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A Note
on
THE STRATEGY FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION
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Any strategy for elections has to consider not only current trends but also past averages. In the last General Elections, the general pattern of voting was 45% for the Congress candidate, 30% for his nearest opponent and 25% for other candidates with a plus or minus 10% as margin. This does not imply that in every straight contest, the chances of the Congress are 45 to 55. In fact, the figures indicate that the Congress has done better in straight fights, winning 5 out of 7 seats in Andhra, loosing the only straight contest to an Independent in Assam, winning the only straight contest in Bihar, winning 4 out of 5 in Gujerat, loosing 6 out of 8 in Kerala, winning 3 out of 4 in Madras, all 6 in Maharashtra, 6 out of 7 in Mysore, 8 out of 11 in Orissa, 1 out of 2 in Punjab, loosing 1 out of 1 in U.P. and winning 3 out of 11 in West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan had no straight fights. The first conclusion that emerges is that there are more straight fights in the politically advanced States (Kerala and W. Bengal) and that Congress fares badly in them. It is possible that the polarisation in these States may/ due to the strength of the Communists which may have persuaded other parties not to divide the Congress votes. The second conclusion is that the personality of the candidate even more than the party, is the deciding factor. This factor must not be ignored in the agreements of opposition parties against the Congress.

Voter's preference is not an easy subject for research and there remains largely a matter of intelligent conjecture. Roughly 20% vote on the ideologies of the parties, 45% on the record and resources of the parties and 35% on the record and resources of the candidates, the proportion rising in the third category, according as the Constituency is politically backward.

In respect of ideology, Congress has at least three advantages, first its declaration for Socialism, for reducing inequalities has a mass appeal, second this Socialism has created favoured classes, including factory workers and owners, contractors and officials, who in their own support the Congress, third at its Annual and other Sessions, the AICC receives the widest publicity for confusing its intentions with achievements. Except the Swatantra Party, other Parties are not disposed to be critical of the Congress because they accept the same Socialist principles. The task of exposing this pseudo socialism is not easy because Congress has created class antagonisms and it is difficult to oppose socialism without appearing to oppose the interests of the largest section of the voters. A three way approach is possible first from the statements of Congress leaders like that of Kamaraj that the rich have become richer and the poor poorer or Sanjivaya that in the Congress paupers become millionaires with no ostensible means or of Nanda that if wheat did not come from America our people

would starve and die and that 20% out of 25% allocated for construction is misused. In fact, the Party Office should collect all similar statements for issue of a general pamphlet. The second approach may be to face plans and performance of the Congress during the last 18 years, the cost in terms of taxes and prices being unmistakeably shown. The third approach is exposure of the logical consequences of Congress policies. In stating this as also in stating Swatantra policies, perhaps a change of sights is necessary, to emphasise that the masses have been sacrificed to satisfy small classes of supporters.

Among the more important policies to be criticised, the first may be excessive taxation, the Central Revenue budget having increased six times and the Capital budget nine times since 1951 - 52. The stress however should be that as profits have not decreased, the taxes have been passed into the prices and are being paid by the consumers who form the masses. Rajaji's offer to dissolve the Swatantra Party if the Government halved the taxes emphasises the party's interest in saving the common people from an almost unbearable burden.

Second, inflation may be attacked for reducing the value of a rupee to 15 paise, which confiscates accordingly the money income of all people while adding unearned increment to property and stocks of the few who possess them. Thirdly, controls, in so far as they confer monopolies on those who have licences and permits, reduce production and increase prices for the common people. They bar new comers in enterprises, thereby/one hand denying them constitutional rights and, on the other, preventing competition which can improve quality and reduce prices. Fourth, the policy of nationalisation of industry, trade and land not only increases the tax and debt burden, but what has not been realised transfers property to the state, limiting the opportunities of the people to the same extent. If tenants are declared as underproprietors, which in fact they are under Rajaji's Tenant's Protection Act, they would be entitled to borrow from Co-operatives for their needs which are stronger than those of others. At the same time, the existing proprietors will be saved from the law of ceilings and resumption. In Industry, property rights could be created for workers by encouragement of bonus shares purchased from bonus and provident funds. For the common people, loans for house construction would generalise creation of property. The Swatantra Party can reduce inequality not by destroying the property of existing owners but by creating property for new owners, which equation deserves to be highlighted. Fifth, Corruption is the consequence of the extension of the administrative and economic interference of the government in the livelihood of the people. It has become part of Congress power because elections are won from the positions and persons created by Statism. It is far from socialism because it favours the ingenious against the weak, the rich against the poor.

