

Ref: SP-P-383.

30th July, 1974.

my dear Raju

1456

Thank you for your letter of 25th July expressing your great concern and complete disagreement with the line which I am taking about the future of the Swatantra Party. I was in two minds whether to reply; but felt I must, since you had taken so much trouble to write to me so frankly and with such feeling on the subject.

Firstly, one must avoid arguing on the basis of false analogies. There is, for instance, nothing ⁱⁿ common between what is sought to be attempted now and

- either the various post-election attempts at S.V.Ds of opposition parties;
- or the pre-election "common programme" approach, which at first succeeded, but later failed, in Orissa;
- or the pre-election "Grand Alliance" so-called of 1971, without a common programme.

Indeed, if anything is to be learnt from the above it is this that perhaps a merger of at least some of the opposition parties may succeed where all other modes of their getting together have failed.

Equally untenable is the analogy of the Liberal Party in U.K. It is a completely different sort of country from India in every conceivable respect; and so are the people of the two countries. The Liberal Party in U.K. is one of three leading parties, not one of ten as is the Swatantra Party in India; and the Liberal Party has always had an enormous War Chest, unlike the Swatantra Party which is totally bankrupt and cannot ^{now} be sure of ^{even} paying its employees three months hence.

Secondly, you must not think my political education stopped with the Haryana Elections in 1968. It is true that I then thought that the Swatantra Party's future was to be permanently in the opposition; and I had no doubt it was quite a useful role. But after the 1969 mid-term elections in West Bengal, Bihar, U.P. and Punjab I began to doubt whether the Party would survive very long. This doubt was very strongly confirmed after the disastrous 1971 General Election to Parliament when, although I did not contest

myself, I campaigned for Doshi (in Jamnagar), Maharaja of Dhrangadhra (in Surendranagar), for H.M. Patel (in Dhandhuka) and Minoo Masani (in Rajkot). As you know, only H.M. Patel succeeded. Finally, after the experience of my own contest for the Matunga Assembly seat in 1972, when everyone without exception worked very hard for me, I had little doubt indeed that the fate of all opposition parties (except only the Jan Sangh and the Communists) was sealed unless they could get together to form one Party.

Thirdly, one must avoid argument by abuse such as calling people "opportunists". I am increasingly driven to the conclusion that in politics if one's objectives are good and geared to sound principles, one must not disdain expediency and opportunism to achieve them. A political party must adopt every expedient and take advantage of every opportunity that offers itself for its success. So you must now bracket me also with the others as an "opportunist".

The Swatantra Party's image in the public mind is that of a Party of Maharajas, Capitalists, ^{even} Landlords and Re-actionaries. This will continue, despite all proof to the contrary, and even though we now receive no support from those very same classes. We are stuck with it. So where do we go from here? My answer is contained in my letter of 23rd July to Masani. I can see no other way. Certainly, unlike him, I refuse to sit back and do nothing about the situation, while waiting for a "take over" by some benevolent Military Dictator before the Communists do so.

Accordingly, if my doctor permits me, I intend attending the National Convention at Delhi on 4th/5th August in support of Piloo Mody's endeavour.

With best wishes,

*Yours sincerely,
L. Dandekar*

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