

PARTY CONCLAVE IN BOMBAY

The Party's Organisation Sub-Committee, Parliamentary Board, Central Organising Committee and General Council met in Bombay from the 28th to the 30th of June.

ORGANISATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Organisation Sub-committee, which met on the evening of the 28th and again on the afternoon of the 29th, devoted its attention to discussing various organisational matters.

PARLIAMENTARY BOARD

The Parliamentary Board met on the morning of the 29th.

Prospective Candidates

To break away from the unfortunate practice that has developed among Indian political parties of throwing in candidates at the very last moment to contest elections, the Parliamentary Board decided to commence nominating prospective Parliamentary candidates. This would give a chance both to the prospective candidate and the electorate in the Constituency to get to know one another and enable the candidate to identify himself with the problems and aspirations of his constituents. Not only would this enable the candidate to nurse his constituency and improve his chances but it would also make him a true representative of his constituency, thus making the system of representative government more meaningful.

Of the recommendations for prospective candidates received from several States, the Board approved one from Rajasthan, three from Gujarat and two from Uttar Pradesh.

Guidance to Parliamentary Group

The Board gave detailed guidance in regard to the Group's functioning and set-up in both Houses of Parliament.

CENTRAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE

The Central Organising Committee also met on June 29.

Time Table for Party Elections

The following time table for elections to Party committees was approved:

Last date for enrolment of Workers and Life Workers for purposes of Party elections July 31, 1964.

Last date for receipt of Register Entries and Centre's quota of subscription Aug. 15, 1964

Conclusion of scrutiny of Workers/Life Workers/Life Members registers by the Central Office and their verification Sep. 15, 1964

Completion of elections at the primary (Constituency) level Oct. 15, 1964.

Completion of elections at District level Oct. 31, 1964.

Completion of elections to State Committees Nov. 15, 1964.

Completion of elections to General Council Nov. 30, 1964.

Election of National Executive by General Council Dec. 31, 1964.

Assumption of office by new National Executive Jan. 1, 1965.

Committees at the Constituency, District and State levels will assume office immediately on their respective election.

Resolutions for General Council

The Committee then discussed various draft resolutions for placing before the General Council the following day.

Cooptions

Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy, M.P., and Smt. Gayatri Devi, M.P., two of the Party's Vice-Presidents, were coopted to the Organisation Sub-committee and Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh, M.L.A., was coopted to the Parliamentary Board.

Kerala

Discussing the Party's future set up in Kerala and the possibility of contesting the elections to the State Assembly in 1965, the Committee decided that the President and General Secretary, in consultation with Mr. V. P. Menon, should go into the question and make their report to the Organisation Sub-Committee, which was authorised to take action in the matter on behalf of the Central Organising Committee.

Delhi Unit

Turning its attention to the unsatisfactory functioning of the Party Unit in Delhi, the Central Organising Committee dissolved the Delhi Unit and its *ad hoc* Committee, and appointed Mr. R. C. Sharma, hitherto Vice President of this Unit, as the officer-in-charge of the office, affairs and property of the Delhi Unit.

In this connection the Central Office issued the following Press Note on July 2:

"The Central Office of the Swatantra Party announces that, in view of the prolonged and continuous failure on the part of its Delhi Unit to function in harmony, the Central Organising Committee of the Party at its meeting in Bombay on June 29 decided that the Delhi unit of the Party and the *ad hoc* Committee appointed by the Central Organising Committee to conduct the Party's affairs in Delhi be dissolved with immediate effect. The resignations tendered by Col. H. R. Pasricha, President of the Delhi Unit, and Mr. A. C. Bisaria, General Secretary, were accepted. Mr. R. C. Sharma, hitherto Vice-President, has been appointed officer-in-charge of the affairs and office of the Swatantra Party in Delhi.

"The Central Organising Committee decided that enrolment of members and workers in Delhi should be discontinued with immediate effect and that this should be brought to the notice of the public in Delhi and New Delhi. The Committee was sorry to learn that certain members of the Party were endeavouring to enrol members in Delhi in an unauthorised manner. The only manner in which anyone in Delhi who wishes to become a member of the Party can join the Party is by applying to the Central Office of the Party at 143, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay, for an enrolment form."

GENERAL COUNCIL

The General Council began its proceedings the following day with the observance of a minute's

silence in memory of the late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

The late Raghavendra Pratap Singh

The Council then adopted a resolution mourning the loss sustained by the Swatantra cause and the country by the untimely death of the freedom fighter and public worker, Shri Raghavendra Pratap Singh of Mankapur, member of the Central Organising Committee and Leader of the Party's group in the U.P. Legislative Assembly, and conveyed its condolence to the members of the bereaved family and to the Party in U.P.

