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January 25, 1972

The Consul-General,
Consulate General of the United States of America
360 University Avenue
Toronto 100
Canada.

Sir:

I was on a private visit to Toronto between the 4th and the 18th of December 1972. On the 11th or 12th, I called at your Consulate to apply for a visa to visit my sister in Philadelphia. Though, before leaving India, I had not planned to visit her, she spoke to me over long distance when I was in Toronto and pleaded that I should see her even for a couple of days. Similarly, my good friend, Dr. Howard Erdman of Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, wanted me to visit his College, I decided to respond to their requests and forthwith applied for a visa at your Consulate.

After waiting for three hours, I was informed by the Visa Clerk (an elderly lady) that my application for a visa had been turned down on the ground that I should have obtained one from the Consul-ate in Bombay. I explained to her that I certainly would have done so but for the fact that I had not planned a visit to the States. Her reply was, I thought, gratuitous. She said that if I wished to see my sister, I had better ask her to come and see me.

I explained to her that I had no intention of staying in the United States for more than a couple of days. I had my plane tickets not merely to Philadelphia and back, but also my return ticket to Bombay. She was totally unmoved. In frustration, I remarked that it need not have taken her three hours to tell me that I was not being issued a visa. Pat came her reply that she was sure the U.S. Consulate in Bombay would have taken much longer.

The only conclusion I could draw was that bureaucracy was the same everywhere-wooden-headed and unimaginative.

Ironically, I am considered to be 'pro-American', particularly because of my pronounced pro-Nixon views. This I suppose prevented me from generalising on the attitudes of American officialdom. But it did give me a clue as to why Americans, despite all the good they do, and their desire to be liked, continue to be misunderstood.

I realise nothing can be done, but if this letter enables some future visa applicant placed in the same situation as I was, to face an easier time in your Consulate, then this letter would have more than served its purpose.

Yours sincerely,

Executive Secretary Swatantra Party