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Speech by
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REPUBLICAN PARTY OF INDIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
5th SESSION OF THE R.P.I.
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Delegates of the R.P.I., Ladies & Gentlemen,

In the beginning we express our heart felt sorrow on sad demise in Delhi of our leader Rao Bahadur N. Siv Raj who had come to Delhi to organise and participate in the demonstration of the Republican Party of India before the Parliament on 1-10-64. The Republican Party of India got a great set back due to Rao Bahadur's death. He was a great giant and a staunch desciple and follower of Late Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar. I pay my homage to the departed leader.

The R.P.I. is a party of the down trodden, exploited and have nots. They are the weaker section of the country. The RPI is pledged and determined to fight for the rights of the down trodden masses and to improve the economical, social, educational and political status of these people, and brings them to the level of others.

The Constitution, guarentees that the Government would provide homes to homeless, food to the hungry and clothes to the naked persons. But I am very sorry to say that since independence the position of these classes in this respect has not improved at all.

When the Constitution was being considered, members of the Constituent Assembly congratulated Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar for giving extra-ordinary Constitution to the nation. While replying Baba Saheb Ambedkar told the Constituent Assembly that having good Constitution is not enough. Implementation of the Constitution is more important and it will be the responsibility of the ruling party to implement the Constitution. If it is properly implemented, the mattes will be benefited. If it is not implemented properly nothing will happen. The fact that the lot of the weaker section is not improved clearly shows that the Constitution is not implemented properly by the ruling party.

The Republican Party of India has tried its level best to improve, through the Constitutional means, the pitiable conditions of the weaker sections in the country. But unfortunately the Government has paid no attention to the grievances of these people.

The country is facing great scarcity of food grains. Every year the Government is importing food grains from foreign countries,

spending crores of rupees in invaluable foreign exchange. This drain on foreign exchange could be stopped if the production of food-grains is increased by bringing under cultivation all the waste land available in this Country. Considerable Government waste land is available in the country and there are millions of unemployed persons who are willing to work hard on these lands and grow more food. If this waste land is given to the landless labourers it would solve both the problems of food shortage and unemployment. The demand for such land is always refused by the Government. The reason for refusal of these demands for waste land is nothing else but the opposition from the land-lords who have vested interests. The landlords oppose this demand for the simple reason that they will not be able to get cheap labour if the lands are given to the landless labourers. The plea of the land-lords is always supported by the party in power so that these land-lords will help the Party in power in the coming elections.

Satyagraha agitation

When the question of allotting Government land to the landless people was raised in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly in 1959 the concerned Minister replied that there was not an inch of land available which could be given to the landless people for cultivation. The Republican Party of India was compelled to start land agitation (Satyagraha) in the year 1959 in the Maharashtra State. Within a period of two months more than 35000 Satyagrahis were arrested and sent to jail by Government. Ultimately the Government called the leaders of the Republican Party of the Maharashtra State and all the fourteen demands were accepted. In the next year the Maharashtra Government was pleased to distributed several lakhs acres of land to the landless people.

All over the country crores of acres of land is lying idle. The R.P.I. represented the matter to the State Governments and requested that these lands should be given to the landless people. But no attention was paid to these demands. The R.P.I. decided to draw the attention of the Government of India to this problem along with other problems. With this view in mind the R.P.I. organised a demonstration in Delhi on the 1st October, 1964 and more than one lakh persons participated in this demonstration before the Parliament and presented the charter of demands consisting ten demands to the then Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri. After a month a depu-

tation consisting of Barrister B.D. Khobragade, General Secretary, R.P.I. Bhayya Saheb Ambedkar and myself met the then Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri in Bombay and requested him to accept the demands of the R.P.I. mentioned in the Charter of demands. I think Shri Shastriji, perhaps, might have taken this matter very lightly and advised us to wait. It was but necessary for us to explain the real situation and bring to his notice that in case the demands are not accepted and fulfilled, the R.P.I. will have to start Satyagrah from the 6th December, the 'Mahaparinirvana' day of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar.

