HINDUSTAN TIMES. 19 APR 1973

Singh Deo defends ties with Biju Patnaik

From Bankim Das Hindustan Times Correspondent

BHUBANESWAR, April 18—Swatantra leader R. N. Singh Deo yesterday accused Mr Minoo Masani of being responsible for the "liquidation" of the Swatantra Party in Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and elsewhere by adopting a "rigid attitude".

Mr Singh Deo's rejoinder to Mr Masani comes in the wake of the latter's criticism of the leadership of the Orissa unit of his party at their national convention for having joined hands with Mr Biju Patnaik in toppling the Satpathy Ministry in Orissa in March this year.

Mr Singh Deo regretted in a strongly-worded statement, released here today, that notwithstanding the fact that some members of the Central leadership of the party were living in "ivory towers of grandeur and hopes" he and his colleagues, along with the State unit of the party, will continue as a constituent of the Orissa Pragati Party, led by Mr Biju Patnaik. In a satirical tone, Mr Singh Deo has, however, wished well to Swatantra Party leaders "wishing to capture power in Delhi in 1976."

Rejecting criticism of association with Mr Biju Patnaik, Mr Singh Deo reminded Mr Masani that after the Khanna Commission report, the Orissa Vigilance Department during his Ministry had looked into the report and the police reported "mistake of facts". Mr Patnaik was, later, accepted to the people as was evident from his "record-breaking victory at the Rajnagar by-elections," Mr Singh Deo pointed out.

"It was too late to object to a closer political association with Mr Patnaik after having shared power with the Utkal Congress only recently," Mr Singh Deo said.

JD

Parmar

2235