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SWATANTRA PARTY.

Statement on Labour Policy.

DRAFT.

The core of Swatantra ideology is self-help, whether at individual or collective levels. As in the field of agrarian or economic policies the Swatantra Party approach to labour and industrial relations problems is based on this principle of self-help.

The prevailing political philosophy in the country in all quarters is based on the concept of a handful of elite or "vanguard" appointing themselves as proxies on behalf of sections of society. This concept is rationalised with the argument that the people of India, particularly the peasantry and workers are too backward and illiterate to realise what is in their best interests.

The Swatantra Party takes a radical departure from this prevalent concept and concretely applying its basic concept of self-help takes the following position in its approach to labour and industrial relations problems. It believes that only in such a radical departure in thinking can the values it stands for, ~~which~~ be realised.

LABOUR ORGANISATIONS: The industrial worker in India, though having formally the right of association, in effect is stifled from exercising this right. Automatically equating illiteracy and alleged backwardness with lack of commonsense and capacity to determine for themselves what is in their best interests, workers have been thrust with, with a character and status by self-proclaimed "proxies and vanguards of the working class" who are not workers themselves. At least in this respect all the political parties reflect the Marxist prescriptions. It is on this account that the composition of labour leadership all over India is overwhelmingly non-industrial and non-worker. Trade Union movement in India is literally being socialised and nationalised to further entrench this non-worker, non-industrial leadership. ~~which~~ interests.

This situation offers for the Swatantra Party not only a challenge but an attractive field for generation of self-help and self-realisation tendencies among workers. Rejecting the deliberately thrust status and character of backwardness on account of illiteracy in the Indian worker, the Swatantra Party asserts that the industrial worker in India is very competent to determine what constitutes his best interests if only he is given an opportunity.

The Swatantra Party believes in encouraging the growth of completely worker-controlled and worker-conscious unions with their own healthy vested interests . It strongly opposed political and non-worker domination of the trade union movement and will not be a party to organising trade unions as front organisations or transmission belts for any political party including itself. While the Swatantra Party welcomes to its fold such worker-leaders or worker-members of trade unions, it shall not depute partymen to organise unions.

LABOUR LEGISLATION: The Swatantra Party shall support any labour legislation which prevents non-worker interests from controlling labour unions. The present legislation which allows the composition of every trade union to contain fifty percent of non-worker outsiders in its executive should be amended. Should the help and assistance of outsiders be needed these could certainly be had on a contractual and professional basis .

The present labour legislation all over the country aims at stifling all genuine union activity and actually serves to bolster up the present unhealthy situation in the labour movement. The present labour laws are aimed at converting industrial disputes into long drawn out litigations and squabbles in the courts. The fate of millions of workers and industry are left completely in the hands of ^{a handful of} bureaucrats in the government levels who have the sole powers to determine the extent of resolution of an industrial dispute. Under the plea of avoiding industrial-unrest the State has come down with a heavy hand on both management and labour, preventing a direct resolution of conflicts by ~~all~~ processes of free and full collective bargaining. The present labour laws, whatever may have been their intentions when originally framed have in effect resulted in a series of iron curtains being drawn between labour and management, labour and government, and management and the government. Easy and effective communication between labour and management have become impossible in the climate of litigation and representation through proxies. The present legislation and series of laws also offer enormous scope for corruption of government, management and union representatives, just as in the case of laws applicable in other fields.

The Swatantra Party rejects the theory that industrial conflicts and disputes must be avoided at all costs, on the grounds that such a theory can only be imposed and enforced through compulsion. Conflicts cannot be wished away and are inevitable. In a free society these conflicts could be so channelised as to bring about a resolution through certain objectively correct and rational procedures. On this basis the Swatantra Party rejects such exhortations as

as have been often and recently made by leaders of the ruling party, that a moratorium on all strikes and lock outs should be imposed by law during the Five Year Plan periods. The Swatantra Party believes that threats to industrial peace do not represent such a calamity as has been made out, but are an inevitable phenomenon in any free society. Artificial imposition of industrial peace however has dangerous implications in that the State appoints itself as the final arbiter of what is good or bad for the people.

The Swatantra Party believes in basic and minimum labour legislation in accordance with fundamental rights, such as fair-labour practices law, etc. The role of the State as visualised by the party would be to the extent of providing services to both labour and management. The State shall play a neutral role in any conflict between labour and management, its intervention restricted only to situations where general public good^{is} affected.

The Swatantra Party also rejects discrimination between public and private sector industries in the matter of application of labour legislation.

In essential industries and services the State shall impose only such restraints on labour and management to the minimum extent^{as} required for ensuring public good. And such restraints shall be compensated with alternative procedures for realising the legitimate interests of both management and labour.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: The Swatantra Party rejects the traditional and paternalistic concept of labour relations under which collective bargaining as a matter of right by workers is frowned upon and expectations of paternalistic goodwill encouraged by the management. The party believes in industrial relations based on the equality of status between management and labour organisations. It stands for full and collective bargaining and collective agreements between a strong, free and democratic worker-controlled labour movement on the one hand and management on the other.

Free and full opportunities for collective bargaining imply the jurisdiction of every issue that arises in any industrial dispute including wages, working conditions, grievance procedure, productivity, fair share of the profits, etc.

The Party realistically poses the fact that under any system of economy

or any system of ownership the identity and interests of labour cannot get merged automatically with that of management. Each have their own identity and legitimate self interests, which while being in conflict can be resolved lastingly only by allowing a free play within their common industrial arena. One group cannot usurp the functions and role of the other, and attempts to portray a merger of labour and management identities represent distortions of reality.

The above statement reflects the party's stand on labour and industrial relations problems.

Bombay,
Oct. 5, 1959.