

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)
OFFICIAL REPORT

Vol. VI. First Day of the Fourth Session of First Parliament of India No. 1

I

HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Monday, 3rd August, 1953

*The House met at a Quarter Past Eight
of the Clock.*

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(No Questions: Part I not published)

MEMBER SWORN

Shri Y. Gadilingana Gowd (Kurnool).

**DEATHS OF DR. S. P. MOOKERJEE,
PANDIT L. K. MAITRA AND SHRI
A. H. GHUZZAVI**

The Prime Minister and Leader of the House (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Before the House commences its work in this session, I beg your leave, Sir, to refer to the passing away of two Members of the present House and one of the previous Parliament. All Members of the House know of these sad events.

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who was one of the leading figures of this House and a Leader of the Opposition, and who played a very important part in the work of this House for the last few years, passed away in peculiarly unfortunate cir-

cumstances, in detention. In any event his passing away would have been sad and a great blow to this House and the country, but in the peculiar circumstances in which this took place, naturally this added to our sorrow.

The other Member,—an old Member, one of the oldest, perhaps,—Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra, is also no more and he is missed by a very large number of his friends here.

A third Member of the previous House passed away, Mr. Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, and I should like to bring his name also to your notice, on this occasion.

Now, it is not necessary for me to say much about these old colleagues of ours with whom we have worked together and with whom we have differed also. But I would say, whether we worked together or differed, we had a certain regard for each other and tried to carry out our work with that respect which is due to people even when they differ.

It had been my privilege to work with Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee in Government for a number of years and then, later when he left Government, in opposition. When he was in opposition I naturally came in contact with him a good many times. We differed sometimes very deeply on many issues and we agreed too on many issues and it is a matter of peculiar regret and grief to me that in the last days of his life an occasion arose on which there was very

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[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

considerable difference between him and me. However, this is not the time to think of differences, but rather of the many agreements and of the fact that we are deprived of the personality who had played such a notable and great part in the country, and who was after all fairly young and who had a large and good stretch of years before him. But that was not to be.

Many hon. Members have come to me and suggested that this House should rise for the day in token of respect. Well, naturally every Member present, I have no doubt, would agree with that proposition and the Government appreciate that sentiment. The only difficulty that the Government had in considering such a proposal was that it was a precedent which is against our normal convention. But I recognise that in such a matter the wishes of the House are more important than conventions and precedents. In suggesting to you, Sir, and to the House—if it so wishes—to adjourn the business of the House on this occasion, after what you will be pleased to say, may I add, as a guidance for future occasions, that whatever happens in future this old convention should not be broken on any future occasion. Otherwise, difficulties will arise. Naturally, a firm convention should be firmly kept in future, regardless of personalities, but that need not apply for the present, and on the present occasion, I would respectfully suggest to you and to the House that after the preliminary remarks such as you may be pleased to make, we should rise and we should adjourn for the rest of the day in token of respect for the members who have passed away.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I fully associate myself with all the sentiments so well expressed by the hon. the Leader of the House. It is a very sad event that occurred during the interval after the closing of the last session and the commencement of the present session.

Whatever might be the differences of opinion on political matters, one cannot deny the fact that Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was a big man. Quite early in life he became the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University. Thereafter he became Member of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1929 and Member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly from 1937-47. He was the Finance Minister of the Government of Bengal in 1941-42. After Independence, as observed by the hon. the Leader of the House, he was taken into the Cabinet here and as Minister in charge of Industries he did his work ably; though at last on an issue he differed and resigned.

So far as this House is concerned, he was a very able parliamentarian. He always fought without bitterness; and very often when he was defeated he took the defeat without rancour. He had always a smile on his lips. Certainly he attracted the attention of all the members of the House, to whichever party they might belong. In his demise the country as a whole has lost one of our good politicians and able statesmen. As the hon. the Leader of the House observed, he passed away quite young, though he appeared to be a little old. I am sure the hon. Members of the House will agree with me in the expression of all these sentiments and bemoan his loss and will advise me to send our condolences to his aged mother and the members of the bereaved family.

It is unfortunate that we should lose another Member of this Parliament, Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra who was a Member of this House and of the previous Assembly since 1935, continuously. He came in the old Assembly and as a veteran fought many a battle against the government of the day. Though he fought boldly and expressed his opinion frankly I always found him to have no bitterness in his heart against his so-called opponents. I believe he had none. It is sad that we should have lost him. It is true he had been ill for some time, but many a man that

is ill lives for a long time. He could have also been spared to us.

I should also like to refer to the death of Shri Abdul Halim Ghuznavi. I had the opportunity to work with him here, though on opposite sides. He was a Member of the old Central Assembly from 1926 to 1946 and was also a Member of the Provisional Parliament. He died at the ripe age of seventy-seven years in East Bengal. We also mourn his loss.

I have also got a message from the hon. Speaker which I shall read out. It runs:

"I am writing this specially to associate myself with the deep sense of sorrow and loss we all feel at the very sad and unexpected demise of our friend Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. He was one of our great patriots and his services to the national cause have been equally great. The situation in which he passed away is tragic. It was God's will and who could help otherwise?

I knew him personally first when he joined the first national Cabinet in 1947. "His ability, sincerity, the masterly manner of handling his subject, his eloquence and above all his patriotism and love for his countrymen entitled him to our respect. I feel his loss as that of a brother and friend."

Please convey to his family my condolences in the sad bereavement, which is shared by all of us."

As a mark of respect I would request Members of the House to stand in silence for a minute.

I believe it is the general desire of the House that the House should stand adjourned and not do any other business as a mark of respect for the demise of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee.

The House then adjourned till a Quarter Past Eight of the Clock on Tuesday, the 4th August, 1953.