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General Secretary's Report

MADHU MEHTA



SWATANTRA PARTY

SIXTH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Rajaji Nagar, Madras

April 14 & 15, 1973

SWATANTRA PARTY

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General Secretary's Report

by **MADHU MEHTA**

Friends,

It is my privilege to present to you this Report. But I do so with a heavy heart, for Rajaji is no longer with us. In the context of the recent vicissitudes faced by our Party, it would have gladdened his heart to see the Party he founded keeping its head high, its flag flying and its determination to carry on his ideals.

This Report covers a long period of four years and five months from October 1968 to March 1973.

In other words, the Sixth National Convention is meeting after almost four and a half years. This Report is largely a factual narrative with some conclusions based on my analysis of the present situation. The responsibility for whatever is contained in this Report is entirely mine.

THE FIFTH NATIONAL CONVENTION

The Fifth National Convention was held in Bhubaneswar on October 5 and 6, 1968.

Attended by 702 delegates from 17 States the Convention was an impressive affair, held in a beautiful but simple pandal without the kind of ostentatiousness displayed by similar affairs of the ruling party.

It may be recalled that that was the time of the Swatantra-led coalition Government in Orissa. Not only did our members in office not misuse their position, but on the other hand, as the

then General Secretary Mr. N. Dandekar observed, they were modesty personified, "waiting patiently in a queue at the counter where the Central Office was issuing delegates' badges. They made no special claims to get their cards out of turn even though they were themselves busy organising the Convention".

It was destined to be the last National Convention to be inaugurated by Rajaji. Though 90 and far from being in good health, Rajaji made the trip all the way from Madras to Bhubaneswar.

The Convention carried out several amendments to the Party's Constitution necessitated by the rapid growth of the Party and the inadequacy of the old constitution to meet the needs of a growing organisation.

A number of resolutions dealing with economic and political matters were adopted. The debates were free, frank and vigorous, with the delegates exhibiting a delightful sense of independence in assessing the *pros* and *cons* of any issue that came up for discussion, regardless of whether their point of view had the approval of the national leadership.

A novel resolution that was adopted concerned a "Mid-term Manifesto". All political parties issue manifestos on the eve of General Elections. The Convention decided that this was not good enough and that half way through a term, the party should report to the people on what the Party had been able to achieve since the last General Elections and what the Party proposed to do between then and the next General Elections. The General Council was asked to discuss and adopt such a Mid-term Manifesto.

That was also the time when the press played up so-called differences within the national leadership. To quote Mr. Dandekar again: "Critics who gleefully looked forward to sparring matches between members of the national leadership in the Party must have been sorely disappointed. They misunderstood our habit of open criticism of undesirable developments in the Party as a sign of our disenchantment with the Party. The precise opposite was convincingly demonstrated" by more than one national leader present at the Convention when they moved and secured the adoption of several important policy resolutions "calculated to strengthen the Party's organisational framework and ideological base".

GENERAL ELECTIONS

In the last four years our Party had to face three General Elections, viz. the mini-general elections commonly referred to as the Mid-term elections to the State Assemblies of Punjab, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in February 1969; the General Elections to the Lok Sabha of February 1971; and the General Elections to several State Assemblies of March 1972.

The Mid-term Poll of February 1969

The Party's effort was a modest one not because candidates were wanting but due to the terrible paucity of resources. We set up 5 candidates in the Punjab, 3 in West Bengal, 41 in Bihar and 71 in Uttar Pradesh. We were able to return one from the Punjab, the late Sardar Basant Singh, three from Bihar and five from Uttar Pradesh. The performance was certainly disappointing. For the then General Secretary Mr. N. Dandeker, it was doubly so, for it was almost a solo effort on his part. In the process his health gave way and he was compelled under medical advice to go on leave.

The Lok Sabha Elections of 1971

Then came the snap elections of 1971 to the Lok Sabha, with the dissolution of that House by the President in December 1970 on the advice of the Prime Minister. Elections were also held for the State Assemblies of Orissa and Tamil Nadu.

In July, 1970, the General Council of the Party had welcomed the call given by the AICC (O) at its meeting a month earlier for a consolidation of national democratic forces to meet the threat of communist subversion and to offer a stable government to the people of India.

The General Council accepted the basis on which the AICC (O) had made its call, viz.

- (a) the unity and security of India,
- (b) the defence of constitutional liberties and preservation of democratic institutions,
- (c) the maintenance of law and order, and
- (d) the establishment of a secular society based on the principle of social and economic justice and equality of status, and ensuring effective opportunity to all to earn their livelihood and attain the basic minimum standard of living.

The then President of our Party Mr. M. R. Masani was authorised by the Council to enter into appropriate arrangements with the Congress(O) and other democratic parties on the basis of the above issues.

In his report to the General Council of April 18, 1971, Mr. Masani told the sad story of how, despite the very ready response of the Swatantra Party, the Congress(O) leaders after their initial call went on dithering. Even upto November 1970 (a mere three months before the General Elections) the only reply the then Congress President Mr. Nijalingappa could give to a communication from Mr. Masani was, that the Congress(O) Working Committee would be meeting later in November when the matter would be considered. But the decision of the Working Committee after its November meeting contained no commitment to a programmatic alliance of the kind that the AICC(O) itself had called for.

Finally, after a great deal of persuasion, Mr. Masani was able to persuade the leadership of the Congress(O) and the Jan Sangh to announce the formation of a Democratic Front and a draft Announcement was agreed upon in December. After more vacillation on the part of the Congress(O) it was finally agreed that on 3rd January, 1971, the Presidents of the Congress(O), the Jan Sangh and Swatantra would meet the Press together and announce the formation of the Democratic Front on the basis of the draft announcement settled earlier.

Unfortunately, on 3rd January, the SSP got hold of Mr. Nijalingappa and persuaded him to agree to the SSP joining the front, the price for their entry being the dropping of the programme and the word "democratic" from the description of the Front.

Mr. Masani protested and withdrew on the ground that an alliance without a programme was meaningless.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party met ten days later on 13th January. It expressed its deep disappointment over the developments of 3rd January and after approving the action of Mr. Masani, decided however that the Party should enter the Front.

Thereafter our then Vice-President Mr. N. Dandekar, and the then General Secretary Dr. R. C. Cooper represented the Party on the Coordinating Committee of the Front dealing with the allocation of seats.

The experience of our representatives on the Committee was far from happy. While our Party, in the larger interest of the country behaved in a very responsible manner and sacrificed a larger number of seats than the others to avoid mutual contests, no such feelings motivated the other constituents of the Front. The result was that the Swatantra Party put up as few as 58 candidates as against 179 seats contested by us in 1967.

The elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly were held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections. We contested the elections in alliance with the Congress (O). Of the 19 candidates set up by us, six were successful.

Similarly, in the elections to the Orissa Assembly which were also held, we carried 36 seats.

In retrospect one will agree with what Mr. Masani told the General Council on April 18, 1971 that the General Elections of 1971 "was lost by the Front on the evening of January 3", when the SSP, the Jan Sangh and the Congress(O) conspired to scuttle the common programme patiently worked out by the leaders of the Congress(O), Swatantra and the Jan Sangh.

One will also agree with him that the reason why the National Executive, even while expressing disappointment and approving the President's action in withdrawing from the negotiations, decided nevertheless to join the Front, was dictated by the weakness of our organisation, the absence of adequate funds and the little time left at the Party's disposal to plan a campaign if it were to go it alone.

The Party was able to contest only 58 seats of which it carried 8 seats. This was indeed a great drop compared to our performance in 1967 when we annexed 44 seats.

We were displaced from our position as the leading opposition in the Lok Sabha to the fifth position.

Why did the Party fare so badly? The General Council which met in April 1971 analysed our performance and came to the following conclusions:

- (1) The idea of the Alliance was a sound one. But whereas we wanted to present a strong democratic front with a common agreed programme, we actually went into the Elections without a programme and on the basis of mere electoral adjustments. Our opponents, however, were able to project us as an alliance and capitalise on it.

- (2) The members of the Alliance, however, did not always work loyally for the common candidate, very often sabotaging him and in some cases fielding competing candidates.
- (3) The last elections have taught us that in future we will have to contend with techniques successfully tried out by the Ruling Party during this election, which will be used with more telling effect in the next. Some of the more obvious methods identified were:
- (a) a higher level of violence throughout the country,
 - (b) the more blatant use of money power,
 - (c) the efficient organisation of block votes, and
 - (d) the unconscionable use of Government machinery in the form of All India Radio, Air Force Planes, Government servants, official vehicles and certain sectors of the "committed press". The results were not only unexpected but somewhat mysterious, particularly as it was not discernible as to how block votes were cast with an inexplicable vehemence and the lines of communication used for the purpose.
- (4) The Party will have to find ways and means of countering these practices.
- (5) One of the inferences to be drawn was that in future we may have to forswear such alliance, while leaving the States free to work out whatever electoral adjustments may be beneficial. But basically, the Party could only prosper if it stood on its own legs.
- (6) Another point worth noting was that unfortunately the Party did not consider seriously enough and implement faithfully the Mid-Term Report published by the Party although it contained a timely warning.
- (7) However, the National Executive felt that there was no need for despondency. An Opposition is needed desperately, without which democracy cannot survive. Our principles were beyond reproach and our policies were right but they needed different dimensions to project them effectively. The best way of doing so would be through the youth of this country.

Assembly Elections of March 1972

The Assembly elections of 1972 to several State Assemblies soon followed. As against 973 seats contested in 1967, returning 256 candidates, we contested 308 seats carrying just 16 seats. Many of the factors listed above were equally responsible for our poor performance in these elections. In addition was the war with Pakistan and the Bangla Desh problem. Mrs. Gandhi and her Party claimed full credit for the victory of our armed forces. Moreover Opposition parties including ours had yet to recover from the disaster of 1971.

Party Elections

The period covered by this Report saw two Party elections—the third and fourth organisational elections.