Amendments to Constitution

The Council considered two amendments to the Party's Constitution arising from the report of the Sub-Committee appointed for the purpose by the Third National Convention in Bangalore. The following amendments were unanimously adopted:

Delete clause 12(a) and *Substitute* new clause 12(a)

"12(a) The first elections to the primary bodies, District Committees, State or Regional Councils and General Council under the revised rules shall be held before the end of 1964 and thereafter by the end of every alternate year."

Consequential Amendment as a result of amendment of clause 12(a) and in consonance with the decision of the General Council at its meeting in Bangalore on January 31.

Delete Clause 12(b) and *Substitute* new clause 12(b).

"12(b) Workers and Life Workers duly enrolled by July 31, 1964, and Life Members enrolled on or before December 31, 1963, will be entitled to vote in the first elections to the bodies referred to in sub-clause (a)."

Resolutions

17th Amendment to the Constitution

Mr. G. Latchanna proposed and Sardar Basant Singh seconded a resolution on the 17th Amendment to the Constitution. The resolution was unanimously adopted as amended. Copies of a Memorandum jointly submitted by Rajaji, Prof. Ranga, Prof. Ruthnaswamy, Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel and Mr. M. R. Masani were circulated to members of the Council.

Food Scarcity and High Prices

A second resolution on food scarcity and high prices proposed by Mr. K. M. Munshi and seconded by Mr. B. P. Singh was unanimously adopted after amendment.

South East Asia

Mr. M. R. Masani then proposed a resolution on South East Asia which was seconded by Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel. After discussion the resolution as amended was similarly adopted.

Relations with Pakistan

The Council unanimously endorsed the statement of policy outlined in the Parliamentary Board's resolution of May 17 on relations with Pakistan (see *Newsletter* No. 44 for text) after deleting the word "particularly" in paragraph 7 of that resolution at the instance of the Party's Vice-President, Mr. K. M. Munshi.

See Annexure 'A' for the full text of Resolutions; Annexure 'B' for an extract from a comment in the Delhi weekly *Thought* on the resolution on Food Scarcity and High Prices; and Annexure 'C' for the text of the Memorandum on the 17th Amendment to the Constitution submitted to the President of India.

NO SWATANTRA SATYAGRAHA

In view of misleading reports published in certain sections of the press that the Swatantra Party's National Executive had decided to launch on direct action in the nature of *satyagraha* against the 17th Amendment and that a meeting was being held in Delhi on September 6 to consider this question, it becomes necessary to clarify the Party's position for the information of Party Units and members.

No decision of the nature reported in the Press was taken by the Central Organising Committee of the Party when it met in Bombay on June 29. The question came up when the Central Organising Committee was discussing the draft resolution to be placed before the General Council on the 17th Amendment, which is to be found in the Annexure. At that point, one of the members of the Committee raised a query as to the advisability of members of the Party participating in *satyagraha*. After considerable discussion, it was decided that, if organisations like the Bharat Kisan Sammelan were to decide to organise demonstrations and consequent *satyagraha* against the 17th Amendment, members of the Party in their individual capacity would be free to participate in such demonstrations and *satyagraha*. Similar permission was also given to participate in agitations against enhancement in land revenue or levies.

It will thus be seen that permission given was to members in their individual capacity functioning on the platform of some other Kisan organisation and that the Swatantra Party has not decided that any *satyagraha* should be undertaken in its name or on its platform.

Similarly, it also needs to be made clear in regard to press reports that a meeting to discuss this question

is to take place in Delhi on September 6, that no such meeting has been called by the Party.

BOMBAY DEMONSTRATION AGAINST RICE EXPORT

On learning that the State Trading Corporation was shipping 300 tons of rice to Basra, the Bombay Unit of the Party wrote to the Manager of the Corporation requesting them to desist from exporting any more rice in the context of the acute food shortage in the country.

Receiving no reply, sixty Swatantra workers organised a protest demonstration at the Alexandra Dock where the rice was being loaded. Led by the Bombay Unit's General Secretary, Mr. Madhu Mehta, the protesting workers demanded that the shipment of rice be stopped immediately.

They were stopped outside the gates. When the workers pleaded to be allowed to demonstrate outside the ship, they were pushed about by the Police.

In an attempt to scatter the demonstrators, certain officers started swinging their batons and several Party workers were beaten up. Scant respect was shown even to lady volunteers. Mrs. Panday, Mr. Wahab Azad and Mr. K. B. Mohite were singled out for special treatment by the police.

