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Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive held at Vithalbhai Patel Bhavan, New Delhi on Sunday, February 16, 1969, at 3 p.m.

Present:

Prof. N.C. Ranga - in the Chair
Smt. Gayatri Devi of Jaipur
Mr. Lakshman Singh of Dungarpur
Mr. Bhanu Pratap Singh
Dr. R.C. Cooper
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel
Mr. H.M. Patel
Mr. J. Mohammed Imam
Mr. S.S. Mariswamy
Mr. Loknath Mishra
Mrs. Kailash Rekhi
Mr. T. Krishnamma Choudhary
Mr. G. Hanumantha Rao
Mr. K. Sundaram
Sardar Ram Singh
Mr. Lobo Prabhu
Mr. C.C. Desai
Mr. N. Dandekar

Mr. Mandhata Singh)
Choudhary Hardwari Lal) By Special Invitation

1. The Executive condoled the death of Mr. C.N. Annadurai, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and Mr. Ramaswamy Naidu, Swatantra MLA of Tamil Nadu.
2. The Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive held in New Delhi on November 24, 1968, were confirmed.
3. President's Opening Remarks :

In his opening remarks, the President, Prof. Ranga referred inter alia to the Statement on Party's objectives released for the Mid-Term Elections, the infructuous negotiations with the Jan Sangh (vide para 4 below, the disappointing performance of the Party in the elections and to Rajaji's views on Kashmir, Agricultural Income-tax, State Lotteries etc.

4. Negotiations with Jan Sangh :

Prof. Ranga reported on the recent talks with the Jan Sangh. He narrated the circumstances in which the initiative for the talks had been taken by the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra at the instance of some M.Ps of the Swatantra Party and by the Rajmata of Gwalior for the Jan Sangh. The President, after narrating the disappointing developments during and after the talks, stated that it became necessary for the General Secretary, in the light of conflicting press reports to issue a Press Statement on January 4, 1969 putting the whole matter objectively, in proper focus, viz.,

- a. That the discussions were concerned primarily with evolving electoral understandings between the two Parties in connection with the then impending Mid-Term Elections 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 Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha;
- c. That there was no question of any "merger" of the two Parties, whether within or outside Parliament; and
- d. That since the talks concerning electoral understandings were unsuccessful, all further discussions on other matters were discontinued because of the pre-occupation of all parties with the then ensuing mid-term elections to the State Legislatures in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

The President also referred in this connection to Mr. Masani's letter dated January 30, 1969 where the latter had drawn attention to the decision taken by the National Executive at its meeting in Cochin in January 1968, namely, that apart from seeking understandings on specific matters like electoral adjustments, mutual support in biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads, etc., the Swatantra Party should no longer continue its efforts to seek a closer relationship with the Jan Sangh.

The President also conveyed the decision of the Central Parliamentary Board taken earlier that day that in the light of the past experience, the Party's Members of Parliament and Office Bearers of the Party's Parliamentary Group should not involve themselves in any negotiations with the Jan Sangh without the prior approval of the Central Parliamentary Board, and advising them not to issue any press statements on the subject.

5. Party Elections :

The following decisions were taken :

- a. While the last date for renewal of membership was March 31, 1969 (as prescribed in the Party's constitution), the last date for enrolment of new Workers and Life Workers would be August 31, 1969.

The General Secretary was authorised to make consequential adjustments in the time-table for Party elections so as to conclude them by December 31, 1969.

- b. The General Secretary was authorised to settle the procedure for Party elections in consonance with previous procedures but with necessary changes in the light of
 - i. Amendments to the Constitution effected at the Fifth National Convention in Bhulaneshwar
 - ii. Difficulties experienced during the Party elections held in 1967.

c. A Three-Man Sub-Committee consisting of

Mr. N. Dandekar
Dr. R.C. Cooper, and
Mr. H.M. Patel

was constituted to select Presiding Officers to take the Chair and conduct the proceedings of the meetings of the newly elected State/Regional Councils to be held in due course for electing State/Regional Executive Committees and State/Regional representatives on the General Council.

