CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST CONGRESS MINISTRY OF MADRAS STATE

P.S. Kumarasamy Raja, the first Congress Chief Minister of Madras State after the adoption of Republican constitution stated that the change of the Premier and members of the Cabinet would not mean a change in the policies of the Government and that his government would follow the same principles of the former Ministry. ¹ This announcement was welcomed by the leaders of the Dravidar Kazhagam and by the non-Brahmins, in general.²

In the cabinet that was formed Kumarasamy Raja included Dr. Rajan, the only Brahmin candidate. Prakasam after writing in vain to Patel to secure the formation of a broad-based Ministry, met Kumarasamy Raja. Prakasam complained that Subbaroyon was not consulted in the formation of the Ministry. Prakasam also presented a memorandum in which he had reiterated that the Ministry should be reconstituted or expanded in such a way as to give representation to his group.³

¹ Dravidanadu, 10 April, 1949

² Ibid., 3 April, 1949.

³ The Hindu, 4 May, 1949.
Kumarasamy Raja in a Press report made it clear that he did not propose to accept Prakasam's suggestions for the simple reason of 'putting an end to group politics, in TNCC. He further stated,

"In the selection of my Cabinet colleagues, I can be generous enough not to make any distinction between members of the Party who voted for me and those who voted against me in the leadership election, but I cannot certainly on principle recognise the existence of any group in the Party. That will neither be proper nor possible because once I do that more groups will come into being and clamour for similar recognition. I reiterate my considered view that in the interests of the sound working of the Party no group should exist, at any rate their existence should not be encouraged."  

After their failure to achieve their goal, Prakasam's group resorted to an agitation against the Madras Ministry and individual Ministers. Subbaroyan issued a statement that an inquiry could be initiated into the charges levelled against some of the Madras Ministers by certain MLAs.
The Andhra Provincial Congress Working Committee which met on 11 May 1949 under the chairmanship of Ranga passed a resolution requesting the President of the AICC to refer the charges against the Ministers to a Judicial Tribunal. By another resolution the Committee demanded that the whole Ministry should be dissolved and that the Leader should again form a new Ministry with capable persons and by giving suitable representation to all interests. The Committee requested the Congress Parliamentary Board to take up the matter as the Premier was reluctant to reconstitute the Ministry as suggested by Prakasam.

As a rejoinder to the APCC resolutions the TNCC Working Committee, which met on May 16, 1949, passed a counter resolution criticising the attitude of Prakasam.

"This committee deplores the agitation carried on in the public by certain Congress Committees and Congress members against the Madras Ministry and individual Ministers. This committee requests the Congress President to go into the whole

7 The Hindu, 11 May, 1949.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 17 May, 1948.
question of complaints against the Ministers in the former two Ministries since 1946 and dispose the matter finally and also to direct Congress Organisations and Congress Members to desist from such public agitations which is not conducive to the interests of Congress work or to the interests of the organisation itself.¹⁰

On the persistent demand for an enquiry the Congress President deputed Shankar Rao Deo, the General Secretary, to make a preliminary enquiry and submit a report whether there was a prima-facie case to institute a judicial enquiry.¹¹ Rajaji, by now functioning as Governor-General of India, wrote to Patel criticising the above decision of the Congress Parliamentary Board.

"Do you approve all this? If you do not, then you should prevent this kind of thing. How can any Government command respect and how can Ministers resist the encroachments of Congress Committee Members in position here and there if defeated candidates for Premierships and Ministerships can bring about such enquiries and fill up newspaper columns this way?"¹²

¹⁰ The Hindu, 17 May, 1948.

¹¹ G. Rudrayya Chowdari, op. cit., p.181.

this above letter of Rajaji, Patel replied:

"As far as I know this is an old decision of the Working Committee. The question of approving it or not does not arise. You can hardly hold me responsible for things that are happening in the Committee under the new Presidentship."\(^{13}\)

Thus the decision of the Congress Working Committee created reactions in various circles. In the Madras Provincial Assembly, when the news of Shankarrao's visit was known, Raja Khan, a Muslim League member, gave an adjournment motion but it was allowed by the Speaker.\(^{14}\)

Before the departure of Mr. Deo to Madras, the press office received a counter complaint by Raghavayya, M.L.A., against Prakasam's Ministry. Congress Secretary proposed to enquire into both complaints.\(^{15}\) The charge was that Prakasam granted

\(^{13}\) Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol.IX, p.88.

\(^{14}\) Madras Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol.XX., The Hindu, 15 June 1949. "I hereby give notice intention to move for the adjournment of the issue of the Assembly to discuss a definite matter of public importance involving the breach of privilege of the House, to witness the investigation of cases against six ministers of the present Ministry responsible to this House by a private motion" instead of by a committee of Judges designated by the House generally on a resolution moved by the Leader of the House".