Third Party Elections

Party elections for the third time were held between September and December 1969. Whereas the earlier two elections took over five months the third elections took less than four months. The Party's Constitution as amended by the Fifth National Convention brought in some changes in regard to membership. The first was a change-over to subscription based on the Calendar Year and the second was the granting of concessional membership to members belonging to scheduled castes and tribes and other backward classes who were required to pay 50% of the normal membership fees. New provisions in the Constitution introduced Election Tribunals at the state and national levels to settle disputes that might arise during the elections.

Except for the offices of the President, General Secretary and Treasurers, all other offices and the membership of the National Executive were contested. This was equally true of the elections at the state, district and primary level. There was active canvassing and a desire to shoulder the burdens of office.

The third party elections saw many new faces taking office and membership of Committees and Councils.

Mr. M. R. Masani and Dr. R. C. Cooper were unanimously elected President and General Secretary respectively. So were the two Treasurers Mr. H. P. Nanda and Mr. Lalchand Hirachand

elected unanimously. There were eleven nominations for five Joint Secretaries and 51 nominations for the 20 members of the Executive.

In April 1971, following the General Elections to the Lok Sabha, Mr. Masani resigned from the Presidentship of the Party taking full responsibility for the Party's debacle. Neither the National Executive nor the General Council was able to persuade Mr. Masani to withdraw his resignation. Mr. Dandekar thereupon acceded to the General Council's request to carry on as acting President. Meanwhile the National Executive and the General Council which met in April 1971 felt there was need for fresh blood to take over the conduct of the Party and decided to bring forward in about four months the fourth party elections which were normally due towards the end of 1971.

Fourth Party Elections

The fourth party elections were held between July and September 1971. At the state level changes of office bearers particularly of the Presidents and General Secretaries was about even. Half of the 14 State units re-elected incumbents and the other half opted for change. At the national level, there were several changes. Mr. H. M. Patel was elected President in the first ever contested election for the Presidentship. For the five vacancies of Vice-Presidents there were seven candidates. The election to the offices of the General Secretary, the two Treasurers, the five Joint Secretaries were unanimous. There were 29 nominations for the 20 members of the Executive. The Executive did have a new look, with more than half the members elected being new comers to the Executive.

Both the third and fourth party elections were found possible in fourteen States and regions. The States of Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal could not hold elections due to poor enrolment.

Soon after the Assembly Elections of 1972, the President, Mr. H. M. Patel, stepped down from his office as he wanted a younger person to lead the Party. Mr. Piloo Mody was elected President in June 1972.

While on this subject it might be useful to have a look at comparative enrolment figures in 1969 and 1971:

State	As on August 31, 1969	As on June 30, 1971
Andhra	9718	3762
Bombay	1300	1302
Delhi	771	866
Gujarat	9674	4011
Himachal	1404	1324
Kashmir	810	567
Kerala	3017	1649
Maharashtra	513	326
Mysore	1504	1549
Orissa	6395	5491
Punjab	1301	906
Rajasthan	7386	5003
Tamil Nadu	5678	4156
Uttar Pradesh	2610	2996
	52076	33908

The term of office of the present Committees and Councils will come to an end by December this year. The fifth party elections will therefore begin soon after this Convention.

Meanwhile the President, Mr. Piloo Mody, has initiated a discussion at the National Executive on the need for changes in the party's organisational structure to meet the challenge of the present political situation. The last two meetings of the National Executive in Lucknow in October 1972 and in New Delhi in February this year have held detailed discussions on organisational matters. Several suggestions have been made. The consequential amendments involved arising from the suggestions that were made are now before delegates for their consideration.

I would like to spotlight one particular suggestion which calls upon the National Headquarters to deal directly with District Units of the Party in all administrative and organisational matters. This suggestion which comes from the President, Mr. Piloo Mody, is to

- (a) help State offices reduce routine administrative burden so as to enable them to give greater attention to more important aspects of party activity, and

- (b) enable District Units to maintain direct communication with the National Headquarters, which it is hoped will encourage active Units by giving them the feeling that their work is being recognised and thus also serve to activate other units.

Meetings of the Council and Committees

There have been eight meetings of the General Council, twenty-one meetings of the National Executive and seventeen of the Central Parliamentary Board since the last National Convention in Bhubaneswar in October 1968.

Since the period covered by these meetings is so long, I have been compelled to confine myself to highlighting some of the more important matters that were discussed at these meetings. A more detailed coverage in my view is not only not necessary, but would needlessly lengthen this already lengthy Report.

General Council

There have been eight meetings of the General Council since the last National Convention in Bhubaneswar in October 1968.

The first of these was in New Delhi on November 15 and 16, 1969. The Council adopted the Mid-Term Report which outlined the Party's achievements since the 1967 elections and what it proposed to do till the next general elections. The Report which blazed a new trail in Indian politics was widely welcomed by the Press and the public.

The Bhubaneswar Convention which had adopted a resolution on Agriculture dealing with land tenure had provoked considerable discussion within the rank and file of the Party. The General Council set up a 9-man Committee to study the resolution and suggest to the General Council whatever revisions, and/or modifications might be considered necessary or desirable in order to give effect to this resolution.

Unfortunately, soon thereafter, the National leadership had to turn their attention to the fast-moving political developments culminating in the 1971 Lok Sabha elections. Consequently, the Committee appointed to study the Agriculture Resolution was unable to do its work.

The Resolution is significant in that it is a telling reply to those who charge the Swatantra Party with being concerned only about

big landowners. I would suggest to our delegates that this Resolution should soon form an integral part of party policy.

The second meeting of the Council was held in Madras on December 27 and 28, 1969, to elect the Office Bearers and members of the National Executive for the next two years. The following Office Bearers and Members of the National Executive were elected:

President

Mr. M. R. Masani

Vice-Presidents

Mr. R. N. Singh Deo
Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy
Smt. Gayatri Devi
Mr. N. Dahdeker
Mr. Dahyabhai Patel

General Secretary

Dr. R. C. Cooper

Hon. Treasurers

Mr. H. P. Nanda
Mr. Lalchand Hirachand

Joint Secretaries

Dr. H. V. Hande
Mr. Harihar Patel
Mr. N. K. Somani
Mr. R. K. Amin
Mr. Madhu Mehta

Members

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari
Prof. N. G. Ranga
Mr. G. Latchanna
Mr. S. S. Mariswamy
Mr. J. M. Lobo Prabhu
Mr. H. M. Patel
Mr. Piloo Mody
Mr. K. Sundaram
Mr. P. K. Deo
Sardar Basant Singh
Mr. D. N. Patodia
Mr. Buddhi Prakash
Mrs. Louella Lobo Prabhu
Mr. J. Mohammad Imam
Mr. J. Vallikappen
Miss Kusum Kumari Joshi
Mr. N. K. Ganapajiah
Col. H. R. Pasricha
Mr. Y. G. Gowd
Mr. Tribikram Tripathy

The Congress (O)'s call for a consolidation of all nationalist and democratic forces to meet the threat posed to the country's security and its democratic constitution by the Ruling Congress and its communist allies was the main theme of the General Council's third meeting held in Madras on July 21 and 22, 1970. Rajaji and the Party's President, Mr. Masani, enthusiastically welcomed the Old Congress call as a step in the right direction which offered a correct lead to the country.

Rajaji moved the resolution on the Political Situation which welcomed "the call given by the All-India Congress Committee

of the Organisation Congress at its meeting in Delhi on 28th June, 1970, for a consolidation of national democratic forces to meet the threat of communist subversion and open up the path of ordered progress resulting in a better and richer life for the people. The Swatantra Party whole-heartedly responds to the Congress Party's appeal."

Commending the resolution to the Council, Rajaji observed *inter alia*:

"I move this resolution, not formally as the President said, but with all my heart and with all the spirit of battle that has been revived in me for the time being.

The resolution is not mere words. It reflects heartfelt emotions and is absolutely devoid of any superficial fatuity. It reflects the realities of the situation."

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Other resolutions adopted by this meeting of the Council included such diverse subjects as West Bengal, Cambodia, Unemployment, Agricultural Wealth Tax and the Land Grab agitation in Bihar.

The General Council's fourth meeting was held on April 17 and 18, 1971, in Bombay under less happy circumstances. The Party had suffered badly at the polls held a month earlier and the President of the Party, Mr. M. R. Masani, had sent in his resignation from his office taking full responsibility for the Party's débâcle. Mr. Masani had a sad story to tell the Council, which I have briefly referred to elsewhere in this report.

The Council pleaded in vain with Mr. Masani not to press his resignation. But then, unlike the charade of resignations trotted out by those in the ruling party, Mr. Masani meant every word of what he wrote in his letter of resignation. He had, according to him, led his army into the war and been defeated. And as the General he took full responsibility for his army's defeat. He felt therefore that he had no business to continue a minute longer than necessary, so that another General could take his place and regroup the defeated army. This was the theme of his letter of resignation. He sought to set a healthy precedent in Indian politics. Rajaji could not come to Bombay

for the meeting. But he did send his message, which apart from requesting Mr. Masani not to press his resignation, warned the Council against the Party drawing incorrect conclusions from the results of the elections and adopting a policy of "me-too-ism". He wrote among other things:

"Failure in any good attempt is no disgrace. The effort was our duty and the result is not our fault. The Swatantra Party's mission remains and can be summed up briefly. It is: one, to fight against the totalitarian tendencies at the top and to defend the Constitution, and two, to educate the people out of the ignorance of economic laws that rule production and out of the tendency among people, educated and uneducated, to vote for those in power irrespective of whether they deserve support or not.... The Swatantra Party cannot seek to justify itself by any form of me-too-ism in the hope of acquiring power. Other parties may follow such a line. So far me-too-ism has not brought and is not likely to bring any power to those who practise it. A party which is dedicated to truth and to educating the electorate cannot follow that line. It would be better to wind up, if that be the only way to maintain the Party's existence and leave the nation to learn by going through the calamities that totalitarian rule will lead to. A nation can learn through calamities, but the Swatantra Party's mission is to save the nation from such suffering."

That the results of the elections had not demoralised the Party was clearly evident when members of the Council discussed at length and adopted a 9-point "Minimum Programme" for 1971-72. This programme dealt with the problems of the common man and was designed to serve as a rallying point for the party's rank and file in the districts and villages to carry on purposeful activities in the service of the people.