The Working Committee of the RPI was then called to consider the whole issue and it was resolved that the Satyagrah should be started all over the country from the 6th December, 1964. In response to the call given by the Party all the branches of the R.P.I. in the country launched the land agitation. The land agitation continued for about two months. About three lakhs of persons participated in the Satyagraha and courted arrest within two months. The then Prime Minister Shri Shastri invited the leaders of the R.P.I. to discuss the issues involved and settle the matter amicably. Accordingly Shri B. D. Khobragade, Shri Arumugham, Shri A. B. Nilley Advocate, and myself went to Shri Shastri on the 30th January, 1965 when Shri Y. B. Chavan, the Defence Minister, Shri Guljari Lal Nanda, the Home Minister were also present. We all discussed the matter for over an hour and ultimately the demands were accepted in principle and the Prime Minister, Shri Shastri assured us that the Government would implement some demands immediately and some demands later-on at convenient time.

Unfortunately War broke up between India and Pakistan and Government was engaged in defending the country against Pakistan aggression. With a view to assist the Government in defending the country effectively against the Pakistan aggression the R.P.I. did not deem it proper to pursue the matter and extended full support to the Government in its defence efforts. As soon as the war was over, the R.P.I. represented the matter to the Government of India. I am glad to note that the Government have issued instructions to all the State Governments to allot all cultivable waste land to the landless labourers. We note with satisfaction that the State Governments are following the instructions of the Central

Government and are distributing the waste land. Some of the State Governments have paid subsidy to such landless labourers for purchasing bullocks and agricultural implements.

Some of the State Governments have passed legislation imposing ceiling on the land holding. But it is regretted that inspite of the avowed policy of the Congress, which happens to be the ruling party, some of the States have not adopted this policy. Even in those States which have passed such legislation, this land reform has not been carried out with due care. All big landlords had distributed their lands among their relatives before the ceiling law came into force and therefore, inspite of the ceiling limit on private land the Government could make no surplus land available for distribution among the landless labourers.

In anticipation of such policies and dilatory tactics of the State Governments the R.P.I. had passed a resolution in its conference held at Aurangabad in 1959 demanding nationalisation of land.

In my opinion the problems of the landless labourers and food-shortage cannot be solved until and unless the land in this country is nationalised.

Food Problem

For the last several years the country has to face food shortage and consequently the people have to suffer great hardship. Inspite of the assurances given by the Ministers the food situation is going from bad to worse every year. During the current year there is acute shortage of food grains and people are actually facing starvation. According to press reports some persons have died due to starvation. The situation in rural areas is worst as compared to that in big cities. Generally speaking urban people are living in better conditions. Being organised, they get better wages and sufficient quantity of foodgrains. The Government is supplying food grains in more quantity to the people in cities. In some big cities the Government has introduced rationing, thus undertaking the responsibility to supply the adequate quantity of food-grains, to the urban population. But what about the rural areas? People living in villages are being completely neglected. As a matter of fact the people who are toiling on the farms to produce food-grains are being made to starve. Under these circumstances, it becomes

the responsibility of the Government to supply sufficient quantity of food-grains to the villagers and save them from starvation. For this purpose the Government should introduce rationing for rural areas.

In my opinion, the hoarders, merchants and big landlords are also responsible for aggravating the food problem. By cornering available foodgrains, artificial scarcity is created and prices are abnormally increased. The Government should take effective steps to stop such exploitation of masses. Mere production of food grains is not enough. Equitable distribution of available food grains is equality important. As long as the whole-sale trade of foodgrains is in private hands, the profiteering tendencies of the merchants cannot be curbed and there can be no equitable distribution of foodgrains. I, therefore, suggest that there should be state trading in food grains.

Hutment Dwellers

There is one important burning problem in the country which has drawn the attention of some political parties. That problem is of the hutment dwellers. Inspite of the 18 years of Congress rule, the Government has not been able to solve the problem of providing shelter to all citizens.