Twenty eight workers, including the Vice-President of the Bombay unit, Mr. Piloo Mody, Mr. Madhu Mehta, Mrs. Sosan Panday, Mrs. Manorama Dandekar among others were taken into custody and held for a couple of hours.

The Bombay unit has lodged a strong complaint with the Commissioner of Police against the reprehensible action of certain officers of the police force for the way they dealt with this peaceful demonstration.

Earlier, in a letter to the Press, the General Secretary of the Party Mr. Masani, after criticising the export of rice and other essential commodities like edible oils by Government had pleaded that "public opinion should assert itself and demand an immediate and total ban on the export of rice, groundnuts and other sources of edible oil."

BAN ON COMMUNAL PARTIES QUERIED

Addressing a Press Conference in Rajkot on July 14, the Party's General Secretary, Mr. M. R. Masani, said in reply to a question that, while the Swatantra Party had not yet considered what line it should take on the banning of communal parties recommended by the A. P. Jain Committee Report and the question of doing so would arise only if the Congress Government proposed to legislate on those lines, his personal view was that the evil of communalism could only be eliminated and defeated not by legal coercion but by political and educative measures.

Pointing out that the Swatantra Party was against

communalism and had recently shown its readiness to make sacrifices in that struggle, Mr. Masani said that licensing of parties had no place in a democracy and was part of a totalitarian pattern. Once one kind of Party was allowed to be banned, a bad habit might be formed which might later be extended to the banning of other political parties inconvenient to those in office.

Questioned about communal disturbances in India, Mr. Masani said the existing laws were adequate to deal with communal frenzy and failure in this respect was the failure of administration and not of the Constitution or legislation.

PEKING SQUEALS AGAIN

Readers will recall that Mr. Masani's visit to Formosa in September last year (see *Newsletter* No. 39 of November 1963) provoked Peking's wrath leading to their protest to the Government of India. Once again Peking has let out a big squeal over the visit to Formosa of a ten-member non-official delegation of democratic opposition members of Parliament led by Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel, leader of the Party's group in the Rajya Sabha, and including Mr. C. L. Narasimha Reddi, Mr. Sundarmani Patel and Mr. Pravinsinh Solanki, all Swatantra members of Parliament, three others from the Jan Sangh and two from the D.M.K. among others.

The *Times of India* of June 30 carried a despatch from Hong Kong which reported Communist China's interpretation of the delegation's visit to Formosa as "open interference in her internal affairs." The Communist *New China News Agency* is reported to

have said that "Mr. Dahyabhai Patel had declared in Taipei that India shared the anti-Communist convictions of the Chiang Kai-shek regime."

Once again Red China protested to India against this delegation's visit to Formosa.

On July 1 in New Delhi, Mr. C. L. Narasimha Reddi and Mr. Pravinsinh Solanki at a press conference urged the Government of India to establish immediate diplomatic relations with the Government in Formosa. Reporting on the delegation's visit, Mr. Reddi and Mr. Solanki said that they had found in Formosa a great amount of goodwill for India among the people and officials. They quoted the Foreign Minister in Formosa as having told them that their Government recognised the Macmohon Line as the correct boundary between India and the Chinese mainland.

In Bombay on July 2, Mr. Dahyabhai Patel at another Press Conference also urged that India should recognise the Formosan Government.

Mr. Dahyabhai Patel, in the course of a letter dated July 2 to the *Times of India*, said "Far from being unnecessary", (as characterised by an editorial in that Daily) "I believe our visit has been very instructive and we shall place before the Government and Parliament a report of what we have seen and how the economy, particularly agriculture, has progressed in Taiwan. Perhaps there is a lot that our Government can learn from them."

Recalling President Chiang Kai-shek's championing the cause of India's freedom the letter added "... Let us remember with gratitude that the President of the Republic of China, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, pleaded for India's freedom with Britain and the United States during the war when he was their ally."

AROUND THE STATE ASSEMBLIES

ANDHRA PRADESH

The Party's Legislature Group deserves congratulations for having succeeded in getting their nominee Mr. Pyda Venkatnarayana elected to the Legislative Council during a by-election last month.

A report submitted by the Swatantra Group in the Andhra Legislature makes interesting reading. We give below some excerpts from it:

Ceilings on Lands

The Legislature Group opposed the introduction of ceilings on land holdings as also the low quantity of compensation paid to those whose lands are taken over by the Government. The Group attacked the Bill on the ground that it was discriminatory and unconstitutional and an effort on the part of the ruling party to destroy free peasantry.

