

Dandekar to Officiate as Swatantra President

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

BOMBAY, April 18.

The General Council of the Swatantra Party has accepted the resignation of Mr. M. R. Masani from the presidency of the party.

Mr. N. Dandekar, one of the Vice-Presidents of the party, has agreed to officiate as president till new office-bearers and members of the National Executive are elected in September this year.

The General Council also recorded its "deep sense of gratitude" to Mr. Masani for his services to the party from December 1939 to the end of 1967 as its General Secretary and subsequently as its President from January 1970 till now.

The Council also noted with gratification that Mr. Masani would continue to give the party the benefit of his advice and counsel and propagate the party's principles and policies.

A special sub-committee has been set up by the National Executive of the party consisting of youngsters to review the policy and programmes of the party. The Committee has been asked to submit its report before June 30.

It was stated that many members felt that the party should revise its attitude towards labour and trade unions. They wanted increased participation by partymen in labour movements.

APPEAL TO THANT

The Swatantra Party yesterday appealed to United Nations Secretary-General, U Thant, to convene an emergent session of the Security Council and the General Assembly to bring about an immediate ceasefire and an end to the bloodshed in East Bengal.

In a resolution adopted yesterday, the General Council of the party said that it was high time for the world body to evolve an effective machinery to end the fighting.

In another resolution on the developments in Ceylon, the party warned the Government of India and the people against the "dubious designs and strategy" of North Korea and its agents. It demanded a probe into the appearance of full page advertisements of North Korea in Indian dailies.

PARTY'S PLAN TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

The General Council expressed concern over the sufferings of the country's poorer sections and demanded that the Central and State Governments should undertake a minimum programme for public welfare.

To facilitate such a programme the party put forward among others, the following suggestions:

The Government must devise plans to create at least 50-lakh new jobs every year to be able to reduce the carry-over of about three-crore unemployed to the next plan.

Precedence must be given to minor irrigation schemes, roads and other building works and road transport. These works which are labour intensive also promote wider economic development and yield quicker and greater returns to the exchequer. This would create at least 30-lakh additional jobs during 1971-72 and 160-lakh jobs in the next five years.

Equally important is the need to slow down the pace of population growth. For this, family planning efforts require top priority.

In view of the housing shortage, the Government should commit itself to an investment of at least Rs. 200 crores for the construction of low cost housing alone during 1971-72.

The Government should also ensure supply of credit at cheap rates to agriculturists, small-scale industrialists and self-employed persons.

As prices have soared during the last five years and the value of the rupee has slumped, the Government should immediately apply an effective brake on its expenditure, especially non-plan, non-productive expenditure and arrest further inflation to prevent any more increase in prices this year.

Excise duty must be reduced by half in order to provide the common man immediate relief in prices.

Masani's Letter of Resignation

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

BOMBAY April 18.

Mr. M. R. Masani in a letter to the members of the General Council on his resignation from the Presidency of the Swatantra Party, said that he should take his full share of responsibility for the mistakes in the past 15 months.

He said the party's present plight was the cumulative result of several organisational shortcomings and the mistakes in the party's appraisal of the situation as well as strategy in joining the four-party front to contest the election.

Mr. Masani said the primary task at this moment would be to examine seriously the shape to be given to the party and its future so that the party might help to maintain freedom in the country and take it forward.

He said among the conclusions he had come to were — "(1) that a great task of basic political education faces us all in India. This task is to educate the masses of our people, and indeed our elite also, on the values of democracy and the importance of the free institutions we have so far enjoyed and to impart some understanding of the fundamental laws of economics, and (2) that if existing democratic opposition parties such as ours are to play any decisive role in bringing about such an awareness and in successfully defending our democratic constitution and promoting the acceptance of sound economic policies in place of the present misguided ones, they can only do so under a new and fresh leadership which should preferably be of younger people."

Mr. Masani hoped that the Council would accept his resignation.

He assured the members of the Council that he proposed to continue to be a member of the party.

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