Five months later on September 17 and 18, 1971, the General Council met in Bangalore to elect the office bearers and members of the National Executive. Actually, as mentioned elsewhere, the elections were not due till December, but the General Council at its April meeting in Bombay had brought forward the elections in order to enable younger people to take over the reigns of party organisation.

The following Office Bearers and Members of the National Executive were elected:

President

Mr. H. M. Patel

Vice-Presidents

Mr. R. N. Singh Deo

Rajmata Gayatri Devi

Mr. N. Dandeker

Sardar Harbhajans Singh

Mr. G. Latchanna

General Secretary

Mr. Madhu Mehta

Hon. Treasurers

Mr. Manubhai Amersey

Mr. G. K. Sundaram

Joint Secretaries

Mr. Tribikram Tripathy

Dr. H. V. Hande

Mr. Mewaram Arya

Mr. Y. G. Gowd

Mr. Buddhi Prakash

Members

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari

Dr. R. C. Cooper

Mr. Piloo Mody

Mrs. Louella Lobo Prabhu

Mr. P. K. Deo

Miss Kusum Kumari Joshi

Mr. D. N. Patodia

Mr. Abdul Wahid Raina

Mr. N. K. Ganapiah

Mr. G. B. Sukhee

Mr. K. D. R. Pandey

Dr. M. Santhosham

Mr. Kalyansingh Kalvi

Major Munshi Ram

Mr. Bhupinder Singh Mann

Mr. Gurucharan Tikayat

Mr. Anandbhai Amin

Mr. Harikrishna Srivastava

Mr. R. Y. Ghorpade

Col. H. R. Pasricha

Mr. J. Mohammad Imam

The Council discussed and adopted several resolutions on subjects like Fundamental Rights, Bangla Desh, the Indo-Soviet Treaty, the Press Bill and the Unemployment problem.

The sixth meeting of the General Council took place in Baroda on November 6, 1971. An important decision taken at this meeting was to ratify a decision taken by circular reducing the entrance fee-cum-annual-subscription of all workers from Rs. 3/- to Re 1/- per calendar year. The renewal fee was also fixed at Re. 1/- for all workers other than those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other Backward Classes who would now pay 50 Paise.

Another important, and what has in retrospect turned out to be a significant decision was the acceptance of the Andhra State Council's recommendation that the State be bifurcated into two separate Units viz., the Andhra Regional Unit comprising the

districts of Anantapur, Chittoor, Cuddapah, East Godavary, Guntur, Krishna, Kurnool, Nellore, Srikakulam, West Godavari and Ongole; and the Telengana Regional Unit comprising the districts of Hyderabad, Nizamabad, Warangal, Nalgonda, Adilabad, Khammam, Karimnagar and Mahbubnagar. In doing this, the Party has shown more common sense and an awareness of reality than Mrs. Gandhi and her party.

Another State that was divided for organisational purposes of the Party was Assam, which was bifurcated into the Assam Regional Unit consisting of the districts of Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Darrang, Nowgong, Kamrup, Goalpara, and Kachar; and the Meghalaya Regional Unit comprising the hill districts of Assam.

The Council which was meeting three months before the General Elections to various State Assemblies, adopted an Election Manifesto.

A statement on the current political and economic situation calling upon the Party to launch a movement with the following objectives, was adopted:

- (a) Destroy decadent Marxist values,
- (b) Save the individual, and
- (c) Present to the people "Our Path"—a way of life ideally suited for India.

The 'Our Path' referred to above is the path adumbrated by the Swatantra Party in its Statement of Principles and Statement of Policy and in the various election manifestos issued from time to time.

The seventh meeting of the General Council was held in Bombay on April 8 and 9, 1972. Meeting after the Assembly elections, the Council reviewed the Party's performance in the elections.

Rajaji had in a message to the President, asked members not to take any decisions in a hurry. The context was a letter from Dr. R. C. Cooper who had posed three choices before the Party viz.,

- (a) continuing the Party as it is, or
- (b) merging it with other parties, or
- (c) disbanding the Party and allowing its members to work in different fields of activity or join Congress (R).

The discussion on Dr. Cooper's letter and the response it had evoked from several leading members of the Party was dispassionate and thorough. Almost everyone of the seventy members present had their say. The consensus that emerged from the discussions was:

- (a) that the Party continues to believe that its principles and programmes are sound and their adoption generally would be in the country's interest. Therefore the question of winding up the Party was wholly uncalled for;
- (b) that there is today no Party in the country which could be described as like-minded. That being so, the Swatantra Party must continue to go it alone;
- (c) that at the same time even while adhering to its policies and principles the party must present them in a manner and form which would be more generally understood and acceptable to the masses.

During the discussion Mr. Dandekar after admirably summing up the discussions proposed that if the Party was to address itself vigorously to the task of re-establishing the Party throughout the country, a revamping of the Party's leadership at all levels beginning from the national level was called for. He had in mind a leadership that was young, vigorous and possessed of an energy level adequate to take the Party ahead. And he sought to set an example by offering to step down from the office of Vice-President to enable a younger person to take his place.

The President Mr. H. M. Patel endorsing Mr. Dandekar's views said that he too, like Mr. Dandekar wished to make way for someone else who was younger, more energetic and had the time at his disposal.

The Council decided to give members time to consider the various suggestions that had been put forward so that appropriate decisions could be taken at the next meeting of the Council.

The last of the eight meetings of the General Council was held in Madras on June 24 and 25, 1972. It was also destined to be the last meeting to have the honour and comfort of having its Founder in its midst.

This meeting was really a continuation of the meeting held in Bombay on April 8 and 9. The discussion on organisation was taken up from where it was left off at Bombay.

Mr. H. M. Patel reiterating what he had said in Bombay that

he agreed with the suggestion that new, younger and more dynamic people should take over, announced his resignation. He suggested to the Council that Mr. Piloo Mody be elected President of the Party. Mr. Patel's resignation was accepted and so was his suggestion that Mr. Piloo Mody be appointed President.

In line with what he had stated at the Bombay meeting, Mr. Dandekar wished to be relieved from the Vice-Presidentship. His resignation was accepted. Similarly, Mr. J. Mohammad Imam wished to resign from the membership of the National Executive on grounds of poor health. This too was accepted.

Consequent on the above, the Council after deciding not to fill the vacancy for Vice-President, elected Mr. Dandekar and Mr. H. M. Patel to membership of the National Executive.

A nine-point programme dealing with agriculture, housing, employment, availability of consumer goods of good quality at fair prices, the rights of labour, the rights of minorities, a free press, the right to social justice and the Party's task of education and agitation was adopted. So were eight resolutions, dealing with such topics as the plight of Harijans, Land Ceilings, threats to Press Freedom, etc.

The General Council meets on April 13, on the eve of the Sixth National Convention.

National Executive •

The first of the meetings of the National Executive covered by this Report which was held in Bhubaneswar on October 3, 1968, dealt with various matters coming up before the Fifth National Convention.

The Executive's next meeting was held on November 24, 1968. A seven-man Committee was nominated to draft the Mid-term Manifesto as resolved by the Fifth National Convention. Various issues concerning party organisation arising from the amendments made to the constitution of the Party at the Fifth National Convention were settled.

While calling upon the party's members and units to participate in the Gandhi Centenary celebrations, the Executive declined to subscribe to all the 9 points enumerated in the "minimum programme" published by the National Committee for Gandhi Centenary. Specifically there were two points—one was "Gramdan" to which the Party was opposed and the other

"prohibition" in respect of which the party's members were free to follow their own conscience.

It was decided to extend the party's activities to Kashmir by setting up an ad hoc committee in that State.

The third meeting was held in New Delhi on February 16, 1969. That was the time when the Party had begun negotiations with other democratic opposition parties to present a united front to the Congress.

Prof. Ranga, the then President, reported with disappointment that the discussions with the Jan Sangh had been fruitless. The then General Secretary Mr. N. Dandekar finding it necessary to put a stop to speculation in the public that the Swatantra Party and the Jan Sangh were planning to merge, issued a public statement clarifying the position which was approved by the National Executive. The statement said *inter alia*:

- (a) "That the discussions were concerned primarily with evolving electoral understandings between the two Parties in the context of the mid-term elections that were then due in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh;
- (b) That a further objective was to evolve, if possible, a working arrangement whereby the Parliamentary Groups of the two Parties could henceforth sit together as one combined Opposition Group in the two Houses of Parliament;
- (c) That there was no question of any "merger" of the two parties;
- (d) That as the talks concerning electoral understandings were unsuccessful all further discussions were discontinued because of the impending mid-term elections."

The Executive reiterated an earlier decision that in view of its past experience, the Party should, apart from seeking understandings on specific matters like electoral adjustments no longer continue its efforts to seek a closer relationship with the Jan Sangh.

The Fourth meeting was held in Madras on June 22 and 23, 1969. At this meeting the Party decided to initiate an effort to persuade the ruling Party, the Prime Minister and other Opposition Parties that a leading non-party man like Pandit Kunzru or Mr. K. Subba Rao be the unanimous choice of all parties for the office of the President of India.

It might be relevant to mention here that Dr. C. D. Deshmukh was finally the candidate whom the Party supported.

What will again, in retrospect, be considered a statesmanlike resolution dealt with Telengana, when the National Executive after criticising the State Government called upon the Central Government to keep an open mind. The resolution said *inter alia*: "The Central Government should then quickly explore all avenues for solving the problem of not only restoring the confidence of the people of Telengana in the Government of the State but also of bringing about harmony and good relations between all sections of the State and consider whether it is necessary for this purpose to constitute a separate Telengana State."

Despite the earlier decision of the Executive, not to continue to seek a closer relationship with the Jan Sangh, political developments were compelling opposition parties to come closer together. Week after week, Rajaji pleaded in *Swarajya* for the opposition to get together on the basis of a minimum programme. The Party heeded the call of its Founder and revived its efforts.

The then B.K.D. General Secretary Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri was invited to this meeting of the Executive. That was the time when the B.K.D.'s Chairman Choudhary Charan Singh had called for a merger of democratic parties, on the ground that the only way to fill the vacuum caused at the Centre by the disintegration of the Congress and to arrest the growing influence of the Communists was for like-minded democratic parties to get together.

