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March 22, 1971

Dear Friend,

As General Secretary of the Party, I share your disappointment at the extremely poor performance of our candidates at the Lok Sabha and Legislative Elections. I am writing this to you, not as the General Secretary of the Party, but purely in my personal capacity. I thought that you would perhaps like to share your thoughts with me on the most important question of our Party's future.

My initial reaction at the debacle was that perhaps it would be better to wind up the Party in view of our extremely poor performance. On mature consideration and discussions with some friends, I have now come to the conclusion that the Party must not only continue, but must be revitalised to face the challenge of time. In fact I now feel that the Party will face its real test in the months ahead. I am sure, very soon we will be called upon to face additional responsibilities and the people of India are bound to look to us for guidance. I do admit that the clock has been put back by several years. It is no use trying to apportion the blame.

I have also come to the conclusion that the defeat which we have suffered has nothing to do either with (a) the Principles or (b) the Programme of our Party. It is largely due to a wrong image of the Party in the minds of the public. From this point of view, it would be improper to seek any understanding, alliance or merger either with the Organization Congress or with the Jan Sangh or any other Party in Opposition whose images are equally distorted. We will have to stand on our own legs, revitalise the Party and build up a strong organization once again at grass roots level.

We will have to take certain steps immediately to improve the image of the Party, particularly to create a mass appeal without necessarily giving up our principles.

I would venture to suggest for your careful consideration the following steps :

1. The General Council, the National Executive and other Offices at State, District and Unit levels must be filled by dedicated people selected from among small businessmen, small shop keepers, agriculturists, professionals, administrators, enlightened Trade Unionists.
2. In the process of reorganisation a considerable amount of decentralisation and autonomy at State, District and Unit level will be required to build up a grass-root organisation. As long as the basic principles and programme of the Party are adhered to, a considerable amount of decentralisation and autonomy would help greatly to revitalise the Party.
3. It will be equally necessary to see that, at every level, the Party's working is self sufficient. In the past, the process of pumping money from the top has done serious damage to the Party organisation. It has made the lower cadres of the Party always look up to the Centre for financial assistance. There has been very little effort to be self sufficient and self reliant. There has been a considerable amount of waste of resources at various levels and this has prevented the independent growth of different cadres of the Party. The ban on contribution by Companies to political parties is an additional factor which we have to reckon with.

4. Although I have stated earlier that there is nothing fundamentally wrong either with the principles or the programme of the Party, to start with, it would be advisable to concentrate our attention only on a few items and focus them before the public. I would suggest the following :

- (i) We must continuously emphasize the need for massive rise in employment by creating job opportunities, particularly through higher production. This should be done without introducing any 'Isms' or the useless controversy of public v/s. private sector.
- (ii) We must emphasize the need for a massive programme of public works throughout the length and breadth of the country which would create a vast employment potential and at the same time strengthen the infrastructure.
- (iii) The need for protecting the farmer's right to the small farm and the small house, and equally the right of the small man to his personal property.
- (iv) The need to ensure stable prices for the agriculturists.
- (v) Preventing further rise in prices of essential commodities to prevent hardship to the masses, once again through increased production.
- (vi) Promotion of National Integration.
- (vii) Restoration of Law and Order
- (viii) Protection of Muslims and other Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- (ix) Recognition of the Labourer's right to Collective Bargaining and the right to strike as a part of a free Society.

Instead of embarking on a very ambitious programme, we should content ourselves with a realistic minimum programme on the lines indicated above which would appeal to the masses.

5. Lastly, it is essential that at the State, District and Unit levels, attempt must be made to organize the "Youth" through our newly created Youth Wing. This alone can help us to build up the necessary link, between the leadership of the Party and the masses, which we have sadly lacked during the last 10 years of our existence.

The General Council of the Party will meet very soon, sometime in April 1971. I thought that I should write to you in advance putting my personal views before you. These are in no way the official views of the National Headquarters. This letter is only intended to stimulate further thinking. I would very much like to share your thoughts in this matter and would request you to kindly write to me about your reactions.

I would particularly request the President and Secretaries of the State, and District Committees to discuss this matter with their members as early as possible and let me have your comments.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

R. C. Cooper
(R.C. Cooper)