Survey and Settlement

The numerous mistakes committed by the Survey and Settlement Department in surveying Andhra areas has resulted in thousands of peasants losing their small plots of land. The Swatantra Group fought hard and successfully for a revision of such or survey and settlement. As a result of the Party's efforts, thousands of peasants were able to file petitions before officials for rectifying mistakes committed earlier.

Crop Insurance

For a long time now the Group has been agitating for the introduction of crop insurance and the Government had, as a result, appointed an official committee to go into the question. Its report is awaited.

Distribution of Banjar Lands

Members of the Party in the State Assembly have

been continually pressing for the distribution of banjar lands to the landless in Andhra. Their efforts, if successful, would enable five lakhs of landless labourers to benefit.

Social Welfare

The Party successfully fought for the introduction of old age pensions. It is now waging a struggle to force Government to introduce schemes for harijans and backward classes.

Electricity

Recently the State Government increased the minimum guarantee for consumption of electricity by agriculturists. Our Party in the Legislature opposed this measure and was successful in getting the minimum

reduced. Presently they are engaged in demanding a reduction of electricity charges for agricultural consumption and for the allocation of more funds for rural electrification.

Labour Relations in the Public Sector

The Group has tried to expose the manner in which Government treats employees in the public sector. Far from acting as a model employer the Government has been ignoring labour regulations which they enforce on industries in the private sector.

Corruption

The Swatantra Group has been pressing its demand that all Ministers and Members of the State Assembly and Council should submit an annual report of their assets and liabilities.

NEWS FROM STATE PARTIES

ANDHRA

The Party Unit in Andhra organised a convention attended by Rajaji and Prof. Ranga at Bapatla on June 7 to protest against the Constitution (17th Amendment) Bill. A resolution unanimously adopted by the Convention condemned the undemocratic action of the Congress Party in getting the controversial measure re-introduced in the Lok Sabha.

BOMBAY

The presence of Swatantra Leaders from all over the country was utilised by the Bombay Unit and several other organisations in the City in organising public meetings.

The Bombay Unit held three meetings.

Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel, M.L.A., President of the Gujarat Unit and Mr. S. S. Mariswamy, M.P., General Secretary of the Tamilnad Unit, addressed a meeting under the Party's auspices at Sion.

Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel in his speech, was severely critical of the Government's agricultural policy. He was of the opinion that the food shortage in the country was an artificial creation of vested interests in Government.

Mr. S. S. Mariswamy, speaking next, welcomed the Das Commission's Report and said that it was a good thing that Mr. Kairon had been forced to resign.

Sunderabai Hall, the venue of the next meeting the following day, was jam-packed and hundreds of people had to content themselves by listening to the speeches from outside. Rajaji, Prof. Ranga and Mr. Masani were the speakers. Mr. N. Dandekar presided.

Rajaji said that the Congress Party was now talking of memorials to Jawaharlal Nehru, only to keep

his image going and prevent the Party from going to pieces. He described the movement for collection of funds for the memorial almost like the collection of a big new tax. While he did not object to it, he felt this would only help in reducing Nehru's image. He asked: "What are they going to do? Is it a museum that will remind us of Jawaharlal?" He added that while Swaraj was the memorial to Lokmanya Tilak and a unified India to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the best memorial he could think of for Jawaharlal Nehru was the establishment of a good administration in the country.

Referring to Mr. Gulzarilal Nanda's efforts to check corruption, Rajaji said: "I would like to tell my good friend of 40 years' standing that he should attack it where it breeds — a point very near your Secretariat." He said that the root of corruption lay in the system of State controls. He added that corruption is like "bugs, ants and fleas. It is no use firing pistols at bugs and ants. One has to mount an offensive at their breeding points."

Prof. Ranga, in his speech, said that he did not expect any healthy change in Government's policy just because a man here or a man there was replaced by another.

Speaking earlier, Mr. M. R. Masani criticised the Government for its abject failure in raising food production and in preventing the consistent trend in rising prices. In this context he read out a Customs House Release which said that 10,192 bags of rice had been shipped to Basra by the State Trading Corporation on June 27. He pointed out that this was being done at a time when the country was faced with acute food shortage.

His own suggestions for combating these trends were: Priority to agricultural programmes, complete

decontrol, bringing the buffer stocks into the market and the abolition of food zones. Mr. Masani added that, while Europe had a Common Market, "we cannot even buy food from one of our own States!"

In his Presidential speech, Mr. N. Dandekar said that in the present food crisis, all "that nonsense" of the past 15 years of importing food grains but not steel was coming home to roost.

