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The Outlook for Party Politics in India

by

M. R. MASANI, M.P.



NORTH BOMBAY JUNIOR CHAMBER



Mr. M. R. Masani, M.P., addressing a public meeting organised by North Bombay Junior Chamber at the Indian Merchants Chamber Hall on 'The Outlook for Party Politics in India'. From left are: Mr. Muzli S. Deora, Vice President, North Bombay Junior Chamber, Mr. M. R. Masani, Mr. Adi Godrej, President, North Bombay Junior Chamber and Mr. Hoshi Karanjia, Vice President, Indian Junior Chamber.

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*Produced by MUBLI S. DEORA,
Vice President, North Bombay Junior Chamber*

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M. R. MASANI, M. P.

The topic that you have suggested that I speak on, "*The outlook for Party Politics in India*", is well chosen because it concerns certain vital issues that face us in our national life today. But, before I come to that topic, I would like to ask you to consider for a minute the state of our country—to consider whether we are satisfied with the way we have used our freedom for the last twenty years and more.

I would like in this context to quote the words of a very good friend of India when he spoke while inaugurating the UNCTAD Conference in Delhi last February. I refer to Mr. George Woods who was then President of the World Bank which, next to the United States of America, has been the biggest donor of aid and sustenance to our country. He said: "We must be frank to say that in many parts of the world the situation is discouraging and even disturbing. Here in our host country (he was speaking in New Delhi), the home of one-seventh of all the human race, after twenty years of independence many billions of people have yet to experience more than the feeblest manifestations of progress. Those who believe as I do that India is engaged in a task of deep meaning for all the developing countries must be gravely concerned by the uncertainties that cloud her national life. India is an exceptionally dramatic case because of its size and location on the troubled Asian continent. But it is by no means the only country where hope has dwindled to despondency".

This is the overall picture and I wish that one could say that he was wrong. But we know in our hearts that he was right. Today I shall deal with only one aspect of this kind of despondency in place of hope that is coming over intelligent people in this country,

and that is in regard to the party's political system as it is developing in our country—or as it is failing to develop.

Now, in most parts of the world, the necessity for parties is a closed subject. It is assumed to be part of nature. Nobody questions the necessity for political parties in a democracy. But in India the concept has been challenged by some people including my very good friend Jayaprakash Narayan, who has preached the partyless democracy after a fairly extensive experience of the functioning of political parties. His thesis is that parties are an obstruction to the national interest and that our free society could function better if people functioned without parties and in all elections "the best man" were elected. The question that he has not quite succeeded in answering is: 'How is the best man to be ascertained? Who is the best man?' It is all right in a village to say that the best man is the most moral man, the most respectable man, the most efficient man. But when we come to big electorates of lakhs of people that kind of a test of the best man is very difficult. How would you say who is the best man in the city of Bombay for example? At that point it becomes necessary to define the best man as the man who is most representative of our own thoughts and feelings, who can speak for us best, who represents us best. And as soon as we come to that concept, it is obvious that the only way we can find out who is the best man is for political parties to be formed who have certain ideals and feelings in common and who put up candidates for whom those who agree with that Party should vote. That is how the Party system becomes an essential, almost inevitable, part of democracy.

Jayaprakash and I

In fact if you do not have any parties, you are likely to have a one-party dictatorship. Because unanimity becomes the rule and as you know unanimity is the hallmark of totalitarian dictatorship, whether it is

fascist or communist. This is not to say that I do not sympathise with my friend Jayaprakash. I do very deeply sympathise with him as I know he sympathises with me! I received his sympathies in person only a few days ago, but I told him that there was still a difference between him and me. That is that while both of us might be conscious of the evils of parties, I am not prepared to make a principle or virtue of partyless democracy. I still have to face the fact that in anything larger than a village or small town a political party probably is a necessary evil, something inevitable until we evolve a great deal further and evolve to that system of libertarian anarchy that the students of Paris and elsewhere would like us to jump to overnight.

There is another reason why parties are necessary and that is that in a democracy an Opposition is fundamental. Where there is no effectively functioning opposition there is no real democracy. You may have a very beautiful paper constitution like the Soviet Constitution which my good friend Louis Fischer, before he was cured, used to describe from Moscow in 1936 as "the most democratic Constitution in the world". Reading it, you would think he was right. But the whole essence of that freedom is taken away by the denial of the right to form opposition parties who can put up candidates and possibly defeat the Communist Party in a free election. Therefore, the functioning of an effective opposition is above all the acid test of a real democracy. And how do you get a functioning opposition unless there are parties in opposition? So there is one more reason why, as far as one can see, parties are a necessity, even if a necessary evil.