The Executive authorised the President, the General Secretary of the Party and Mr. Masani to continue talks on its behalf with leaders of other parties.

The mid-term elections had taken their toll of Mr. Dandekar's health. He therefore sought permission of the National Executive to Dr. R. C. Cooper's continuing to function as the Officiating General Secretary. This was given at the next meeting of the National Executive held in New Delhi on August 30, 1969.

The Executive adopted a resolution thanking "Dr. C. D. Deshmukh for his patriotic action in agreeing to stand as a candidate for the President's office knowing that the odds were against his success."

Concerning the reservation of seats in Parliament and State Assemblies, the Executive confirmed a decision it had arrived at earlier by circular that there should be a gradual elimination of

reservation of seats over a period of fifteen years by reducing one-third of the seats every five years.

The last meeting of the Executive in 1969 was held on November 12. The draft Mid-term Manifesto which the seven-man Committee appointed for the purpose had christened the "Mid-term Report" was taken up. The draft was finalised and recommended to the General Council for adoption.

About this time defection and toppling operations in several states had got going. In Gujarat Mr. C. C. Desai began making statements which were at variance with the declared policy of the party viz. not to help the ruling Congress in its efforts to topple the State Government. The Executive while approving Mr. H. M. Patel's rejoinder to a statement by Mr. C. C. Desai that Mr. Desai was speaking for himself and not for the Party, called on the Gujarat Unit not to take any action without prior consultation and approval of the Central Parliamentary Board and/or the National Executive.

Giving guidance to our MLAs in U.P. where also the toppling operations were in full swing, the Executive asked our MLAs not to participate in attempts to topple the State Government and in the event of the government being toppled our MLAs could support a new government provided it did not contain communists. As regards joining any such government the matter would be considered:

- (a) only if our MLAs were invited to join, and
- (b) provided such a government did not include communists.

An interesting decision taken at this meeting concerned the distribution of decontrolled cement. A memorandum was signed by some of our MPs which in effect called for some kind of government control over distribution. The Executive while reprimanding the erring MPs decided that "in consonance with the desire of the Party to promote the social responsibilities of business, Mr. Masani, Mr. Dandekar and Dr. Cooper should use their good offices to get together the interests concerned to explore the possibility of evolving a voluntary arrangement among the producers which was not against the interests of consumers."

The next meeting of the Executive was held on 27th of December on the eve of the General Council meeting. The meeting did not transact any serious business except to recommend

to the newly elected General Council the number of office bearers that should be elected for the next two years.

The following day, December 28, the newly elected Executive met with Mr. M. R. Masani in the Chair.

The Central Parliamentary Board was constituted comprising the founder Rajaji, leaders of the Party in the two Houses of Parliament and in the various Assemblies. The President and the General Secretary would be ex-officio members.

The functions of the Board were also outlined, viz.

- (a) to guide the attitude of the Party's group in Parliament regarding legislative and policy matters and similarly the State legislatures regarding matters having all-India repercussions,
- (b) selecting candidates for Parliament, and
- (c) approving candidates for State legislatures.

The Gujarat situation was warming up and the newly elected President Mr. Masani decided that he would go to Ahmedabad and meet the Gujarat Executive and legislature party.

Meanwhile the Executive unanimously reiterated its earlier decision of 12th November 1969 that the Gujarat legislature group of our Party should neither initiate nor support any move to topple the Government in Gujarat without the previous approval of the Parliamentary Board.

The Executive met again on February 16 and 17, 1970. A Statement on the current political situation outlining the Party's attitude and role in the context of the break-up of the Congress party was adopted. After analysing the causes for the Congress split, the Statement pointed out that a change of government in New Delhi could only become effective and meaningful if the people saw the emergence of an alternative government comprising patriotic and democratic elements from the various democratic opposition parties since no single party was itself in a position to do so. The Statement pointed out that the real choice before the country was "between liberal democracy and humanism on the one hand and authoritarianism or totalitarianism on the other". While pledging itself to place the nation before the party the Statement said that it would "continue its efforts to build a broad-based platform in order to repel the threat of communist subversion.... so that our country may pursue the path of

ordered progress under a broad-based government of democratic unity and progress."

The fast moving developments in Gujarat again came up for discussion. By then the President and General Secretary had been to Ahmedabad and met the leader of the Party in the State Assembly, the MLAs and the President of the State Unit. Aware of the delicate situation and the position of the party, it was decided that while our Party in the Assembly should play its legitimate role as an opposition party, it should at the same time remember that nothing should be done which would cut across the national objective of the party viz. the formation of a broad-based front in order to combat the ruling Congress and its communist allies.

Similar guidance was given to our legislature groups in Mysore and U.P. (though our group in U.P. was small and acquired importance in view of the evenly matched strength of the ruling and opposition parties). The ruling Congress was trying to topple the opposition governments in these two States. Our legislators were asked not to support any move if the consequence of such a move was the establishment of a government of the ruling Congress or led by it.

The Executive welcomed the Supreme Court's decision striking down the Bank Nationalisation Act as hostile and indiscriminate against the 14 nationalised banks and as a violation of the Constitutional guarantee of fair compensation wherever private property was acquired by the State.

A 5-Man Sub-committee was appointed to consider ways and means of drawing youth to the Party. Unfortunately rapid political developments made it difficult for this Sub-committee as well to attend to the task entrusted to it.

The perennial problem of raising funds was discussed and it was felt that party members and units should emphasise the collection of small contributions from a large number of small businessmen, shop-keepers, professionals and white collar workers rather than rely on a few big contributions.

Mr. C. C. Desai figured again at this meeting for, though a Swatantra member of Parliament he had been acting contrary to party policy at the national level.

The State President conceded that the activities of Mr. C. C. Desai in Gujarat were causing considerable embarrassment to the State unit. The Executive decided to ask Mr. Desai to furnish

an explanation, but before doing so the President Mr. Masani said that he would have a talk with Mr. Desai and seek from him an assurance of good and disciplined behaviour in the future. Mr. Lobo Prabhu made a similar offer. If such an assurance was forthcoming from Mr. Desai, all action contemplated would be dropped.

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan's view that politicians found guilty of corruption should retire from politics and if they did not do so their party should debar them from membership, was endorsed by the Executive.

New Delhi was the venue of the next meeting of the Executive held on April 12 and 13, 1970. The President reported on his visit to Bhubaneswar where he had met the State President and his colleagues as also our then coalition partners, the Jana Congress. He had come back with the impression that while our performance in government was satisfactory, party organisation was being neglected.

An issue that was later to spell disaster for the opposition alliance in 1971 came up at this meeting in the form of a letter from Mr. George Fernandes of the SSP. The SSP General Secretary had written to us asking our Party's cooperation along with the other parties in defeating the ruling Congress. In our reply we had restated our well-known position that we were quite willing to consider an arrangement provided it was based on a common programme. Mr. Fernandes' reply was to the effect that dislodging the Government in Delhi should precede agreement on a common programme. Naturally the National Executive disagreed with this view and reiterated its earlier decision that efforts to dislodge the present government would only be meaningful and successful if and when a viable alternative was available. This meant the emergence of an opposition front with an agreed programme. But at the same time the Party did not close the doors to a dialogue with the SSP. It forwarded to him a note by Mr. Piloo Mody entitled "Towards a better Future" and a paper on Economic Policy prepared by a working group of the National Executive to help the SSP understand the Party's position on various issues.

The Executive expelled Mr. C. C. Desai from membership of the Party. This action was taken after a considerable amount of discussion and after the President reported that his efforts to persuade Mr. C. C. Desai to give an assurance that he would

act in a disciplined and loyal manner had failed. He was therefore given a detailed charge sheet. Mr. Desai's reply to the charge sheet was considered in great detail and after thorough discussion the Executive voted to expel him by 17 votes to 5 with 3 abstentions.

The last three meetings of the Executive had also been considering various position papers explaining the Party's position on such matters as transport and communication, housing, agriculture, unemployment, etc. It was decided to circulate these papers as widely as possible among the Party's membership. An appeal from Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan asking Mr. Masani to be a signatory to an appeal for funds to be called Gramdan Fund was turned down on the ground that the appeal included Gramdan to which the Party did not subscribe.

To focus attention on the growing menace of Naxalitim in the country the Executive called upon Party units to observe May 24 as anti-Naxalite Day. The response to this call was very encouraging.

The Executive went to Madras for its next meeting on July 17, 1970. Meeting on the eve of the General Council the Executive finalised a Statement on the political situation which welcomed the Congress (O)'s call for a consolidation of nationalist and democratic forces in the country.

The General Secretary reported on the initiative taken by the Party to organise a campaign for the defence of Fundamental Rights.

The Executive was keeping a close watch over the functioning of our party in Orissa and the performance of the coalition government in that State led by us.

Mr. Masani again reported on his visit to Orissa and expressed satisfaction with the manner in which the coalition government was functioning. The Executive while conveying its satisfaction felt that the good work being done there deserved wider and better publicity.

On November 8, 1970, the Executive met in New Delhi. It decided to hold the next National Convention in Bombay on the 30th and 31st of January 1971.

Mr. Nuggehalli Shivappa, a Swatantra member of Parliament, was expelled from the Party for defying the Party's policy on the Constitution 24th Amendment Bill regarding Privy Purses.

He had failed to reply to a show cause letter sent to him two months earlier.

The President reported on the efforts he was making under the authority given to him by the General Council to negotiate with other democratic opposition parties for a national Democratic Front.

The consensus of the discussion was —

- (a) disappointment with the absence of a positive response from the Congress (O) to their own resolution of June 28;
- (b) that the Swatantra Party could not wait indefinitely particularly with the possibility of an early mid-term poll to Parliament;
- (c) that the Party's President should pursue his efforts with the BKD and the Jan Sangh while keeping the doors open to the Congress(O) to join as and when it made up its mind; and
- (d) meanwhile to accelerate the pace of nomination of its own candidates particularly in such constituencies carried by the Party in the 1967 election.