The third meeting organised by the Bombay Unit was held at Kalbadevi on June 30. Among the speakers at this meeting were Mr. B. P. Singh, Mr. Himmatsinh, Mr. Narendrasinh Jhala, Mr. Piloo Mody and Mr. Madhu Mehta. Mr. Parmanand Kejriwal presided.

On June 30, Rajaji addressed the Bombay Rotary Club. Rotarian President, Mr. E. J. Fielden described the attendance as a record in Rotary history. Speaking on the subject 'India And Her Neighbours' Rajaji affirmed that the number one priority before the country was friendship with Pakistan and other neighbouring countries no matter at what cost or sacrifice. He warned: "If we have a fixation that Pakistan and India can never be friends, then there is no way but to fight both Pakistan and China."

On July 1 Rajaji spoke again under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs. The subject on this occasion was 'The Future Of The Sub-Continent.' He declared that the right solution for the Kashmir problem lay in handing over that State to the charge of the United Nations.

Emphasising the necessity for entering into a treaty for the defence of South Asia, the Swatantra leader pointed out that "we need not be ashamed to enter into such a treaty. No single power can defend itself in the position we have been placed in."

Rajaji replied to a number of questions after he had finished speaking. When asked about his statement that Kashmir should be handed over to the United Nations, Rajaji said that by so doing, we would not be "bartering away our sovereignty but only our pride."

Sir Homi Mody, who presided, welcomed Rajaji and Mr. B. Rama Rao proposed a vote of thanks.

On his way to the airport, Rajaji took time off to meet college students and inaugurated the Students' Council and Debating Society of the South Indian Education Society's Arts and Science College.

GUJARAT

Party activity in Gujarat certainly appears to have acquired momentum in the last couple of months judging from reports received from the State office in Ahmedabad.

Meetings of the State Committee and the State Parliamentary Board were held on May 24 at Vallabh Vidyanagar. State President Bhailalbhai

Patel presided. Mr. M. R. Masani, General Secretary, was present by special invitation.

The State Committee decided to hold a study camp at Dohad on July 4 and 5. It was also decided to hold a bigger study camp in October. The meeting further decided to hold a State Convention after completion of elections to Party committees in December.

The study camp was held as scheduled on July 4 and 5 at Dohad. Over 100 workers from various districts participated. Prof. N. G. Ranga, Mr. M. R. Masani and Sardar Basant Singh were among those from outside the State who took part.

Inaugurating the camp, Prof. Ranga explained the difference between dictatorship and democracy. He emphasised that in a real democracy concentration of power in the hands of the State was absent.

Sardar Basant Singh explained the Party's stand on relations with Pakistan and on Kashmir.

Mr. M. R. Masani devoted his talk to workers on the principles of sound organisation. He said that there was no substitute for hard, sustained and systematic work. Efficiency, he said, is not only important in business but equally essential in politics.

Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel spoke on agrarian policy. Mr. Jaideepsingh of Baria welcomed the workers.

The Rajkot District unit has lodged a strong protest against the action of Taluka Development Officers in the State asking Sarpanchs to inform them of their (Sarpanch's) party affiliation. The State President has written to the Gujarat Government asking for a public explanation of this undemocratic request.

Reports received from Mr. Dharamsinh Patel, Field Organiser of the Party in the Western area of Gujarat, give an idea of the intensive work being done there.

Apart from enrolment of workers, the field organiser gives instances of the local issues handled:

- i. Virgin lands of Tirala for distribution to Harijans
- ii. Harassment of farmers by local goondas
- iii. Repairing the primary school at Bhasan and electrification of Bhasan.
- iv. Transfer of a Nurse.
- v. Supply of electricity from Mota Kotda to Chanaka
- vi. Irregular distribution of sugar by the supply department.

KERALA

On the recommendations of Mr. K. C. Zacharias, Convenor of the Party's North Zone unit in Kerala, the following *ad hoc* committee was approved: Mr. M. P. A. Gafoor, Mr. K. P. Ibrahim Kutty, Mr. P. S. Kunhavarana Kutty, Mr. E. K. Kunhikrishna Varma Rajan, Mr. T. K. Mahamood, Mr. M. C. Ninan, Mr. K. V. Rajan and Dr. P. V. Sayyad Hussain.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL COUNCIL ON JUNE 30, 1964

17th AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The General Council deplores the enactment of the 17th Amendment to the Constitution, despite all public protests and the Swatantra Party's efforts, and pledges itself anew to protect peasant proprietorship and to secure the repeal of this Amendment at the earliest possible moment.

