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SWATANTRA PARTY

COMMITTEE TO REVIEW PARTY POLICIES

The Swatantra Party's poor performance in the 1971 General Elections to Parliament was discussed at considerable length at a meeting of the General Council of the Party held in Bombay on April 17 and 18 this year. Members attributed two reasons for the Party's failure, viz.,

- (a) Our partnership in the alliance worked against our interests both because of
 - (i) the absence of a common programme and
 - (ii) the fact that the Jan Sangh's communal image and the Congress(O)'s responsibility for the bad policies pursued by them while in power, had tarnished our image. The Party found itself on the one hand losing minority support and on the other having to shield our Congress(O) allies.
- (b) The second view, according to some other members, was that it was not so much the alliance as our own lack of mass appeal that had resulted in our defeat. Reasons for lack of mass appeal were attributed to various factors among which were
 - (i) our inability to combat effectively the label "richman's party" and the raja-maharaja party".
 - (ii) the absence of a Party programme which would appeal to the common man in both the urban and rural areas, and
 - (iii) Negatively, our stress on matters like corporate taxation and issues relating to business and industry gave the impression that we were primarily concerned with big business interests .

A Committee was therefore appointed at the April meeting to take a fresh look at the Party's Statement of Policy adopted at the First National Convention in Patna in March 1960 to consider what changes, if any, were needed to bring the Statement of Policy adopted ten years ago, in tune with today's situation. The Committee consisted of the following persons viz., Rajkumar Ghorpade, Mr. Tribikram Tripathy, Mr. G. Latchanna, Mr. Piloo Mody, Mr. H.K. Somani, Mr. Madhu Mehta, Mr. Kalyansingh Kalvi, Mr. Anandbhai Amin, Mr. Harbhajan Singh, Col. H.R. Pasricha, Dr. H.V. Hande, Mr. Debanand Amat and Mrs. Sharayu Daftary.

To assist the work of this Committee the following Questionnaire has been drafted to elicit your views on certain important issues of Party

policy dealing particularly with agriculture, industry and labour.

In this connection, we would like to caution you **against** relying primarily on the opinions of the more affluent and prosperous members in our Party. It is necessary if the Party is to appeal to the common man, that the views of the rank and file are ascertained. We are therefore sending you this Questionnaire in the language of your State and hope you will cooperate with us in securing the views of as many of our members as possible. Your reply should be with us on or before August 7, 1971.

I. AGRICULTURE

1. Please let us have your estimate of the percentage of farmers in your State/District/Taluk/ who have reaped the benefits of the green revolution and of other facilities available to farmers like tractors, fertilisers, Bank Credit and other agricultural services.
2. To what extent have existing land reform measures (including ceilings on land holdings) been implemented in your State? What is the existing land ceiling in your State and does it apply to the family as a Unit?
3. To what extent have harijans and landless labour been allotted lands in the last two or three years?
4. What should be the Party's view on land ceilings as a measure of economic policy? If land ceiling is not desirable, what steps would you suggest to be taken to ameliorate the condition of the landless including harijans and other backward classes?
5. Please let us have your comments on existing State procurement procedures and policies. In view of the extremely limited resources available, should we stand for complete free enterprise in procurement?
6. Do you consider that the State is paying reasonable procurement price to agriculturists particularly in view of the fact that agricultural produce so procured is sold at much higher price to the other States and to the consumers? What, in your opinion should be the State's fair profit margin?
7. What is the general condition of agricultural labour in your area; how much are they paid, and in what manner (cash and/or kind). Should there be a statutory compensation for them? If so, what would you consider to be a fair amount per working season?
8. Should agricultural labour enjoy the benefit of a daily minimum wage?