A four-man Sub-Committee with Mr. Lobo Prabhu as Convener and Prof. Ranga, Prof. Ruthnaswamy and Mr. Patodia as members was entrusted with the task of preparing a detailed programme of bringing prosperity to the people of India.

Resolutions on a number of issues like the Henderson-Brooks Report, Soviet Maps and Unemployment problems were adopted.

An invitation from the Congress (O)-led Ministry in U.P. inviting a member of our Party to join the SVD government was discussed and it was decided that a member of our Party would be permitted to join the State Ministry it being made clear that our Party would neither sign the SVD Programme nor be committed to it wherever it was at variance with the Swatantra Party's principles and policies as for example the lowering of ceilings on land. Our M.L.A. Mr. Munshilal was given permission to accept the Chief Minister's invitation to join the Government as a Minister of State. Similar permission was also given earlier to our M.L.A. Mr. Tej Narayan Yadav to join the Congress(O)-led Ministry in Bihar.

The Executive heard a report on the Preparatory Convention of the Party's Youth Wing held in Bhubaneswar in October

1970 and which I attended. It was an encouraging Convention. It is a pity that it has not been able to be more active.

On the 8th and 9th of January 1971, the Executive met in Madras. By then, Parliament had been dissolved and General Elections were due in February. It was decided therefore to postpone the National Convention scheduled for the 30th and 31st of January 1971.

The Executive while accepting the Election Commission's proposal that each political party be given time over A.I.R. was unable to appreciate the Commission's condition that their proposal should be unanimously acceptable to all political parties. The Executive urged the Election Commission to leave each party to decide whether or not it wished to participate in such broadcasts. I might mention here that the Congress (R) was one of the Parties which did not reply to the Commission's proposal.

Matters had started hotting up in Orissa and the proverbial headache of all Orissa Ministries viz., the Kendu Leaf Trade, was utilised skillfully by the Ruling Congress to bring about a split in the Orissa coalition. The Jana Congress partners in the coalition government demanded the dissolution of the Assembly. The National Executive approved the action of the Chief Minister, Mr. R. N. Singh Deo, in appointing a Cabinet Committee to look into the Kendu Leaf affair. It also approved the decision of the Governor in summoning the Assembly to test the Government's strength.

Five days before this meeting of the Executive, viz., on January 3, Mr. Masani had withdrawn from the all-Party Democratic Alliance because the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh had allowed the SSP to sabotage the common programme as a price for its entering the Alliance. While approving Mr. Masani's action the Executive "having regard to the totality of the circumstances" asked the Party to rejoin the Front formed in Delhi on 3rd January so as to enable one agreed candidate to be put up from each Lok Sabha constituency.

The contents of the Draft Election Manifesto for the 1971 Lok Sabha Elections were settled and it was decided to release the Manifesto on January 26, 1971.

The next meeting was held in Bombay on April 16, 17 and 18, 1971, after the General Elections to the Lok Sabha. It analysed in detail the reasons for the Party's poor performance the consensus of which can be found elsewhere in this report.

Mr. Masani had resigned his position as President of the Party accepting full responsibility for the Party's defeat. As Mr. Masani declined to withdraw his resignation when the matter came up before the General Council, the Executive decided to request Mr. Dandekar to officiate as President till the election of a new President in the course of the forthcoming Party elections.

The Punjab State Executive was reconstituted.

In the light of the decision to hold early Party elections, the National Convention was further postponed till after the completion of these elections.

The Executive met again after the General Council meeting with Mr. Dandekar officiating as President and he took the Chair at the adjourned meeting.

In the context of the Assembly elections due in various States in 1972, it was decided to call upon State Units to start providing lists of constituencies where the State Units intended putting up candidates.

As regards arrangements with other parties, the Executive decided that while State Units were free to go along and work closely with Congress (O) they should not associate with the Jan Sangh or the SSP without prior reference to the National Headquarters, where the Acting President and the General Secretary would treat all such references strictly on merits.

The next meeting of the National Executive was held on 17th September. It was meeting on the eve of the General Council which was to elect new Office Bearers, for the next two years.

The Constitution 24th Amendment Bill had been opposed by the Party in Parliament. In line with the Party's policy, the National Headquarters had called upon the Party's units and members to organise a campaign against the Bill. Unfortunately, certain of our Assembly Groups had dragged their feet in not forcing the opposition to a division. This was the case in the Andhra Assembly whereas in the Andhra Legislative Council our group had pressed for a division in which six members had opposed the ratification of the Amendment. This was noted by the Executive.

The first meeting of the newly elected National Executive was held on 18th September with Mr. H. M. Patel in the Chair.

The Central Parliamentary Board was constituted comprising the leaders of the Party's groups in Parliament and the leaders

of the Assembly Groups in Andhra, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. The President and General Secretary would be ex-officio members. State and Regional Units of the Party which had all been newly elected were asked to set up State/Regional Parliamentary Boards without delay to get on with the job of preparing for the General Elections to several State Assemblies in March 1972. A sub-committee of 4 members was set up to finalise the Draft Election Manifesto of the Party for the forthcoming Assembly elections.

It was decided to set up a Sub-Office of the National Headquarters in Delhi with Mr. M. R. Arya, Joint Secretary, in charge.

The next meeting of the Executive was held in Baroda on November 5, 1971. It recommended on various organisational matters and several resolutions for the General Council's consideration the following day.

The next meeting of the newly elected Executive was held on April 8, 1972 after the Assembly elections. It reviewed the results of the elections which have been reported in detail elsewhere in this Report.

On June 23, 1972, the Executive met again in Madras. Various resolutions that were coming up before the General Council were discussed.

The twentieth meeting of the National Executive covered by this report was held in Lucknow, on October 7 and 8, with Mr. Piloo Mody, the newly elected President in the Chair.

It was decided to hold the National Convention in Bombay on January 27 and 28, 1973, with the National Headquarters being given the authority to shift the dates to the following month in case the Bombay Regional Unit needed more time. The position of the Party in the various States was reviewed. A novel feature of this meeting was that for the first time the National Executive after its deliberations held a Joint Session with the entire State Council of U.P. and members from both the National Executive and the Council had a free exchange of views with the U.P. State Council.

The twenty first and last meeting covered by this report was held in New Delhi on February 18 and 19, 1973. This was the first meeting of the National Executive after Rajaji's passing away and it adopted a resolution expressing its profound sense of sorrow and deep sense of loss.

The situation within the Orissa Assembly was very fluid and

the State Unit's cooperation with Mr. Biju Patnaik and Mr. Hare Krishna Mahtab in forming the Orissa Pragati Legislature Party was agitating members of the Executive. There was a free and frank discussion at the end of which the National Executive while concurring with the decision of the Orissa Unit to form the Orissa Pragati Legislature Party stipulated that this collaboration between the Orissa Swatantra Party and other groups "be confined strictly to their functioning in the legislature and does not commit the constituent partners to any similar collaboration outside it".

The leader of our Party in the Rajasthan Assembly asked for and was given permission to initiate a similar arrangement in the Rajasthan Assembly subject to:

- (a) the composition of such a Group having the approval of the National Headquarters,
- (b) it being based on an agreed programme of legislative work, and
- (c) it being strictly confined to the Rajasthan Assembly.

The situation in Andhra came up for discussion and the Party while fully sympathising with the people of Andhra and Telingana called upon the Government of India to concede with immediate effect the demands of the people of the two regions for separate States.

Tamil Nadu affairs were also considered in the context of the split in the DMK. The Executive approved the line taken by the Tamil Nadu unit of retaining its identity even while cooperating on specific issues with the Congress (O) or the ADMK.

The efforts being made to revitalise party organisation in the various States were reviewed by the Executive.

Resolutions on the take-over of foodgrains trade, relations with Pakistan, Power shortage, Drought Situation were among those discussed and adopted.

An important decision taken at this meeting was one which not only reiterated the earlier decision of the Executive permitting the Party to set up candidates in elections to Gram Panchayats but called upon the Party's Units to take a more positive position and contest wherever possible elections for the village panchayats, talukas and district levels.

The Tamil Nadu Unit invited the National Convention to Madras so that the Party could pay a tribute befitting Rajaji's

memory. It was therefore decided to shift the venue to Madras and hence you see us here today.

Central Parliamentary Board

The board first met in Bhubaneswar on October 3, 1968. Attending to the forthcoming Mid-term elections in Bengal, U.P. and Bihar the Board decided to permit State Units to formulate their own manifestos so long as they were within the ambit of the party's principles and policies.

An important decision taken at this meeting concerned a resolution that was then being moved by Mr. Vajpayee in the Lok Sabha seeking full integration of Kashmir with India by abrogating the relevant article in the Constitution. The Board decided that while members would be free to speak as they liked the Group as a whole should refrain from voting.

However at the next meeting of the Board in New Delhi on November 4 it was decided to endorse the decision taken by the Party's Parliamentary Group to vote against Mr. Vajpayee's resolution.

The work of various sub-committees that had been set up to plan Party strategy and campaign for the Mid-term poll were considered. Various candidates for by-elections to the State Assemblies and Lok Sabha were approved.

Concern was expressed over the unruly scene witnessed in Parliament on November 13, 1968. The Board decided that the leaders of our Party in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha should write to the Speaker requesting him to enforce the rules of procedure in order to maintain order, decorum and discipline.

On February 16, 1969, which was the next meeting of the Board our performance in the Mid-term poll was analysed. Utter paucity of resources and the inability of our own candidates to explain satisfactorily the Party's policies were among the reasons given. But the few that were elected viz., 3 from Bihar, 5 from U.P. and one from the Punjab were all generally asked to support all efforts to provide stable governments in their State provided that such governments did not include the Communists or the SSP. It also advised the various legislators on the election of their leaders. The progress of the discussions with the Jan Sangh were also reviewed, which are referred to elsewhere in this Report.

There was an informal meeting of the Central Parliamentary

Board to give guidance to our MLAs in Bihar where attempts were being made to form a Congress(O)-led government. The then General Secretary, Mr. Dandekar, who visited Patna was able to convince our MLAs to offer only conditional support without participating in any coalition government.

