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Dear Friend/Esteemed Colleague,

Our Party President, Mr. Piloo Mody, has taken the trouble of sending a long circular letter dated ~~16-6-1974~~ to many of us along with a draft statement of policy of the proposed new party which according to him will be the national alternative to the ruling Indira Congress. You know that he has put his heart and soul into this project which to most of us is neither wise nor likely to be productive of the good results which Mr. Mody expects from his pet child, the new party.

Since there is a certain amount of confusion amongst us due to want of correct information of the circumstances under which our party came to be associated with this unfortunate move I wish to share with you the information I was able to gather regarding this life and death question.

It is a fact that the National Executive Committee of our party at its meeting held on 6-4-'74 & 7-4-'74 at New Delhi authorised our President, Mr. Piloo Mody or his accredited representative to consult with other party leaders for forming an alternative to the Indira Congress but this resolution did not empower either the President or his representatives to agree to disband the Swatantra Party and form a new party even before any consultation with the party units or workers took place and even without reporting the results of the conversation either to the National Executive or the National General Council.

Some of you will be surprised to learn that when the first meeting of the leaders of the 7 or 8 Parties took place at New Delhi Mr. Piloo Mody was away in Gujarat. Mr. R.N. Singh Deo and Mr. Patodia have participated in this meeting with whose authority is not known and evidently even without consulting the President or Mr. H.M. Patel, who was available in New Delhi these two gentlemen have committed themselves and the party to the formation of a new party by dissolving our party subject to approval of the party and the programme of the new party being acceptable to us.

I am told that Mr. Piloo Mody was as much surprised and taken aback as all of us when he saw the announcement in the newspapers. Instead of pulling up these two gentlemen and making them and others understand that they had acted without authority and in haste for reasons we are yet to know, our President plunged headlong to put into action the decision taken by the joint meeting of the leaders of the 7 or 8 Parties which met at Delhi. The action of the President is really intriguing. Simply because Mr. Singh Deo had committed himself to a decision without authority why should the President of the party go all out for bringing into being a new party without any consultation with the party units, party workers and other leaders--all of whom have contributed their mite for the last 15 years for making Swatantra Party's principles and programme known all over the country? A perusal of the circular letter of our President will convince anyone that our President is also all for the formation of the new party and he is trying his very best to take the whole of the Swatantra Party into the new party. The circular is meant to convince those who doubt the wisdom of the move and those who feel that disbanding of the Swatantra Party will be a national calamity.

That a strong viable national alternative to the ruling party is a necessity is admitted by all. That a strong national All-India opposition with principles and programme similar to that of the Swatantra Party would have acted as a check on the excesses committed by the Indira Congress is also admitted by all. That the Indira

Congress has played ducks and drakes with the institutions of democracy and that they are very much bent on establishing a one-party rule if not personal dictatorship is also evident to every one of us. But the real question to which there is no answer from either our president or those who are working with him for forming the new party by dissolving the Swatantra Party is whether disbanding our party, which has a national image and which has a name for probity, common sense and pragmatic programme and fundamental principles consonant with human nature should be dissolved for accommodating small, regional and state groups led by people of doubtful integrity and a past record of which none will be proud or whether our party should continue to function as a separate national party and co-operate with other parties large or small, national or regional on the basis of a common manifesto and minimum programme for work connected with parliament and State legislatures. Mr. Mody seems to think that the total loss of parties' identities is necessary for forming the so-called national alternative. He does not seem to have any faith in having a federal type of national alternative as suggested by the Tamilnadu General Council of our party. If according to Mr. Mody a federal type of organisation will not be homogenous and will be rife with party rivalries etc. what is the guarantee that those who join the new party--eg., people from the SSP and the Swatantra Party will not function as groups inside the new party and try to canvass and even impose their views on the new party as a whole. That this is bound to happen is indicated by the President himself in his circular letter dated 16th June, 1974. Please read last para of his circular on page 2. At the recent convention of the SSP held in U.P. it was openly stated that the new party will be a better instrument for putting into action the programme of the SSP but a section of the SSP quietly rejected this argument and has decided to stay away from the new party.

Coming to the contents of the letter proper it is evident that our president is in great hurry and in a desperate mood. Even granting that we accept into his analysis of the present political conditions no man with an elementary knowledge of politics will accept that such a hotch-potch grouping of "national and state parties, communal parties, regional parties, fractional parties, personal parties, independents, new people with new hope and, whatever else may exist" can at any time form a viable national alternative; nor are the people of this country are so devoid of common sense as to accept this proposed conglomeration as an alternative to the ruling party. Our President himself admits in his letter that formation of a national alternative is a long drawn out process but you will be surprised to learn that he is prepared to use the well known four methods--Sama, Dhana, Bada, Dhandam for bringing this group into existence and for making it a viable alternative. The words used by our President in this connection are "perusasion, reasoning, threatening, cajoling and even brow-beating". That a gentleman like Mr. Mody who happens to be the President of the Swatantra Party should descend to this level in his anxiety to help the formation of the new alternative is proof if any proof is necessary of the desperate situation in which he finds himself.

That Revered Rajaji at the advanced age of 78 undertook to form the Swatantra Party to oppose the disastrous policies of the ruling congress and that all of us followed Revered Rajaji in this patriotic endeavour to save democracy and the citizens' liberties is evidently forgotten. That the Swatantra Party though not very strong was able to make the ruling congress give up some of its pet ideas like co-operative farming or joint farming which is also conceded by all unbiassed observers is also forgotten. That may be the reason why of all persons our President should develop cold feet suddenly and do his utmost to bring into existence the new party instead of devoting his undivided attention for building the Swatantra Party from its grass roots.