The Swatantra ideology is for the people against the privilege, favouritism, licence created by Congress policies. It is possible that this policy would be better understood, if restated in terms of popular interest both in respect of the principles and persons it favours. The first principle of Free

Enterprise may be restated as of Full competition. Free enterprise benefits producers while Full competition benefits consumers who are in vastly greater numbers. In respect of Planning, the misapprehension that the Swatantra Party is in opposition may be removed by clarifying first that the Party believes in Planning from bottom to top, from the minimum needs of the common man to whatever is required to satisfy them, from full employment of the population to results thereof, from what the people are willing and able to do for themselves to what only the Government can do for them. Even if a detailed Plan cannot be now prepared the Plan prepared by the Government may be examined and exposed in the light of these principles. The Swatantra approach may stress the need of incentives, including those of legitimate property and profits, without which production must continue to fall, because investment by the rich for the employment of the poor, will not be attracted. Thirdly, the Swatantra Party may orient itself more as a party for the rural masses, which not only represent vastly greater voting power but have been badly neglected by Congress Planning. In bringing the rural living standards nearer the urban ones, there will be the creation of vast purchasing power, which will naturally stimulate other sectors of the economy. Subsidies and loans for rural housing will not only create a spectrum of employment but also property, comfort, health and self respect which will naturally resist communism.

The Swatantra manifesto may also spell benefits to the various sections of the population so that they identify their interests with the success of the Swatantra Party. According to a government classification, (Page 185 India 1960) 9% of the population are mainly tenants. To these the Swatantra Party may offer under proprietary rights instead of tenancy rights convertible into proprietary rights on payment of premiums, as provided in most Land Reforms. These tenants will also avoid the various restrictive conditions, like ceilings, personal cultivation, ban on transfer, resumption by cultivating owners, which in fact limit the current rights under the Tenant Protection Acts. To 47% of the population who are peasant proprietors and 1% who are owners, the Party can assure that there will be no ceilings or no nationalisation or, Co-operativisation. To 13% who are Landless Labourers, with an average wage of 96nP according to the Agricultural Labour Inquiry report, the Swatantra Party could offer right to employment, according to the Directive Principles of the Constitution. This will imply that Planning will have to begin by providing this employment in the Public Sector to the extent it cannot be activated by loans and subsidies in the Private Sector. To the 10% engaged in Industries and 6% engaged in Trade, the Swatantra Party may offer first equality of opportunity in the absence of licences, secondly a growing market in the absence of crippling taxes, third freedom from administrative restrictions for which they have to submit to corruption. To the 2% engaged in Transport, the Party offers the same benefits. For the remaining 12% in Services and miscellaneous professions, the benefit of the prosperity of other sectors will accrue. To government servants, the promise is of freedom from political favouritism.

Voters who are not influenced by political ideology fall into the following categories, first 15% Scheduled and

and other lower castes with Caste Panchyats who can be bribed through their leaders, with food, drink, transport and even money. The record, local or national of the Parties is not relevant to these classes but only the resources, in which it is impossible for other parties to compete with the Congress. The best course for them is first to get Government to make all Election Offences cognisable because without action by the police, there is little that preoccupied candidates can do to prosecute offences. The Election Commissioner has proposed that transport may be made a cognisable offence but there is no reason to exclude other offences. To the extent the Swatantra Party presses for making the offences cognisable, it will appear to the voters a party opposed to corruption. If the Government is not agreeable to make the offences cognisable, it must be compelled to give the widest publicity to the offences before and at the time of polling so that many respectable persons abstain from what they do not know is criminal. Thirdly, the Party may organise that election and polling agents report election offences, particularly the numbers of cars, taxis, lorries and buses used, to Presiding Officers and Magistrates so that they may take action as the former can do from the constitutional responsibility to see that elections are fair and proper and the latter under sub section (c) of Section 190 Cr. P.C.

Another 15% of the voters are driven to the polls by their landowners, local and religious leaders, trade unions and even bootleggers. This class is aware and can be made more aware of what it has suffered from the Congress. This will lead to no practical results unless the voters are assured of the absolute secrecy of their votes. If the Government is not agreeable to give up noting the number of the ballot paper in the electoral roll with the Presiding Officer, the voters should be assured that the marked electoral rolls can only be seen by the Courts and has never once been used to identify any voter with his vote. Government should be compelled to make strident propaganda about the secrecy of the vote before and at the time of polling.

20% of the voters make up their own minds belonging to the educated and middle classes. Their vanity has to be satisfied by personal approach and even provision of transport. As many as possible of their number should be approached by person or post. They must also be satisfied that provision of transport is an offence, which the Swatantra Party cannot commit, if it is at all to correct the Congress and to save democracy.