Certain developments within the U.P. Legislature Group of our Party were discussed at the next meeting of the Board in Madras on June 22, 1969. The advice of the Central Parliamentary Board that Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh be elected leader had not been accepted by members of the U.P. Legislature Group and another MLA had been elected to this post. The BKD was making efforts to dislodge the Congress government in the State. Giving guidance on what ought to be our Party's position, the Board decided that in view of the negotiations that were then going on between the two parties to come closer together our MLAs be permitted to support any motion of no-confidence that may be moved by the BKD.

The Party's attitude to a private member's Bill seeking enhancement of salaries and other allowances of MPs and which had been referred to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament was defined. The Board, as also the Party's Parliamentary Group wanted the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee to be referred to an impartial third party like a judge of the Supreme Court for opinion with a tacit understanding that such impartial opinion would be accepted by the House and the Bill amended accordingly. If this suggestion was not acceptable then our MPs were asked to support only those provisions in the Bill which had the unanimous recommendation of the Joint Select Committee but not those which were merely majority recommendations. If even this was not accepted by the Ruling Congress then the Party's Group was asked to abstain from voting on those recommendations which were not unanimous.

At its meeting in New Delhi on July 20, 1969, the Board expressed its surprise and shock that the Ordinance nationalising 14 Banks was promulgated less than 48 hours before the opening of the Parliament session. The Board described the step as amounting to a contempt of Parliament.

In the Presidential election, all Party MPs, MLAs and MLCs were directed to give their first preference vote to Dr. C. D. Deshmukh and their second preference vote to Mr. Sanjiva Reddy

but under no circumstances to give any preference vote to Mr. V. V. Giri.

The next meeting of the Parliamentary Board was held on February 17, 1970, in Bombay. Some of our MLAs and MPs were attending meetings and conferences organised by other political parties. This was causing the Party a certain amount of embarrassment. The Party therefore decided that the Party's MLAs, MLCs and MPs should not attend Conventions of other political parties, address meetings from platforms of other political parties nor issue statements or sign memoranda jointly with members of other political parties without the prior permission and approval of the appropriate Party authorities.

Candidates were nominated for the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha from the States of Gujarat, Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

Rajaji had been pressing MPs to move a non-official resolution in the Lok Sabha for setting up a quasi-judicial board to administer permits and licences. It was decided that the Party's group should seek the cooperation of other Opposition Parties and move a non-official resolution to the effect that (a) the administration of permits and licences be entrusted with full autonomous authority to a non-Party Board of economists and statesmen of experience functioning independently of government as a quasi-judicial body.

The Prime Minister and her colleague Mr. R. K. Khadilkar, upset by the Supreme Court's verdict on the Bank nationalisation ordinance had been attacking the judiciary. Taking serious note of this, the Board called upon our MPs to challenge Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Khadilkar in Parliament and to be ever vigilant against all attempts that Parliament might make to denigrate the judiciary and destroy their independence.

A Preventive Detention Ordinance promulgated by the coalition government led by our Party in Orissa had created a certain amount of unhappiness among the Party members, because it contained provisions which our own MPs had opposed on the floor of the Lok Sabha. The then Chief Minister and President of our State Unit after explaining the special circumstances (the real threat posed by the Naxalites) said that he would, when the Ordinance came up before the Assembly to be enacted, take appropriate note of the suggestions that had been made.

The next meeting of the Board held on March 19, 1970, was

essentially concerned with guiding our MLAs concerning various candidatures to the Rajya Sabha in the different States.

Mr. Jagjivan Ram, the then President of the Ruling Congress, offered conditional support to the Swatantra Party if it helped to overthrow the Congress (O) ministry in Gujarat. The Board rejected Mr. Jagjivan Ram's offer and described it as "cynical".

Meeting in New Delhi on April 11, 1970, the Board considered the results of the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha in which three of our candidates were successful.

At its next meeting in Madras on July 20, 1970, the Board considered various Parliamentary matters and gave guidance to the Party's Groups in the two Houses of Parliament.

Meeting in New Delhi on 22nd August, 1970, the Board considered the situation in Orissa arising from the attitude of our coalition partners, the Jana Congress, who wanted the Government to be dissolved and to hold mid-term election. The Swatantra Party on the other hand saw no reason for a dissolution. The final decision was left to the then President Mr. Masani in consultation with the President of the Orissa Unit.

As a result of the dissolution of the Kerala Assembly, General Elections were due in that State. The Board decided that four candidates of the Party should contest the elections and that the Party should negotiate electoral arrangements with other democratic opposition parties.

Orissa was the only item of discussion at an emergency meeting of the Board held in New Delhi on 2nd September, 1970. Events were moving fast in Orissa. The Jana Congress had left the Ministry. The Swatantra Party decided to go it alone and face the Assembly and if it was defeated it would naturally step down from office. In the light of the discussions held by the Board it was decided to leave the matter to the President of the Orissa Unit. As it turned out our Ministry resigned and recommended the dissolution of the Assembly.

Meeting again on November 7, 1970, the Party expressed its disappointment that the two candidates of the four who finally contested were not successful in the Kerala Assembly.

The Board welcomed the decision of the Party's Group in the Mysore State Assembly to withdraw from the SVD (Opposition) as this was damaging the Party's identity. The Board nominated several candidates for the Lok Sabha elections from Andhra, Mysore and Maharashtra.

By the time the Central Parliamentary Board met next on January 9, 1971, Parliament had been dissolved.

We had walked out of the Democratic Front and rejoined at the instance of the National Executive. The Board asked the Party's representatives on the Coordinating Committee which would be meeting in New Delhi for allocation of seats to seek allocation on the following principles, viz.

- (1) that that Party which carried that constituency in the last general elections to the Lok Sabha or a subsequent by-election will ordinarily be entitled to nominate its candidates;
- (2) where there is no nominee of the relevant Party in the Front the nomination should be of that candidate of that party who had the best chances of success.

As regards joint campaigning it was suggested that the Units of the parties constituting the Front be directed to work out local arrangements. The issue of joint publicity material was left to the initiative of local candidates. There was a review of seats the Party was likely to contest in the various States. The two States of Orissa and Tamil Nadu which were having simultaneous Assembly elections were also dealt with.

A 3-Man Sub-Committee consisting of the then President, Mr. Masani, Mr. N. Dandekar, the then Vice-President, and Dr. R. C. Cooper, the then General Secretary, was set up to approve further recommendations of Lok Sabha candidatures received from State Units.

The next meeting of the Board was held on March 20, 1971, after the Lok Sabha elections. It reviewed our performance and adopted a Statement which said that "as good democrats the Swatantra Party accepted the popular verdict" and called upon the Party's small group in the two Houses of Parliament to function on their own and articulate the distinctive Swatantra approach and policies. While our MPs should resist all tendencies towards authoritarianism they should not hesitate to continue to give support to all such measures of the Government as would build the nation into a prosperous and free society and ameliorate the lot of the masses. The Board called on the Party "to play the role of a determined but not a factious Opposition".

The results of the elections to the Orissa Assembly were not decisive. Only a coalition government was possible. The then

President Mr. Masani expressed the view that the Party should sit in Opposition for a while and not seek new electoral arrangements.

The Board while generally approving the advice given by the then President asked Mr. Singh Deo to protest to the Governor of Orissa against inviting any one to form a government unless it could be proved that the invitee had a majority in the Assembly.

When the Central Parliamentary Board met on April 16, 1971, the Orissa Unit had already entered into coalition arrangements with the Utkal Congress. This was reported to the Board. Giving reasons Mr. R. N. Singh Deo, leader of the Party in the State Assembly, said that both the State Executive and the Swatantra Legislature Group which discussed the matter had taken the view that in order to avoid another mid-term poll and also to sustain the Party's morale, our Party had to take the initiative in forming a coalition government. He pointed out that the coalition partners had agreed on a common programme. The Board noted the action taken by the Orissa Unit.

The decision by the leader of our Party in the Gujarat State Assembly, Mr. Liladhar Patel, to support the Congress (O) Ministry during a no-confidence motion against it moved by the Ruling Congress, had resulted in a schism in our legislature group with five MLAs defecting. Finding itself in a minority, the Hitendra Desai government resigned. The leader of our Party in the State Assembly offered unconditional support to Mr. Hitendra Desai to form a new government and our Party which had then a strength of 16 decided to support the Ministry unconditionally so as to avoid President's Rule.

The last meeting of the Parliamentary Board covered by this Report was held on January 3, 1972. It adopted a Resolution congratulating the Armed Forces for the manner in which they had defended the country. The Government of India was also complimented for the cool confidence with which it had faced the entire situation.

The Board considered the Party's strategy for the Assembly elections of 1972. It discussed the question of relations with other Parties and decided that while there would be no adjustments at the national level with other Opposition parties, the Party's units at the State level were free, if they so desired, to enter into negotiations or arrive at electoral adjustments. It was however made clear that these would strictly relate to adjustment of

seats and would in no way involve a common programme or joint campaigning.

In regard to the issue of State Manifestos, it was felt that despite the situation created by the conflict with Pakistan, and the kind of atmosphere prevailing in the country, the Manifesto that was adopted by the General Council at Baroda in September 1971, continued to be relevant.

The problem of financing the elections was discussed at length and the Board advised the Party's Units that in the light of the very difficult financial condition, the Party Units should set up candidates only in such constituencies where the Party had a reasonable chance of success.

OBITUARY

We have to report and record with deep sorrow the passing away of the following stalwarts of our Party in the last four and a half years.

1. Sardar Darshan Singh Pheruman

Former President of the Punjab Unit who died as a result of a fast unto death that he had undertaken on the Chandigarh issue.

2. Sardar Ram Singh, MP

President of the U.P. Unit.

3. Shri Bhailalbhai Patel

The illustrious President of our Gujarat Unit.

4. Raja Giriraj Saran Singh of Bharatpur, MP

5. Sardar Basant Singh, MLA

General Secretary of the Punjab Unit who died at the hands of a cruel assassin.

6. Mr. K. M. Ramaswamy Gounder

Chief Whip of our Group in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

7. Mr. G. S. Adimoolam

Deputy Leader of our Group in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

8. Mr. T. Parmanand

Trade Union leader and member of our General Council from Bihar.

