



swatantra party

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Ho. Circular

General Secretary's Letter No.282

June 27, 1972

Dear Friend,

As you are aware, the National Executive and the General Council of the Swatantra Party met in Madras on the 23rd, 24th and 25th of this month.

While I shall, in a few days, inform you in greater detail of the various decisions taken in Madras and which call for action on our part, I thought I should send you immediately the text of a Statement dealing with several important issues and the Party's policies thereon which was unanimously approved by the General Council.

* Also enclosed are the texts of eight resolutions which were also adopted unanimously.

It is necessary for us to give the Statement and the Resolutions the widest possible publicity.

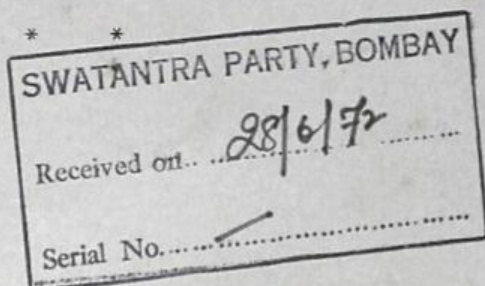
I would suggest that you should kindly have them translated in the language of your State, distributed to the Party's workers, office bearers and members of Committees at the Primary, District and State levels.

Yours sincerely,

Madhu Mehta

(Madhu Mehta)
General Secretary

Encl : * *



Statement Approved by the General Council

Madras, June 24, 1972

The country faces today a situation in which several unhealthy trends are compounded such as the lowering of standards of our public life, blatant corruption, economic stagnation, control over mass media of communication, tampering with Elections and detention without trial, undermining the fundamental rights of the citizen through the systematic denigration of the judiciary and Amendments to the Constitution, the absence of an effective opposition in Parliament, the concentration of power in the hands of the Union Government and the atrophy of the autonomy of the States of the Union and finally the concentration of power within the ruling Party in one pair of hands. All this is a violence on Democracy. Faced with this picture there are a large number of patriotic men and women who are greatly concerned with the future of the country but express their helplessness to do anything to counter these trends, preserve democratic institutions and further the prosperity of the people.

In such a situation, the Swatantra Party which alone stands for a clean and effective administration has an important role to play. Indeed it may be claimed that it is today the only real opposition party to the Government of the day. The Swatantra Party has always fought for the twin values of Liberty and Justice in the interests of the whole country, with malice to none and greater sympathy for those in need of it.

While reiterating its belief in the validity of the principles set out in the Statement of Policy of the Party of March 19, and 20, 1960, which has been further proved in the last decade, the General Council of the Party considers it necessary to present a simple and stimulating programme to the people in terms of their rights for which it will dedicate itself.

1. RIGHT TO MAXIMUM RETURNS TO ALL AGRICULTURISTS :

Peasant proprietors who form 49% of the population be assured of economic holdings without uneconomic ceilings, reducing production or the utility of their investment or without condemning them to a permanently low living standard unrelated to standard of living in other sectors.

Landless labour constituting 13 % of the population should have priority for all land made available by the strict enforcement of economic ceilings and from vast areas of cultivable waste land like Chambal which Government should develop and distribute without further delay.

Tenants constituting 9% should be confirmed in the permanent tenure of their land on fair rents without being involved in further litigation for rights which are of no real interest to them. To add to their assets, their tenancies should be made transferable by mortgage or sale.

2. RIGHT TO HOUSING :

The land with Government should be surveyed and made available for housing on the most economic pattern of construction. Secondly banks may advance loans freely for house construction. Thirdly existing tenants may be allowed to transfer their rights of tenancy, under suitable safeguards.

3. RIGHT TO PRODUCTIVE WORK :

Unemployment in India is growing, by and large, as a consequence of mistaken policies and priorities of Government. There is more unemployment at the end of every Five-Year Plan than there was at the beginning. It is authoritatively estimated that 14 million were unemployed in India in 1970 and with current policies continuing there are going to be another 25 million by 1980 thus resulting in 37 million unemployed. This shows a rise in the number of unemployed at the rate of 6,000 per day. There is no artificial method of creating jobs for the unemployed unless they are productive and the only way to secure employment is by basing the next plan on full employment opportunities to different sections of the people. For the largest section of the unemployed which is in the rural sector, a Standing Offer of Employment on minimum wages must be created. For the educated unemployed industry must be cleared of restrictive controls for expansion in itself and in the connected sectors of trade, transport and services. In addition, all employment should be based on equality of wages and qualifications in public and private sectors to ensure social justice and to stimulate full contribution by all workers. Labour should be served by increase of employment opportunities.