The Council reiterates that the Party stands for true and good land reforms for ensuring security of tenure and fair rents without taking away any of the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution before the 17th Amendment.

FOOD SCARCITY AND HIGH PRICES

The General Council of the Swatantra Party holds that the current rise in prices and shortage of supply of food grains are the outcome of the doctrinaire policies wrongly followed by the Congress Government over the past decade flouting the laws of economics.

In the name of land reform laws were passed putting a ceiling on the size of farms owned by individuals, leading to fragmentation of holdings and uncertainties in the great and basic industry of agriculture.

The basic fact to be borne in mind is that it is the larger farms that supply a marketable surplus and if that supply is hit by thoughtless legislation with unworkable socialistic ideas in mind, the urban markets suffer a loss of supply and distress results. These ceiling laws were struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional on several grounds, but the 17th Amendment has been enacted to validate all these unconstitutional laws. These laws discourage the investment of private capital on farm production, a disincentive aggravated by the increased and unbearable taxation all round. The 17th Amendment has created the fear that the Government is bent on the double policy of fragmentation of ownership in land and artificial collectivisation both of which are vicious in effect and increase uncertainties.

Apart from the ill-conceived agrarian policies, the steep rise in the price of food grains is the result of the general rise in all prices due to the inflationary policies of the Congress Government. These inflationary policies have taken many forms, among them being deficit finance, heavy excise duties and sales taxes, enhanced land revenue and other levies and, above all, the false order of priorities in the Second and Third Five-Year Plans where quick yielding activities such as agriculture, road building and rural processing industries have been neglected in favour of low and slow yielding heavy projects.

Faced with the catastrophe that must inevitably result from such misguided policies and priorities,

the Congress Government are now seeking to find scapegoats. The General Council finds no evidence to justify the sweeping charges against peasants and traders.

The General Council warns the country against the proposals for State Trading in food grains and compulsory levies on the peasants, which are being advanced by certain elements in the Congress Party. Such measures, far from solving the problem, would aggravate it and lead to increased blackmarketing and corruption of all kinds and take the country to the brink of chaos. The failure of controls is so obvious that it would be perverse to ignore it. No solution short of decontrol of prices and movements and the removal of compulsory procurement will, therefore, suffice. The Swatantra Party should intensify its efforts to educate the people and warn them to resist such disastrous policies.

In the opinion of the General Council, the long term solution of the food problem in India is the rehabilitation of agriculture, which is and will continue to be the means of the livelihood of the majority of the people for many generations to come. The needs of the peasants, whether in regard to irrigation, fertilisers, seeds and roads or the necessity for a guaranteed floor price or cheap credit, must take priority over other measures of economic development. While such a reversal of the order of priorities will in itself act as a brake on further inflation, other inflationary policies of the Government, such as deficit finance and high excise duties on the necessities of life, should be abandoned.

In so far as the short term aspects of the problem are concerned, the General Council is convinced that immediate action on the following lines would greatly reduce the hardship of the people, both in rural and urban areas:

- (i) The Centre and State Governments have been the biggest hoarders of food grains during the past few months. Although buffer stocks were available, these were held back from the people,

this contributing to panic and a rise in prices. The Government should disgorge these hoarded stocks and distribute, through fair-price shops and the trade, substantial quantities from these buffer stocks. This measure would immediately allay panic, hold prices down and lessen the people's distress.

(ii) The zonal arrangements should be terminated and a common free market in food grains restored. While some phasing may be necessary so that this adjustment may be smoothly made, the General Council is convinced that there is no need for the survival of any part of the zonal system beyond the next three months, whether in respect of rice, wheat or other grains or pulses.

(iii) The attempt to make a scapegoat of peasants

and traders should be abandoned and those with knowledge and experience of the supply and distribution of food grains should be taken into confidence. There should be consultative machinery established so that there may be exchange of information and ideas between Government, farmers and the food grain trade, both at the Central and State levels.

The General Council calls upon members of the Party throughout the country to spread among the people an awareness of the realities stated above and to see that the legitimate rights and interests of peasants, food grain traders and consumers are not trampled upon in an attempt at justifying and perpetuating the wrong policies of Government which have brought the country to this unfortunate pass.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

The General Council takes note of the appeal made by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia to the conscience of the free world and in particular the countries of the Commonwealth to act in providing support to Malaysia in defence of its territory and freedom against aggression. The Council recalls the prompt and spontaneous support given by the Prime Minister of Malaysia on the very day that the Chinese Communist troops invaded this country in October 1962. The Council calls upon the Indian Government to declare publicly and without delay its full support for the defence of the security and freedom of Malaysia and its readiness to give all possible aid to the Malaysia Government.