Now, while rejecting partyless democracy, one does not have to go to the other extreme of elevating the Party into a God. There has been a trend not only in totalitarian countries but in all countries generally in the last twenty or thirty years for parties to acquire a dominating position in the life of the individuals

who belong to them. My good friend Ignazio Silone, the well known Italian novelist who has also been a leader of the Socialist Party, has drawn attention to this in his writings. He has protested against the way in which in his own country, Italy which is fairly representative of Western Europe the political parties have dominated the life and thought in all aspects of life of the citizen. He has protested against this and said: 'Let us keep the party in its proper place'. The individual must still have a large area where he can't be bothered with what his party has thought out for him. The individual must be free to think for himself. In other words, we have to apply that old Biblical precept in our public life: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's". In this case God represents the individual conscience as opposed to the State and the political party.

When some of us formed the Swatantra Party in 1959 we took a step which I thought was estimable. We said we were "a party with a difference" because we recognised this trend of the party to dominate the individual and we rejected it. In our Statement of Policy, we said that the Swatantra Party "believes that the present trend followed in India and elsewhere by which political parties dominate more and more the thoughts, lives and activities of members is one that needs to be removed. The Party holds that democracy is best served if every political party allows freedom of expression to its members on all matters falling outside the fundamental principles of the party. The Party therefore gives its members, whether in Parliament or elsewhere, the fullest liberty on all questions not falling within the scope of its principles and statement of policy." Now, I think it was an excellent statement and I think we have tried to live up to it, though some of our friends have misunderstood it to mean that, if they sell their votes for an election to the Rajya Sabha, that also is freedom of conscience which they should enjoy!

In other words, the party is a means to an end. A

party cannot be made an end in itself. A party is formed so that people who are like-minded can get together to get their point of view represented in the councils of the nation. It is a very strictly limited instrument to carry out certain objectives and the service of the party, the glory of the party, cannot become an end in itself, otherwise the means will defeat the end.

How Real?

I would like to come to another topic and that is the reality of the party system in India. How real is it? To what extent do the political parties as they exist today really have roots in the country? To what extent do they go deep into the hearts of the people? To what extent do they float on the surface and cover up other realities? There is no doubt that the reality of the party system in India is a little more limited than what it is in the United States or Britain or other Western countries. There are many reasons for this. The first is the wide distances and the number of people in this country. India is big, as populous, as the whole of Western Europe. Forming a political party and making it live in India is as hazardous and difficult an enterprise as if, in the Europe of the future which has still to evolve, the European Community, a political party were to have members all the way from Scandinavia down to Spain on one side and Yugoslavia on the other. You can imagine how difficult that task would be and how often that task would fail in its achievement. Another factor is that nearly four-fifths of our voters are illiterate. That does not mean they are less intelligent or that they are stupid. They are not. I think the illiterate peasant in India is in many ways as shrewd as the best of us and in many ways wiser than many of our so called intelligentsia. They have not suffered from the fog of confusion from which our intelligentsia still suffers as a result of twenty years of Jawaharlal Nehru. They escaped him. They stuck to their families, their temples and their

land and missed this whole disastrous chapter in our intellectual development.

The point that I am making is that illiteracy does constitute a tremendous barrier to effective communication. After all, how can a voter decide for whom to vote if he cannot read the manifestos of the rival candidates or parties; if he can't follow the controversies in the press; all that is available is the door to door interview or a mass meeting, where the candidate or someone on his behalf can talk. There are other aids to democracy in an illiterate country — what are called the audio-visual aids — Radio, Television, the Film. But unfortunately, the film is not used except by a few of us who are public relations minded. I have used the film in a couple of elections, but I am one of the exceptions. We cannot use the radio because it is a Government department and closed to us, and unfortunately the present government has refused to carry out the Chanda Committees Report which would have created a B.B.C. kind of Corporation which could have allowed freedom of political debate to proceed. Television practically does not yet exist. So there is this absence of what I call a conveyor belt — the belt that carries the message to the voters and brings back the votes. In present conditions, the conveyor belt has to be the human being the mobile, vocal human being who carries the message by word of mouth.

Another factor is caste. Below the surface of the ideological political party, there is often the reality of caste. It eats into all the parties. However much we deny it, it exists amongst all of us. Jayaprakash Narayan has quite accurately described Caste as 'the biggest Party in India'.

