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Masani hits out at party leadership

By Our Special Representative

NEW DELHI, May 23—The strains inside the Swatantra Party, which developed after defection of a section of partymen in Gujarat resulting in the defeat of the Swatantra nominee in the Rajya Sabha biennial elections, have grown and assumed serious dimensions.

This becomes evident from an eight-page confidential note, circulated by former general secretary M. R. Masani, to members of the general council of the party.

In his note, Mr. Masani has sharply criticised the present leadership of the party, including its president, Prof. N. G. Ranga.

Mr. Masani says that for nearly seven years as the party's general secretary he had sought to maintain the supremacy of clean me-

thods and disciplined functioning. "If I have failed to convince my colleagues of the need for such an approach, it is only fair that they should feel free to try out an alternative approach which they may consider to be more in line with the party's interest.

Mr. Masani makes a pointed reference to some of Mr. Ranga's remarks, who told him late last year that since he was no longer the general secretary he should not seek to impose his policies on the party.

Obviously hurt by these remarks, Mr. Masani retorts: "I can assure our president and you that I have no desire whatsoever to impose any policies on those who do not believe in them and I was grateful to our president even as he spoke for opening my eyes to the fact that my attempts at maintaining certain standards of behaviour and discipline had done some violence to him and perhaps some others amongst our colleagues".

Commenting on the present state of the party, Mr. Masani says: "I believe that the interests of the democratic functioning of the party demand that there should be no conspiracy of silence as between leaders and that you, as an elected member of the party's general council, the supreme deliberative body of our party, have a right to know the facts."

SNIPING AND NEEDLING

Accusing a "considerable" section of the state leadership of lack of sincerity of purpose, Mr. Masani says that he had informed Mr. Rajagopalachari two years ago that the consciousness of this weakness and somewhat limited success one had in dealing with it lessened the zest determination and satisfaction with which one did one's task. The central office had been at the receiving end of so much sniping and needling that they had come to the end of their tether.

Referring to the Gujarat developments which led to the present

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to answer the charges against him. One or two preceding the polling day, or six members of Parliament belonging to the party, viz Ahmedabad and some of the including Mr. C. C. Desai, member of the national executive worked against Mr. Vaidya.

When show cause notice issued against five MLAs who had sponsored Mr. U. N. Mehta, rebel Swatantra candidate who defeated Mr. Vaidya, minutes recorded that "several of disciplinary action would exclude expulsion from party". Thus, the rebels were told that they need not expect any serious action against them.

The effect of all this on the party's credibility in the eyes of the voters at the time of the elections, if not earlier, should not need too much imagination to estimate. One would have thought that the national executive would have considered ways of trying to erase this unfortunate development by presenting a new image and a new face for the party in Gujarat.

There were ways of doing this. One would have been for the president and general secretary of the state unit themselves tender their resignations in view of their failure to perform their obligations. Another would have been to dissolve the state executive and to replace it by an ad hoc committee on the lines of U.P.

Mr. Masani has also taken exception to action not being taken against Mr. Bhagwanji Patel of Rajkot District who had worked against him and other party