

521, V.P. House,
Rafi Marg,
NEW DELHI-1

June 25, 1976

2134 copy -
Dear Mr. Ganapiah,

Your letter addressed to Ch. Charan Singh and copy endorsed to me has been received by us. Chowdhary Sahab has asked me to write to you - which in any case, I would have done on my own - explaining the B.L.D. stand on the merger issue.

We are as sincere as before to bring about the merger of the opposition parties, and there is no question of our trying to wriggle out of our earlier commitment in this respect. But at the same time, we cannot accept a situation, in which the new party is formed, without the dissolution of the existing parties, and whose programmes and policies are more socialist than Gandhian.

You have said, "leaders of all political parties have expressed themselves in favour of merger", but when it has come to taking final decision in the matter, they have all evaded it. National Executives of all opposition parties have met and discussed the merger issue, but none have committed to merge in the new party, even to the extent that we have done. We have only expressed our fear, that the procedure that was being adopted was not correct and would not achieve the desired result. Now JP himself has conceded this point in his recent talk with Ch. Sahab in Bombay. The correct procedure would have been, having announced their intention to form a new party, the leaders of the 4 parties should have sat together, and thrashed

out a policy and programme statement acceptable to all parties. After that, the National Executives should have endorsed the policy statement and announced their decision to merge in the new party on the basis of the common policy statement. The "Approach" paper, produced by the Steering Committee was not acceptable to us, because excepting those portions, which promised to restore civil liberties etc., the rest was an endorsement of the policies of the ruling party. We could not accept (i) greater emphasis on agitational than on constitutional methods to bring about change, (ii) further expansion of public distribution of foodgrains, (iii) extremely one-sided labour policy, including payment of compulsory bonus etc. (iv) total planning and (v) lack of clarity and emphasis on agricultural programme which form part of the "Approach" paper and characterize it. We pointed out these defects in the "Approach" paper, as soon as it was made available to us. Our difficulty has been that Mr. H.M. Patel - for reasons not known to us - was not assertive enough in the Steering Committee, and failed to get our point of view accepted. We prepared an alternative policy statement draft. But this was not even discussed at the Bombay meeting on 22nd and 23rd May. Instead we were assured that our ideas would be incorporated in the final policy statement of the new party. This, however, was not done, except to a very minor extent.

The above, I hope, explains the 'out-spoken' nature of our resolution passed on 31st May 1976. In certain situations, frank talk is better than acquiescence in a confused way of thinking. I think, our resolution has produced the desired result. Now it has been agreed, that a bigger Committee consisting of the leaders of the 4 parties will meet in

New Delhi, most probably in the first week of July to thrash out all the details concerning the new party. Thereafter, if agreement is arrived at, that agreement will be endorsed by the Working Committees of all parties. Consent for dissolution of the parties can be easily secured from those leaders who are in jails. If you can manage to communicate with us, I see no reason, why other leaders who are in jails cannot convey to their colleagues who are outside, their unequivocal consent for the merger.

You say in your letter, that all leaders including the leaders of the Congress (O) were in favour of merger. But that is not true. Yesterday, I had met C.B. Gupta in Lucknow. He told me frankly that Congress (O) Units of Gujarat, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and West Bengal were not willing to merge. What can the B.L.D. do in such a situation? We are making every effort to bring about merger in the true sense of the word, but we are not willing to take a leap in the dark.

Hope you and your companions in jail are in good health and spirit.

Sincerely yours

(BHANU PRATAP SINGH)