

A NEW PARTY — Bharatiya Kranti Dal — came into existence on Nov. 10 at Indore. It reminds one of nothing so much as the KMPP of sixteen years ago. For, like the KMPP, it is essentially a party of ex-Congressmen. The party has nothing in common with a dislike of the Congress and a distrust of other parties. Its allegiance to democratic socialism and Gandhian ideals is too general to mean anything much to anybody. By a strange coincidence, Shri Mahamaya Babu, President of BKD, was Chairman of the Reception Committee for the KMPP Convention in Patna!

The Background

In December 1966 a few prominent ex-Congress leaders met in Delhi and decided to form an all-India organization. After the elections when Congress lost majority in many states a 3-day convention was held at Patna in May, 1967, when Shri V.K. Krishna Menon and Acharya Kripalani were also present. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha was elected president of the proposed party. In Aug. 1967 a six-man sub-committee was formed in Delhi and Prof. Mumukshu Kabir was elected convener. On Oct. 19-20 the committee finalised the draft constitution at Lucknow. The Indore Convention was the formalisation and finalisation of the move to form the new party.

More than 1200 delegates attended the Convention. But more than half of them were from West Bengal, Bihar, U.P., MP and Rajasthan were fairly well represented. But other States' representation was negligible. Madras and Kerala did not send a single delegate. The projected non-Congress Chief Ministers conference was abandoned because only three of them-- Ajoy Mukherji, Mahamaya Babu and Charan Singh-- were present.

The over-representation of West Bengal in the Convention made it inevitable for the crisis in that State to overshadow everything else. The entire four-day session was a virtual competition by the Ajoy and Kabir groups for endorsement of BKD support.

IT WAS AJAY VS. KABIR THROUGHOUT

The convention started off with a controversy over the name of the new organisation. In the Steering Committee 12 were for Bharatiya Kranti Dal, seven against it and four including Kabir and Mahatab-neutral.

On the very first day President Mahamaya Babu snubbed Kabir by declaring that BKD could never think of coming to terms with the Congress. That put out Kabir. And he sat glum-faced for the rest of the time. Kabir wanted to have a show-down with Ajoy Babu. When, however, a fresh contingent of 100 pro-Ajoy delegates arrived from Calcutta, he gave up the attempt.

When delegates demanded to know whether Prof. Kabir had a secret understanding with Atulya Ghosh to topple the U.F. Government and be rewarded with a seat in the Union Cabinet, Mahamaya Prasad got up to say: "How can there be any understanding between the BKD and the Congress which has stained its hands by evil deeds?" He added amidst cheers that in no circumstances

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background
Kripalani

could there be a compromise with the Congress. He described the differences between Kabir and Ajoy Mukherjee as those between husband and wife. (He did not clarify who was the husband and who ~~was~~ the wife). He then asked both Kabir and Mukherjee to come to his side and held the two in a close embrace while the delegates broke into wild cheers. But the embrace notwithstanding, the differences remained.

CHARAN SINGH IMPRESSES

However, the real hero of the Convention was Shri Charan Singh. His exposition of the aims and objects of the new party was superb. Politicians, he said, were ~~the~~ responsible for the present plight of the country. It remained to be seen, he said, whether the tribe of politicians could deliver the goods.

An overwhelming number of delegates wanted Shri Charan Singh to be the new President. The Kabir group was very particular that Mahamaya Babu should not be President. But Shri Charan Singh refused to get involved in this controversy. He himself proposed the name of Mahamaya Babu, who was unanimously elected.

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