\(^{15}\) G. Rudrayya Chowdari, \textit{op cit.}, p.182.
a forest contract to one Mr. Eswarapragada Jagannadham, who, it was alleged, issued a cheque on the Andhra Bank for Rs.19,000 in the name of Prakasam. That was the first item of charge against him. Prakasam felt that these complaints were designed to be a tactical move to neutralise the charges against the Ministers. He even questioned the impartiality of Mr. Deo in the whole matter. On what authority could Deo take up the enquiry on the counter-charges, Prakasam argued especially when these charges were not referred to him officially either by the Working Committee or by the Congress President.¹⁶

Prakasam submitted the address of Jagannadham and requested Deo to send for him. He also requested Deo to get the accounts of the Andhra Bank and verify whether a cheque was ever issued by the said person and if it was ever encashed by any one. Prakasam also promised to allow his Ministerial colleagues to be present and cross-examine him during the enquiry. Deo neither sent for Jagannadham nor verified the records of the Andhra Bank. The anti-climax was that the complainant N.V. Ragavayya himself was not present in

¹⁶ G. Rudrayya Chowdari, op. cit., p.182.
Madras during the enquiry. Apparently Deo gave up the idea of making any enquiry into the charges against Prakasam.\textsuperscript{17}

Deo who arrived at Madras characterised the enquiry to be conducted by him as departmental and deprecated Congressmen making allegations against other Congressmen in public.\textsuperscript{18} He stayed in Madras for a week from 13 to 18 June 1949 and conducted his enquiry. He was given access to Government files. The enquiry was given Press coverage.\textsuperscript{19} This resulted in raising an Adjournment Motion in the Assembly by one Abdul Salem Sahib, an Opposition member. B. Gopal Reddy replied that in the discussions with Shankarrao the files only served as an aid in discussions and that the files were never actually placed before him for perusal.\textsuperscript{20} The Government had to yield to the pressure of the Opposition for a half-an-hour debate over this

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Madras Legislative Assembly Debates}, Vol.VII, pp.827-829.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Hindu}, 15 June, 1944.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Madras Legislative Assembly Debates}, Vol.XX, p.203.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
issue. Though the charges against Ministers appeared to be a party affair, it began to attract the attention of the Opposition and people later, thus weakening the credibility of the Congress.

Deo completed his enquiry and submitted the report. Not satisfied with Deo’s enquiry, Prakasam now demanded a judicial enquiry into the matter. A deputation headed by Prakasam waited on the Working Committee on 18 July, 1949. Patel wanted Prakasam to give a list of charges. The CWC passed an interim order stating that they were inclined to have a committee for going into the charges.

Then the CWC expressed the view that further enquiries into certain matters connected with the charges were necessary. But before the enquiry was finally ordered the charges and counter charges were to be referred to Kumarasamy Raja, the Premier who would investigate into the charges and in doing so would give full opportunity to complainants to draw his attention to any matter in relation to these charges. The


22 MLAD, Vol.VII., p.829.
Premier would then inform the complainant. In the event of there being a difference of opinion between him and the complainant as to the facts those differences would be noted.23

It was also decided, that in case the two Madras leaders Kumarasamy Raja and Prakasam could not come to a common conclusion the matter should be referred to a Central Committee, consisting of Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad.24 Prakasam and Kumarasamy Raja started their work. But from the start they differed with each other on the issues to be left out of the enquiry.25 Kumarasamy Raja on his own responsibility, decided not to proceed with certain charges, in which Kala Venkata Rao was involved. Finally, the two leaders found themselves at loggerheads.

Consequently, the CWC appointed a three member sub-committee consisting of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sardar Vallabhai Patel to go into

23 The Hindu, 30 July, 1949.


25 Ibid.
the note prepared by the Madras Premier after investigating the charges levelled against some of the Ministers. The report prepared by Rajendra Prasad, and countersigned by Nehru and Patel stated that mere suspicion of circumstances was not enough in as much as it had not made out prima facie evidence for holding a judicial enquiry.


27 Letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to Vallabhai Patel dated 5 February, 1950; Jawaharlal Nehru Correspondence, NMML.