Then there is the cult of personality, the patronage of government, those in authority, the fear of those in authority. Gandhiji used to say: "India has yet to learn to say 'no'". If he were alive today I am afraid he would still say: "India has to learn to say 'no'". In other words, the non-conformist conscience, as it is

called in the West, is missing. Then finally there is the power of money. Thus ideology is only one of five or six things that decides the fate of parties and of elections. This is the background. I now come to the problems of the day.

What is the state of our Party system today? Is it healthy, is it bad? Before I answer the question, I might mention that people all over the world today seem to think that the parties are in a mess. This is true now of Europe, America, Japan, and so on. There are very few countries where people are satisfied with the functioning of their parliamentary or presidential democracy.

Let me just quote three or four remarks about Britain today. I was there last month and I picked up these opinions while I was there because they were expressed either when I was there or a few weeks earlier. Jo Grimond, who had been leader of the British Liberal Party — a very fine Liberal and an idealist—said in March this year: "We have a growing mood of cynicism throughout the country. Not only students, but many others no longer believe what Ministers say. Why should they?.... The political boat is always at sea. The point about it at the moment is that it is rocking very badly and if we are not very careful it may founder in the cynical contempt for democracy which we saw in France between the Wars". He had not foreseen what was coming in France within a few weeks again.

There was a National Opinion Poll reported in the London Times of 9th April which will amuse you. It presented voters with nine uncomplimentary statements about politicians in England. Half or more of the voters agreed with each of the disparaging remarks. At least two-thirds thought that politicians would promise anything to get votes and that politicians care more about their party than about their country. Out of eight occupations listed politicians came fifth in value, behind Doctors, Teachers, Businessmen and Policemen. In terms of the least usefulness to society,

they came second with only Clergymen below them!

The climax of this kind of feeling in England which is very real came on the 1st of June when Mr. Francis Noel-Baker, a British Labour M.P., resigned from the House of Commons. He just vacated his seat and retired from Parliament, and the reason he gave is probably the first time a member could have retired for this reason. He said: "I am deeply worried about the dangerous public disrepute into which Parliament has fallen. The scorn with which more and more sections of public opinion and particularly young people openly feel for Parliament is a serious threat to freedom and our free way of life." That is quite a remarkable act for a man to give up his seat because he thought that he was belonging to a body which was inviting public contempt and scorn.

In France, recent events have shown how the National Assembly was practically bypassed by the people and by all concerned.

And so, when we come to India, we need not feel unduly unhappy that our politicians have never been so low in public esteem as they are today — never so low in the last twenty or thirty years. My opinion is not relevant there, but let me quote President Zakir Husain on the 30th of March as reported in the *Times of India* the following day. He said: "How can we speak to hot-headed student mobs and ask them to refrain from senseless destruction and disturbance of peace when even those in high political and public places set an example of violent expression and agitational approach in the conduct of public affairs? The unseemly scramble for power, growing lawlessness, senseless destruction of life and property are bringing democracy into disrepute." Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan said in April: "In every Party the extremists are trying to pull down the good men." Mr. Frank Anthony, a fine parliamentarian, said in April: "Power hungry politicians are seeking to enlarge their empires by interfering with the internal management of the best universities, colleges and schools. The disastrous re-

sults are already increasingly evident in intrigue, nepotism, indiscipline and a rapid decline in educational standards."

Mr. Frank Moraes, writing in the *Indian Express* in March, said: "The nation-wide deterioration in public conduct began and will probably end with our politicians in Parliament and the State Legislatures. For unless these gentlemen learn to mend their manners and their way of life the people will never be persuaded to observe better codes of individual and general behaviour. The politicians have ceased to amuse. More and more they are coming to be regarded as a public nuisance which needs to be abated. For ironically nobody has brought and is bringing Parliamentary institutions more into public disrepute than some of the members who inhabit them.... Are these human beings or baboons? This writer overheard a foreign visitor observe after one exhibition at a certain legislature. If India were to live by politics alone the country would be a madhouse."

Calcutta and Lucknow

I was in Calcutta last week to attend a meeting of the Consultative Committee of Parliament on West Bengal affairs. As you know, the Assembly has been suspended there. There is an Advisory Committee of Parliament. While there, I became aware of the fact that in Bengal or at least in Calcutta today most people do not seem to want an election. They don't want it in November and they don't even want it next February. The general mood is: "Leave us alone. We don't want elections and we don't want politicians. We are very happy with the Governor and the bureaucracy." Why? Because they are honest and they have minimum government. They leave us alone. They don't interfere in our lives." The bureaucrats naturally do the least that they have to do, holding the fort between one government and another. Now this has gone down extremely well. Everyone says: "Why can't we enjoy Governor's Rule for two or three years?"