6. In view of the impending Party elections and the need to take quick decisions in respect of possible applications for enrolment as Workers/Life Workers from persons who might not be approved by any State/Regional Unit of the Party, the National Executive authorised the General Secretary to take appropriate decisions in respect of such applications in consultation with the President and the General Secretary of the State/Regional Unit concerned.

7. Bill to Amend Article 334 of the Constitution of India:

The General Secretary reported on the discussions at the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board held earlier in the day on a proposal by Mr. C.C. Desai that he be permitted to move a Bill in Parliament to amend Article 334 of the Constitution, designed to extend the reservation of constituencies for Scheduled Castes and Tribes for a further period of fifteen years on the expiry of the present constitutional provision in that regard in January 1970.

After considerable discussion, the Executive was of the opinion (with Mr. T. Krishnamma dissenting) that the circumstances warranted an extension for a further period of ten years. The Executive decided to convey its views to the Parliamentary Group for their consideration to the effect that Mr. C.C. Desai be permitted to move the Bill seeking an extension of Article 334 of the Constitution for a further period of ten years from 1970.

8. The National Executive expelled Mr. Raghunath Singh (ex-MLA of Uttar Pradesh) for gross indiscipline and disloyalty to the Party, he having defected from the Party on the eve of the mid-term elections though he had applied and been nominated as the Party's candidate. The Executive also confirmed the expulsion of Mr. Dokania (ex-MLA of Bihar) for identical reasons.

9. In regard to the two M.L.As of the Party in Haryana, the General Secretary reported

(a) that Mr. Narain Singh (Swatantra MLA) had defected and had subsequently sent in his letter of resignation from the Party; and that in pursuance of an earlier decision of the National Executive in regard to such cases, Mr. Narain Singh would be expelled from the Party;

(b) that as regards Mr. Joginder Singh (Swatantra MLA) it was not clear whether he had defected; there had been no communication from him and, as a matter of fact, even the State President, Chaudhary Hardwari Lal, was in the dark about Mr. Joginder Singh's intentions.

10. Resolutions:

The following resolutions were unanimously adopted after discussion :-

- (i) The Disturbances in Telengana,
(ii) Abolition of Food Zones,

- (iii) Proposal to levy Agricultural Income-tax,
- (iv) Proposed Monopolisation of Imports of Industrial Raw Materials through the State Trading Corporation,
- (v) Famine Conditions in various parts of the country,
- (vi) Mob violence in Bombay city.

11. Mid-Term Election Results:

The General Secretary reported on the very disappointing performance of the Party in the Mid-Term Elections in West Bengal, Bihar, U.P. and Punjab.

He informed the Executive that the Central Parliamentary Board had decided that the elected legislators of the Party should generally support all efforts to establish stable governments in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab provided that such governments did not include the SSP and the Communists. If invited to join in a coalition government, the Party's Groups should first obtain the approval of the Central Parliamentary Board before responding to such invitations.

12. State of the Party:

The Executive had a general discussion on the state of the Party organisation. But as members felt that this needed to be discussed more comprehensively, it was decided to hold a meeting of the Executive some time in April devoted entirely to a discussion of organisational matters. This would also afford an opportunity to examine in depth the Party's disappointing performance in the mid-term elections. For this purpose, it was decided that reports from States, particularly from those where mid-term elections were held, should be called for and circulated to members of the Executive in advance of the meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting then terminated, with a Vote of thanks to the Chair.

SWATANTRA PARTY
National Executive
New Delhi.
February 16, 1969.

RESOLUTION ON TELENGANA DISTURBANCES.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party views with grave concern the recurrence of violence in Andhra Pradesh resulting mainly from agitation by pressure groups within the Congress Party itself and by communists to exploit local grievances.

The Telengana agitation which culminated in great violence and resulted in the loss of many lives and the destruction of much property was the direct result of the disinclination of an insensitive administration to give adequate attention to some of the most urgent and live problems facing the people living in Telengana. A more responsible administration could surely have provided less scope to irresponsible groups for exploiting the grievances which provoked the local population to resort to violence. Also, there is room to suspect that any rate in the initial stages after the outbreak of violence there was almost a deliberate reluctance on the part of the State Government to exercise its authority firmly to restore law and order.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party condemns the part played by pressure groups within the Congress Party in engineering these disturbances and holds the Government of Andhra Pradesh responsible for the outcome. The Executive demands that just and fair compensation should be paid by the Government to the dependents of those persons not guilty of violence who lost their lives and to those whose property was damaged or destroyed in the disturbances.

