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Swatantra Party Men Urged To Aim High & Work Hard

From Our Special Representative

MADRAS, April 14.—A recurrent theme in the speeches at the opening session of the Swatantra Party's national convention here today was the need for, and the very favourable conditions obtaining for, what the party president, Mr. Piloo Mody, described as the "resurrection of the party and its transformation into a powerful political force in the country".

There was a wealth of goodwill for the party lately, Mr. Piloo Mody noted in his presidential address at the session. That goodwill, coupled with the general disenchantment with the Congress and its leadership, could provide an admirable atmosphere for building up the Swatantra Party. "If in spite of this we fail, it will not be for lack of support", he added.

He said that the greatest difficulty he had encountered in the building up of the party had been the limited thinking of the party's own members: "many of them are tired of fighting, others take what they describe as a practical view, and some want to talk in terms of accepting reality and discussing possibilities". All this became counter-productive, "putting restraints on our endeavour, lowering our sights and restricting our creative energy". His ultimate plea to party men, he added, was to think big, to aim high and work hard.

For his own part, he was convinced that the Swatantra had a superior philosophy, superior policy and the only answer to India's gruelling poverty, chronic unemployment and unabating inflation. Besides, everything the Swatantra Party had said and every warning that it had given had ultimately proved correct. "Yet we have failed to capitalize on our prophecies".

Mr. M. R. Masani, who delivered the inaugural address, also declared that the principles of the party were not only sound but that unless the country turned to them there was no hope for the future of India. Therefore, the party had a role to play.

But, he asked, was that role to join with others in groupings in this State or that in an effort to get into office? Or was it, "whether by hook or by crook", to win the next elections? His own answer was that for the party to join in efforts such as those recently started by Mr. Biju Patnaik would be counter-productive.

"It is not to discredited politicians of that kind or to any combination of them that the people are going to turn in order to replace Mrs. Gandhi and those in power in Delhi today". The Swatantra Party, Mr. Masani noted, had to beware of false starts like these.

What the party needed was a reappraisal of its position and the adoption of a long-term strategy as opposed to short-term tactics. And the immediate task in the coming years would be one of educating the people. "If we keep an unrelenting campaign on against the follies and mistakes of the socialist establishment and keep placing before the people a sane and practical alternative, one of the results should in time be to rally the sensible elements throughout the country against the

unredeemable ones".

Earlier, after a lengthy analysis of the situation in the country, Mr. Masani concluded that there was nothing wrong with our country or with our people who were both intelligent and enterprising "what is wrong is that the people are not getting the leadership that they have a right to expect from those who are better endowed with intellectual and material resources".

Mr. Piloo Mody announced in the course of his speech that the Swatantra Party had decided to contest the forthcoming U.P. Assembly elections "in force". The party machinery had been fully mobilized and activated for the purpose. "U.P. holds the key to Delhi", he said, and his party was determined to see that Mrs. Gandhi does not win in that State.

A surprise visitor to the session today was the Congress (O) leader, Mr. Kamraj. He arrived a little after the session began, was received by a prolonged welcome, and went up to the dais to occupy a front row seat next to Maharani Gyatri Devi. Mr. Masani made a warm reference to him in his inaugural speech.

The convention office claimed that over 1,000 delegates from 14 states were attending the convention. The audience in the convention pandal also seemed surprisingly large despite an admission fee being charged. A massive portrait of Rajaji formed the backdrop to the dais and the convention venue, in Central Madras, has been designated Rajaji Nagar.

PTI adds: Mr. Masani denounced his party's role in the developments in Orissa leading to the resignation of the Nandini Satpathy cabinet.

He charged the party leadership in Orissa with not only joining in a "toppling" operation at the beginning of this year but with also joining hands for this purpose "with those who it had condemned as being unworthy of continuance in public life".

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