Due to the unemployment in the country and particularly in the rural areas thousands and thousands of unemployed persons from rural area are pouring in cities. They go in the cities and do hard labour and with many difficulties earn their bread. As they do not get any proper housing site or accommodation to live in, they naturally go and construct a small hut on the open ground near latrines or Guttars full of dirt and filth where people cannot even stand for few minutes without closing their noses. In big industrial cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Delhi, Kanpur etc. lakhs and lakhs of poor families are leading this miserable life.

Many times the Government with the help of the Police, attack such localities and destroy their huts and throw the hutment dwellers on the streets. It is always a very pitiable scene. The sick persons, the old, infirm small children, men and women being made homeless sit by the roadside crying about their miserable lot. The Government usually says that the hutments are demolished because

they are unauthorised occupants. They have no right to use and occupy these lands for their huts.

The Republican Party first organised Republican Zopadi Sangh in Bombay and through it ventilated the grievances of the hutment dwellers. Now most of the other parties have started their Zopadi Sanghs.

It was one of the 10 demands included in Charter of demands that until and unless the alternative site is provided to the hutment dwellers their huts should not be demolished. Being Indian citizens it is the responsibility of the Governments to provide jobs and homes in the cities. If these poor unfortunate persons leave their villages and come to cities in search of jobs, it is not their fault. They should be provided with jobs and homes. Even the people from East or West Pakistan come to India our Government spends huge amounts to rehabilitate them. When persons from Burma & Tibet come to India for shelter our Government is always prepared to make all arrangements for them. Our Government is always very kind to others, but very cruel to them. Masters of this country. The reasons are best known to them. Generally these hutment dwellers are mostly from the Scheduled Castes and other Backward classes who are the original inhabitants of this country and, therefore, I call them the Masters of the country. On behalf of the Central Government the then Prime Minister Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri was pleased to assure us that no such huts constructed before 1962 would be demolished until and unless they are provided with alternative housing sites.

The Republican Party of India has received many complaints from the hutment dwellers that their huts are demolished even without providing them the alternative housing sites. If so, this is, in my opinion, breach of the promise given by the Government. The Government should please take note of this and please see that no such injustice is done to the poor hutment dwellers. Before their huts are demolished they should be provided with alternative convenient and suitable sites. Many times it happens that the housing sites which are provided to the hutment dwellers are far away from the places of their work and, therefore, they hesitate to occupy the sites allotted to them. The Government, therefore,

shou'd take sympathetic view and allot sites after taking into consideration their convenience.

Socialism

Now-a-days it has become a fashion to speak of socialism. Almost everybody declares that he desires to establish Socialism in the country. The Congress also adopted a resolution for establishing the socialistic pattern of society. But it took nearly a decade for the Congress to define the democratic socialism and therefore Congress will require many more decades to implement the socialistic policies. As everybody defines the socialism according to his own convenience. Socialism means different things to different persons. To me socialism means the end of exploitation of man by man, of one caste by another caste and of one class by another class. Socialism means equality of opportunity to all irrespective of caste, creed, religion or class. Socialism means equality—not only economic equality but social equality also. Many people seem to believe that socialism means economic equality only. But it is my considered opinion that there can be no socialism or economic equality until and unless there is social equality. There is no social equality in the country. The weaker sections of the people are leading the life of slaves. People in this country are always concerned about slavery of Negroes in South Africa and America. But these people do not realise what is burning under their feet. I can positively say that the position of the Negroes is much better than the position of the Scheduled Caste people of this country. Even though the Constitution has abolished the untouchability, it is practiced through out the country in different forms. Even to-day in some places the Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to walk on the Public roads. The Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to draw water from public wells and tanks. The Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to take marriage processions, by public roads. The Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to sit on Char-Pai in front of the Thakurs or Jamindars of the villages. The Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to get a housing site to the West of the Caste Hindu localities. The Scheduled Caste people are always compelled to do the dirty jobs for the Caste Hindus. The Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to wear decent dress. The Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to improve their social and economical conditions. If lands are granted to them by the Government the Caste Hindus would destroy the crops.

