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TALKING POINTS FOR THE USE OF SWATANTRA PARTY MEMBERS

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Twenty five years ago, when India won freedom, it committed itself to the perpetuation of Independence, so dearly won; to a democratic system, and to social justice of the type enunciated in the pre-amble of the Constitution. Let us see how each of these commitments has been kept.

DEMOCRACY

While the facade of democracy has been retained, its substance has been whittled away in the following ways :

1. Monolithic one-Party government, in the Centre and in most States, due to the peculiarities of an electoral system, which allows a Party to win a majority of seats, without a clear majority of popular votes.
2. In continuation of the above point, the rule of one Party has been perpetuated by its control over mass media, over political and economic patronage arising from licensing. These advantages have been used, in combination with an unfair electoral system, either to prevent the formation of alternative governments, or to "topple" the few non-Congress governments which were able to gain a majority in the States. The fall of the Orissa coalition is a flagrant example of democracy subverted by the money and manoeuvres of a dominant Party which cannot think of sharing power. Democracy has been emasculated still further by the defiance of well established democratic procedures and conventions: selection of Chief Ministers by the Prime Minister, instead of free election by the legislature Party; the tendency to legislate by Ordinance on the eve of Parliamentary sessions (vide, the Bank Nationalisation case, and the ratification of the Simla Treaty); the practice of over-ruling a Parliamentary verdict by passing an Ordinance (the Princes case); the centralisation of all powers in the office of the Prime Minister.
3. Democracy has also been ill-served by Opposition Parties - with a few honourable exceptions. Weakness in numbers is accentuated by divisions in the Opposition ranks. Except, for the Swatantra Party, Opposition is hardly worth the name, offering as it does, not an ideological polarisation, but a competition in unworkable radicalism.

FREEDOM

Proposition: the freedom won from the British, stands, today in danger of being lost due to external alliances, and internal subversion.

1. The Indo-Soviet Treaty marks the culmination of a protracted "sell-out" to Communism. In economics, this involved sacrificing India's foreign-exchange earning capacity to the rupee and switch trade with the Soviet bloc, which has exploited such agreements to sell obsolete plant at uncompetitive prices. In external affairs, this economic tie-up resulted in satellitism of the worst kind support of the Soviet Union even in its invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which were condemned by the Communist Parties of Italy and France. The Indo-Soviet Treaty formalises the subservience of India to the Soviet Union, as its initiative in foreign policy is now fettered by "joint consultations" hampering India's freedom of action in a crisis. It is believed that this clause delayed India's military action in Bangla Desh, and was responsible for the summary signing of the Simla Treaty, on terms which could have been bettered.

2. Not of benefit to the people, because the greatest expansion is that of the Capital Goods Sector, producing commodities which neither generate employment, nor better the lives of the common people.

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The common man is penalised by taxation, which hits him at two levels: in the prices he pays for the commodities he daily uses (commodities swollen by excise duties) and by restriction of employment opportunities from Income and Wealth Taxes which act as disincentives on the classes which have a surplus for savings and investment.

The common man is penalised by the growth of bureaucracy, from the expansion of the State Sector.

He is penalised by poor living standards, and inadequate social services.

KEY FIGURES:

PER CAPITA INCOME: 543 per year, as against 840 in undivided Pakistan; 1245 in U.A.R.; 6908 in Japan.

SELECTED INDICES OF CONSUMPTION:

Calorie Intake: 1810 in India, as against 2180 in Ceylon; 2290 in Pakistan; 2780 in Mexico.

Cloth Consumption: 14 metres per head, unchanged since 1951.

CARS: 1 for 1072 in India, as against 1 for 140 in Ceylon.

HOSPITAL BEDS: 1 for 1710 in India, as against 1 for 290 in Ceylon; 1 for 130 in Israel.

Roads: 25 years after independence, 67% of villages remain isolated from main roads.

Housing: New units constructed by government number 440,000 against an estimated demand of 83.7 million !

This is India in the 25th year of Independence !