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PRESS STATEMENT

Shri A.B. Vajpayee, President, B.J.S. has issued the following statement:

At its Bombay session the Jana Sangh Working Committee had taken note of the growing threat posed to national unity and democracy by disruptive forces and had felt that parties which believed in nationalism and democracy ought to put their heads together and notwithstanding their inter-party differences should exert to work out a common plan of action against these elements. It was in this context that the Working Committee had welcomed the B.K.D's merger resolution addressed to various political parties and had set up a sub-committee to negotiate with other parties and "to probe the possibility and scope for concerted endeavour".

The Sub-committee comprised of six senior members of the Jana Sangh's Central Executive. This was done with a view to ensure that at any talks held with other parties at least two or three were available so that the party was adequately represented. It is really amazing that so much is being made of my absence from this week's meeting. Our representatives who attended were fully empowered by the party to conduct the necessary talks.

To date there have been three rounds of talks with Swatantra and B K D leaders. The first two were informal meetings held at Shri Prakashvir Shastri's place, and more lately, there has been this formal meeting at Shri Masani's residence. In all these meetings, our representatives made it very clear that so far as the Jana Sangh was concerned its decision about merger would be contingent on agreement over principles, policies and programmes. As has been rightly stated in the agreed note, issued after the conclusion of this last meeting, the talks "were exploratory in nature and were intended to demarcate areas of agreement and to assess and narrow down areas of disagreement". My colleagues had informed me at Bombay that the talks had been satisfactory. The joint note also said the same.

The B K D announcement yesterday, therefore, has come as a sharp surprise. Were it not for the serious context in which it has been made, the B K D's decision to close talks with the Jana Sangh would have been dismissed as an amusing joke, particularly so as it came within twenty four hours of its leaders expressing satisfaction about the talks. As it is, it really defies understanding how a party led by as senior a politician as Chaudhary Charan Singh can behave so immaturely. If their decision has been taken just in a huff, we can only regret it. If, however, it has been the result of deliberate thinking there can hardly be anything more irresponsible. Forging the unity of nationalist forces, one should think, is too serious a ~~task~~ for such levity. Our reservations about precipitate mergers with such elements only stand substantiated.

The ~~Jana~~ Sangh's efforts to bring together various nationalists democratic elements on the lines indicated in its Bombay decision, will continue.

Sd/-

Office Secretary