

S.V. Raju

Mr. N. Dandekar

Confidential : Unless we get two things clear, we cannot talk on the same "wave length" :-

- (1) I had an open invitation from Janata Party to stand from my Constituency (West of Lucknow) or from my Constituency in Gujarat. In fact my candidature was actually announced for Jamnagar. But I declined for reasons of FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Health and also other reasons, which I shall explain in person if you are interested.

- (2) The Swatantra Party does not exist. It was merged into BLD.

1367

Sub: Dissolution of Swatantra Party and consequential position re: Our Office

What I write below is purely in my personal capacity. I have neither consulted or discussed the matter with anyone.

At the August 1974 "Convention" over 50 of us refused to go along with Piloo Mody & Co. because in our view the BLD was not the answer. We felt that the Swatantra Party had to wait for a more propitious time before ceasing to exist. Had we been listened to the chances are that you and Minoo would today be not only members of Parliament but perhaps in the Union Cabinet as well. I feel pretty sore on this point. The Swatantra component in the BLD did indeed get a raw deal as we suspected it would. However my purpose in writing this is not to say "I told you so" but to state that those of us who decided to keep the Party alive, decided within days of the announcement of the Janata Party's formation that the time had arrived to disband. We further decided that we would do so as soon as the other parties fulfilled their pledge to dissolve. According to press reports this is likely to happen by the second or third week of this month. We are meeting in Madras on April 17 with Mr. G.K. Sundaram in the Chair.

Personally

~~Perhaps~~ I am relieved both because the one point of difference I have had with you (of a major nature) has been eliminated and we can again close ranks and also because I ~~could~~ fulfilled a pledge I had given Rajaji in June 1972 that I would "carry on" and do my best to keep the "Old Guard" together.

But there is one problem that remains to be solved. And that is our office premises. You will recall that we acquired the premises almost 18 years ago (around July 1959). ~~If there is~~ and When the Swatantra Party dissolves one of two things can happen:

- either the Janata Party will get control of the office, or
- the landlords will stake their claim to it.

You will perhaps ask: "What the hell. Let the office go to the Janata Party, So what !" Well Sir, you know me and my unhappy habit of looking beyond the obvious and the immediate.

I have moved somewhat closely in Janata ranks during the elections and what I heard of the thinking of the various constituents is far from reassuring. I therefore made discreet enquiries about what these constituents planned to do about their respective offices. I found that the Congress O, the Jan Sangh and the Socialist Parties have taken or are taking steps to safeguard their premises. Should we also not do so. I was very impressed with the suggestions thrown up both by Minoo and Soli Sorabjee at the meeting the



the other day and if we wish to go about it in some meaningful way we need a place. What better place do we have than our present premises. In any event we do require some base of operations and also some place we can call our own so that in the event of a realignment of political forces at a later date or even if we carry on in the Janata Party we are not reduced to non-entities as was the fate of the large majority of our people who joined the BLD.

How do we do so. This is the problem. There are several options. One is to form some kind of organisation devoted to service and constructive activities to which the Swatantra Party can transfer its assets. Another perhaps is to give the place over to the Adult Education Institute.

Please give this matter some thought. If you like I shall be happy to come over for a discussion at a time convenient to you.

  
S.V. Raju

4/4/77

P.S. I see there is going to be a by-election in Rajkot. Minoo or you would ~~the~~ be the right candidate.