It is possible that he has more information how things are going on in Delhi than you and I have but all the information he may have will not justify disbandment of the Swatantra party and its replacement by an indifferent and motley grouping of heterogeneous political elements. If all the information at our President's disposal are correct then it will be all the more necessary to strengthen the Swatantra party by bringing in new elements who accept our programme and principles because ours is the only party which is having an alternative programme based on laws of nature and not on any out-moded ideology. Grouping together is always good but it should of like-minded people and especially in a Parliamentary democracy the combination of heterogeneous elements will only bring discredit to all and possibly will be disastrous to the country, if this grouping manages to come to power. The record of coalition Governments in some of the States after 1967 elections is a warning that hotch-potch groups cannot deliver the goods or offer cleaner and better administration than the Indira Congress. The joining together of like-minded men fired by common ideals and dedicated to salvage the economy and save the people will alone inspire the voters.

Mr. Mody's letter clearly states that the Congress itself is in reality a coalition party and is not based on any ideology and that it consists of groups representing various interests and ideologies. Mr. Mody wants the new party also to be based on no ideology but only on a common programme. Hence Mr. Mody has no use for the Swatantra party which has an ideology of its own, which has its fundamental principles and ofcourse a pragmatic programme. Since ideology has become an anathema to Mr. Mody it is no wonder that he has no use for the Swatantra party and wants a set of people drawn from the entire spectrum of Indian society. Though he is now opposed to Marxists and Communists he may admit groups from these parties - Marxists and Communists also later. Mr. Mody may do it for his own purpose while the Communists and Marxists may send groups of their workers to infiltrate the ranks of the new party and cause confusion and chaos in its thinking and working. Mr. Mody's letter makes it clear that the new party not only will have no ideology but no discipline also because the broad spectrum of individuals and groups within the party will have freedom for deviation on regional, State and National levels and perhaps at the district level also. Mr. Mody himself has stated that the new party will be open to all including the Congress (O), Jan Sangh, D.M.K. but none of the three parties are prepared to disband themselves or merge in the new party for very obvious reasons. Perhaps they understand that the contemplated grouping will not work and break up sooner than feared by many unbiased people. It is ridiculous to talk of Jai Andhra, Telengana Praja Samiti and separate Vidharba ~~States and bigger~~ Vishal Hariyana parties as political parties. These groups were formed with the specific object of getting a separate Andhra State, Vidharba State and bigger Hariyana State and so on. They have no ideology and no programme other than achieving the separate States they need. That the Jai Andhra movement which was very near achieving its object and defeating Indira Gandhi's stragagem to keep Andhra under her control is now almost defunct is a patent fact which nobody can ignore. The same fate perhaps has already overtaken the other movements also. How can a new political party which aspires to become a viable alternative to the ruling Congress expect the common man to believe its protestations when it openly proclaims that it expects to become a national alternative by enlisting the support of such disparate elements as DMK, Akalis etc. etc.

Lastly, one part of Mr. Mody's letter contradicts the other. He speaks of two party system but leaves out of reckoning "all non-Congress, non-Marxist, non-Communist parties". Communists are not going to merge with the Indira Congress nor are they going to give up their ideology and programme. At present

marxists are not prepared to merge even with the communists faction. Hence they will continue to be a separate entity. Jan Sangh is not prepared to merge. So also Congress (O). Hence even if the Swatantra Party is disbanded and the new party comes into being there are bound to be even on Mr. Mody's reckoning six national parties for years to come. Hence keeping the Swatantra Party in tact and trying to build it up will not jeopardise in any way the ultimate object of bringing into existence a two party system. Instead of six National Parties, what is wrong in having 7 National Parties by keeping the Swatantra Party in tact? Let the other six parties which met at Delhi merge and form a new party if they so desire. Why should the party founded after great deliberation and forethought by no less a person than Revered Rajaji be disbanded only for the sole purpose of satisfying the whims and fancies of not even half a dozen leaders like Mr. Charan Singh, & Mr. Raj Narain? With its clear-cut programme and fundamental principles which are ante-thesis of socialism of all brands that function in India, Swatantra alone is the real alternative. If Mr. Mody really wants a two party system he should try in the first instance to bring into our fold all non-socialists and at the same time try his best to make all the socialists join together and form another National Party. It may be that the Swatantra grouping will be comparatively weaker in the beginning but in due course it is bound to beat the socialist group since their ideology and programme have been tried in the country during the last 15 years and found wanting and have failed miserably to alleviate the sufferings of the people. On the other hand they have only added to the people's misery and poverty. Hence I submit with all the earnestness at my command that the only viable alternative with a sound programme and principles is the Swatantra Party and the Swatantra Party should be made stronger by bringing into our fold all non-socialists who are interested in the efficient functioning of the democratic institutions in this country and in safeguarding the freedom of the citizens of this land. The workers of the Swatantra Party will gladly consider any other worthwhile suggestion sans dissolution for the creation of a two party system. The Swatantra Party has to be the rallying point of the national alternative. There can be no other alternative.

We are all at the cross roads of history. If we take a wrong decision all our sweat, toil and tears shed by us all these 15 years will be washed out and the country and its people will greatly suffer. Hence it behoves us all to think calmly and coolly and take a correct decision. And that wise decision is contained in the resolution passed by the Tamilnadu General Council on 2-6-1974. It is reproduced below for your consideration.

"THE EFFORT TO FORM A TWO PARTY SYSTEM IS TO BE WELCOMED IN THE INTEREST OF THE PROPER WORKING OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN INDIA. AS A PRELIMINARY STEP, A FEDERATION OF VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES WITH .. COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAMMES MAY BE FORMED BY KEEPING THE IDENTITY OF THE SWATANTRA PARTY AND ITS ORGANISATION IN TACT."

Thanking you and with my highest regards,

Yours truly,

V. S. Srikumar
(V. S. SRIKUMAR)