

Piara Singh Khabra, MP (UK): An Obituary

The Veteran Labour Leader Passes away

A tribute by AMIT ROY

PIARA SINGH KHABRA, the long time Labour MP for Ealing Southall, the constituency which includes the heart of the oldest Sikh settlement in Britain, died in London, last June, aged 82.

P.S. Khabra, who was senior-most member of the House of Commons, had been undergoing treatment for liver problems at Hammersmith Hospital, West London.

His death removes one of the pioneering Indian “community leaders” who had to tackle many of the problems faced by the early settlers who came from rural Punjab.

Born in Punjab, Khabra attended Khalsa High School and Punjab University, earning a degree in social services. He served in the Indian army between 1942 and 1946, and arrived in the UK in 1959.

He worked as a teacher and social worker, becoming a leading member of the Asian community in Southall. He became a Justice of the Peace in 1977 and entered Parliament in the 1992 election.

He was re-elected in 1997 in the general election which brought Tony Blair to power and easily held his seat in 2001 and again in 2005 with a reduced but still comfortable majority of 11,440.

A Sikh himself, Khabra had little time for the Khalistan movement which he dubbed as “illogical”, “Only a tiny minority is raising this issue,” he said.

Although he was a loyal Labour Party man, Tony Blair never thought of giving him any kind of ministerial office. In parliament, he remained a backbencher, happy to serve his constituents.

Piara Singh died on June 19, 2007 respected reporter Julian Bell, said: “Piara Singh was a remarkable servant of the people, devoting his life to helping his constituents and providing service to the community.”

[Courtesy: *The Telegraph*]

