

Speech Delivered by Sir Homi Mody as
President of the Public Meeting of
the Swatantra Party held on July 6,
1959
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The large and representative gatherings which have responded yesterday and today to the call of the Swatantra Party are eloquent of many things. They testify to the growing disillusionment of a large body of people over the policies and methods pursued by the Party in power. They are also a testimony to the respect and regard which the public entertains for the veteran statesman who has lent the weight of his great name and position to the Swatantra Party.

I do not know why, when people speak of Rajaji, they refer to him as an Elder Statesman. That term is sometimes employed to designate one who has turned somewhat senile and decrepit, who has to be wrapped up in cotton wool and preserved with affection. Rajaji, I am sure you will all agree, does not answer to that description. His mind is a great deal more active and his thinking more acute than that of most of us. He is a stout-hearted patriot who has been in the forefront of the national movement, and whose courage and independence have shone out all through his long and honourable career. And he has always something refreshing to say, unlike most of those who take it upon themselves, day in and day out, to exhort us to be patriotic and lead a life of self-denial, which really means that we shall pay up with a smile everything we have so that a socialist paradise may be built up.

I do not propose to trench on Rajaji's province and tell you why the Party has come into being and what its programme and policies are. Broadly speaking, the Party stands for democratic freedom, for social justice and for efficient and honest administration. Ours is not a negative approach; we are anti this Party or that only to the extent that we feel that the policies and methods pursued by them are fraught with disastrous consequences and require to be combated. Within a few short years of assumption by the Congress of the government of the country, a position has arisen where we are faced with a serious threat to our liberties arising from the ascendancy of a single party in the legislatures of the country, and from the dominance of a few individuals in that party. Democracy may mean a rule of the majority, but the essence of political wisdom is the restraint with which power is exercised. Especially is this the case when a single party is in an overwhelming majority and there is no opposition worth the name. Just think of the light heartedness with which Government has tampered with our fundamental rights under the Constitution and whittled down by the Fourth Amendment one of our most cherished rights - the right to property. Pause and consider also the number of Ordinances that are issued and the vast amount of regulatory legislation pouring out in an unending stream for the control of almost every aspect of our national life. I have no doubt that in the prevailing atmosphere and with the cast iron majority which the ruling party has in the legislatures, if a bill were brought in tomorrow that we should all turn vegetarians or put on khadi, it would be passed. This is not democracy. It is the dictatorship of a chosen oligarchy ruling in the

name of the people. It is time those who love liberty and the fundamental rights which free men cherish handed themselves together in defence of their rights and made an effort to give to the country what it badly needs - a well planned development of the human personality and the material resources of the country and an efficient, honest and progressive administration. Thousands of crores of rupees have been spent in the last few years on grandiose projects, while many of the basic needs of the people remain to be satisfied. No country can prosper which puts first things last in pursuit of an outmoded philosophy and in defiance of the values of life which free men have cherished through the centuries.

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heartedness with which Government ^{has} tampered with our

fundamental rights under the Constitution and ^{taken} ~~took away~~
~~from us in effect~~ ^{shuttled down under the fourth Amendment} one of our most cherished rights - the

right to property. (Consider also the casual way in which
matters of importance are disposed off by Ordinances which
are intended to deal with emergent situations.) I have

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