The Council expresses the hope that in the defence

of the independence of Laos against Communist subversion and aggression the Government of India will shed its past policy of non-interference and turning a blind eye to Communist aggression and will join other democratic countries in demanding the withdrawal of Communist forces from the territory they have recently occupied and failing such withdrawal give the Government of Laos every assistance that may be possible. In this context the Council deplors the failure of the Indian representative in Laos to associate himself with the representatives of the United States, Britain, Canada, Thailand and South Vietnam in calling for the withdrawal of Communist forces from the territory seized by them by force and asks that this unhelpful and equivocal attitude should be abandoned.

Annexure B

"THOUGHT" ON FOOD

(The following is an extract from comments by the Delhi weekly "Thought" of July 11, on the resolution on Food Scarcity and High Prices)

Commenting on the General Council resolution regarding Food Scarcity and High Prices, the Delhi weekly, *Thought*, of July 11 observes:

"The resolution on Food Scarcity and High Prices passed by the General Council of the Swatantra Party in Bombay last week showed a healthy awareness of realities. The current rise in prices and shortage of supply of foodgrains are, it points out, the outcome of doctrinaire policies followed by the Congress in defiance of the laws of economics. It also says that in the name of land reforms laws have been passed to cut down the size of farms regardless of its implications such as fragmentation of holdings.

The Seventeenth Amendment of the Constitution which was passed by the Parliament last month in a special session called for the purpose has validated many laws declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The Swatantra Party is right in saying that this has created the fear that the Government is 'bent on the double policy of fragmentation of ownership in land and artificial collectivization, both of which are vicious in effect and increase uncertainties.'

"The other aspect of the food problem highlighted in the Swatantra Party's resolution is 'the false order of priorities in the second and third Plans where

quick-yielding activities such as agriculture, road-building and rural processing industries have been neglected in favour of low and slow yielding heavy projects.' It is here that a reconsideration of the over-all strategy of planning is urgently needed. Long-gestation-period projects result in slow economic growth. The masses would like to experience the

thrill of immediate improvements in their standard of living side by side with the general economic development of the country. This is an indispensable connection between economic development and social justice in developing countries where expectations are becoming increasingly explosive. Social justice in its essence should not be sacrificed at the altar of doctrine.

Annexure C

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE CONSTITUTION (17th AMENDMENT) BILL

The 17th Amendment to the Constitution is of an extremely far-reaching character, entrenching as it does on the Fundamental Rights to property of no less than 60 million families in India who own and cultivate some land. By a stroke of pen, ryotwari farmers, the backbone of our society, are sought to be placed on a level with feudal landlords and intermediaries by the designating of any land used for the purpose of agriculture as an "estate". This distortion of language and justice is made retrospective as from 26th January, 1950, when the Constitution itself was brought into operation. This 17th Amendment infringes the important principle of Law that a new enactment should be expressed in simple and clear language. It is cryptic and has all the characteristics of a riddle the full implications of which can be fully understood only by men learned in the law.

The Amendment represents contempt for the Supreme Judiciary of this country being an attempt to undo the judgements of the Supreme Court and the High Courts.

Over and above the cumulative effect of the considerations set out above, there are some very specific reasons which call for the President's intervention.

This law in effect does away with the whole of Part III (including the vital Article 14) of the Constitution and the guarantees therein contained, so far as land-owning citizens, small or big, are concerned. The contention that this Amendment is necessitated by the desire to carry through land reforms is altogether untenable since land reforms in a free society have always been understood to mean freeing the peasants from intermediaries and parasitic rent collectors and not the dispossession of the actual tillers of the soil like the ryotwari landholders who are in direct relationship with Government. The plea that an Amendment introduced in the Select Committee protects those actually cultivating the land below the ceiling from expropriation is an untenable one for two reasons:

- (a) First, it opens the door to their being divested of their land for any purpose and not for any

specific public purpose as would be the case if the land acquisition laws were to apply.

- (b) Secondly, the ceiling itself is capable of unilateral and arbitrary reduction on the part of the State Government or Legislature, thereby rendering this so-called safeguard illusory.

