

5580

Hindustan Times 15-5-68

Masani firm on quitting Swatantra party posts

New Delhi, May 14 (UNI)—Swatantra leader M. R. Masani has turned down the appeal of the party's Central Parliamentary Board and National Executive that he withdraw his resignation from these bodies.

In a letter to the party's secretary, Mr. N. Dandekar, Mr. Masani said his decision was final and he had decided to adhere to the action he had taken.

Mr. Masani offered to resign from membership of the Parliamentary Board and the Executive early in April following the conduct of some partymen in the elections to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat. Disobeying the party High Command directive, Gujarat Swatantra MLAs had set up their

own candidate against the candidate sponsored by the High Command and helped him win the election.

In his letter to the general secretary, Mr. Masani has said the reported "disciplinary action" initiated against six Swatantra men by the National Executive was a mere "eyewash".

Both Mr. Dandekar's letter to Mr. Masani urging him to withdraw his resignation "in view of the disciplinary action initiated against Mr. Mahida and five other persons, who were known to have supported his candidature" and Mr. Masani's letter pressing his resignation were released to the Press today.

Executive's failure

In his letter, Mr. Masani said the National Executive had failed to take the obvious steps that were called for in order to restore the credibility of the party in Gujarat and a measure of discipline within its ranks. He alleged that the minutes of the meeting of National Executive in Delhi on April 13 and 14 last recorded, although this was not mentioned to the Press, that it was not the intention of the Executive to resort to any serious disciplinary action, such as expulsion, against the rebels.

Further, the Executive, he said, had ignored the lapse of duty on the part of the leader of the Opposition and the president and general secretary of the State unit in Gujarat as also of certain Parliament members who went to Ahmedabad a day or two prior to the elections to work against the party's candidate.

"It seems to me, therefore, that the Executive has, in fact, purported to court martial the corporals who were guilty, while turning a blind eye to the colonels and captains who were involved. Would it be unfair to consider this kind of disciplinary action a mere eyewash," he asked.

Party's cynicism

Mr. Masani expressed the fear that the Swatantra Party too was developing the same cynicism about the sanctity of the party's pledged word and the same contempt for the electorate which the Congress Party had been showing.

In these circumstances, he felt he could do more for the party and the maintenance of democratic processes by staying outside the Executive and the Parliamentary Board.

While he would continue to spread the party's excellent principles both in Parliament and outside, Mr. Masani said, he would also be free to give expression to the suppressed feelings of the rank-and-file, many of whom were not happy with the state of the party.

He has urged Mr. Dandekar to report his resignation to the party General Council when it meets in Madras on June 1.