Meanwhile the National Executive appeals to all political groups, parties and organisations to adhere to democratic processes and constitutional procedures for redressing their grievances, however frustrating such efforts may seem in the short run. Anti-democratic parties are waiting for precisely such opportunities to create chaos and disruption in their grand design to overthrow the established order. Patriotic national parties have a duty to the country to deny such opportunities to the enemies of democracy.

SWATANTRA PARTY

National Executive
New Delhi.

February 16, 1969.

RESOLUTION ON ABOLITION OF FOOD ZONES.

The Swatantra Party is of the opinion that abolition of Food Zones has been long over-due and must be effected immediately. The present is the most opportune time for abolition of Food Zones which are being quite unnecessarily continued. The Food Zones in the context of present conditions in India are neither for the benefit of the consumer nor the producer of food grains. In fact they are depressing agricultural prices in surplus areas, causing hardship to the cultivator and thereby jeopardising the food grains production of the next year. At the same time, they result in maintaining prices at unduly high level in areas of short-fall causing inconvenience to the consumer. If Food Zones are continued any longer, they are likely to act as a direct disincentive for the farmers and will adversely affect agricultural production in the country, as also perpetuate shortages. It is obvious that the ruling party is clinging to these artificial barriers purely to promote their own political ends.

In view of this, the Swatantra Party demands immediate abolition of Food Zones by the Central Government.

The Swatantra Party further resolves that if Food Zones are not removed with immediate effect, the Party should plan for starting an organised country-wide movement at all State and Unit levels to demand the abolition of Food Zones.

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RESOLUTION ON AGRICULTURAL INCOME-TAX & OTHER LEVIES ON LAND.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party condemns in unequivocal terms the proposals said to be under consideration by the Central Government and some State Governments to impose Agricultural Income-tax and other levies on land thinly disguised as "Debentures" and the like.

The peasants, farmers and landless workers on land, together with their families, constitute about 80% of the population of this country. They have been perhaps the worst affected by the steadily rising prices, especially of non-agricultural commodities, over the past twenty years. They have also suffered most by floods, droughts and famines. And all the futile experiments in foodzones and all the restrictions on the free movement and sale of foodgrains have been at their expense. In these circumstances, the relative prosperity that has come to the rural communities in some parts of the country during the past two years is something about which the entire nation should feel happy, instead of converting it into an opportunity for penalising the farmers and the peasants still further by imposing Agricultural Income-tax and other levies.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party rejects the specious plea that Agricultural Income-tax, with its normal exemption limit of Rs.4,000/-, will affect only the "rich" farmers and peasants, as wholly misleading and altogether fallacious in its implications. In the first place, it is an axiom that the well-being of the landless workers on land depends entirely upon the prosperity of the farmers and peasants who employ them. Secondly, with comparatively low "land ceilings" operative in most States, there are now very few rich farmers and peasants. Thirdly, to subject these few persons to such new or additional exactions is to introduce strong and positive disincentives to improved farming precisely at those points where it would be most injurious to the best interests of the country. Finally, to talk simultaneously about "draining away surplus resources" in this way from the so-called "rich" farmers and peasants, on the one hand, and the urgent need to maximise the availability of Agricultural Credit so as to facilitate capital inputs into land, on the other, is a complete contradiction in terms.

The fact of the matter is that India needs more, not less, prosperity in Agriculture, which is by far the most important sector in our national economy, contributing as it does nearly fifty per cent to our national income. And the Swatantra Party insists that the fruits of that prosperity must remain in the hands of the farmers, the peasants and the landless workers on land, either to be "ploughed back" into land by way of various inputs so urgently needed for a genuine and sustained break-through in Agriculture or to be spent and so to generate genuine and broad-based "real demands" for goods and services throughout the country so necessary for re-activating the presently sluggish economy. The Swatantra Party will therefore oppose all proposals to impose Agricultural Income-Tax and other new levies on agricultural land and agricultural income.

