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ARTICLES & LECTURE F2W.

M. A. Rane Felicitated

A Report of the function held on February 1, 2001, to felicitate Mr. M. A. Rane on his 75th Birthday:

Mr. M. A. Rane needs no introduction to readers of *The Radical Humanist*. He is well known in the Bombay High Court for his advocacy of cases involving human rights and civil liberties. A Royist and a Radical Humanist for well over 50 years, he has been practising in the Bombay High Court since 1949. An alumnus of Mumbai's Elphinstone College, he is the founder-member of the Indian Radical Humanist Association, Citizens For Democracy and People's Union for Civil Liberties. He is well known for the large number of Public Interest Litigations he has conducted on behalf of the deprived sections of the society and justly earned their gratitude.

In recognition of the numerous services rendered by Mr. Rane to public causes, his friends and well-wishers felicitated him on his 75th birthday at a well attended function at the Convocation Hall of Bombay University on February 1, 2001. Justice M. L. Pendse, former Judge of the Bombay High Court and former Judge of the Karnataka High Court, presided.

The Felicitations Committee presented Mr. Rane an elegantly produced book containing his selected writings on various topics. The presentation volume has a foreword by Mr. V. M. Tarkunde.

The book was released by the veteran Radical Humanist, Dr. Indumati Parikh, All India President of the Indian Radical Humanist Association.

The function was attended by a large number of persons, including retired Judges of the Supreme Court and the Bombay High Court including Justice V. D. Tulzapurkar, former Judge of the Supreme Court, Advocates and friends of Mr. Rane, the members of the family of the late Mr. K. S. Daundkar including his son-in-law Dr. Padamsinh Patil, a minister in the Maharashtra Cabinet. The late Mr. Daundkar too was Mr. Rane's senior.

In a brief presidential speech, Justice Pendse highlighted the integrity, honesty and courage of Mr. Rane,

both as an advocate and a public worker. Dr. Indumati Parikh referred to the services rendered by Mr. Rane to the Radical Humanist Movement, particularly his role in collecting a large number of subscribers to *The Radical Humanist* and thus help build up a good corpus for the RH. Justice Daud, former Judge of the Bombay High Court referred to Mr. Rane's role as a prolific writer and as an activist in the Human Rights Movement. Mr. M. R. Pai, Vice President of the Forum of Free Enterprise and an activist in the consumer movement, describing Mr. Rane as a responsible citizen, praised the way he reacted to events affecting the public. Mr. Navroz Seervai, a member of the Felicitations Committee, recalled the days of the Emergency when Mr. Rane acted courageously and encouraged a number of young persons like Navroz to resist the Emergency.

In his reply, Mr. Rane thanked the Felicitations Committee for considering him deserving of felicitation. Though he couldn't do grassroots work, he had vicarious satisfaction of conducting a large number of cases of very poor people and public interest litigation relating to problems of the deprived sections of the society. He severely criticised the perverse priorities of all political leaders and parties who want to arm India with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles and strong armed forces and generally to make India strong though the overwhelming majority of the people of India were not provided with bare necessities of life. He deplored the negligence of education of the people, which deprives them of any opportunity to leading a dignified life, let alone equality.

Yogesh Kamdar, another colleague of Mr. Rane since the Emergency, and a member of the Felicitations Committee, proposed a vote of thanks.

Copies of the Felicitations Volume are available at: (1) Strand Book Stall, 'Dhannur', Sir P. M. Road, Fort, Mumbai 400 001; (2) Centre for the Study of Social Change, M. N. Roy Human Development Campus, Plot No. 6, F Block, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051, and (3) Mr. M. A. Rane, 29, Joothica, N. Bharucha Road, Grant Road (West), Mumbai 400 007.

(Report prepared by S. V. Raju)

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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- II. Cheques/DDs towards subscriptions, contributions, etc. may please be issued in favour of "Indian Renaissance Institute - A/c. The Radical Humanist."

Sumitra Devi Passes Away

When the Radical Democratic Party (RDP) was dissolved consequent to the Calcutta Conference of the Party in January 1948 resolving that party politics is a hindrance to the growth of direct democracy, some members of the RDP joined other political parties. Most of them rose to occupy high positions in these parties/governments - Chief Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Secretary, and other important positions. M.N. Roy was not unhappy at their joining other parties - indeed, he thought they, too, could advance the cause of the political philosophy and practice of radical humanism and democracy. Sumitra Devi of Bihar who passed away on 8 February was one such radical.