9. Dr. K. M. Munshi

Our illustrious Vice-President.

10. Dr. Biharilal Antani, MP (Rajya Sabha)
11. Rao Bahadur B. L. Patil
Former President of the Mysore Unit.
12. Mr. C. Mathai
Member of the General Council from Kerala.
13. Mr. S. Venkatarao
Joint Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Unit.
14. Mr. Dadubhai Amin
Vice-President of our Gujarat Unit.
15. Mr. Morarji J. Vaidya
Former President of the Bombay Regional Unit.
16. Mr. Ramaswamy Naidu, MLA, Tamil Nadu
17. Sir Homi Mody
Honorary Treasurer of the Party.
18. Dr. K. C. Bhagel, MP (Rajya Sabha)
19. Mr. N. Rama Seshaiiah
Former Health Minister in the Orissa Coalition Government.
20. Dr. Ambashanker Trivedi, MLA, Gujarat
21. Prof. P. J. Shroff
Vice-President of our Gujarat Unit.
22. Mr. Rajendra Singh Singhvi
Former MLA (West Bengal)
23. Mr. M. Mahableshwarappa, Mysore
24. Mr. P. Venkata Subbiah, Mysore
25. Mr. Birendra Narayan Singh Deo, Mysore
26. Mr. Khageswar Sahu, Orissa
27. Mr. Chandra Sekhar Singh Bhoi, Ex-MLA, Orissa
28. Mr. Mahadeb Mallik, Orissa
29. Mr. Rajendra Kanhar, ex-MP, Orissa
30. Mr. Mahendra Majhi, ex-MP, Orissa
31. Mr. Arjun Das, ex-MLA, Orissa
32. Mr. Indu Bhusan Mohanty, ex-MLA, Orissa
33. Mr. Hemendranath Kanungo
Former President of the Orissa Unit.
34. Mr. Nabin Ch. Bhanja Deo, Orissa
35. Mr. Ramesh Ch. Pradhan, Orissa

36. Mr. Jaladhar Das, *Orissa*
37. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari
Founder of the Party
38. Mr. B. Ramachandra Reddi
Former President of the Andhra Unit.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing is a brief resume of our work and various developments in the last four and half years. Having done so I will be failing in my duty if I did not elaborate on the meaningful role, which according to me, the Swatantra Party ought to play in India today.

Political Situation "Hopeless Mess"

The political situation in India can be best described in just two words: "Hopeless Mess". There is neither democracy nor stability in India today. This may provoke some of our political pundits to raise their eyebrows for they derive satisfaction only from the fact that India goes through elections every five years and that there is a stable government at the Centre.

The first serious blow to Indian democracy was struck when the Prime Minister of India went back on her written word and acted against her Party's decision to support Mr. N. Sanjiva Reddy in the Presidential Elections. After that day, the Congress party and the President have been reduced to act as a rubber stamp to fulfil the whims of the Prime Minister. We have witnessed how various Chief Ministers in a number of States have been imposed by Mrs. Gandhi on her Party, completely throwing to the winds, the usual procedure of respecting the wishes of the MLAs who have a democratic right to elect their own leader. We have also witnessed how Presidential Rule has been imposed in States without giving the opposition an opportunity to prove its strength on the floor of the Assembly.

In Parliament, the Ruling Party is ruling practically through series of ordinances. It is interesting to note that these ordinances have been proclaimed on the eve of Parliament sessions thus putting in contempt the institution of democracy and parliament. On top of all this, fundamental rights have been taken away by Constitutional amendments.

It is true that elections are held in India but it is equally true that the Ruling Party has been increasingly resorting to the shameless misuse of Government machinery at the time of elections. The fantastic amount of money spent by the Ruling Party during the elections, its complete monopoly and control of All-India Radio, its arm-twisting techniques on the Press to give lop-sided news have forced the Opposition in India to function under a tremendous handicap to fight against the giant government machinery and big business money which pours into the Ruling Party's coffers at the slightest nod from the Rulers. Thus from Parliament to Panchayat elections, the Ruling Party is consolidating its position with the help of big money, All-India Radio and an increasingly pressurised Press. The President and the Governors are all used by the Prime Minister to serve her political interest. All these have reduced democracy to a mere farce.

Business and Industry in India

Cynical spokesmen of the Ruling Party are not wrong in saying that business is booming and industrial activity is increasing day by day resulting in increased production. They quote figures from the Reserve Bank to the World Bank to prove this. On the other hand when courageous champions of the free enterprise system like Mr. Nani Palkhivala talk about India being the highest taxed nation in the world, the business and industrial world applaud him momentarily, the middle class doubt him and the poor man in the village is blissfully ignorant about everything including Mr. Palkhivala's *existence*!

Businessmen and industrialists of India have now cheerfully accepted the licence-permit-quota raj, as it helps them enormously to thrive in spite of heavy taxation, fantastic amount of controls, regulations and red tape. To them it is no longer relevant whether the benefits of increased industrial activity go to the common man or not. The plight of the consumer, the shareholder have ceased to bother them. They keep on making black money, with the "krupa" of the Rulers. The collusion between them (businessmen and industrialists) the Ruling Congressmen and corrupt bureaucrats has succeeded in almost wiping out that class of businessmen who believe in competing with each other to provide a better product at cheaper prices to the consumer at a reasonable level of profit, and who believe in paying taxes honestly. The Swatantra Party has championed the cause of this

kind of businessmen and industrialists and continues to do so even today.

Unfortunately, this class of businessmen is being replaced by a class of businessmen who are committed to buy their days' existence, amassing fortunes that can be spirited away to foreign countries and who have complete disregard not only for the future of India but also for the future of their own children. They have forgotten the lessons of history that in countries where the Communists have taken over, the first casualty has always been the trader (petty bourgeois) then the farmer (kulaks) and then the industrialists.

However the biggest tragedy today is that the Congress has succeeded in driving a wedge between the agricultural community on the one hand and the business and industrial community on the other. Each is prepared to shut his eyes to the plight of the other. Not only has the wedge been driven between the city and villages but even within the business world. There is a wedge between industrialists and traders, wholesalers and retailers, small farmers and big farmers.

The Congress now rules on the crest wave of corruption, aided and abetted by utterly selfish, corrupt and demoralised businessmen. This collusion is responsible for the fast growing rate of corruption which is destroying the character and values of India which was once a great country.

The Middle Class

The middle class which used to be the backbone of our country and which provides the intellectual leadership is being wiped out. The enormous price rise, lack of proper accommodation, transport, medical and educational facilities have been compelling factors in bringing about a change in the attitudes of our middle class towards standards of public life.

In their anxiety to solve the problem of their physical survival, they have often been lured by temptations offered by the galloping popularity of corrupt practices resorted to by the high and the mighty who surround them. Day by day, silently, more and more of our good decent people with fixed incomes are discarding their old values of simple living and high thinking. Simple living is considered an impossible luxury and high thinking is replaced by a synthetic existence helped by instant spiritualism. The result is that the middle class which can be the most effec-

tive instrument of bringing about any change has become increasingly ineffectual and apathetic. To them, there is no hope, there is no inspiration and they have been reduced to accept corruption as an accepted way of life, a necessity for their normal existence.

Congress has destroyed the character of the Indian Nation

The single biggest charge that can be levied against the Congress Party is that it has accelerated the process of destroying the character of India. Mrs. Gandhi used to talk of the need for improving and putting life in the instrument to bring about the change in India. She has succeeded only in destroying that instrument viz., the people, who have lost their character.

When I talk of the people I am not confining myself to Congressmen alone but all the leaders and workers of all political parties in India. No political creed or dogma can succeed in an effective manner unless the human aspect of the above problem is honestly looked into and remedies found to improve the situation which has affected the thinking of all leaders and cadres of all the Opposition Parties in India. They have witnessed what political and economic power can achieve. They have witnessed how licences, permits and quotas have already built up the fortunes of the members of the Ruling Party. We are now witnessing a pathetic competition among the Opposition who appear more socialistic than the Ruling Congress. They have really come to believe that to succeed in Indian politics they have to resort to image politics and outdo each other in raising socialist slogans.

Social Consequences of Socialism

Socialism in India gives more power in the hands of politicians in the name of Janata welfare. The politician, big or small, not accustomed to the use of power, abuses it—Janata is cast aside and his own welfare is his first concern. Those who fight him become his enemies and those who help him share the loot with him. The moral of the story is that with the total apathy to insensitivity of the intellectual classes in India, a new breed of politicians has come today into being whose business is to thrive through politics. Many of them have joined the Ruling Congress Party and quite a number have joined the Opposition Parties in the hope that some day they will also get to positions of power.

The result is that the old guards who believed in clean means for clear ends are being pushed out by those who believe in any means to get power.

We have ample evidence of this. We saw the functioning of the various SVD Governments and we have also seen how all opposition parties resorted to the game of toppling and defections. People who have also witnessed all this have lost their faith in all politicians. The virus is spreading in all walks of life—from Universities to Chawl committees, from charitable institutions to cooperative societies and from Chambers of Commerce and Industries to Harijans and Adivasi uplift societies and organisations.

Ideology has been sacrificed at the altar of expediency and humanism has been replaced by cheap sloganism. Socialism has thus become a paying proposition in every walk of life as it gives power and opportunity to prosper and succeed over merit, talent, hard work, efficiency and honesty. This is the reason why a Party like the Jan Sangh adopted what Rajaji aptly described as "me-too-ism".

This is the reason why businessmen and industrialists, farmers and bank clerks, industrial workers and middle class are opting for the easy way out—for a trouble-free existence, accept bribes and give bribes. Let us face the ugly fact that Indian society is now dominated by smugglers, bootleggers, black marketeers and adulterators who are replacing honest traders, manufacturers and distributors. Socialism has thus destroyed initiative, character and enterprise and succeeded in creating a most pervert kind of materialistic society in India. These are indeed the social consequences of socialism in India.

