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Hindu, 10/1/71

Swatantra Party Accepts Cong. (O) Programme

MADRAS, Jan. 9.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party, which concluded its two-day meeting here today, accepted as its election manifesto the resolution adopted by the Congress (O) on June 28, 1970, calling for a consolidation of all nationalist democratic forces in the country "to repel the threat of communist subversion and communal virus".

The AICC (O) resolution had put forward a four-point programme as the broad basis for a front of nationalist democratic and socialist forces. The programme envisaged faith in the unity and security of the country, defence of constitutional liberty, preservation of democratic institutions, maintenance of law and order and establishment of a secular society based on the principles of social and economic justice.

Mr. M. R. Masani, President, told reporters that the National Executive unanimously decided that the party should contest the coming elections on the basis of the agreed programme spelt out in the AICC (O) resolution "which would have been and would still be the minimum programme of an alternative Government in Delhi".

"We have denied ourselves the luxury of a separate party manifesto," Mr. Masani said. "It was something like 'a self-denying ordinance'," he remarked.

Asked whether the adoption of the resolution would mean a modification of the principles and programmes of the Swatantra Party, Mr. Masani said the resolution

did not clash with his party's programme. The resolution envisaged a "pragmatic programme" which any liberal party would accept.

Explaining the background against which the Executive decided to accept the AICC (O) resolution as its election manifesto, Mr. Masani said so far the party had hoped that it would fight the coming elections on an agreed programme, providing a democratic alternative to the present Government and offering a clean and good government to the country on the basis of the resolution. But the effort to arrive at an agreed programme had to be abandoned. Nevertheless, the Executive decided to contest the elections on the basis of the agreed programme contained in the resolution.

Mr. Masani released the following resolution, adopted by the Executive in regard to the election manifesto: "In the light of the changed situation, and the absence of an agreed programme of work among the democratic opposition parties as had been originally contemplated, the Executive authorised the President, Mr. M. R. Masani, the Vice-President, Mr. N. Dandekar, the General Secretary, Dr. R. C. Cooper, and Mr. H. M. Patel to settle the election manifesto of the party in the context of the commitment made by the General Council at its meeting on July 21, 1970 (in Madras) accepting and responding positively to the AICC (O) resolution of June 28, 1970".

Mr. Masani said the four-member group would draft the preamble to the manifesto highlighting some aspects of national importance

which would be within the ambit of the AICC (O) resolution.

Mr. Masani said his party wanted to honour its commitment and abide by the decision taken in July last. "In a way, unilaterally we are standing by the agreed programme. We think this will be appreciated not only by the sister parties but also by the public", he added. His party's decision would demonstrate its keenness for Opposition unity.

It was entirely a matter for the AICC (O) to decide whether it should also accept the agreed programme. "We are not asking for anything from them", he said. Mr. Masani hoped the manifesto would be finalised in two weeks.

Asked whether adoption of the AICC (O) resolution as its own election manifesto was a "prelude" to a merger with the Congress (O), Mr. Masani said merger was out of question.

Twentyone out of the 32 members of the Executive attended the meeting. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was present throughout the meeting.

Kamaraj Welcomes Swatantra Decision

MADRAS, Jan. 9.

Mr. K. Kamaraj, Congress (O) leader, today "wholeheartedly" welcomed the Swatantra Party's decision to join the democratic front of Congress (O) and its allies.

Mr. Kamaraj said he was also happy that the Swatantra Party had adopted the AICC (O) resolution as its election manifesto. — PTL.

Rusaul