

PERSONAL.

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c/o Bank of Montreal,
615 Church Street East,
TORONTO, Ontario.
Canada.

August 23rd, 1964.

Respected Rajaji,

As you might be aware, I have been out of India for nearly twelve weeks now and most of this time has been spent in Canada and the United States. During my absence from home, India has lost one of her greatest sons, the late Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru and if the local newspaper reports are to be relied upon our Country is undergoing a period of grave economic crisis accentuated by shortage of food grains and consequent rioting in important cities like Agra and Ahmedabad.

As a political Party with a National character I believe we owe it to the people as well as to ourselves to formulate a firm policy and take resolute action in meeting the challenge of the times! I sincerely feel that the passing of lengthy resolutions and trying to pick holes in what the Government of the day is doing will not carry us very far. On the contrary this wordy warfare is destroying the image of the Party in the masses and the void is being filled by others notably the Jan Sangh and the Communist Parties.

I feel it is high time for all of us to realise that in India, the passing away of Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru after being its Prime Minister for over 17 years marks the end of an era which is no less significant than the withdrawal of the British from our shores in 1947. But his ideals and his policies live on! The unanimous choice by the Congress Parliamentary Party of a New Leader is significant in the fact that the transfer of power has been orderly and democratic. What is more, with the coming in of Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, India will henceforth be governed by a consensus in which the ablest amongst the ruling Party would have equal share and responsibility for running the country. Similarly, the leadership of the Congress Party has passed into the hands of one whose touch with the masses is unquestionable and the great ovation recently given to Shri Kamaraj Nadar in Madras on his 62nd birthday is pointer to the fact that he is a man of the people and a person capable of building up his Party into a powerful well knit machine!

You must be wondering as to why I am setting forth all these facts about the Congress when I should really be concentrating on what the Swatantra Party ought to do at the present juncture. My reasons for the same are simple. Without a proper assessment of the other side it is well nigh impossible to formulate our own strategy and this I would like to submit in the paragraphs that follow. Before I do so however, I would like to point out the various handicaps under which the Swatantra Party is labouring at the present moment and without the eradication of which we cannot hope to survive.

The Swatantra movement, under your leadership, made a very promising start in 1959 and within a year of its inception the people of India began to look towards it as a Party capable of replacing the Congress in the government of the Country. Subsequent events however, have damped much of their enthusiasm and inspite of the fact that we polled nearly nine million votes in the last General Elections and came out third behind the Congress and the Communist Parties there is little cohesion in our ranks today and the man in the street is not enthused. This is largely due to our own short comings. Within the last three years some of our tried and trusted colleagues have gone out of the Party hierarchy and of the four States of Bihar, Orissa, Rajsthan and Gujarat where we form the main Opposition in the Legislatures there is disunity and dismay in the first above-mentioned. Our recent attitude in regard to important issues like Kashmir, Western aid and Hindi as the National language, have created a wrong image of the Party in Northern India and the lack of interest which we have exhibited in suitably amending the Party Constitution will only tend to weaken us in the months that lie ahead. Discipline in itself is good but when overdone it can produce disastrous results. India is the second largest populated country in the World and unless a political Party functioning within it has the active support of a large mass of people, it cannot possibly make headway. Of course, the elite and intellectuals are few in any country but even they require a base and this at the moment is lacking in our case.

I will not refer here to the financial aspect. It is well known to all of us that most of the State Units today are hardly in a position to run even their main offices and no financial support is available to them from the Centre. On the contrary there is growing tendency to foist industrialists and other big business man on State Units for the purpose of getting them elected to Parliament and this is spreading the belief that we stand for vested interests and not for the common man. Very recently we opposed the Constitutional amendment relating to land reform when every other Party in India supported it. True, the Swatantra Party stands for Farm, Family and Freedom but we must take into consideration the existing conditions in the country and try to put realities before idealism.

I have said all these things not in a spirit of criticism but as a self-analysis because you have given me the privileges of being associated with the Central Executive of the Party; though here also there seems to be a growing tendency of contraction and the Central Organising Committee is today being by-passed by the Organisation Sub-Committee and the Parliamentary Board which bodies find no mention in our Party Constitution. Indeed I feel that we have embarked upon a policy of contraction and centralisation instead of expansion and de-centralisation which to my mind is not workable in a large country like ours especially when the Party concerned happens to be in the Opposition!