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RESOLUTION ON PROPOSED MONOPOLY OF IMPORTS OF INDUSTRIAL
RAW MATERIALS THROUGH THE STATE TRADING CORPORATION.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party views with grave concern the recent repeated utterances by the Commerce Minister to monopolise the import trade in Industrial Raw Materials in the State Trading Corporation. It is plain that this move is motivated by purely political considerations.

A close scrutiny of the working of both the State Trading Corporation and the Minerals & Metal Trading Corporation over the last several years has brought to light serious irregularities in their handling of imports. These include:

- (i) Purchases from abroad at exorbitant prices;
- (ii) Imports at wrong time, causing serious dislocation of Industries through shortages;
- (iii) Profiteering in a number of instances by both S.T.C. and M.M.T.C;
- (iv) Lack of expertise and experience in the complicated mechanism of import trade in several commodities;
- (v) Contracting with foreign firms without investigating their credentials; and
- (vi) Locking up of Capital in heavy inventories.

It is on record that these evils have been rampant and resulted in heavy losses running into crores of rupees.

The Swatantra Party is convinced that the bogey of cartels, consortia and the like in exporting countries is being grossly exaggerated. In fact, private agencies so far operating in the import trade have derived substantial advantages of bulk purchases in a large number of commodities and also economies of efficient purchasing procedures.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party therefore strongly condemns the proposed move for "nationalisation", that is to say, monopolisation of import trade in industrial raw materials which is actuated by wrong economics, faulty ideologies and corrupt political considerations.

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RESOLUTION ON FAMINE.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party has repeatedly drawn the attention of the public and of the Governments concerned to the acute state of famine prevailing since last year in Rajasthan, Gujarat and some other States. But the conditions in most of these areas continue as bad as ever.

In particular, the National Executive views with deep concern the apathy of the Government of Rajasthan in regard to relief works in extensive areas of the State.

The measures taken by the Government are grossly inadequate as compared with the magnitude of the problem which is becoming chronic. Famine in Bikaner, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer areas is in fact a recurring phenomenon; but the State Government has repeatedly failed to take measures of a permanent nature to minimise the rigour of this calamity.

What-ever relief works have been started are motivated by political considerations and are being used to further the interests of the Party in power; and corruption is rampant in connection with these works. In the result no heed is paid to the real work of ameliorating the lot of the famine affected population.

The famine affected areas being mostly on the Indo-Pak Border, it is urgently necessary that the Central Government should also pay special attention to this problem, particularly in regard to the completion of the Rajasthan Canal.

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RESOLUTION ON VIOLENCE IN BOMBAY.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party views with deep concern the recurrence of violence in public life resulting from agitations by political parties and pressure groups which thrive on emotional issues, with little regard for the democratic process.

Whether it is inter-State border disputes or linguistic loyalties, these parties and groups appear to have come to the conclusion that violence pays because through violence alone can they secure their objectives. The overt commitment of some State Governments themselves to such disputes and the weak and vacillating policies of Governments both at the Centre and in certain States have contributed to such attitudes.

The recent outbreak of wide-spread violence in Bombay City when mobs looted, burnt and destroyed both public and private property with impunity while the law enforcement agencies at first helplessly looked on, gives room for the suspicion that the State Government was at first half-hearted in its efforts to restore law and order. Regardless of the merits of the border dispute between Mysore and Maharashtra, the primary duty of Government was to have ensured the safety of its citizens, even if the Government itself were in sympathy with the alleged objective of the agitation. This duty the Government failed to discharge.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party holds the Government of Maharashtra responsible for allowing the demonstrations connected with the border dispute and occasioned by the visit of the Deputy Prime Minister to Bombay to get out of hand and to degenerate into an uncontrolled orgy of violence and destruction. The Executive demands just and fair compensation to the dependents of those persons not guilty of violence who lost their lives and to those whose property was damaged or destroyed in the disturbances.

Meanwhile the National Executive appeals to all political parties and organisations to adhere to democratic processes and constitutional procedures for the settlement of their grievances, however frustrating such efforts may seem in the short run. Anti-democratic parties are waiting for precisely such opportunities, as was indeed made abundantly clear in Bombay, to create chaos and disruption in their grand design to overthrow the established order. Patriotic national and local parties and groups have a duty to the country to deny such opportunities to the enemies of democracy.