45% of the voters do not vote for various reasons, first that they do not understand that their vote affects their own livelihood, second, they do not wish to be identified by their votes in a way prejudicial to them, third that they regard the Congress Party inevitable, almost part of democracy, which it may not be in the interest of the country to disturb, fourth that they are without identity slips, which they believe entitle them to voting. It should be the task of the Swatantra Party to educate this large class on whose votes Congress can be beaten. In respect of the identity slips, the Swatantra leaders should not delay to take up with the Election Commissioner that they are issued by official authorities, failing which their use is prohibited at polling stations because other parties

do not have the facilities of Congress to issue nearly 5 lakhs of such slips. In fact, the direction to recognise the slips which is not part of the law seems to be illegal and could be a ground to challenge the validity of the election. In any case, our candidates, if they are not able to distribute the slips, would do well to take up with the electoral authorities, the legal admissability of the slips.

The personal factor is important in elections in every country. Only in India, it is related to caste, in so far as at least 60% of the voters will always vote for their own caste candidate. They think his success is credit to the caste, second that he will understand and represent caste requirements best, third that he will be more accessible. It is not easy to convince them that an able representative can do all this and serve their economic interests better than a dumb caste representative. Congress therefore selects candidates with reference to their potentials for drawing the preponderant caste vote.

The record of the candidates is in importance. The sitting candidate has the advantage that he may have favoured individuals or institutions and to that extent secured their unstinted support. It is possible to turn this against the candidate and even to discredit his supporters, if the favours done are listed in their proportions to the relationship, caste, friendship of the individuals and institutions concerned. A painstaking survey therefore requires to be made of the licences, contracts, appointments, promotions, postings secured by the candidate because information about it will make the general voters react violently against the candidate and his favoured supporters. Secondly, what the sitting candidate has not done, in local and national problems also should be discreditedly publicised. Thirdly, the improvement in wealth of the sitting candidate should be ascertained, for publicity, where it is considerable. The educational and professional record may be relevant if that of the opposing candidate is better.

The Swatantra candidate, if new will have to build up his image before the whole electorate. By interest in the welfare of the common man, he should eliminate the impression created by the Congress that the Swatantra Party is only for the rich. This means that our candidates should begin their tours of every village at once, looking not so much for votes as for the wants of the voters. The information collected from talks with villagers should be written up for publication if possible in a Monthly or Fortnightly paper of the candidate. Failing that local papers could be persuaded or paid to publish it. In any case, copies should be sent to local authorities and the ministers concerned. If they take action, the candidate will get credit; if they don't, they can be blamed with a suggestion that if elected, the candidate will remove the grievance. The wants to be reported may relate either to the State or Central government on one side or to the local legislators and officials, on the other. Mostly they will be failure to execute declared projects, like electricity, irrigation, roads, buildings, bridges from inefficiency or corruption. As much play as possible should be made

of corruption as the people are deeply resentful that there is no office or institution of government, in which money is not exorted from them. General trends of corruption should be indicated and the ministers and vigilance commissioner challenged to make investigations. It is possible, though not very easy to analyse government expenditure for its personal, political and public benefit. Before the election a list could be published on what has been done and remains to be done on the candidate's report of the deficiencies of the people.

The image of the candidate will also depend on his personality, which must contain awareness of the interests of others and a general alertness on problems of the country. Secondly, the candidate must see as many voters as possible as this creates an obligation, while default appears ungrateful particularly when the voter has to face the trouble and travel to vote.

The resources of the Congress candidates are overwhelming by comparison. Government policies and expenditure is related to the election interests of the Congress. Almost all the rich are indebted to government policies and favours and some are dependent on them. Whatever fears they have of the future, they are content with the past and not disposed to change in government. The Congress always uses them to pressure even the few who may be arrayed against it. At the last minute whole blocks of votes may be changed from passage of money or other favours to those commanding votes. The wisest course therefore is to win as many influential persons as possible but to rely mainly on the voters themselves. If a Parliamentary candidate has a paper of his own, he can send one copy of it to all the households of the voters before the election at a total cost of about Rs.6000. The voter is flattered by this attention and if the paper also contains his voting slip or at least number, he would react favourably to the specimen ballot paper printed in favour of the Swatantra candidate.

[the The Swatantra Party has a magnificent chance because other parties, the Communists and PSP are divided, the Socialist Party discredited for its intemperance and the Jan Sangh, discredited in Non Hindi States by its pro Hindi attitude. The Swatantra Party has also the advantage that its predictions on most Government policies have come right and that in the present state of distress and disillusionment, it has a special appeal. It will succeed as it will establish the impression that it is only party for the people because it is the only party for the Open Society, with equality of opportunity for building up a Great Society in this country. It will succeed, not by copying the Congress but by surprising it by new ideas and methods.

1st May, 1966.