4. RIGHT TO PLENTY, FAIR PRICES AND GOOD QUALITY :

The consumer who in a competitive free economy should be supreme has been the forgotten factor in Indian economics and has been sacrificed. He will be served by the termination of inflation, corruption and the manipulation by licences which the Congress Party has tolerated for political reasons.

5. RIGHTS OF LABOUR :

The Swatantra Party ever since its inception has supported the workers' right to organise themselves and where necessary to strike as also to be associated with management. The Party has also sought to help in their emancipation from domination and exploitation by outside elements of a political nature. In so far as Government employees are concerned, the Party stands for freedom for them to carry on their work without interference from political pressures. The General Council feels that the Party's call given in its Statement of Policy of 1960 to its members to help workers in all possible ways for organising themselves has not been adequately responded to and it urges members of the Party to help trade unions to establish and to grow, taking care to see that these organisations are organised and controlled by the workers themselves.

6. RIGHTS OF MINORITIES

In a multi-lingual and multi-religious country like ours, maintenance of equality before the law and the protection of the minorities is a major task. The Party has pledged itself to carry out the provisions of the Constitution for the protection of the rights and interests of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and other minorities and of those who work under economic and social handicaps such as Harijans, Adivasis and other Backward classes. There cannot be any question that the success of national integration demands that there should be no feeling on the part of minority communities of a denial of fair representation in the public services or of equal opportunities in trade, commerce and industry or of a fair deal in regard to admission to colleges and educational institutions, of facilities for the development of their institutions, languages and of some machinery for the redress of their grievances. The General Council of the Party reiterates its concern in this matter.

7. RIGHT TO FREE AND FULL INFORMATION :

The General Council is concerned at the way in which those in authority are seeking to establish a monopoly over all media of mass communications. While on the one hand they stubbornly refuse to carry out the recommendations of the Chanda Committee in regard to Radio and Television, they are now seeking to lay their hands on the Press under the deceptive slogan of. "Diffusion of Ownership". The Swatantra Party stands for the fullest freedom of expression and will oppose to the bitter end measures of the nature referred to above.

8. RIGHT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE :

The Swatantra Party is strongly opposed to privileges acquired through inheritance or otherwise. The Party stands for a society based on merit. It stands for equality of opportunity and for the recognition of the workers' efficiency through promotions and increased pay, which lead to job satisfaction. The Party is strongly opposed to nepotism, push and favouritism preached by those in power without consideration of merit.

9. TASK OF EDUCATION AND AGITATION :

The Party feels that the two big tasks which it faces today are firstly the education of its members and others to an awareness of the realities and dangers that face our country and calls for a number of study circles to perform this task. The second task is to guide and lead the various sections of the people in agitations for the relief of their legitimate grievances and the achievement of their just objectives. It should be the task of the Party and others to provide to various sections of the people, guidance, help and leadership against injustice, corruption, arbitrary action and wrong doings on the part of those in the ruling party. It is only through a series of effective agitations of this nature that the present helplessness of the people can be ended and a spirit of resistance to all measures endangering liberty and justice can be generated.

Resolutions Adopted by the General Council

Madras, June 24 and 25, 1972

1. Fall of the Orissa Coalition Government

The Swatantra Party strongly condemns the unscrupulous tactics of the Ruling Congress in its bid to capture power in Orissa.

Keeping in view the Prime Minister's assurance in Parliament on impending legislation against defections, her silence over the coup engineered by her party, suggests tacit connivance with its methods. The implication is that the legislation has been deliberately deferred, thereby encouraging defections to the ruling Congress and obstructing defections from it thereafter.

The Swatantra Party welcomes the decision of the Orissa Unit to organise an "Anti-Defection Week" at the beginning of the Monsoon Session of the Orissa Assembly through a series of meetings in Bhubaneswar and in the constituencies of the defectors.