Rajendra Prasad stated in his report:

"All the charges have been carefully looked into. The statement of the Premier, Shri Prakasam, the Minister concerned and the final report of the Premier have been considered in detail. The impression left on one's mind after considering all the charges in the form in which they are made. A close scrutiny of the facts and circumstance relating to them does not made out a case for further investigation. In some cases there is no prima facie evidence in support of any charge and a mere statement of suspicion cannot be considered sufficient for holding a formal enquiry. There is however one thing which should be noted. The action of Minister should not only be in strict accordance with rules and procedure laid down for dealing with particular matter which come up before them but they should do nothing which might leave from any reasonable person to entertain any reasonable suspicion. The matter should be dropped and the complaints dropped".
Thus the much-publicised charges against the Madras Ministry fell flat when the three member sub-committee appointed by the CWC recommended the dropping of the matter. Prakasam complained that the sub-committee drafted the report without calling for any evidence but recommended dropping of the charges on the ground that there was no evidence. He felt that great harm had been done to the cause of truth and justice by the suppression of the charges. 28

Prakasam along with some of his friends requested the Speaker of the Madras Legislative Assembly to arrange for their seats in the Opposition benches. 29 He also gave an adjournment motion to postpone the Budget. The Speaker expressed his inability to permit the motion as the Budget dates were fixed by the Governor. Prakasam then withdrew the motion. He met the Speaker again and gave him another 'adjournment motion' to discuss some charges against the Ministers to which the Speaker replied that charges


against the Ministers could not be brought under a motion for the adjournment of the House. Paying heed Prakasam withdrew this motion, as well. Then once again he gave a motion for the appointment of a Tribunal to enquire into the conduct of certain Ministers. His lengthy resolution read as follows:

"That a Select Committee of the House consisting of five members of the Assembly (State/Parliament) be appointed to investigate into the charges against the Ministers" -

I Sri B. Gopala Reddy, Finance Minister:

i) For granting 10 lakhs state aid loan to Sudarsan oil Mills Limited.

ii) For granting 10 lakhs state aid loan to Royalaseema Mills Limited, Adoni

iii) For granting 1 lakh state aid loan to Mohan Industries Limited, Tenali.

iv) For granting 1.25 lakhs state aid loan to Radhakrishna oil Mills, Panruti.

v) Purchase of Italian Buses and paying money in lakhs towards the business.

II. Minister of Industries, Sri Sitarama Reddy and Sri M. Baktavathsalam, Minister for Public Works.

i. Both for granting permits to steel and Iron to

(a) Sri Ramnath Goenka ()
(b) Sri M. Chitti and others () Sri Sitarama Reddy only
(c) Sri M. Venkataraju ()
III. **Sri M. Bakthavatsalam and Sri V. Kurmayya**

Grant of permit of cement to Mrs. Kurmayya and Mr. Kurmayya and others and father-in-law of Hon. Sri. Sitarama Reddy.

IV. **Sri H. Sitarama Reddy—Minister for Industries**

(a) Grant of bus routes to Sri O.V. Alagesan, Brother-in-law of Sri M. Bakthavatsalam.

(b) Grant of bus routes to Sri M. Somappa.

V. **Minister for Agriculture—Sri K. Madhava Menon**

Grant of manure (Groundnut cake) worth Rs.40,000 to Sri Settipalli Appaiah, a favourite of V. Kurmayya for sale taking it away from Agriculture Department and punishing an officer for carrying out the Premier’s orders cancelling the pursuit.

VI. **Minister for Food—Sri T.S.S. Rajan and Sri K. Chandramouli—Minister for Co-operation**

For suppressing Producer-cum Consumer co-operative Societies.

VII. **Minister for Local Administration and Co-operation—Sri K. Chandramouli**

(a) Abuse of executive power by the suppression of unfriendly municipalities or panchayats in Tenali and Attilli.

(b) Stopping of annual auction of the right to collect market fees etc., in Guntur Municipal Market against law and continuing it in favour of the existing lessee in order to help the supporters of his group.

(c) Removal of Chairman, Todpatri Municipality.

(d) Interference in Vijayawada Municipal Market.
VIII. Minister for Rent Control – Sri H. Sitrama Reddy

(a) Exemption of Bosotto Hotel Building belonging to Sri Ramnath Goenka from the operation of Rent control Act.

(b) Passing of validating legislation to circumvent the decision of the High Court which set aside H. Sitarama Reddi’s order granting bus permit to his old partner friend M. Somappa.

IX. Health Minister Sri A.B. Shetty

Misuse of radium needles from the Government X-Ray Institute by Dr. Rai, Brother-in-Law of Sri Shetty, and report the same to this House as expeditiously as possible and that the committee have power to send for persons, papers and record the evidence on both the sides."

Prakasam however was told that there was no Act in this country providing for it. But Prakasam would not budge and handed over the Speaker yet another motion requesting the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate into the charges against ministers.  

Prakasam’s above plea for the constitution of Select Committee consisting of five members to be

30 The Liberator, 1 March, 1950.
appointed to investigate the charge was ruled out of order by the Speaker.31

On 8.3.1950, Deo wrote to Prakasam: "I am to request you to withdraw your motion at once and oblige".32 Prakasam was not prepared to withdraw the motion. Then Kumarasamy announced that in the event of Prakasam refusing to withdraw his motion, the Congress Executive should be left to take suitable action.33 The Executive Committee of the Madras Congress Legislature Party met and decided to issue a 'Show Cause Notice' to Prakasam and his friends. Deo again wrote to Prakasam on 29-3-1950 requesting to explain why disciplinary action should not be taken against him.

