

The proposition appears extravagant but it can be established from certain equations. The first equation is that in the ultimate analysis, Government responds to public opinion. This is all the more so in a democracy and in India is emphasised by demonstrations of various kinds, which have become part of the apparatus for expressing public opinion. From this it follows that a party which develops and directs public opinion can pressure the Government to accept its measures or face embarrassment from disturbances or defeat from elections. The question therefore really is how the Swatantra Party can create public opinion. It cannot use demonstrations, not only because it respects the law but also because their benefits are more precarious than precious. It has to use the Press, Platforms and Parliament and more particularly the last where it is the leading opposition party.

The second equation is that public opinion in the last analysis responds to felt needs of which the broad distinction is between political and economic ones. Though different political needs may be projected from time to time, the basic need of the vast majority of the people is for stability of government. This means that the Swatantra Party should stand for the Constitution as the only assurance to people not only of their rights but of their expectations. It must oppose parties, which after members of legislatures sworn to "true faith and allegiance to the Constitution" attack it in whole or part. To emphasise this dedication to the Constitution, the Swatantra Party could avoid participation in other political subjects except to the extent they touch the Constitution. Silence on other subjects has also practical advantages, first that it avoids common cause with parties, fundamentally opposed to the Swatantra Party, second that it allows the Congress and other parties the rope to hang themselves from their uncorrected mistakes, third that it rightly reserves for the time before the elections the destructive strategy, the stronger for the constructive policy the Swatantra Party followed before. Attacking the Government in and out of season, with no prospect of changing it discloses not only feminine petulance but makes for unnecessary diversion of public time from fundamental issues of life and livelihood, with which the public is concerned. If such a constructive attitude is accompanied by clear indication that the Swatantra Party is not expecting office in company with Opposition parties to which it is basically opposed, the public will begin to respect the Party as a disinterested guardian of its rights. The Government will also respect it as a critic without counterfeit. Its abjuration of office will be only a national loss to the party because it has no chance for office at all but has the opportunity created by its moral position of influencing those in office to carry out its policies.

Of these policies, the most important are economic ones, which would acquire clarity to the extent the Swatantra Party is identified as the Consumer's party. Its base then will be as wide as the whole population because even producers are consumers susceptible, in their way, to rising prices and shortages in their consumption patterns. In any case, the attitude of the Party to producers can be the simple one of increasing production to its full potentials, which would serve them and the consumers at the same time.

This leads to the third emphasis, that the Swatantra Party is against controls and for competition. Here the Party would do well to drop its identification with Free Enterprise, because this has come to imply freedom only to big business. Not only is this against the tenets of the party but the reverse is the purpose of the party, which wants to end controls and the monopolies consequent to them. In the name of socialism, the Government has protected and promoted only licencees in the private sector and contractors in the public section, against the vast masses outside. On the other hand free competition will not only reduce prices, improve quality, increase supplies but will be a true act of socialism, recognising the right of every one to share in the economic opportunities created by the Plans of Government.

With three simple slogans, the Constitution, the Consumer and Competition, the Swatantra Party will command public confidence as no other party can. Into this future, the coming session of the General Council and the National Executive, can usher the Party.