I want to ask the rulers of the Country as to whether there is any country on the surface of the earth where such inhuman ill treatment is meted out to human-beings ?

Integrity

Hindu Society is divided in numerous unequals castes and sub-castes. The castism is ruining the whole country. It is strange enough that while everybody speaks of national and social integrity, no one is doing anything to establish homogenous and integrated society by abolishing caste system.

There is self contradiction in the attitudes of many persons who criticise the caste system but in actual practice take considerable pride in their own castes. This is not the way to eradicate the evil of castism. For this purpose people should be willing to forget and abandon the castes. By abolition of castes alone we can establish social equality.

Scheduled Tribes

I am sorry to state that there is no improvement in the lot of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Government is paying only lip sympathy to their cause without doing anything to ameliorate their conditions. There is frustration among these down trodden people. Recent Bastar episode is not only the proof of the failure of the Government to improve the economic and social conditions of these classes but it clearly indicates inhuman, unjust attitude of the Government towards these classes. I strongly condemn the M. P. Government for perpetrating atrocities on the tribal people in Bastar area.

Government Services

Constitution provides for the reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Government services. But even though the Constitution has been in force since last sixteen years, there is no adequate representation of these communities in the Government services. Whenever the question is raised in the Parliament the usual reply given is that no suitable candidates are available. But this is absolutely false. Many capable and competent candidates are available from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They can satisfy all the minimum conditions prescribed. But even then they are not selected for the Government posts. The post reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are treated unreserved on the pretext that the suitable candidates are not available and these posts are filled

in by the other non-Scheduled Caste Candidates. Due to such provisions, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates are deliberately rejected even if they are equally competent and these posts are filled in by nepotism and favouritism. This is the main reason for not having adequate percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe candidates in the Government service in spite of the Constitutional provision for reservation.

The Government had adopted a policy in 1956 that there should be reservation in promotion to selection grade posts. This was upheld by the Supreme Court. But strangely enough the Government has not implemented this policy. This is one of the many instances showing vast difference in preaching and practice of the Government. The Government should implement this policy and should have reservation while filling in the class I and II posts by promotion. In many instances it is noticed that the Caste Hindu Officers meet together and conspire to harass the Scheduled Caste and Tribes Officers. I have come across many cases where the confidential record of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes Officers is deliberately spoiled by the superior caste Hindu Officers. Therefore at the time of promotion the Scheduled Caste Officers are superceded by the junior caste Hindu Officers, thus resulting in great injustice and frustration among the Scheduled Caste and Tribe Officers. It is high time for the Government to stop the step motherly treatment to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes people. The Government should take effective steps immediately to bring these weaker sections of the society, to the level of others by providing special facilities and implementing such policies faithfully.

D. I. R.

Many persons detained under D.I.R. are still behind the bars. In the Chief Ministers' Conference most Chief Ministers were opposed to withdrawal of emergency and repeal of the Defence of India Act. It is greatly regretted that the Home Minister Mr. Nanda yielded to pressure of the Chief Ministers. No doubt Mr. Nanda has demanded that the D.I.R. would be used sparingly. But even then continuation of emergency is most undemocratic. Suspension of fundamental and basic rights for such a long period amounts to negation of democracy. Prevalent situation in the country does not warrant the continuation of the emergency. More-over, the D.I.R. have been used to further interests of the party in power. As

declared by the Election Commission elections are to be held in February, 1967. These elections should be held in free and fair atmosphere. As Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar had said "Free and fair election is the other pillar on which Parliamentary democracy rests." As long as the emergency continues and the D.I.R. is in force there can be no free and fair elections. Therefore, I urge that the emergency should be withdrawn, D.I.R. be scrapped and all the detenués released immediately.

