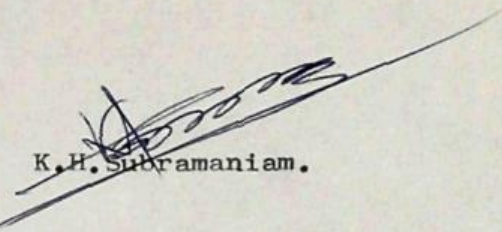


10th August, 74

Mr. M. R. Masani

You had asked me to send the transcript of my speech at the convention, which I am enclosing. Please acknowledge receipt.

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K. H. Subramaniam.

In 1972 the General Council of the Party considered and rejected a proposal by Dr. R. C. Cooper that following the poor showing of the party in the 1971 General elections, it had better be wound up. It looked like then that the extreme unction was sought to be administered to a person whom some people believed dead, but who really was only a little sick. Today, in this National Convention we are being asked to orchestrate the requiem mass that our present leaders want to say before the Party is dead.

They believe that the party has outlived its utility and therefore, it can be buried with a sense of relief. It is not mere rhetoric, I imply, when I say that the party has not failed us, but we have failed the party. Even according to those who want the end of the party its principles are valid. Our President claims, that the programme of the new conglomerate contains every principle of the party and for good measures even more. Our President is one who sees no danger to the digestive system of the new party through a surfeit of such pristine ideology, and seems to think that the new party by giving this ideological additive to the erstwhile programmes of the Swatantra Party will ignite the dormant engines of democracy.

Figuring it out logically we have the old Swatantra principles; plus the additive and a new set of people to implement them and therefore, success is assured.

The Party has failed, so the President has a recipe for success. Take the Party's principles - put them into a new bottle - shake it well so the contents are well stirred. Add a dash of the ideological additive. Season it with BKD casteism and liberally lace it with SSP Socialism and serve to the pop music of the Pragati Dal - the people of India will lap it up and turn in gratitude to the Bharatiya Lok Dal who will then rule India, that is Bharat, happily ever after.

So the new factor in the situation is the band of leaders who are going to convert the Swatantra party principles into success; I would call the new party a coalition of the frustrated - the common bond among its champions being only shared frustration. I am sure their political unity is in direct proportion to their proximity to power, real or imagined. And what a galaxy of leaders this is!! Charan Singh, who, as late as February 1974, just before the U.P. Elections, was horse trading with Indira on the UP Chief Ministership. Wheeler-dealer Patnaik who can sell the country down the river for less than a chief ministership. Raj Narain who publicly admitted that his only principle is 'Indira Hatao' and whose antiques barely disguise the antiquity of his political ideas.

But our President assures us that the character of political leaders (by this I mean their political morality) has nothing to do with the success or failure of a party. It would seem, therefore, the president's overweening ambition has become the pursuit of success, i.e. electoral success, if necessary at the expense of character. If in this you see a contradiction of a valid swatantra tenet, it is merely your imagination.

Our President has stated time and again in the last four months that the new party is the only hope for this country. I would give this country indeed a fat chance if its future and salvation is linked to this new party. It is difficult to accept this optimism of our President as more than a desperate gamble, and to give this gamble the respectability of a calculated effort is what our President wants us to do. He is like the Rummy player who wants one card to

declare and hopes desperately for a joker. If he thinks that Charan Singh is the joker that will make his hand click, he is welcome to hope so. But to suggest that we should toss our cards is neither strategy nor wisdom.

The President hails the new Party as the National alternative by which he means that it will be in a position in the foreseeable future to take over the reins of the Government from the Ruling Congress, by means of the ballot box. The absurdity of this notion is too patent to be discussed further. He seems to think of a system of Government alternating between two parties like the Labor and Conservative parties in England. This is the 'pie-in-the-sky' vision of a political green horn. The new party has the chance of a snow ball in hell of snow balling, (as the President imagines) into the second party of the two-party system of his fond dreams. He has wished away the Congress (O) and the Janasangh and forgotten to take into account that his parties in the new coalition can break out into more parties than merged into this unholy alliance.

These leaders who talk of great things to come under the new party are people who have knocked at some electoral door or the other thinking that beyond lay power. Our President claimed that of the 300 candidates he fielded in U.P. 100 would be returned. We had just one successful candidate there, proving to the President that zeros placed to the right of a digit have still some power unlike zeros luxuriating in isolated splendour.

If the spectacle of these leaders remind you of a scenario from the Gold rush in America - of adventurers leaning on their shovels claiming that a rich lode lay beneath and was waiting to be mined - then the comparison is not far off the mark. There is little gold and a lot of bragging that will soon be followed by the shoot-out.