Silent submission of the Congress members

It is interesting to note that many leading members of the Ruling Congress have agreed with their friends that the country is really going to pieces on all fronts. They will even plead privately with the members of the opposition to raise certain issues and they willingly provide certain relevant information also to the opposition, but on their own they will confess that they are not in a position to argue things out within their own party. Why this fear and why this diffidence? Almost all of them are occupying some position or the other in the government or in the organisation which helps them to improve their standards of living which

they would not like to jeopardise by a voice of dissent. Here we must also note that very few members, (I would say even 5%) of the Ruling Congress party are sensitive to what is happening around them in the country. They have joined the Congress party to improve their own lot.

The only person who lays down the rules is the Prime Minister. It is not that she is not aware of the all round deterioration in the country. She knows the weaknesses of her own colleagues. In fact, their weakness is her asset. She bullies the businessmen and industrialists with dosiers. She is also aware of the weaknesses and handicaps suffered by the opposition in the country. She knows that discontent is spreading fast. She knows that her party is cracking and she is also aware of the fact that the people have lost their will to fight. She insists on taking over more industries and more trades. Not a single measure adopted by her has either increased production or provided relief to the people by bringing down the prices or reduced the incidence of corruption. In fact, all the measures she has adopted have had just the contrary effect. Yet she goes on cheerfully. She thrives on crisis and goes on dictating, killing democracy in the process with the active connivance of card holding members of the Communist party who are now in the Congress.

The Role of the Opposition

As mentioned earlier, the social upheaval caused by the Congress socialist policies have also affected thinking of many opposition parties. Soon after the last mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha, partners of the so-called grand alliance, except the Swatantra Party, started to lose faith in their own policies. The most notable example is that of the Jan Sangh which tried to adopt a more socialist image for itself at its Ghaziabad session. The Socialist Party, the Organisation Congress and the Jan Sangh with their new look of socialism have been accusing the ruling Congress of corruption, inefficiency, callousness and total disregard of public opinion without realising that this is bound to happen automatically when any party pursues socialistic policies. In other words, their appeal to the people is that "we are better people than Congressmen and we will not exploit you (people) if you put us in power". They have completely forgotten the most important point that people have lost faith in all politicians who have changed sides and who are rightists today and

socialists tomorrow. People may have lost their will to fight but they have not forgotten the record of the opposition when they were put in power in various States before the mid-term elections.

The role of Swatantra

With all our organisational defects and failings, mistakes and blunders committed by some of us, thanks to the inspiring leadership of Rajaji and Mr. Masani, the Swatantra Party did not lose its head after the mid-term elections. The Swatantra Party reiterated complete faith in its basic principles and policies at its very first meeting of the General Council that was held after the mid-term elections in Bombay. Today more than ever the least we can say with some degree of pride is that we have not compromised our principles on the altar of expediency. Having said this let us also not overlook the fact that some of our colleagues have not yet cured themselves of the habit of opting for an easier way out by joining hands with undesirable and discredited elements in the vain hope and belief that they will give us strength which we lack. Let us realise that the set-back suffered by our party is not because of wrong and faulty policies but because of our own organisational failings, lack of confidence due to inadequate understanding of the Swatantra policies and lack of hard work and imagination to approach the people in the manner that will win their hearts. Wherever we have sincere, dedicated and enthusiastic workers we have succeeded in building up afresh. We have before us the examples of our colleagues like Sardar Latchanna from Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Hande from Tamil Nadu and our colleagues from U.P. and Mysore where a lot of good work has been done recently and good results achieved. Here I must mention the role of our three very good colleagues in their untiring efforts to boost the morale of our party workers and to project a good image for the party — Mr. Piloo Mody, our President, Mr. Manu Amersey, our Treasurer and Mr. Dandekar, our past President, who inspite of his failing health came out boldly and contested the Vidhan Sabha seat from the Matunga constituency in Bombay.

I would like to also place on record our deep appreciation of our members of both Houses of Parliament, who despite their small number have done excellent work and have succeeded in projecting sanity in the nation's highest forum.

However, all this is not enough for us to derive satisfaction of

our performance. Before we leave Madras let us go back with a better understanding of our country's problems and how exactly we can serve the country.

I have already drawn a picture of India as it is today. I am listing below some of the problems on which we have to apply our minds and start working:

1. Everywhere in villages and in towns everyone is harassed and disgusted because of rising prices, rising unemployment, corruption and rising nepotism.
2. In the villages the problems of redistribution of land after land ceilings, lack of proper compensation, ridiculously low price procurement are agitating the minds of the farmers.
3. In famine areas the conditions are worse where complaints of corruption and exploitation by Congress workers and bureaucrats are rampant.
4. The recent take-over of the wholesale trade in wheat and rice is creating tremendous discontent all over the country amongst traders, farmers and consumers. The result of this dangerous move will result in the exploitation of the farmers and consumers. The village mandis will now become "corrupt mandis". The useless government machinery will not be in a position to ensure proper distribution of food-grains and will result in black-marketing and shortages affecting adversely the lives of the poor and middle class in the country.
5. Consequent to the autocratic rule by the Congress bosses from the Centre, the Congress party is showing signs of cracking up in many states.

The Congress has derived its strength mainly from peasant proprietors who are now beginning to grumble loudly. All decisions are only allowed to be taken after clearance from the Centre and the result is inordinate delays in everything. There is a strong feeling developing in the minds of politicians at the state level to fight for more state rights and more autonomy for the states. This idea is gathering momentum and will catch on like wild fire in the coming two or three years with more and more central interference. The DMK, the Shiv Sena and the latest mood of the politicians in Andhra provide ample evidence of this.

An Action-Oriented Programme

The main task before all of us is to explain to the people by personal contacts that neither the Congressmen nor the Communists are interested in solving their problems; the former for their selfish reasons and the latter only interested in creating chaos for a final take-over bid. We must convince them that ours is the only party which has concrete plans that can solve their problems.

To be able to convince the masses about our capacity to solve their problems let us go all out and fight ceaselessly wherever there is injustice. We must organise the following movements:

1. Expose corrupt Panchayat bosses, corrupt officials after collecting evidence to prove our charges.
2. Organise morchas, demonstrations and offer satyagrahas.
3. To be able to build a cadre for our party let us contact the village youth, conduct study classes and prepare them for more struggle to secure justice.
4. In the cities and in towns let us expose the collusion between big businessmen and government to exploit the people.
5. Let us try and contact as many wholesalers, retailers and farmers who have been affected by the take-over of wholesale trade of foodgrains.
6. Let every State unit convene a conference of farm leaders with a view to organise them for future struggle.
7. Every State unit of our party should prepare its state manifesto reflecting the dreams, aspirations, political, economic and social, and start a movement for more State rights.
8. We must oppose undue interference from the Centre.
9. We must mobilise the movement for more State rights, and tell the people that while we want India to be united we shall resist attempts of a handful of people in Delhi to impose their Soviet-inspired plans on our State.
10. We must oppose and agitate against all unnecessary controls, regulations, permits and licences which breed black-markets, compelling honest people to turn to dishonest means.
11. Let us fight for minority rights wherever attempts are made to trample them.

Alliance and other suggested remedies

A number of our members keep on suggesting that the Party should join hands with other like-minded Opposition parties in the country so that we can give a better fight to the Congress. Here we must do a little bit of objective thinking. Is there any other Opposition party in the country which we can honestly describe as like-minded? As mentioned earlier, all of them are giving a new socialist look to their image. We are totally opposed to that after what socialism has done to India.

Our Party gave permission to the Orissa Swatantra Party to work together in the State Assembly with Mr. Patnaik and his colleagues without losing their identity outside the Assembly. It is one thing to go in for joint working in the Assembly and Parliament with other parties, but it will be suicidal for us if for the sake of expediency we join hands with parties or individuals who have not yet cured themselves of the mania to appear socialistic. If in the coming years sufficient realisation dawns amongst the members of other parties and they are prepared to adopt a pragmatic and sane approach to solve India's problems then we shall have no hesitation in joining hands with them.

In fact, we should go out of our way to convince good democratic and open-minded members of the Opposition about the stand of our Party so that at some stage or another, there is a better understanding of problems between us which alone will pave the way for a new party consisting of really like-minded people. I would urge my friends in our Party who are in great hurry to form alliances or new parties to have a little more patience and carry on with the educative campaign among friends of the Opposition parties.

Finance and Organisation

It should now be clear to all of us that our path is very narrow and difficult. To get finances for the Party is a very difficult task and to run the Party on the lines mentioned above, we have to raise resources. It is very difficult to get financial help from big business and industrial houses and our experience with them particularly after the last mid-term elections and State elections has been very disappointing. However we have managed to survive today, thanks to the valiant efforts put in by our valued colleagues, Shri Manubhai Amersey and Shri G. K. Sundaram.

It is also very heartening to note that our State Units have understood this gigantic problem of raising funds for the Party and they are cooperating with the Centre to raise resources.

We have to have offices, we have to print literature, we have to make our workers mobile, and for all this, we require a lot of money. Here I would like to urge State Units of the Party to take their cue from U.P. which has arrived at a fairly satisfactory arrangement under the circumstances by actively cooperating with the Centre to raise funds for the forthcoming elections in that State.

We will now have to change our approach and methods of collecting funds.

We will have to go to the small businessmen, farmers, shopkeepers to raise funds. I would like to suggest to our State Presidents and General Secretaries to start a vigorous drive to collect small sums of money even from our Party workers, members and sympathisers.

We of the Swatantra Party will now have to learn to stand on our own feet and finance the Party through our own contributions, however small they may be. Personally I feel that if all of us were to really shake off our diffidence and plunge ourselves into active work among the people who are adversely affected by the Ruling Party's policies, there is no reason why the necessary resources cannot be raised. And once we start work vigorously and sincerely, the impact of our Party is bound to be felt and once the impact is felt, then everything will straighten out. Therefore, let us take the decision to work first and then start worrying about resources and not just keep worrying without putting in the necessary effort.

Finally, before I conclude I would like to pay my sincere tributes to my valued colleagues in the Central Office, particularly Mr. Raju, who have been working shoulder to shoulder with all of us to keep the National Headquarters going efficiently and effectively.

Bombay

April 5, 1973.

MADHU MEHTA