

Masani's Resignation : Bid To Restore Probity To Public Life

BOMBAY: THE RESIGNATION OF M. R. MASANI, MP AND OTHER SWATANTRA LEADERS FROM THE PARTY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AND OTHER HIGH POSITIONS HAS CAUSED A CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL STIR.

Yet this decision, depressing in certain respects, is based on a principle that has been sadly neglected in political life in recent times — the principle that a politician's word should be as good as his bond.

Much of the chaos prevalent in India today springs from the fact that expediency often takes the place of moral norms and political convenience overrides honest convictions.

Floor-crossing, shifts of allegiance and similar phenomena have reduced politics to a mockery.

Sad to say, the infection has spread even to the ranks of the Swatantra Party in Gujarat, for the behaviour of certain members of the Gujarat Assembly in joining hands with the Congress to defeat the official Swatantra candidate, was not only morally wrong but a clear betrayal of solemn assurances given by the leaders of the Party.

NO OTHER WAY

In these circumstances it is not at all surprising that men who took the pledged word seriously should have preferred to resign rather than permit such betrayal.

As Mr Masani wrote to General Secretary N. Dandekar following his resignation, the Swatantra Party had in 1966 invited the support of the Independent Progressive Group, of which Mr Babubhai Vaidya was the leader in the Gujarat Assembly.

This support was at the time vital to ensure the success of Dr Beharilal Antani, the Swatantra candidate.

The Party had, in order to secure Mr Vaidya's support, given the latter a solemn assurance that he would be the Party candidate for the Rajya Sabha in the 1968 elections.

SOLEMN PLEDGE

Mr Masani, then General Secretary of the Party, had been approached by Jaideepsinghji of Baria for approval and had assured him that the Central Parliamentary Board of the Party would honour the arrangement in 1968.

A decision in this regard was in fact taken by the Board when it met in Bombay and recorded that Mr Vaidya would be the Party candidate in 1968.

When, however, the time came for the Rajya Sabha elections, certain members of the Swatantra Party, although fully aware of the pledge to Mr Vaidya, decided to ignore it and to vote against the Party candidate in conjunction with the Congress Party.

DETERIORATION

As Masani points out, this action was "one more example of how the general demoralisation in the political life of the country is finding its way into our own ranks."

As one who had pledged the Party's word to the Independent Progressive Group and its leader, Masani felt he had a personal responsibility in the matter, along with the leaders of the Party in Gujarat, Bhailal Patel and Jaideepsinghji of Baria.

from the fact that he has assured the General Secretary that he will continue to give the fullest support to the Party in all efforts to uphold its discipline and effective functioning.

ACTION NEEDED

It is yet to be seen what action the Party will take against those members of the Gujarat Assembly who have chosen to defy its mandate.

The rebels ignoring Dr Vaidya, elected another Swatantra Party member, U. N. Mahida, in violation of a whip issued by Bhailal Patel, founder member of the Gujarat Swatantra Party and leader of the Party's group in the Assembly.

On previous occasions the Swatantra Party has preferred to expel members who did not conform to discipline. Although it is too early to say what concrete action will be taken in the present instance, it is difficult to see what



M. R. Masani

other course is possible.

In any event, Masani's resignation on a point of principle will do much to restore the public's confidence in the integrity of politicians which, during the past few years, has been badly shaken.

Patil Highlights Congress Misdeeds On Many Fronts

From Our Correspondent

BOMBAY: Mr S. K. Patil addressed two meetings last week of Bombay's industrial and business community. The views expressed by him and the manner in which he spoke, not only reflected his serious concern and sorrow at the manner in which the country is drifting under the devalued Congress rule but these were also the most outspoken (and damaging to the Congress) that a top Congress leader of the standing of Patil has ventured to come out openly.

At a meeting of the All India Importers' Chamber, he uttered the warning that it would prove disastrous to the country and its efficient and economic production from their normal avocations, has deprived the country of the valuable experience of the established trade channels, has distorted the pattern of trade in

public interest! But, coming back to Mr Patil, the former Railway Minister is aggrieved — and rightly so — that the country has been badly caught up in all sorts of ideologies, and foreign ones at that! "I do not know how, we are going to get out of this. Anything and everything we have to do, there must be an ideology. Why not for a change, do it in our own way, efficiently and competitively? After all, what is important is, doing it well," he remarked.

It was at the meeting of the All-India Association of Industries that he waxed eloquent about

ed the economy and exports very seriously, all because the necessary follow up measures were not taken. "We lost economically, and we also lost the election". He would not blame any foreign advice or anything for this disaster. "The Government must take the entire blame", he maintained.

Mr Patil said that there is a tendency to face serious difficulties through "cheap remedies". One instance is the suggestion that admission to engineering institutions should be curtailed to tackle the problem of unemployment among engineers. "This is something like family planning of engineers. Nothing can be more dangerous or ridiculous than this", he said.

If the suggestion was extended to unemployed graduates or matriculates what would be the



S. K. Patil

result, he asked. The younger generation would be ruined.

On controls, Mr Patil said that these represented an erosion of democracy. "For everything you do, you have to go to the Government, stand in queue to get your essential needs, get permits etc., etc. This is not democracy".

He could, of course, understand Government intervention in people's normal activities but only in times of emergencies and that too for short periods. But in this courting emergencies have long life. The emergency which came after Chinese aggression in 1962 took six years to be lifted, despite the "universal cry against it".

Patil ridiculed the suggestion, made by the Congressmen themselves, that Company contributions to political Parties should be banned. "If honest methods are stopped, money has to be found for politics, purposes and they will resort to other methods", he cautioned.

He admitted in so many words that the cement industry had been punished by way of re-control because its distribution organisation C.A.C.O. dared give more money to the Swatantra than the Congress. "I do not know why. CACO gave 15 lakhs to the Congress. There must be some research on this CACO story." Candid, indeed! This speaks volumes about the misuse by Congress of its official position, he concluded.

AIR-DASH TO OF NO SIGNIFICANCE

Premier Mr Kosygin made a dash for the Republic in exchange for the Indian gesture of attending the Moscow

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