This brings me to the important question which has been agitating my mind for sometime past. It can be simply put into two words, "What next?" Are we to be the silent spectators of the political arena in India wherefrom our Party appears to be fading away from the limelight

or can something be done to save it and save it now before it is too late? The answer to this question is not so simple and I would like to give my own views about it in the paragraphs that follow.

Firstly -- We should put our own house in order and the holding of party elections this winter is a welcome move in this direction. Even so I have a feeling that it will not be easy to strictly adhere to the time-table laid down because it allows only a couple of months to hold elections from the Primary to the State level. Again I guess that not many workers have been enrolled in the various State Units up to 31st July who would be eligible to vote in the Party elections and perhaps there are other Units like Delhi and Bihar where, according to the proceedings to the COC meetings held in Bombay last June, there have hardly been any efforts to enrol Party Workers.

Secondly -- I would like to say that the Party Constitution should have been further amended in such a manner as to make it as comprehensive as possible to suit changing conditions. As at present worded it says too little and leaves much unsaid so that the whole authority becomes vested in the Central Office. All this was perhaps necessary in the initial stages when the Party was started five years ago but at the present time it only serves as an irritant and gives the impression to the State Units that they are so many naughty boys who have to be kept in their proper place by the headmaster. Surely large Units have the required political sagacity and understanding to run the Party machine in their own areas and it gets us nowhere if we go on prodding them all the time and listing their deeds of commission and omission. In this context I might also mention the case of the Delhi Unit which seems to have been recently struck off the list. It is unfortunate that we have been unsuccessful in getting a party cell in working order in the Capital City of India and our failure to do so brings credit to no one.

Thirdly -- I feel that there has been undue interference by the Centre in the internal working of the Party and some times a certain amount of distrust of the State Units. I could cite quite a few examples in support of this contention but feel that they are better left unsaid. I might however, mention in passing that the setting up of Committees and the appointment of individuals to look into the affairs and conduct of the State Units do not tend to create political stability but on the contrary they encourage fissiparous tendencies and indiscipline in the rank and file of the Party. The State of affairs in the Bihar Unit amply illustrates my view point.

Fourthly -- Important Party and National issues are discussed and decided upon within the orbit of the Organising Sub-Committee and later placed before the COC and the General Council for ratification. This might be a good thing in itself but in the larger circles of the Party it creates a feeling that the latter do count in the formulation of policy and are only called upon to act as rubber stamping machines of decision already taken and publicised.

Bifithly -- The Central Office in Bombay is situated too far away from the hum of political activity which centres in and around Parliament. I am not advocating that the whole Office as such should be shifted to Delhi but feel that it is high time we had a regular well-manned Branch functioning there. True, we have a Parliamentary Office but it is wholly inadequate to meet the demands made on it. In the same manner there must be Statewise Organisers to go around their respective areas spreading the message of the Party and attending to the many difficulties which the local Worker faces in his day today dealings with the people and the administration.

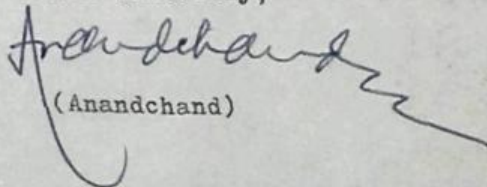
This ultimately leads us to the question of finance. No political Party can function without adequate funds at its disposal and the Swatantra Party stands in dire need of them today. Of course we all know that there are very few people who have the courage to give funds to the Party and it is on this ground that the State Units have been charged with the responsibility of finding their own resources during the last three years. Self sufficiency is good but the State Units can only succeed in raising the necessary finances if there is a co-ordinated policy laid down for the purpose. At the moment people fight shy of giving us any monies not only because we happen to be in the Opposition but also because we do not act in time to take up their cause in specified areas. Even in elections and by-elections the burden is left to be borne entirely by the State Unit concerned and the Central Leadership has shown little interest in organizing election campaigns. Left to themselves the State Units have thus become susceptible to taking money from prospective candidates and this has created a vicious circle which is degarding political life.

I am afraid I have taken a lot of your time and perhaps caused you a certain amount of irritation and annoyance. If so, I beg to be excused. As the Founder Leader of the Party you have to take us out of the present quagmire. Unless something is done and done quickly I fear that the Swatantra Party will stand to lose its hold on the minds of the people. Only if we are willing and eager to do something today can we hope for a better tomorrow!!

As I am returning to India shortly I shall be grateful for a reply on my New Delhi address.

With respects,

Yours sincerely,


(Anandchand)

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