

LOK SABHA DEBATES

(Part II—Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

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LOK SABHA

Wednesday, 8th August, 1956

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(See part I)

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DEATH OF DR. H. C. MUKERJEE

Mr. Speaker: We were all deeply moved and full of sorrow to hear last evening of the very sad demise of Dr. H. C. Mukerjee, Governor of West Bengal. He was not in good health for some time, but no one knew that the end was so near, and he died very suddenly.

Apart from the fact that he occupied a high position in public life at the time of his death, he was held in high esteem by all who knew him and the people at large. He was a very popular Governor. He started his life in the Calcutta University and made his mark there as a Professor of high eminence. He had a life-long interest in educational institutions. He was also associated with the Legislature a long time ago and was a member of the Bengal Assembly in the thirties. He lived a simple life devoted to public causes, and we all know that a great part of his private fortune and also his salary as a public servant went to public causes and charitable institutions. He sponsored many such proposals and gave them his whole-hearted support. In that way, he came into contact with many public institutions and was res-

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pensible for their care and progress. This devotion to public causes not only enriched and ennobled his life, but exerted a wholesome and healthy influence on all who came in contact with him.

He was also a Member of the Constituent Assembly of India and helped in the framing of the Constitution and held the high office of the Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly.

We all deeply mourn his loss and I am sure the House will wish me to convey to the members of his family our deep sorrow at the passing away of a great and noble son of India.

The Prime Minister, and the Minister of External Affairs and Finance (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I fully associate myself,—and I feel sure every Member of this House will,—with the tribute you paid to Dr. Mukerjee. He was some years ago a colleague of ours in the Constituent Assembly and whom many of us knew—not only knew but for whom we had a great deal of affection.

I am not referring to him as a Governor, although he has been a successful and a very popular Governor of West Bengal. But, whether he was Governor or the Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly, he never lost his character as a simple citizen of India. A man of scholarship, a man of learning and a man of deep humility and a man whom I have never known to speak a harsh word or to lose his temper. Inevitably he was liked. People who have not come in contact with him, perhaps, hardly knew of him because I have not seen a more unostentatious person than Dr. Mukerjee. If I may say so, he lived

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

unostentatiously and quietly and he died quietly and unostentatiously, without any fuss or bother.

We remember him not only as a former Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly, but, as a matter of fact, as one who actually presided over the Constituent Assembly for many months when the President of the Assembly was ill. In fact, some of the most difficult parts of our Constitution were framed when Dr. Mookerjee presided over the Assembly. He was a great public servant, a great man and, if I may say so, a fine example of a great Christian. So, we honour him for all this.

It is not usual for us, according to the conventions that we have ourselves framed for the House, to adjourn except under very special circumstances. I would not suggest that this House be adjourned because a Governor of a State has unfortunately died—not that we do not respect or honour our Governors, but that is not the convention we have laid down. But a number of Members of this House as well as, I am told, of the other House approached us and felt that Dr. Mookerjee occupied rather a special position because of his Acting Presidency of the Constituent Assembly and because of other reasons and not merely because he was a Governor. And, they were anxious that this House might show this special and unusual consideration because of those factors to this great son of India.

As it is the view of some Members of this House, I felt that it would not be right or proper for any one of us to come in the way of those wishes which we honour. But I wish to make it clear—so as not to create a precedent in this matter—that this is not because a Governor of a State died but because Dr. Mookerjee played a public part of eminence in other respects. I would, therefore, subject to your wishes and to the wishes of the House, suggest that the

House might adjourn for the rest of the day.

There is one slight difficulty that I should like to put before the House. I had mentioned that I would like to make a statement on the Suez Canal issue today. Now, I should not like to postpone making that statement because we have informed people in other capitals that the statement is going to be made at a certain time here today. Therefore, Sir, if you so allow me, after we have, according to your direction, done honour to Dr. Mookerjee's memory by standing for a minute or two, I may read that statement on the Suez Canal issue and later the House might adjourn for the day.

Mr. Speaker: In honour of the memory of the deceased, I would request hon. Members to stand in silence for a couple of minutes.

The Members stood in silence for two minutes.

STATEMENT RE. SUEZ CANAL ISSUE

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Finance (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): On the 26th of July, President Nasser announced in a speech at Alexandria that the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company had been effected. The control of the offices of the company at Port Said, Ismailia, Suez and Cairo was taken over by the Egyptian Government following the promulgation of the nationalisation law by Presidential decree.

The assets and obligations of the company were taken over by the State. The law provides for compensation to shareholders at the market value of shares as on the day preceding nationalisation. Such compensation is to be paid after the State has taken delivery of all the assets and properties of the company.