31 The Liberator, 1 March, 1950.

"I say that in England a motion for a committee to investigate matter which took place a year and a half ago would not be continued by the Government. In our country we have no rule or procedure to bring this motion under Adjournment Motion still worse when it is one and a half year old. So the Motion of Prakasam cannot be admitted either as a Privilege Motion or as an Adjournment Motion."

32 G. Rudrayya Chowdari, op. cit., p.185.

33 Ibid.
Prakasam in his reply dated 1-4-1950 stated that he was compelled to approach the Legislative Assembly because the Congress leadership had failed to render justice. He further stated that simply because he was a member of a party he did not lose the right as a Member of the Legislature to censure the Ministers if they went wrong. 34

Patel wrote a personal letter to Prakasam on 13th April, 1950 inviting him to Delhi. 35 The APCWC also requested Prakasam to wait upon The Congress High Command. 36 Prakasam reached Delhi and had an interview with Nehru and Patel. Surprisingly these meetings resulted in a compromise.

The controversy was brought to an end when the Working Committee decided that the notices of disciplinary action against Prakasam and his 14 associates in the Madras Legislature be withdrawn. 37

34 The Hindu, 2 April, 1950.

35 G. Rudrayya Chowdari, op. cit., p.186.

36 Ibid.

37 The Mail, 3 May 1950; The Hindu, 4 May, 1950.
It was taken for granted that Prakasam had agreed to withdraw his notice of the resolution in the State Legislature. But Prakasam denied that he had ever agreed to withdraw all the charges against Madras Ministry and that he had given up his demand for seats on the Opposition benches.\textsuperscript{38}

However, when the Madras Legislative Assembly was prorogued on May 12, 1950 Prakasam’s motion lapsed as fresh notice for its revival was not given.\textsuperscript{39}

About that time, the election to the TNCC Executive began to engage the attention of the Congressmen in Madras. The newly elected TNCC at its meeting on August 29, 1950 put on its agenda the election of its President and other office bearers to the AICC. Kamaraj who had been the President since 1939, contested for Presidentship for the fourth time.

Rajaji was at that time a member of the Central Cabinet. He requested Kamaraj to help C.P.Subbiah become the President of TNCC\textsuperscript{40} But Kamaraj’s friends

\textsuperscript{38} The Hindu, 4 May, 1950.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 12 May, 1950.

\textsuperscript{40} The Mail, 29 August 1950; The Hindu, 30 August 1950.
would not allow him lay down the office of the President of the TNCC Kamaraj decided to contest at the last moment.

On the day of election, 256 members were present Rajaji and Subbaroyan were the only absentees.\textsuperscript{41} O.P.R. proposed C.P. Subbiah’s name and P. Varadarajulu Naidu Kamaraj’s. O.P.R. who was not committed to any group felt that there should be a change in the Presidentship of TNCC. When the results were made known, Kamaraj secured 155 votes as against 99 by Subbiah.\textsuperscript{42}

The Presidentship of TNCC empowered Kamaraj to form an Executive of the TNCC of his choice. However, to appease those who opposed him, Kamaraj nominated O.P.R. and Subbiah to the Executive Committee.\textsuperscript{43} V.M.

\textsuperscript{41} T.S. Chockalingam, \textit{op. cit.}, p.51.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Kandeepam}, 8 September, 1950; \textit{Dravidanadu}, 10 September, 1950.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The Hindu}, 31 August, 1950.

The Members of the Working Committee of TNCC were:

Obeidullah as Vice President, Annamalai Pillai and S. Venkataraman as Secretaries and Krishnasamy Vandayar as Treasurer. But O.P.R. and C.P. Subbiah refused their appointment in the TNCC Working Committee.

While the political controversy in the Province deepened the political developments at the Centre also had its impact on the Province. The sudden demise of Patel on 15 December, 1950 changed the political scene at the Centre. In the election to the office of President of APCC, Ranga was defeated by Sanjeeva Reddy who was supported by those opposed to Prakasam. Frustrated by these developments Prakasam and Ranga decided to quit the Congress Party and launch a new party called the Praja Party.

Prakasam resigned from the Congress by sending a formal letter to Tandon, the Congress President by which he severed his 44 year-old connection with the

44 *The Hindu*, 31 August, 1951. It is to be noted here that Annamalai Pillai who was the strong supporter of Rajaji during the Tirupparankundram and Tiruchengode episodes now became the supporter of Kamaraj.


Meanwhile O.P.R. became disillusioned with party politics. The food problem and his failure to make the Congress take effective steps to solve it also resulted in his resignation from the Congress.

47 The Mail, 20 May, 1951.