each very different from the other ; but there was one characteristic in the careers of these two Indian leaders which brings their lives together in a satisfying unity. Different as was their outlook upon public affairs, and varying as were the talents which they possessed, they both of them devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the service of their country. It is not for me to assess the extent of the loss which the province of Bengal and the whole of India have suffered by the death of these two acknowledged leaders ; but the speeches made here to-day are sufficient indication to us and to all outside these walls that the place that they have now left will be indeed difficult to fill. I accept with alacrity the suggestion made by my Honourable friend Pandit Motilal Nehru that I should convey to the relatives of these two distinguished leaders the message which you all desire.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT.

Mr. President : The Assembly will now proceed to elect a President. I have to announce that under sub-rule (3) of Rule 5 of the Indian Legislative Rules I have received six nomination papers duly filled on behalf of Mr. Vithalbhai Javerbhai Patel, proposed by Pandit Motilal Nehru, Khan Bahadur Sarfaraz Hussain Khan, Mr. T. C. Goswami, Mr. D. V. Belvi, Mr. R. K. Shanmukham Chetty and Mr. N. C. Kelkar, and seconded, respectively, by Mr. Ismail Khan, Mr. A. Rangaswami Iyengar, Mr. M. K. Acharya, Mr. M. S. Aney, Seth Govind Das and Mr. M. V. Abhyankar.

Four further nomination papers have been received on behalf of Diwan Bahadur Tiruvenkata Rangachariar. His proposers are Sir Darcy Lindsay, Mr. Kamini Kumar Chanda, Prince Akram Hussain Bahadur and Khan Bahadur Saiyid Muhammad Ismail ; his seconders are Colonel J. D. Crawford, Mr. K. Rama Aiyangar, Colonel Sir Henry Stanyon and Mr. Ahmad Ali Khan.

The election will proceed by ballot and in order that it may proceed in due order I propose to call each individual Member to the table singly. The Member succeeding him will not come to the table until the first Member has not only marked his paper but placed it in the ballot box. The most convenient place to mark the paper is the chair immediately below me usually occupied by Mr. Secretary.

(The ballot was then taken.)

Mr. President : I hope Honourable Members desiring to vote have recorded their votes.

Mr. Secretary will bring the ballot box to my table.

(The votes were then scrutinised and counted by Mr. President.)

Mr. President : Gentlemen, I regret that the process has taken some little time, because there were some doubtful votes.

I have to declare that Mr. Patel has secured 58 votes and Mr. Rangachariar 56. (Loud applause.) All that is necessary now to complete the election of the President is to secure the assent of His Excellency which will be duly and immediately sought.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, the 24th August, 1925.