9. What should be the relationship between the absentee landlord and the sharecropper ?
10. What should be the share (in percent^{age}) of the share cropper ?
11. What are your specific suggestions to relieve rural indebtedness particularly in view of the fact that despite laws and regulations and despite the availability of State and Cooperative Credit institutions the agriculturists even today is compelled to seek loans at high rates of interest ?
12. Should the Party continue its policy of total abolition of land revenue or should land revenue be applied to the more affluent farmers on a graduated scale ?
13. What should be the Party's stand on agricultural income-tax ? Should such a tax be levied by the States or the Centre or would you accept a graduated levy ? Should such taxes be totally opposed ?
14. In view of the serious shortage of cash crops like cotton, oil seeds and of other crops like pulses and vegetables would you consider it desirable to permit a small number of joint stock companies to take to farming of such crops for a limited period of say, 10 to 15 years ? If you oppose the concept of companies entering this field what specific suggestions have you to offer both to relieve shortages and to bring down prices ?

II COOPERATIVES

To what extent have cooperatives, whether they be credit cooperatives or service cooperatives played a role in improving agricultural production and generally improving living conditions in your area ? If in your opinion cooperatives have failed what are your alternate suggestions ?

III PANCHAYATS

What role have panchayats played in the general upliftment of the people in the villages ? If in your view panchayat institutions have failed what alternatives would you suggest ?

INDUSTRY

1. The Party has been accused of sheltering private sector industrialists. Should not the Party therefore de-emphasise its support to the private sector and instead talk of the industrial sector ?
2. Should we not base our support to the private sector on merit and performance ?

3. What should be the Party's activities and programmes to remove the erroneous impression that the Party stands for laissez-faire ?
4. Should we not firmly stand for the slogan of "private sector wherever possible and public sector wherever necessary"?
5. Should we not therefore welcome public sector participation if this leads to competition and better service to the consumer ?
6. Should we not confine our criticism of the public sector to performance and not per se ? Should we not recognise publicly the efficacy of organisations like Air India and lately the STC ?
7. Should not the Party stand for the replacement of family management by professional management in the private sector and of bureaucratic management by professional management in the public sector ?
8. In the absence of competition what should be the Party's attitude towards instances of profiteering, malpractices, adulteration, hoarding, black marketing, etc. by businessmen ?
9. What should be the Party's stand on the social responsibilities of business towards labour, shareholders, consumers and the general public ?
10. Should not the Party stand for the compulsory promotion of training programmes for the unemployed by the organised sector of industry?

LABOUR

1. The Swatantra Party's policy of labour has been considered to be against the interest of labour. Do you agree that this is so ? If so what changes in policy would you suggest to remove such an impression? If however you consider the policy to be correct, then what steps would you suggest to remove the misapprehension among labour that we are against their interests ?
2. Should the Party abandon its policy of not organising politically motivated trade unions ? In other words would you agree to the setting up of a trade union front of the Party on the lines of the other trade union federations in the country like, the INTUC,AITUC, HMS, CITU, UTUC, BMS etc ?
3. Would you accept control of trade unions by those who are not actually workers? If not, would you be willing to allow outsiders to act as advisers without giving such advisers the right to vote and lay down policy ?

4. Would you say that a union's recognition should be based on membership verifications or by secret ballot ?
5. Do you believe in bi-partite negotiations directly between employees or trade unions, or do you believe in voluntary arbitration and/or adjudication through the good offices of the State ?
6. What should be the Party's attitude towards profit sharing? Inter alia would you consider the payment of bonus as an adequate method of profit sharing ?
7. What should be the Party's attitude towards profit making companies particularly in regard to their social responsibilities in the matter of housing, health, medical and educational facilities ?
8. What should be the Party's attitude in matters where management is guilty of denying justice to workers ?

GENERAL

Enclosed is a copy each of the Statement of Principles adopted in August 1959 and of the Statement of Policy adopted in March 1960. We would like you and your colleagues to consider these point by point and let us know, which of these need to be revised and, if so, what are your suggestions.

You are also welcome to raise any other issue concerning Party policy which has not been tackled in this questionnaire.