The present Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha do not have any definite electoral mandate to make such a radical interference with the Fundamental Rights of a particular class of citizens, the most numerous among all. The Election Manifesto in 1962 of the Congress Party, which is now in Office, did not include any item which made clear to the electorate that if the Party was returned to Office it would take away the right of all the farmers of this country to fair compensation at market rates for their land as and when an occasion arose for the Government to acquire it together with what can be taken to make up for the compulsory deprivation of a long enjoyed vocation handed down for generations. It cannot be argued that there was no provocation for such an item forming part of the Election Manifesto since one of the laws in question had already been struck down by the Judiciary and is now included in the new Ninth Schedule. This is a situation in which the President would be acting entirely within his rightful province to ask that no such Amendment to the Constitution be made until after it has secured the mandate of the electorate at the time of the next General Elections in 1967 or, if the present Government so desires, earlier.

A second specific reason for this appeal is that while the letter of the Constitution may appear to have been respected, its spirit has been violated by the manner in which this Amendment was got through Parliament. It will be recalled that on April 28 this year, this Amendment failed to secure the particular majority required for such an Amendment to the Constitution, as a result of a failure on the part of the majority of the members of the Lok Sabha to turn up and vote for it. Constitutional propriety demanded that the measure should have been dropped for the life of this Parliament or that

a new measure was evolved and referred to a Select Committee before being placed before Parliament. Instead, in an attempt to vindicate lost prestige, a special session of Parliament, at great cost to the nation, was convened on 27th May, the ostensible purpose of this being to give validity to enactments struck down by the highest judicial authority many years ago, which had been suffered for long to rest so struck down. Despite all appeals that an Amendment to the Constitution should not be made a matter for the Party Whip and that the traditions laid down at the time of the Constituent Assembly that all decisions should be left to the free vote of the members should be observed, the Congress Party constrained its Members, many of whom were not in agreement with this measure, to vote for it. This in effect nullifies the express provision in the Constitution that a free voter of an absolute majority of Parliament should signify assent to any such Amendment. The question arises as to whether the kind of consensus required by the Constitution in the case of an Amendment to it was forthcoming in this case.

There is a final consideration which is perhaps more decisive than any other and that is that this Amendment represents a breach of faith with Parliament and people on the part of the Congress Government. On 1st June, 1951, while replying to the Constitution (1st Amendment) Bill, Dr. Ambedkar gave an assurance (Parliamentary Debates Vol XII, Part II c.c. 9913-14) that "there is no intention on the part of Government that the provisions contained in article 31 (a) are to be employed for the purpose of dispossessing ryotwari tenants." The use of the word "tenants" is merely conventional, such tenants being recognized by the law and all the Governments that ruled India as full owners. The Law Minister, Dr. Ambedkar, spoke on behalf of Government and proceeded to point out to the critics of the 1st Amendment Bill that there was a specific safeguard against a breach of this assurance. He drew attention to the proviso attached to article 31 (A) "which requires that every such Bill shall be reserved for the consideration of the President", and proceeded to say: "I believe that whenever any such measure comes before Parliament for consideration, the undertaking given in this House would be binding upon the President in giving his sanction so far as any such measure is concerned. Therefore, I sub-

mit there is no ground for any fear of any such thing happening and I believe that there is also no justification for any kind of propaganda that may be carried on by interested parties that this Bill proposes to give power to Government to expropriate everybody including the ryotwari tenants." It may be repeated and explained here that when he used the word *ryotwari* tenants, which was a technical term used under British rule, Dr. Ambedkar was referring precisely to those whom Clause 2 sub-clause (ii) of the Bill describes as holders of "any land held under ryotwari settlement" and who are full owners of the landed property they hold.

The day that Dr. Ambedkar thought would never come has arrived. The situation in which he assured Parliament that the assurance given "would be binding upon the President" has now arisen. It is hoped that the President will be pleased to fulfil the responsibility entrusted to him by seeing that the official assurance given to Parliament at the commencement of the process of amending the Constitution is respected. A new Government securing the mandate of the electorate for a change of policy might perhaps be forgiven for going back on such a solemn assurance but the Congress Party and its Government which was responsible for the pledge can certainly not go back on it without at least securing approval from the electorate to a reversal of that assurance.

The Constitution as amended by this new Bill would stand disfigured by an article amounting to a deep riddle. If the object of this crude disfigurement of the Constitution by an artificial definition be "land reform" as often stated, it is humbly pointed out that there is nothing to prevent the highest security and the best terms being provided for cultivators of land and all workers thereon by a properly drafted enactment within the solemn terms of the Constitution and without infringing any of the guarantees contained therein.

For all these reasons it is requested that the President may be pleased to withhold his assent to the Constitution (17th Amendment) Bill.

Sd. C. Rajagopalachari
N. G. Ranga
M. R. Masani
Dahyabhai V. Patel
M. Ruthnaswamy

(For Private Circulation)