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SWATANTRA PARTY

Central Organising Committee

General Secretary's proposals in regard to Party Organisation.

1. Soon after the General Elections, I had occasion in my report to the Candidates' Convention called in Bombay on April 7 and 8 to outline a brief picture of the Party as it emerged from the Elections, and to indicate some lessons which could be learnt from the experience so far gained. Since I do not wish to cover the same ground again, I append a copy of that report for reference.

2. Briefly, the position of the Party today is that it has emerged from the Elections fairly impressive in quantitative terms of representation in Parliament and the Assemblies but, when an evaluation is made in terms of the quality and standards of the Party's performance, organisation and work, the same degree of satisfaction would not be justified. It has also to be conceded that, since the Elections, the tempo of the Party's organisation and activity has been sluggish and unsatisfactory. It is not unnatural perhaps that, during the first election fought by a new political party, many things happen which ought not to happen. The result has been that the shining image of the Party which was first presented to the public in 1959 now appears somewhat tarnished. Looking back on our first three years of existence it is clear that our basic error was to try and get too big too quickly, and as a consequence to accept recruits to our ranks too indiscriminately and to put up too many candidates, not all of whom were adequately screened.

3. Now that the few months during which war-weariness might be expected to spend itself have passed, it is time to take stock, put our house in order and gear the Party for the next stride forward. It is obvious that if things have to be put right in our set up, this is the time to do it. We have four years and a half ahead of us for the 1967 elections. If we allow this opportunity to pass, the task of cutting our losses, pruning our set up and building on sounder foundations than we found possible to do in the short period that we had between our birth and the General Elections, we shall not be able to face this task later. In another year, we shall have moved out of the post-election to the pre-election stage, and then it will be too late. Hence the need for the Party to do whatever that is to be done between now and the end of 1962.

4. In the course of a talk that I was invited to give at the Harold Laski Institute of Political Science in Ahmedabad on June 26 on 'Party Politics in India', I took the liberty of thinking aloud on the preconditions to success of an Opposition party in the 1967 elections. A copy of this address is attached and I would appreciate its perusal and critical scrutiny. While what I said there did not make any specific reference to the Swatantra Party, I would in all humility urge that it has relevance for us as for any others. I am deeply convinced that, if our approach to the problems of organisation is not broadly on the lines that outlined from page 17 onwards, we shall not be able to make the grade for reasons I have explained in that talk.

5. It is gratifying to record that, at a recent Joint Meeting in Madras on July 21 and 22 of the Organisation Sub-Committee and the Parliamentary Board, certain important decisions were taken which should help to clear the air. Broadly, the organisational issue before the Party is whether it is to be a confederation of political chiefs more or less sovereign in their own State or territory, allowed a free hand to manage things as they like and given support whether they

are right or wrong or whether the Swatantra Party is to be a modern national democratic party in the sense in which a party is understood in the world's democracies. If the answer is that it should - despite the backwardness of the country and the complexity of the problems created by a predominantly illiterate electorate - be the latter, then it is obvious that there has to be a judicious combination of discipline and internal democracy. Indeed, as Mahatma Gandhi never tired of pointing out, discipline and freedom are two facets of the same thing. A brief description of such an organisational approach would be a policy of effective organisation and 'clean hands'. It is in the hope that such an approach would be broadly acceptable to the Central Organising Committee that I now venture to make certain concrete proposals designed to lay the foundations on which such a structure may be reared.

6. In the advanced democracies, the balance between the autonomy of a local unit of a Party and the needs of integrated and disciplined functioning is maintained by the existence of a freely elected local executive committee on the one hand and a full-time organiser appointed by the Party headquarters on the other. In Britain, such an organiser is called the "Agent", and it is the aim of the major political parties to have such an agent in each Parliamentary constituency. Naturally, such a structure involves a large budget but the British Liberal Party's current slogan is: "The Agent more than pays for himself."

7. Since the birth of the Swatantra Party, we have been conscious of the need for the establishment of a cadre of full-time organisers who would be devoted, articulate and efficient builders of the Party organisation. Unfortunately, we did not have the necessary funds and what funds we did collect we dissipated in routine monthly subventions to State units which were eaten up in the maintenance of the State office rather than on field organisation. In some cases, though not all, these contributions proved to be a waste.

8. At its meeting in Bombay on March 15, 1962, the Central Organising Committee decided that "there should be no question of monthly subventions to State units being continued as in the past." The Central Organising Committee also decided that, as early as the financial situation made it possible, a scheme for the appointment by the Central Office of full-time regional organisers who would be posted in various States with a view to the local organisation should be placed before a meeting of the Central Organising Committee. It is in pursuance of that decision that the present scheme is being placed before the Central Organising Committee for its consideration.

9. It is proposed that we commence with the recruitment of a certain number of Organisers who would be carefully selected and properly trained. They would then be posted to appropriate States and regions by the Central Office on the basis of a set of criteria taking note of local performance, potential and needs to be worked out later. Assuming that to, start with, one such organiser is posted in each major State with a second one available for about half the number of States, we would need around 25 such organisers. As a result of discussions with colleagues from various parts of the country, it appears that the emoluments of such organisers might well range from Rs.150 to Rs.500 per month depending on experience and qualifications. In addition to this remuneration, each such organiser, if he is to be mobile, would need an allowance of about Rs.150 per month. At an average, therefore, each organiser in the field would cost Rs.375 per month, or Rs.4,500 per year. For 25 such organisers, we would need Rs.112,500 per year.

10. The following Budget is therefore suggested for the year 1963:

25 full-time organisers (at an average salary of Rs.225 per month plus travelling allowance of Rs.150) Rs.112,500

Central Office expenses, publicity, etc (at Rs.10,000 per month as sanctioned by the Central Organising Committee at its meeting in Bangalore on 5th February 1960) Rs. 120,000

Miscellaneous and contingencies Rs. 17,500

Rs. 250,000

Such a budget should not be beyond our capacity to meet for the year 1963 and it is suggested we plan our work in anticipation of this amount becoming available by the end of this year.

11. This, however, should only be a beginning. I have no doubt that, if the Party's organisation is put on a firm foundation and is seen to function in a dynamic effective and disciplined manner, that very achievement will enable us to raise substantially larger sums of money in the coming years. While the target of one organiser for each parliamentary constituency which is adopted by the Party may remain beyond our reach, it should be our effort to raise the number of our field workers to 100 by the time a year remains for the next General Elections.

12. Another concrete organisational step to take is the adoption of prospective candidates, constituency by constituency, commencing some time in the middle of 1963 until practically all candidates are in position well ahead of the next General Elections. Now that even the Congress Party has adopted such a plan, perhaps it will appear less revolutionary to some of us. It is proposed that this matter and the procedure to be followed re. the screening of candidates and their adoption be taken up for consideration as soon as the new National Executive comes into existence early in 1963.

M.R. Masani

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Bombay, 17th August, 1962