Why can't you leave us alone?" I am told by friends in U.P. that in Lucknow the same mood has come. People do not want elections. In other words, they do not want democracy. They are prepared to forego their wonderful right to vote, to choose their own government.

Now this is not only amusing, it is alarming. Supposing in five years' time the whole of India were to feel this way? Where would be our Constitution and our way of life?

I do not blame this impatience with politicians. I think it is very understandable. Our newspapers announced that in five days after June 1, 1967, three new parties came into existence in the U.P. and two more are said to be in the offing! Now how can people take seriously those who behave in this way?

I think the factors that make for the low repute of our politicians and parties today can be broken down into three or four. One is the lop-sided situation at the Centre where a minority party has been holding office for twenty years. The Congress Party has never secured 50% of the popular vote of the Indian people in any election. The highest they got was 48%. They have come down now to 38%. In the absence of proportional representation, we have had a very distorted political structure, with a minority of people ruling the majority. As many as 308 out of the 520 members of the present Lok Sabha were elected by a minority of their own constituents — a very high proportion. The majority of members of the Lok Sabha do not represent a majority of their own constituents. They came in on a split vote because there were too many candidates. This comes of the failure of the Indian people to evolve a two or three party system.

Gandhiji Ignored

Perhaps the root of the tragedy may be traced back to the failure to follow Mahatma Gandhi's advice to

the Indian National Congress to dissolve itself as a political party and to allow two parties to come up which would carry on the parliamentary system. A few days before he was assassinated on 30th January, 1948, Gandhiji had drafted a resolution for the A.I.C.C. which was about to meet. It said: "The A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organisation and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh". That is, to cease to be a political party and become a social service, constructive organisation. Perhaps if this advice had been followed, which was so easily forgotten by his lieutenants after his death, we would not be in the plight we are today. But there it is. His advice was ignored and we find ourselves today at what may prove to be the beginning of the end of parliamentary democracy if things are not put right very early.

Why did this happen? Why was Gandhiji's advice not followed? Because essentially it would have meant that half the politicians would have been out of office at any given time. Let us consider what parliamentary or presidential democracy means. It means that about 40% of a country's politicians are at any given time out of office. Isn't that true of Britain? Isn't that true of America or any other country? In India the trouble is that 80% of the politicians want to be in office all the time. If you get a political caste like that, you cannot have democracy of any kind. This is the trouble with the Indian political system — 80% of India's politicians want to enjoy office all through their lives for as long as they can. The idea of being in the Opposition, of being in the wilderness, is considered to be anathema.

To this imbalance has been added the instability of our Governments. In the last twelve months to sixteen months, from February 1967, 13 State Governments have fallen thanks to what are called "defections".

Today, we see that all political parties in India are disintegrating visibly before our eyes. As far as I know there are no exceptions. The Congress Party makes

out today in the statements of its Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister that the situation is improving for them. They are regaining lost ground. They quote the results of the Haryana election on their side. I can assure you that it is nothing of the kind. If the Congress Party gets a majority in West Bengal during the next elections, the last thing the people will think is that the Congress people are good and they want them to be in office. The only reason they will win, a good reason, is to keep the Communists out, because they have tasted Communist rule and they don't want another dose. And the same considerations apply all over India. People now vote not for people but against people. They are voting against parties, not for parties. The general pattern is: who shall we vote for to keep out such and such a person or such and such a party? So this reversal in the tide only means that, just as last year people in India were sick of the Congress Party and they voted for Opposition Parties, now they are developing the same disgust for Opposition Parties and for the moment they are voting for the Congress Party.

If the Congress Party is disintegrating visibly, the Jan Sangh is not in much better shape. Till a year ago I believed that they were a party of dedicated and disciplined people. But recently in U.P. and other States we have found out that indiscipline and corruption are also rampant in their ranks. The P.S.P. and S.S.P. are already broken reeds and if you read the statements of my friend Madhu Limaye, he quite frankly confesses that the S.S.P. is breaking up in Kerala, U.P. and Bihar. The B.K.D. started breaking up almost the day after it was formed with the defection of Mr. Humayun Kabir, the man who drafted its programme. But I would like to congratulate it on one act for which it was recently responsible, and that was the dissolution of their Bengal unit. They kicked out the whole of their Bengal Unit because it would not give up its alliance with the Communists. Mr. Ajay Mukherjee and his group are put outside the B.K.D.

because they have clung to the Communist alliance. For that the B.K.D. deserves to be complimented, particularly because of the contrast with my own Party.