She and her husband Gyaneshwar Prasad joined the RDP as active members. Born in 1922 in an ordinary farmer family of a Backward Class in Maheshwar village of Munger district in Bihar, Sumitra Devi joined a Girls' Gurukul at the age of 9 in Hathras near Aligarh - it was an unheard of thing in those days when girls were not sent even to village schools. She passed her Matriculation examination in 1936 and was married in 1937. After the RDP was disbanded Sumitra Devi joined the Congress party. From 1952 onwards she won all Assembly elections with one break, till 1990. (She was disturbed at the excesses committed by the Congress during the Emergency and joined Babu Jagjivan Ram's CFD). In 1960 she became Parliamentary Secretary in the Bihar Ministry, and in 1963 and 1977 she was a Cabinet minister (the first ever woman in Bihar to hold this position). In 1990 when she was Urban Development Minister she refused to contest elections and gave up active politics - she was disillusioned with the rising trend of opportunism in politics.

I may add a personal note. I came in contact with some old members of the RDP who continued to owe their

loyalty to M.N. Roy and were proud of being Royists, specially those who visited Roy at Dehra Dun and those about whom I had heard from the Roys. Mr. Vishwanath Verma, an active member of the RDP from Bihar who became the Political Secretary of President Rajendra Prasad, was one of them (he treated me with love and affection). He introduced me to Sumitra Devi at his residence in Delhi. I invited her to an all-India university/college teachers camp at Mussoorie in 1964 to the valedictory function and translated her Hindi speech into English. When in spite of her persuasion I did not join the Bihar University where I was appointed Reader and Head of English of the University's Darbhanga campus by the Public Service Commission of Bihar (she was a cabinet minister then), she was unhappy.

What is remarkable about these old RDP members (who joined other political parties and held high positions) is that they were and are proud of being 'Royists'. In fact some of them were and are treated with great respect by their party bosses primarily because they are 'Royists'. They actually participate in IRI and RHA functions whenever they are invited.

It is only years later that I came to know from Vishwanathji's son, Rajiv who is Professor of English at Delhi University (both Rajiv and his wife Meera who is Reader in Political Science in College in Delhi University are our family friends) that Sumitra Devi's son, Manjul Kumar, a lawyer in Delhi is married to Babu Jagjivan Ram's daughter, Meera Kumar.

We in *The Radical Humanist* pay our respectful homage and send our condolences to the family, to Manjul and Meera Kumar.

R.M.P.

Veteran Radical Humanists Pass Away

A great freedom fighter and veteran radical humanist of Sasaram, Rohtas district in Bihar, Sri Harihar Prasad passed away on 12 February 2001 at the age of 94. He participated in the Salt Satyagraha movement and was jailed in 1930. He was actively involved in Bihar earthquake relief work in 1934 under the leadership of Gandhiji, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Jayaprakash Narayan living in Sadaquat Ashram at Patna. He left the Congress in 1940 and joined the Radical Democratic Party (RDP) and was a dedicated radical humanist throughout. He participated in a number of movements in Bihar lodged by RDP and the Radical Humanist movement. He corresponded with M.N. Roy, Ellen Roy, Sibnarayan Ray, V.M. Tarkunde and other leaders of the party and the movement. Harihar Prasadji has left valuable collection of over one thousand books (which include M.N. Roy's books and other humanist literature) of his personal library. He was a life member of the Radical Humanist and the Indian Renaissance Institute. In Harihar Prasadji's death the Radical

Humanist Movement has lost a great humanist and a freedom fighter. We mourn the sad demise and pay our respectful homage.

Another veteran radical humanist, Dr. Dhanunshdhari Singh of village Nonsari of Sasaram, Bihar passed away on 8 February 2001. He joined the freedom movement in 1938 when he was a student. He came in contact with M.N. Roy in 1940 through the well-known grassroots RJD leader Sheo Pujan Shashtri. He actively participated in a number of movements in Bihar led by the RDP under the leadership of Sheo Pujan Shashtri. We mourn the sad demise and pay homage to the revolutionary humanist. - SHEO PRASSAN ROY

[We in *The Radical Humanist* pay our respectful homage to the veteran radical humanists and send our condolences to the families - Managing Editor, RH]

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