The Swatantra Party resolves that other units will similarly device non-violent measures to mobilise public opinion against this pernicious political practice.

Moved by : Mrs. Lobo Prabhu

Seconded by : Mr. H.M. Patel

2. Indo-Pakistan Summit Talks

The Swatantra Party welcomes the initiation of summit talks between Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India and Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, President of Pakistan. It commends to both leaders the urgency of agreeing upon terms which will prevent the eruption of a fourth war between the two neighbouring countries thereby ensuring durable peace which will exclude the interference of global powers on the Indian sub-continent.

Moved by : Mr. Madhu Mehta

Seconded by : Mr. K. Sundaram

3. Plight of Harijans and Adivasis

The recent spate of reports on the ill treatment and harassment of harijans and adivasis in various parts of the country are a sad commentary on the degree to which Gandhiji's teachings have been forgotten by many of our countrymen.

Despite guarantees in the Constitution and various statutes giving equal status to our less fortunate brethren, the lot of harijans, adivasis and other backward classes continues to be deplorable.

The General Council of the Swatantra Party reiterates the pledge contained in its election manifesto to carry out effectively and faithfully the provisions in the Constitution for the protection of the rights and interests of all minorities and of those who work under various handicaps such as harijans, adivasis and other backward classes, and calls upon its members to mobilise public opinion on this issue, to take the lead in taking every possible step to redress wrongs and injustices that may be inflicted on these sections of our people.

4. Electoral Reform

In the light of the unhappy experience of the Parliamentary Elections of 1971 and the State Assembly elections of 1972, the General Council of the Swatantra Party concurs with the large volume of opinion in the country that the time has come for a thorough study and overhaul of the electoral system.

The shocking use of money power and the black money creates a situation where an honest and poor man can have no chance of getting elected. The other deficiency is the unrepresentative character of the legislatures where the ruling party which has got only 43% of the popular vote, has captured more than 70% of the seats in the Lok Sabha. This not only distorts and vitiates the popular will, but also makes it possible for attempts to be made to destroy the Constitution of our country by those who represent only a minority of the electorate.

Among the solutions that should be considered to this problem is the employment of the List System, which is one of the forms of Proportional Representation practised in several democratic countries. According to the List System, the voter votes for one or other political party which has published a list of its candidates in a certain order of preference. This list may be one for the whole country or one for each State.

Once polling is over, the number of votes cast for each political party are counted and tabulated and the seats in the legislature are distributed in approximate proportion to the number of votes cast, thus resulting in the first of so many of each list being elected.

As grave doubts are prevailing in the minds of people about the genuineness of ballot papers that were used, it is necessary that some method whereby votes are punched is introduced so as to do away with the present system of stamping of votes.

The General Council appoints Mr. M. Dandekar and Mr. Manubhai Amersey to examine various measures of electoral reform and to present its report to the next meeting of the General Council.

5. Tamil Nadu Farmers Agitation

The General Council extends its support to the Tamil Nadu Farmers' Agitation for the implementation of their 12 Demands which among other things include -

- a) reduction in electricity charges for pumpsets,
and also
- b) doing away with the increased agricultural tax recently levied by the D.M.K. on the basis of crops.

The General Council is of the view that this increased taxation on one side and the recent enactment by the D.M.K. Government writing off the rent arrears due to the farmers on the other, will totally ruin the farmer.

The General Council therefore urges the local D.M.K. Government to immediately concede the twelve demands raised by the farmers of Tamil Nadu.

6. College Education in Kerala

We deplore the decision of the Kerala Government to compel privately managed educational institutions in the state to charge the same fees as are charged in Government Colleges and institutions without at the same time promising to make good the financial loss that this step would cause to the private institutions.

Government cannot be unaware of the cost to them to run Government educational institutions. This decision of theirs therefore is clearly unfair and unjust and designed to compel privately run educational institutions to close down.

Private educational institutions are managed by persons who have been motivated by no other object than the advancement of education and with such assistance from voluntary organisations it would never have been possible for education to have spread as widely as it has in the State.

The step now decided upon by Government to compel them to close down or face financial bankruptcy is a display of unprecedented ingratitude.

If education is to advance and educational experiments are to continue to be tried, it is essential private educational organisations should continue in the interests of sound educational development as also in the interests of justice. This Council expresses the confident hope that the Government of Kerala will even at this late stage retrace its steps and allow educational institutions to charge fees that are reasonable and fair or alternatively to increase the grant to cover the additional loss caused by reduction in fees.

Moved by : Mr. A.J. Dominic

7. Threats to Press Freedom

The General Council of the Swatantra Party notes with concern the attempt of the Ruling Congress and the D.M.K. in Tamil Nadu in threatening and pressurising the Press into reporting news items only for building up the image of the ruling parties at the Centre and the State. If this sort of thing goes on unchecked, a time may come when it will be made impossible for newspapers to present the opposition point of view.

In this context, the General Council condemns the recent attempt in Madras to destroy a local newspaper office by violent methods just because it was also reporting points of view which were opposed to the State Government. The General Council is strongly of the view that this habit of threatening newspapers and giving Government advertisements only to papers which sing the praise of the Ruling Party will ultimately cut at the very root of a free press and convert this country into a totalitarian State.

Moved by : Mr. V. Devanathan

8. Land Ceilings

The farmers of India, within the limits in which they function, have rendered yeoman service to the country by bringing about what has been popularly described as the "Green Revolution".

The General Council feels that at such a time when further encouragement and capital inputs need to be placed at the disposal of our farmers, mischievous efforts are being made under the umbrella word of "Land Reforms" which cannot but have the effect of retarding further progress. The Swatantra Party stands for a fair deal to the landless labourer, share cropper, tenant, the tiller and the farmer alike. This was spelt out clearly at the October 1969 Convention in Bhubaneswar, when the Party resolved that its members shall work actively for the security of tenure for tenants and share croppers and for the prescription and enforcement of a statutory minimum wage and reasonable conditions to farm labourers and for securing guaranteed floor prices to farmers and peasants for agricultural commodities.

Although the Swatantra Party holds that peasant proprietorship is the most productive and the highest social form of relations between man and land and is pledged to resist all efforts to destroy it, the Party is not in principle opposed to measures for the equitable redistribution of land, and (subject always to full scope being available to modernisation of agriculture) with a view to broadening the basis of peasant proprietorship and giving stability to our rural life, provided always that no man is deprived of his land except on payment of just and fair compensation. The wonderful results achieved in the agricultural fields in Taiwan and Japan by such measures after World War II have resulted in these countries producing the highest yields per acre of rice in the world. The success of these measures was due to certain attendant circumstances. The entire operation was carried out not in a spirit of vindictiveness and hatred but in a pragmatic attempt to reorder the rural economy. In other words this was achieved by reducing the pressure on land through diversification rather than by expropriation. Secondly, full compensation at market price was given to those dispossessed of surplus land with the intention that they should.

- (a) invest it in rural processing industries spread throughout the countryside thus securing the progress of agriculture itself and the growth of rural employment and economy, and
- (b) in carrying through an intensive programme for the reclamation of large areas that lie waste today - ravine lands and lands which have become uncultivable because of salinity brought to surface owing to or because of poor drainage.

The General Council deploras the current campaign of the Congress/ Communist axis for lowering land ceilings which were fixed barely a decade ago. It is well known that of all classes of society, the agriculturist is the most hated by the Marxist because if any class of society stands in the way of their establishing totalitarian dictatorship and destroying what they describe as the institution of Bourgeois democracy, it is the peasant. Indeed it was the then Jaw Minister of the Maharashtra Government, Mr. A.R. Antulay, who not long ago confessed as much when he stated :

"This (Land Ceilings) is not an ultimate solution. It is only a stop-gap arrangement. We do not have sufficient land for distribution to all the landless persons. Therefore, ultimately the whole land will have to be nationalised in order to provide social justice for all."

The Swatantra Party therefore warns all concerned and in particular the small peasant proprietors that the ultimate aim of the Union Government is to expropriate and nationalise all land holdings on the plea that small land holdings have brought down food production. The General Council warns the entire country to be vigilant against this dangerous attempt deliberately to bring down production and thus bring in collective farming. This must be resisted now, otherwise it will be too late.

Moved by : Mr. H.M. Patel
Seconded by : Mr. M.R. Masani

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