My own Party has been developing in the last few years, but more openly in the last twelve months, a certain measure of indiscipline and lax behaviour which is doing its own image no good. Recently this subterranean process came to the surface when the Gujarat unit indulged in a shameless breach of faith, a breach of faith for which there was no excuse whatsoever. The failure of the national leadership to take proper steps to restore the credibility of the Party which was shattered has added to the blot on the good name of the Party. Now credibility, if I may explain it to you Junior Chamber Members, is the equivalent of credit in business. When a businessman blots his copybook and behaves in such a way that nobody gives him credit, neither a bank nor anyone else, and everyone says "cash down", the odds are that such a businessman is pushed out of business because in business you function on your credit. Similarly, a political party which loses its credibility is in the same situation as a businessman without credit. Mr. Bhaillal Patel, the leader of the Gujarat Party, in a candid moment after the result said in Gujarati (this was reported in the Gujarati press): "Now nobody will believe the word of the Swatantra Party. Only a fool would do so." Now, how can a Party whose leader has made this statement face the electorate in 1972 if the people who created this lack of credibility are still leading the Party? Its a very simple matter which I think even members of the Junior Chamber should not find it difficult to understand. But the sad thing is that very venerable veterans in my Party have refused to understand this very simple proposition and prefer to pretend that nothing has happened.

It is against this kind of thing that I have found it necessary to take the unpleasant step of refusing to participate in the administration of the Swatantra Party

until I find evidence of a change of heart, a belief in ethical and disciplined methods. Whether this will come or not is not for me to say. One can only do what is the right thing and leave it to others to make the right response. Many years ago in Ahmedabad, addressing the Harold Laski Institute, that was in 1962, I remember quoting a remark of Prof. Tawney who told Mr. Ramsay Macdonald: "Your Party has the right to demand any service of you but not to dishonour you."

I could quote editorial after editorial supporting the line that I have taken. But what interested or amused me most was an article in the *Free Press Journal* in our own city which approached this matter with a delightful sense of humour. In that article written by Mr. K. Srinivasan on the 7th of June, he wrote: "The Madras decision of the National Executive of the Swatantra Party should make it plain to Mr. Masani how much he is out of date and out of tune with the Party". I agree I am somewhat old fashioned about certain matters! He said: "Mr. Masani has explained that the Party should endeavour to build itself on rational scientific lines, based on ethics, discipline and good faith. He can now see how limited reason, science, ethics and discipline and good faith, are in dealing with politics. Reason belongs to the eighteenth century; science is of the nineteenth century. In the latter part of the 20th Century politics need not be burdened with antiquated limitations of this kind. Politics is now one of ganging up; of tactics and expediency; of vested interest and unscrupulous adventurism; of grab and drive; bundhs and gheraos; loot and shoot on all sides". I enjoyed that very much. But, jokes aside, if this is what the people of India gradually come to believe their politicians are up to, then I would like to ask you what price the continuance of our democratic Constitution and our parliamentary democracy?

All this seems to come out of political backwardness, a weakness of democratic roots, the absence, as I men-

tioned earlier, of the non-conformist conscience, the absence of a revulsion against anti-social behaviour. In other countries, people don't do certain things because they know they will be sent to Jericho, sent to Coventry, nobody will talk to them, nobody will shake hands with them. But these defectors and these people who break promises here now feel that they can get away with it. They don't feel that they will be ostracised and told "now you are not fit to associate with". If one party is betrayed, another party welcomes them.

Discipline

Indiscipline comes out of this lack of an internal check. There are two kinds of discipline – the democratic discipline that we exercise on ourselves – and the totalitarian discipline that is exercised on us by a dictator – a Stalin or a Hitler or a Mussolini. History shows us that when people are not able to exercise democratic discipline on themselves, when indiscipline becomes a mass phenomenon as it becomes in our India today, then nature in its own Malthusian way creates a dictatorship that imposes discipline on such people.

Gandhiji said this. Gandhiji was a great political philosopher in his own way. He often said that Freedom and Discipline are two sides of the same coin. An undisciplined man cannot be free. And a free man has to have internal discipline. I remember he referred to this in 1941 when he started Individual Satyagraha against the War. He said "I am going to look round India and choose the most disciplined man in India to be the first satyagrahi". You will remember he chose Acharya Vinobha Bhave, as the first individual satyagrahi for he said he is the most disciplined man, and only the most disciplined man can fight for freedom.

