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For favour of publication

Delhi, November 23.

"The real issue before the country on the economic plane is as to which policy will be able to produce the largest expansion of output with the minimum social strain. It is the claim of the Swatantra Party that the policies embodied in its Statement of Principles will take the country forward much faster, while giving the people an easier life, than the policies of State Capitalism pursued by Prime Minister Nehru," observed Mr.M.R.Masani, M.P., while addressing a public meeting at Sapru House this afternoon with Mr.M.M.Munshi in the Chair. Mr. Masani thought that the Prime Minister's attempt to avoid an intelligent discussion of this basic issue by using strong adjectives about the Swatantra Party, as he had done two days earlier, would fail and the people would demand an answer to the Swatantra Party's case.

While the Nagpur Resolution with its threat of collectivisation of land was the immediate provocation for the formation of the Swatantra Party, the basic reason for its emergence was the reaction in the public mind against the gulf between the professions and the practice of the ruling party, the growing concentration of power in a few hands, the throttling of the productive forces of the nation by bureaucratic restrictions and regulation, the failure to give the peasant a fair deal and the deterioration in the living standards of the middle classes as a result of inflation, rising prices and excessive taxation.

At a time when the food, defence and foreign policies of the government had crumbled, no alternative government was available. This was bad for parliamentary democracy. The Swatantra Party would work to fill this gap at the next elections. It was this prospect that, judging by Mr. Nehru's vituperative statements, appeared to unnerve the Prime Minister. At the last elections, millions of Indians who did not believe in socialism had been disfranchised because all the candidates presenting themselves accepted socialism of one kind or another. Now the country would have a clear alternative presented to it. The Swatantra Party categorically rejected Statism, Soviet-type planning and collective farming. It considered this drift towards State Capitalism to be inconsistent with the maintenance of parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister's basic confusion was in believing that a collectivised economy could for long coexist with parliamentary democracy. It was like wanting a leopard without his spots. The freedom of choice of the worker, the investor and the consumer were fundamental to a free society.

The Swatantra Party would place reliance on the initiative and enterprise of the people and provide incentives for them. West Germany in industry and Japan in agriculture had shown how quickly a country could move given the right economic policies. The whole world was moving away from State socialism. The British elections had confirmed this trend. Mr. Masani read out passages from the new Manifesto of the German Social Democratic Party published in October to show what a close resemblance it bore to the Statement of Principles of the Swatantra Party. In this context, the Prime Minister's attempt to make out that the Swatantra Party was out of date was ludicrous. It was Mr.Nehru who was a quarter of a century out of date but failed to recognise it.

Adverting to Mr.Nehru's charge that the Swatantra Party represented vested interests, Mr.Masani described how in a controlled economy businessmen were at the mercy of the government and lacked the courage to stand up for their beliefs. If a census was taken of the businessmen supporting the Congress Party and the Swatantra Party respectively, it would be found that only a few enlightened advocates of free enterprise were with the Swatantra Party while the bulk of Big Business was hanging on to Mr. Nehru's "socialist" bandwagon. The only vested interest in India today was that of the politicians in office, the bureaucrats and the businessmen who hung on to the coat tails of government.

*Paul J. ...*

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