Tashkent declaration

When Tashkent declaration was signed, it was expected that it would usher a new era of friendship, goodwill and cooperation between India and Pakistan. With this expectation only India had agreed to withdraw her forces from Haji Pir area. India has faithfully implemented the agreement and withdrawn from this area. But recently there has been a change in the attitude of Pakistan. Pakistan has started again hate-India campaign vitiating the Tashkent spirit. Pakistan and China have come together and perhaps there is danger of aggression by these two countries. Therefore, India cannot afford to be self complacent. We must continue to strengthen our defences and should be prepared fully to face aggression from any corner. It is being suggested that there should be fresh negotiations with China. But in the present circumstances I don't think any useful purpose will be served by negotiations with China and therefore, I feel that there should be no negotiations with China.

Election policy

The General Elections are to be held in February, 1967. The R.P.I. will have to prepare to contest the General Elections. The R.P.I. expects to set up about 100 candidates for 'Lok Sabha' and about 500 candidates for the State Legislative Assemblies through-out India.

The question is being asked as to what would be the policy of the R.P.I. during the next elections regarding the alliances with other political parties. In this connection I would like to draw your attention to the policy statements of our Revered leader Dr. Baba Sheb Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar had asked his followers to be strong and united under one party and one leader and to have cooperation with other parties. While speaking at Kanpur on the 29th January, 1944 Dr. Ambedkar said :—

"If you are to share political powers, you must be organised as one solid unit before you could successfully fight for the due

rights in the future goverances of the country. I must warn you against having too many leaders who believed in paper bodies and paper parties."

In another speech delivered at Bombay Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar said:

"The Scheduled Castes should give up the political aloofness and cooperate with other communities in strengthening our newly won freedom. But in such co-operation the separate entity of the Scheduled Caste Federation should be maintained. You must change your policies radically towards Congress. Upto this time our relations with Congress had been one of opposition. On the political field we were enemies of each other. Now that we have achieved our freedom we should change our outlook entirely and cooperate with others, keeping in view of the interest of our community and help consolidate our newly won freedom."

"The Federation should give up its aloofness, Ours is a small Community and if we have to maintain our status-quo we must co-operate with some political party, in the comming election."

While addressing the Conference of the All India Scheduled Castes Federation at Lucknow on the 25th April, 1948 Dr. Baba aheb Amedkar declared :

"Political power is the ^{Kan}sky to all progress and the Scheduled Castes can achieve their salvation if they captured this power by organising themselves into a third party and holding the balance of power between the rival political parties. My joining the Congress Government has created a great amount of confusion among the Scheduled Castes and I want to clear their suspicion and doubts. I am asked why after a fight for twentyfive years against the Congress I chose to remain silent at that crucial juncture. After all it is not best strategy to fight all the time. You have also to restore the other measures. We followed the policy of conciliation and have attended the success to great extent. It is not the time to come a conflict with the Congress and we should get as much as we can by conciliation and cooperation. I have joined the Central Government but I have not become the member of Congress. I was invited by the Congress to join

the Central Government and I have joined it unconditionally. I shall come out any time I think it is useless to stay there. Our condition is such that it is necessary that our men should be in the administrative machinery. If I join the Congress I will do so after declaring my intention. If it will be in the interest of Scheduled Castes I will advise you to do so. You must organise yourself under one party, one leader and one programme."

In a Press statement issued after Lucknow Conference in 1948 Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar clarified his position as follows:—

"It is true I have been an opponant and a critic of the Congress. At the same time I do not believe in opposition for the sake of opposition. There ought to be the spirit of cooperation where we can gain something by cooperation. I thought there would be no use fighting against the congress. I, therefore, decided to cooperate and by cooperation we got some sefeguards in the Constitution which we might otherwise not have got."

From all the statements it will be clear that Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar had no objection to have electroral alliance with any progressive parties including Congress.

