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Draft Statement

Concerned about the steady but sure deterioration in the norms of public life and the state of our economy, where hope is fast dwindling to despondency, we wish to share a few anxious thoughts with our fellow countrymen in the hope that all those who still care may do something about it.

Our Problems

The four main tasks we in India face and will have to tackle in this decade are:

- a) The Preservation of Democratic Institutions
- b) Reducing Poverty
- c) Curbing the Population Explosion
- d) The Modernisation of our Social Structures attitudes.

Democracy

The divorce of principles and ethics from power is almost as complete in our country today as in any totalitarian country except that, in the latter, they do not pretend to hold to canons of personal morality. If this trend continues, our press, our Trade Unions, our Universities and all the rest of the countervailing forces will end up in surfdone and we shall soon be known as one of those unfortunate peoples who fought for Independence but did not care for Freedom.

Those People beyond our frontiers have always wondered how a country like ours, with thirty per cent literacy and one of the lowest per capita incomes with its people precariously below the sociological Plimsoll Line, has managed to preserve democratic institutions. We however, are not surprised for we recognise that this has been possible because of a deep, age-old tradition of tolerance and civilisation and more so because of the way the Congress under Gandhiji worked before Independence. That today's Congress leaders should find it more difficult and "dangerous" to stand up to Smt. Indira Gandhi than we in the old days found to face Mahatma Gandhi is neither a tribute to the present day Congressmen nor to our democracy or its leader. Congressmen today

seen to agree that "there's complete democracy in the Congress and Smt. Indira Gandhi is the only leader". Neither the Mahatma nor the late Mr. Nehru would have considered this a very happy situation or an enviable position for a leader in a democracy. Let us not forget that democracy within the Congress Party needs to be preserved as much as outside it.

Poverty

In spite of slogans like Garbi Hatao, the ancient wrongs of poverty, unemployment and Squalor continue to persist and will in fact be accentuated by the galloping inflation which is built into official Plans.

There are 200 million people in our country who live not only in poverty but in utter degradation. They will take a long time even to graduate to poverty. That their problems cannot be solved by populist measures or by incitement to class conflict or by clever manipulation that confers greater privileges or benefits on the most organised, the most vocal, should be self evident. By resorting to such measures, we are ensuring a certain degeneration of democratic socialism into centralised statism. A deliberate attempt to project the ruling party with its allies as the only instrument of change might polarise our political life between extremes on the basis of mutual bankruptcy and spark a spreading violence and the result may well be Naxalism and other forms of violence.

What we need is realistic policies which would help increase the national output by capital and labour investment, organisation and fiscal measures so that the whole of society and not just the favoured sections or parts grow richer. Let us pause to think of the degree of controls and taxation that can be tolerated during the period of development without generating large scale distress, degradation, corruption and social conflicts.

Modernisation

We need not over-emphasize this aspect as all progress will ultimately depend on the attitude of our individual and collective mind. At every step we need to ask - what kind of behaviour is more likely to facilitate modernisation? Whose behaviour is more modern - the high ranking bureaucrat hostile to applying profit considerations to even public commercial projects, the politician who mouths socialistic phrases and yet cynically asks for greater perquisites and privileges and power of patronage for his "feudal" followers or the private entrepreneur who talks very little of the broader public good but whose quest for profits results in the expansion of industry and growth of employment?

It is time we took a look back to the happenings of the past two or three years and decided whether we can live from crisis to crisis. All those committed to freedom, to social and economic justice, to spontaneity and diversity as basic human values must express "dissent" and bring the country back on the rails or else we shall certainly find change but no progress.

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Poverty

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What we need is realistic policies which would help increase the national output by capital and labour investment, organisation and fiscal measures so that the whole of society and not just the favoured sections or parts grow richer. Let us pause to think of the degree of controls and taxation that can be tolerated during the period of development without generating large scale distress, degradation, corruption and social conflicts.

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We need not over-emphasize this aspect as all progress will ultimately depend on the attitude of our individual and collective mind. At every step we need to ask - what kind of behaviour is more likely to facilitate modernisation? Whose behaviour is more modern - the high ranking bureaucrat hostile to applying profit considerations to even public commercial projects, the politician who mouths socialistic phrases and yet cynically asks for greater perquisites and privileges and power of patronage for his "feudal" followers or the private entrepreneur who talks very little of the broader public good but whose quest for profits results in the expansion of industry and growth of employment?

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Our Problems

The four main tasks we face and will have to tackle in this decade are:

- a) *Pres* Preservation of Democratic Institutions
- b) *Poverty* Poverty
- c) *Pop* Population explosion
- d) *Mod* Modernisation of our Social Structure/Attitudes

Democracy

The divorce of principles and ethics from power is almost as complete in our country today as in any totalitarian country except that, in the latter they do not pretend to hold to canons of personal morality. If this trend continues, our press, our Trade Unions, our Universities and all the rest of the countervailing forces will end up in slavery and we will soon be known as one of those unfortunate peoples who fought for Independence but did not care for Freedom.

People
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Poverty

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What we need is realistic policies which would help increase the national output by capital and labour investment, organisation and fiscal measures so ^{that} the whole society not just the favoured sections or parts grow richer. Let us pause to think of the degree of controls, inflation and taxation that can be tolerated during the period of development without generating large scale distress, degradation, corruption and social conflicts.

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