On top of all this there are the economic policies that have aggravated this demoralisation – permit licence raj, socialism, planning, whatever you like to call it, which has created a concentration of economic

and political power. This concentration of economic and political power makes for corruption and demoralisation in our public life, because the odds or the stakes are very high. People don't get elected to Parliament or the Assembly any more because they like making speeches, as I do, or expressing themselves freely, as I do. Many of them now get elected because that is the way to make money. That is the way to make money because of permit licence raj. Every minister and therefore every member of parliament has to a certain extent a political pull in influencing the issue of licences.

This brings me to the last part of my speech — what is to be done about all this? There are all kinds of suggestions with which people are coming freely. There have been suggestions of a law being passed against defections, mostly by people who do not deal with defectors. You can't pass a law to make people good. When a man commits a crime you can put him in jail. When a man defects you can put him out of business, as you think, for a year or so. Some people say he must not be allowed to be a minister for six months. Others say six months is too little. Let him not be made a minister for one year. But this is not the answer. If a man wants to defect it is not always a ministership that he is after. He can be compensated in other ways, with other jobs or with cash. How are you going to stop blackmarket money being paid to a defector? There is no law that can stop it. In other words, you can't make people good by legislation. There has to be the pressure of public opinion in the sense that you lose social esteem which, as I said, no longer helps because shameless people are allowed to carry ones. When Mr. K. D. Malaviya was appointed Chairman of the Heavy Engineering Corporation, the Prime Minister struck a very big blow at the integrity of our public life. When my Party refused to expel those who justify breach of faith it struck a big blow at the purity of public life.

Mr. J.R.D. Tata came forward a few weeks ago with

a serious contribution to the discussions. He said that in our present situation the Presidential type of government would do better than the Parliamentary. I am very glad he made this intervention. I wish people like him would intervene more actively in politics and bring some reason and sense into it. But I cannot say his suggestion provides a solution of our problem. Just changing the form of our Constitution is not going to solve the problem. The Latin American countries which are, like us, backward also have the Presidential form of government. But they do not work it like the United States. So, if the people are backward if character is lacking, if democratic roots are lacking, then doctoring the Constitution or system of Government is in itself not a full answer. It may be that the Presidential system may work a little better than the Parliamentary but, if I may say so, the problem is much more fundamental. The problem goes beyond constitutional amendments to national character, and the character of the natural leadership. It lies in the character of the people and the politicians they throw up.

Now, it may be that India deserves better leadership than she has got in the last twenty years. I think our common people, our illiterate people, did not deserve what they have got in the last twenty years. On the other hand, there is an old saying that every country gets the government it deserves. After all, who elected these people to office? Who kept Jawaharlal Nehru for twenty years in power?

'We' and 'They'

I would like you to consider whether all of you are also not guilty along with the politicians. So far you have enjoyed my digs at the politicians. But now I would like you to consider whether that is where the evil stops. When you say 'they' have done this 'they' won't do that, 'they' are like this, who are these 'they'? Who put them there? You did. They were not nominated by an outsider. Too many people grumble for five

years and do very little else. They deserve what they get. Because democracy is not the casting of a vote every five years. That is a very poor idea of a democracy. Democracy consists in day to day vigilance and day to day participation in the functions of citizenship. Therefore I would like to suggest to you that *you* are 'they'. Everyone of you is also 'they'. It is no good saying we are good, but they, the politicians, are bad. That is too easy. That will not solve your problems. You will have to do what Gandhiji use to ask people to do: "Turn the searchlight inwards". Consider whether each of you has in the last five years been a good citizen. Ask yourselves whether you have carried out the creed of the Junior Chamber which reads so beautifully and sounded so well when you read it.

So far it seems to me that we have too much of politics and too little of citizenship in India today. The politicians are active, but the citizen is passive. That is why the politician is bad. The politician can afford to be bad because you are passive. In America, this check on the politician is called grass roots democracy. It is a very important part of democracy. It is not in the Constitution, but the American Constitution could not have worked as it has worked if it wasn't for grass roots democracy, the voluntary action of the citizens, people coming together, small people, to clean up some mess, to throw out crooks from the municipality, to capture City Hall and clean it up; to clean up their own political party when it is full of corruption.