I may mention here that the important Congress leaders like Defence Minister Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan and Shri Vasantao Naik Chief Minister of Maharastra have taken considerable interest in the problems of the down trodden masses and helped to solve some of these problems. Firstly Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan as the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra State abolished the heriditary inferior village service (Mahar vatan) which, being a kind of forced slavery Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar had strived to abolish. Secondly, Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan, as Chief Minister of Maharashtra State extended educational and economic facilities to the Buddhist converted. Thirdly, the land measuring 14 acres in Nagpur where Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and gave Dhamma Diksha to 6 lakhs of his followers, was demanded by Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar's followers to erect a suitable memorial. I know that this land was required by the Government for some other Government purpose. But even then the land was given for erecting the memorial of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedker by Yeshwantrao

Chavan. This Diksha Maidan has become the holy place for the Buddhists of the whole world. Fourthly, on the demand by the R. P. I. Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan declared the 14th April, Dr. Baba Saheb Amedkar's birth-day as a Gazetted holiday in Maharashtra State. Fifthly, on the request of the R.P.I., Shri Vasantao Naik, Maharashtra Chief Minister has agreed to place Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar's photograph in all the Government Offices along with other national leaders. Sixthly, as per demand of the R.P.I practically all waste lands are being distributed to the landless labourers in Maharashtra State. Seventhly, Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan took initiative and moved the Central Government to issue commemoration postal stamps in memory of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar on the occasion of his 75th Birth-day anniversary. The postal stamps were duly issued on the 14th April, 1966. Shri Yeshvantrao Chavan is also taking keen interest in securing the economic and educational facilities to the converts Buddhists all over the country according to the assurance given by Shri Chavan in a public meeting held in Bombay on the 14th April, 1966, are expected to be granted soon. Lastly, he has taken up with the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi and the Speaker of Lok Sabha the matter of placing the portriat of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar in the Central Hall of the Parliament. I am confident that this would also be done in the due couse. These things clearly show that there are some progressive people in the Congress who are sympathetic towards the problems of the weaker sections. I will not hesitate to have electroral alliance with such progressive people in the Congress, who will ensure the welfare of the down trodden masses.

There are numerous political Parties in India. Some political parties have progressive policies and some are pursuing reactionary policies. However, the R.P.I. has got a definite programme for economic and social upliffment of the down trodden masses and weaker sections in this country. The R.P.I. attaches more important to the welfare of the down trodden and exploited masses. If any party assures us that it is prepared to implement our programme and take over the responsibility of promoting and advancing the interests of the weaker sections of which R.P.I is proud, I would have no hesitation to have alliance with such political parties. However, I may add that the R.P.I. will have no alliance with the parties like Jansangh

and the Swatantra Party. However the R.P.I. may have local adjustments with the parties like Jan Sangh and Swatantra Party in consultation with the Parliamentary Board of the R.P.I.

Trade Unions

Since the achievement of the freedom to the country industrial growth has taken place rapidly. In view of the acute problem of the unemployment facing to the country many workers from weaker sections sought employment throughout the country in various industries run by the Government and private Sector. Various political parties prevailing in the country have stepped down in Unions. It is not a new thing that the interest of the workers from the weaker sections is not being safeguarded by the industrialists. No doubt that efforts are being made by various unions of the political parties to lessen their grievances. As for the employees of the weaker sections they have to face the dual problem that is day to day atrocities and injustices and stigma of the casteism. As I mentioned above the various unions of the political parties are trying their best to lessen the grievances of the workers but they are not succeeded to remove the distinction amongst the workers prevailing on the caste basis. It is no strange that untouchability and distinction is being observed by the unions in day to day working thus the workers are not benefited either by unions or by employers. I received various complaints indicating such nature. I also received various suggestions from the prominent workers of the R.P.I. that R.P.I. should take initiative in solving the labour problems. I am glad to mention here that some of the workers have taken initiative in this respect at the scattered places in the country. I now feel that it is a vital need to R.P.I. to start the labour unions throughout the country independently by adopting homogenous policy in the interest of workers of weaker sections.

In the end I would appeal to you all to be strong and united under the banner of the R.P.I. and work relentlessly to ameliorate the conditions of the down trodden masses and weaker sections in this country.

Jai Bheem !