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Swatantra heading for split over merger

"The Times of India" News Service
NEW DELHI, August 5.

THE Swatantra Party was today heading for a split following the decision by its national convention to merge the party in the Bharatiya Lok Dal to be launched on August 29.

Amidst noisy scenes marked by a scuffle among some delegates, the convention adopted a resolution by 407 votes to 53 authorising the party president, Mr. Piloo Mody, to dissolve the party and merge it in the new party on a date to be decided in consultation with the national executive.

The group led by Mr. M. R. Masani, former chairman of the party, voted against the merger resolution. Later, at a news conference addressed by Mr. Masani, representatives of the party units in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Delhi and Haryana announced their intention to keep the party alive in these states if it was merged in the BLD.

HEATED EXCHANGES

Mr. Masani accused the leadership of having tampered with the constitution to change the composition of the national convention. As a result of this, U.P. had been given undue weightage in the national convention. Of the 483 delegates who were present from all over the country, 209 came from U.P.

He said that the result at the convention would have been different if U.P. did not have such a large number of delegates.

Mr. Masani said the trouble began at the convention when Mr. M. L. Jatav, president of the Delhi unit, questioned the authenticity of the

delegates from U.P. He asked why the party fared so miserably in the assembly elections early this year if it had such a popular base. This evoked strong protests from Mr. H. K. Srivastava, a member of the national executive from U.P., and led to a scuffle on the platform.

According to the other delegates, the proceedings of the convention were marked by heated exchanges between the pro-Masani group and the pro-mergerists led by Mr. Mody, who had the support of party leaders from Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa and U.P.

Notice of Resolution to be moved at the Seventh
National Convention of the Swatantra Party on
August 4 and 5, 1974 in New Delhi.

The Seventh National Convention of the Swatantra Party has carefully considered the proposal placed before it that the Swatantra Party be dissolved along with the similar dissolution of six other parties so as to facilitate the formation of a new Party.

The Convention notes that of the seven parties that are expected to dissolve to enable the formation of the new Party, the others being confined to particular States or parts of a State.

The Convention is firmly convinced that the Party's principles and policies continue to be valid and that had the policies of Government been formulated on the basis of the said principles, our country would not be in the present critical situation.

The Convention is equally convinced that the new Party will mark no advance in the search for a truly national alternative comprising as it does those who, though for the present have consented to get together on a general programme are bound to disagree in regard to the interpretation of a vague and general statement of policy.

Moreover, with opposition parties like the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh continuing their individual existence, the objective of a two-party system and its electoral benefits will continue to elude us. On the other hand, there is real danger of the ruling Congress on the one side and the Jan Sangh on the other being the direct beneficiaries of such a development.

The National Convention of the Swatantra Party does not consider the time or occasion opportune for the disappearance of the Swatantra Party from the Indian political scene and therefore **rejects** the proposal to dissolve the Party.

Proposed by:

Seconded by: