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Munshi censures Gujarat Swatantraite 'indiscipline'

By A Staff Reporter

MR. K. M. MUNSHI, vice-president of the Swatantra Party, has addressed a special letter to the party's general council meeting in Madras on Saturday expressing his deep displeasure at the "indiscipline" of some party members of the Gujarat unit.

Releasing the text of the letter at a news conference in Bombay on Monday, Mr. Munshi said he felt strongly about the Gujarat affair.

He said the party was breaking up in Gujarat because of the conduct of some of its members there.

The letter said: "Our party is not a confederacy of autonomous units. It is not as if the units at the State level got together and decided to form the party. The Swatantra Party is one party and the State units are its branches.

There is no question of the party at the national level 'interfering' in the affairs of the branches. How can there be 'interference' when there is only one party? This is absolutely fundamental."

Stating that the party was not "a club for contesting elections," Mr. Munshi observed that in the Gujarat affair, some M. L. A.s were reported to have argued that the promise given to Mr. Babubhai Vaidya was no longer valid because it had been made by the party's M. L. A.s in the last Assembly. "This is an absurd proposition," he said.

'GENERAL DEMORALISATION'

"We seem to be drifting towards a general demoralisation in our public life. Unless we prove our superiority in terms of our loyalty to principles and morality, unless we demonstrate in no uncertain terms that what we are interested in is not the immediate achievement of power but adherence to moral and ethical standards which alone can contribute to the preservation of democratic institutions, I am afraid our existence as a political party would be of no use to our people or to our country."

The tragedy of present-day India, Mr. Munshi said, is that all the major political parties, old and new, were step by step, ceasing to be "real" all-India parties with the courage to enforce discipline on recalcitrant State units.

Mr. Munshi told newsmen that because of his poor health he would not be able to attend the general council meeting, and hence this letter was addressed to the members. "But, I keenly feel," he said, "that the decisions taken by this meeting will decide the future of the party."

DISTRESSING DEVELOPMENTS

Answering a question, Mr. Munshi said that though he felt very strongly about the Gujarat episode, he said he would not leave the party unless Mr. C. Rajagopalachari permitted him to do so.

Mr. Munshi said the developments within the party during the biennial election to the Rajya Sabha from that State were "distressing." There was a total disregard for ethics and morality—a total defiance of party discipline. By nominating and securing the victory of a rebel candidate who was asked to withdraw his nomination by the central parliamentary board, incalculable harm had been done to the party's prestige.

Referring to the national executive's decision in this regard was peculiar. "It can mean only one thing—that the national executive is prepared to pay every price in ethics and discipline to retain a few M.L.A.s."

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