Jayaprakash made a statement this morning — he wrote a letter to the Prime Minister telling her why he did not go all the way to Srinagar to attend a meeting of the National Integration Council. He mentioned five or six reasons, but I would like to mention one or two of them which are relevant to my talk today. He said that Party politics itself is a factor responsible for the growth of the forces of disintegration. And he goes on to say: "The present composition of the

Council which is made up mostly of Ministers and Parliamentarians is likely to give the impression that the task of National Integration is one that is largely, if not wholly, to be accomplished by the State. This, as you know, is far from being the case. Indeed, more has to be done at the people's level in this regard than by the State". This is an illustration that Jayaprakash gives, of what I am trying to say that much more needs to be done at the voluntary grass roots level, much less by the Government and by Parliament.

For this passivity all classes are responsible. But I think you will agree that the responsibility or the guilt of the educated and the propertied classes is the highest, because, having the knowledge, having the resources, they have failed the country, which a poor illiterate peasant may be forgiven for having done. There is an old slogan coming from Britain that we must educate our masters. The politician must educate the electorate, it is a very good thought. But the problem we face is; who is to educate the politicians? Today the politician is morally illiterate, he lacks not the capacity to read or write or the gift of the gab but he lacks the character part of leadership. He lacks the sense of responsibility, the sense of integrity, the sense of dependability. And this ranges all the way from being late at public meetings, agreeing to speak and not turning up and forgetting even to send a telegram by way of apology up to cheating as they cheated my good friend Babubhai Vaidya (the Party's official nominee in the General Elections to the Rajya Sabha who was defeated). So who is to train the leaders in honesty and good behaviour and a sense of responsibility?

We in the world of management, as you know, have in the last five or ten years gone in for a great deal of management development and training. Every good business house now takes pride in sending its officers to the Administrative Staff College in Hyderabad or the Institute of Management in Ahmedabad

or Calcutta, and indeed many of them run their own training institutions. There is an excellent Tata Training Centre in Poona where a non-stop programme of training of management goes on from January to December. Nothing like this has been done so far to train our politicians, our public men and women.

Training Politicians

Recently some of us are trying out this experiment. Last year, my good friend Duggie Sawhney and I were discussing this very problem of the need for this kind of training. But as we were discussing and planning this, he died. It was a great loss to everyone with whom he was concerned. He had a great love of young people. He had a great love of freedom and he had a great instinct for leadership. So after his death, some of us got together and established what is known as the Leslie Sawhney Programme of Training for Democracy. We have already run two camps—one in Orissa and the other in Lonavla. We are having another one for Trade Union workers in Bombay in the next few weeks. We are going to go around the country, wherever there are 30 or 40 men and women, never mind what their politics are, except for the communists, we are prepared to train everyone. The Fascists and the Communists do go in for indoctrination, but Liberal democrats have nothing. Neither the Swatantra Party, nor the Congress Party, nor the PSP have any means of creating dedicated, convinced, disciplined workers. The Leslie Sawhney Programme makes it possible for them, for youth leagues, for student groups, for women's councils, for social workers, for trade unions, for anyone to train their members into becoming good citizens.

If these efforts to change the picture of our politics do not succeed, then I am afraid within a very few years we shall be in danger of coming to the end of our parliamentary democracy. Nature abhors a vacuum. So do politics. If a political vacuum develops in this country, a vacuum of public confidence,

a vacuum of power, where power abdicates, law and order abdicate, disorder comes over the country as it has come over Bengal and other parts of the country in the last few months, then people will not hesitate to give up their democracy. Then what people feel in Calcutta and Lucknow, we will feel in this City. We will turn round and look for a saviour, De Gaulle, or a man on horseback, to save us from the politicians. We shall go the way of Pakistan, Indonesia and Greece.

"Tailism"

India today is suffering from a failure of leadership in all her political parties. I will end, as I started, with George Woods. In the later part of his speech which I quoted from earlier, he said: "One of the serious liabilities of some poorer countries in short is leadership that does not lead. And one of the results is likely to be public apathy and cynicism instead of the ferment of enthusiasm and the hard work needed for economic progress". And this I can testify to, that the leaders of most of the political parties are "tailists". They are not leaders. Lenin was a great political strategist. He said two very good clear things. One was that "Cadres decide everything". Your trained, disciplined cadre of workers decides who wins. I mentioned earlier the need for training. His other thought was that leadership was in contrast to what he called "tailism". He accused political leaders of his time of catching the tail of the donkey, and following the party instead of being at the head. Now this is true. Most of the leaders of most political parties are tailists. They lack the courage to lead. They first find out what the majority of the party wants and then say it. Just as a political party is trying to find out what a majority of the people want and then say it. How many Congressmen have I heard saying: "We don't like socialism. But, you know, the Indian people want it, so we have got to pretend to be socialists". Jawaharlal Nehru sold them that Big Lie, they believed it.

