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Babubhai Vaidya

Babubhai Vaidya was the Leader of the Independent Progressive Group in the Gujarat Assembly for at least five years. The Group consisted of ten or eleven members including Yuvraj Digvijaysinhji of Wankaner, Yuvraj Manoharsinhji of Rajkot, Prince Shivbhadrasinhji of Bhavnagar and Ratibhai Ukabhai Patel.

At the end of 1966, several members of the group including Yuvraj of Wankaner, Prince Shivbhadrasinhji of Bhavnagar and Ratibhai Ukabhai Patel were persuaded to join the Swatantra Party with the goodwill and approval of Babubhai Vaidya who thereupon dissolved the Independent Progressive Group.

When the elections of February 1967 came round, Babubhai Vaidya devoted his full time from morning till night every day for over a month in supporting the candidatures of the Party's Parliamentary candidate in Rajkot and each of the Assembly candidates of the Party in Rajkot. He was also in great demand outside Rajkot because of his status and reputation throughout Saurashtra and his being a forceful Gujarati speaker and, in this way, he supported the candidature of Viren Shah in Junagadh, Mr. Dandekar's candidature in Jamnagar and Maharaja of Dhrangadhra's candidature in Surendrangar. Even if he had been a member of the Swatantra Party at that time, Mr. Vaidya could not have done more to help the Party's candidates.

Babubhai Vaidya is a Gandhian by persuasion and has devoted most of his time to social work among Harijans and the underprivileged classes.

Being a pacifist, he has occasionally appeared on the 'Peace Front' platforms inspired by the Communist Party but he has always made it clear that he has no truck with communists and believes in Gandhian ways and individual liberty. In the course of his speeches during the General Elections in 1967, he forcefully supported the economic and social policies of the Swatantra Party. His only reservation in regard to the Party's stand is in regard to Viet Nam.

Babubhai Vaidya has made it clear throughout that, if elected to the Rajya Sabha, he would keep open his relationship vis-a-vis the Swatantra Party. While he was not prepared to make any commitment to join the Party he had always told me that he hoped to give the greatest support to Dahyabhai Patel and our Group in the Rajya Sabha and, whether he became an Associate Member of the Party or not, we could count on his cooperation and moral support on almost all issues.

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