

N.J. TAVARIA

2967

7, Ruston Baug
Victoria Road,
Bombay 27 DD

14.3.72

Dr. R.C. Cooper
C/o Swatantra Party H.Q.,
Bombay

Dear Sir,

I am not a member of the Swatantra Party; you do not know me as we have only been formally introduced across the table at a couple of Forum of Free Enterprise get-togethers; my political activity has been confined to a score-or-so letters in a few periodicals. Therefore, I am in no position to tender advice to worldly-wise people like you. However, I am old fashioned enough to love my country and intelligent enough to grasp the fact that we have landed ourselves in a political mess. If you do not consider me too presumptuous, kindly read further. Perhaps, the observations of a person from a socio-economic class lower than yours could prove useful.

I am convinced that this country is going to fare much worse economically during the next five years, if the economic thinking continues as at present. Mrs. Gandhi, is an unknown quantity and it is faintly possible that she will swing towards greater economic freedom, when she realises the errors of her policies. However, she is much more likely to find herself a prisoner of men and events. I do not believe she can turn her socialistic clock back. Let us presume that we are in for some more of the same stupidity and plan to counter it.

I believe in rights and freedom and oppose the arbitrariness of the state. You believe in the same and a few hundred others do. Let me be very frank and state that in my circle of acquaintances most consider our alarmist talk as undue pessimism. They accept our points of view as worthy debating arguments but laugh it off with "Oh! come off it; don't make a mountain out of a mole hill; you see red everywhere." I have conversed in trains, factories and on the roads with people of the lowest classes. I have heard them converse with each other and even attempted to explain all these issues to them. All I got were blank looks which seemed to say "We don't own anything. If they take it away from the few rich and give it to us poor what is wrong?"

The erosion of fundamental rights does not exist as a politically live issue in this country. When the courts overrule some legislation of this nature, people (even among the upper middle classes) merely treat it as one more set back to the poverty-removal programme. The sum total of it all is that the Swatantra has received the brand of a rich-man's party. This is accentuated by the fact that all the big names in your party are of big-biz or rajahs.

Thus basic rights being no issue at all we must switch back to the economic backwardness and worsening squalor of this nation "Socialism" has received a massive mandate to hateo-garibi. We know from the lessons of economic history that it cannot do so. All the power in the world has been given to the Congress to do its job. It's inevitable failure could be your golden opportunity in 1976. We must prepare the country, educate it for the benefits of free-enterprise and project it as a clear and superior alternative to left-thinking.

How can this be done?

Upto this day the Swatantra Party spokesmen have talked economic jargon that even their most ardent sympathisers did not understand. One does not preach the superiority of market forces, fluctuating exchange rates; or the folly of deficit financing to a massively illiterate population. It goes way above their heads. (But let me return to this a little later).

The next elections are likely to witness a discontented, frustrated youthful electorate. The first step towards wooing them would be to infuse younger blood in the executive and administrative echelons of your party; (and all of them don't have to be millionaires; let's have some people who can have time to get down and talk to the people and with whom the voter can identify rather than look at with avaricious eyes).

The next thing to do would be to look out for talented sneakers in the various regional languages (say 12 or 15 per state) who believe in your ideology genuinely. This screening should be thorough. Let them be your fully-employed spokesmen for each state; going around from village to village explaining local difficulties and their causes simply, comprehensively and forcefully, eg., the corruption of the local officials, the bad state of the village roads, the ill health due to insanitary conditions, the lack of a well, medical facilities etc. Let the grievances be noted and where possible let your own people alleviate them. Otherwise raise a continuous hue and cry. Follow the principle of helping visibly or raising merry hell.

Let these same men scout around for people who have been converted to your ideology in the village and use such followers to widen the base. Do not confuse the villagers with the complexities of public finance, monetary policy, constitutional procedures etc. They live in a narrow isolated world and they can associate only with their own right.

Another useful medium of propaganda could be 16 m.m. movies shown in villages of films prepared by a good advertising agency, depicting the gulf between the practice and professions of those who represent them.

I would also suggest that you subtly attempt to acquire control of a few well read vernacular newspapers in each state. Provide them with good punchy articles at intervals, projecting the Swatantra view subtly to the readers. Sensationalise, lie a little, if need be! Avoid being preachy and sanctimonious as Mr. D.F. Karve is so often.

I am constrained to suggest this because I know that there is a paucity of workers available to you and therefore you need to use these media of communication more than others. I can think of nothing better.

You are also aware that businessmen often indulge in shady practices to exploit the customers. I think you would do well to take up an intensive campaign against such men on behalf of the consumers. Come in the public eye as champions of the people both against private and public sector gangsterism.

Blow up the news of corrupt officials out of proportion. Don't be too afraid of the laws of slander. Most of them are corrupt so they are not likely to take the chance of going to court, and by then the free publicity should have served your purpose.

It would be a very good investment to start looking into the back grounds of as many congressmen as your finances permit. Most have skeletons in their cupboards which a little diligence can dig out. Maintain dossiers on them and keep them up to date. This black-mail time bomb can be exploded at a time and occasion of strategic necessity. Nothing makes a man in public eye more nervous than the knowledge that someone somewhere knows his past. It will lend your weakened party the muscle that it requires to oppose the whole machinery of the party in power.

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I would suggest that for the next 18 to 20 months you gradually prepare an organisation for these purposes. Raise proper funds for the purpose and then get into the act without any announcements or fan fare. Let your actions and speeches be heard across the corners of the nation and not the sober and salutary advice of your party's elders. To be very frank: Their talk is falling on deaf ears. Hoing to hear from you and

Thanking you for your patience, I remain ,

Yours truly,

sd/-

M.J. Taveria