Now, if the leaders are bad, are the people bad too? I would not like to think so. I think we have many fine qualities among our people. We have a peasantry endowed with robust commonsense, simple faith, sturdy dignity. We have a labour force which, if given proper training and leadership, is as good as any in the world, with simple needs and low standards of living. We have a small but growing band of middle class professional executives such as members of your Junior Chamber, who, in knowledge and capability, are second to none in the world. We have a new generation of post-war, post independent young men, capable, willing, modern, uninhibited. How are they going to save this country?

I am afraid at this stage it would be too late to say that one political party will save the country. I had that dream in 1959, that by forming the Swatantra Party we could revolutionise the face of Indian politics. I used to call it "the last hope of Indian democracy." Unfortunately, in spite of our beautiful principles, our behaviour has now made the people of India feel that the Swatantra Party cannot by itself remove the Congress and take its place. In other words the lack of credibility has destroyed this dream. I don't think any other political party by itself can hope to take the place of the Government that must go if India is to be saved. There is a need for all those who are democrats, for all those who are opposed to Communism on the one hand and Communalism on the other, to come together in one grouping or front to save the country. I do not care what it is called. Call it the National Democratic Party or Front or whatever you like. I agree with Mr. Charan Singh who said a few days ago, that "love of the Party image, the Party flag and the Party symbol" seems to come in the way. He is right.

I for one welcome the initiative taken by Mr. Charan Singh and the B.K.D. in the last few weeks to call for a fusion of their own Party, the Swatantra Party and the P.S.P. to start with. Be-

cause, as I said earlier, all these three parties are opposed to communism and opposed to communalism. I would like to think that in the ranks of the Swatantra Party membership also this proposal, if carried to them, would evoke a widespread and positive response. After all, Rajaji and I with Prof. Ranga's cooperation, offered to merge with the Jan Sangh at the end of 1965. We offered to give up our name, our flag and our symbol and have a new one if the Jan Sangh was prepared to merge along with us into one Party. If that was legitimate why should it not now be legitimate to have a new name, a new flag and a new symbol with people who are nearer to us than the Jan Sangh ever were? Unfortunately, that effort was turned down by the Jan Sangh. But we had made it. And I think we should stand by this broadminded stand that we are prepared to join and sink ourselves, our identity, to sacrifice our Party, if necessary, for the sake of the country. That is why I say that the country must come first and not the Party. If these forces can come together, I am quite clear that the face of Indian politics would change, because what is creating despondency is a sense of helplessness, a sense that there is no alternative to the Congress Party. This is what most people are today fed up about—that there is nothing that can take place of the Congress Government at the Centre. The moment these three parties come together in Parliament and outside, there will be a sizable bloc that will be recognisable by the people as being broadbased enough to challenge the Congress Party in 1972. If this is not done, I fear we are in danger of throwing the baby of parliamentary democracy out with the bathwater of the Congress Government in Delhi. Because, at some stage, people will get so fed up, as they were with the Muslim League politicians in Pakistan, as they were with President Sukarno in Indonesia, as they were with the politicians of Greece, and say "let us have a military dictatorship and let us get rid of these people".

I would not like that to happen, because I believe in democracy. I believe that democracy is worth fighting for. It has its imperfections. There is one good thing about it, which no other system has, unless you have hereditary monarchy. And that is that Democracy permits of a peaceful and constitutional change of Government when the people want it. No other system has that. Once you put in a military dictatorship, the only way to throw it out is by another *coup d'etat*, by force. And today with all the instruments in the hands of those in authority, it is not very easy, as the people of Paris found out, to dispose of an unpopular government.

The last word on the subject, as indeed my last word today, is something that was said by a very great democrat—Winston Churchill. He, if anyone, knew all the good and the bad things about democracy. He had been at the pinnacle of power during the War but for ten years before the war he had been in the wilderness, for his own party had no use for him until Hitler threatened Britain. And at the end of the war the British people again put him back into wilderness. So towards the end of his life, when he was asked what he had to say about democracy, Winston Churchill made a very wise, very profound remark with which I would like to end. He said: "Of all known systems of Government, democracy is undoubtedly the worst—except all the others".

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