

Swatantra to join Old Cong. front

By Our Staff Reporter

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party, which met in Madras on Friday, unanimously decided to join the front led by the Old Congress, though it recorded its "deep disappointment" that the effort to establish a democratic alliance with a common minimum programme based on the AICC resolution of June 28 last year had been given up.

The executive took this decision after considering the "totality of the circumstances (in the country)" and in the light of the clear assurance by Congress (O) president S. Nijalingappa that no Communist party would be allowed to associate with the front.

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, founder leader of the party, participated in the discussions, which lasted about three hours, "right from the beginning." 21 of the 32 members of the executive attended the meeting.

The executive is meeting again on Saturday morning to finalise the draft manifesto. In the afternoon, the Parliamentary Board of the party will meet and discuss, among other things, the seat adjustments the party should make with partners of the front and its own list of candidates.

Following is the text of the resolution: "The national executive of the Swatantra Party has received a report from the president, Mr. M. R. Masani, of recent developments in connection with the party's efforts for the establishment of a democratic alliance to contest the Lok Sabha elections, and, in particular, the development in Delhi on Jan. 3. After discussion, the executive records its sense of deep disappointment at the abandonment of the effort at establishing a democratic alliance or front with a common programme based on the AICC resolution of June 28, 1970. The president of the party was fully justified in asking for time to consult the national executive of the party when suddenly faced with a new proposal and it is a matter of regret that this was not agreed to despite the sincere pioneering efforts of the party to bring about a full-fledged alliance.

"Having regard to the totality of

the circumstances including the threat to the Constitution and the imminent danger to vital national interests which require a change of government through the impending general elections, the executive decides that the party should join the front formed in Delhi on Jan. 3, 1971, so that there shall be one agreed candidate for each Lok Sabha constituency throughout the country who will be supported by all the participating parties in the front. The executive has come to this decision in the light of the clear assurance given by Mr. Nijalingappa, the Congress (O) president, at a press conference in Bombay on Jan. 5 that no communist party would be allowed to associate with the front formed in Delhi".

Mr. Masani, who released the text of the resolution to newsmen, said the executive would again meet on Saturday and approve the draft manifesto of the party for the election. He agreed with a questioner that a limited common programme would lend credibility to the idea that an alternative and stable Government at the Centre could be formed. Even now, if other parties re-examined their decision and restored it (a minimum common programme) "we would be delighted."

Mr. Masani was asked whether the Swatantra Party would reconsider its decision if parties forming the front individually entered into an alliance with the communist parties, as Mr. Nijalingappa's assurance was only that communist parties would not be allowed to associate with the front.

Mr. Masani said: "We will cross the bridge when we come to it."

"We feel large issues are at stake and that is the reason we are going ahead. We certainly expect Mr. Nijalingappa to carry out his assurance," he added.

As far as the Swatantra Party was concerned it would not have any alliance with the communists. "We will not touch them with a barge pole".

German model

Asked how the front would go about it in case it secured a majority, Mr. Masani commended the example of West Germany where parties fight the elections on party-wise manifestoes and succeed in forming coalition Ministries, providing stable and good Governments. "It is not to be scoffed at", he said and added, "Let us hope the German model will be capable of operation in our conditions."

Mr. Masani said the executive also considered the report submitted by Mr. Harihar Patel, Orissa Industries Minister, on the recent developments in Orissa. It commended the course of action taken by the Orissa Governor, Mr. Ansari, in summoning a session of the le-

gisature to test the claims of the Chief Minister and the Opposition. "We are glad the mistake made in Uttar Pradesh has not been repeated in Orissa," he said, and recalled the party's stand at the time of the constitutional crisis in UP that the legislature was the forum to test whether the Chief Minister continued to enjoy the confidence of the House.

Mr. Masani said the executive ratified the decision to postpone the national convention of the party, scheduled to be held on Jan. 30 and Jan. 31 to a date after the mid-term elections.

The executive, he said, was unhappy over the statement of the Election Commissioner that the scheme to allot timings to political parties for election broadcasts over All-India Radio could not be implemented because of lack of unanimity among the parties. "We do not see any reason why there should be unanimity for such a scheme. The Old Congress, Swatantra, and Jana Sangh have accepted the scheme and only one party—New Congress—has objected to it. Others have not replied. Therefore, we feel it would be wrong and incorrect to abandon the scheme just because one party does not accept. The Commissioner should carry out the scheme in a way which he thinks fair."

Parvati