

The compromise formula should be implemented soon

When CHAITANYA KALBAG arrived for this pre-arranged interview at Janata General Secretary RABI RAY's residence at 12, Safdarjung Lane, New Delhi, an assistant of the latter's informed him that he had been summoned urgently by the President, Mr Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, to Rashtrapati Bhavan. Half an hour later Mr Ray returned, to inform our correspondent that he had only paid a social visit to the President, an "old friend". Behind his blustery cheerfulness, however, Mr Ray was obviously worried about something. He was also anxious to project the impression that all was now well with the Janata Party.



Q: Is there a possibility of your being one of the two nominees of the erstwhile BLD in the Union Cabinet?

A: I would not like to comment. The nominees will be chosen by Chaudhary Charan Singh in consultation with the Prime Minister.

Q: Do you think the compromise formula worked out on August 17 will heal all the ruptures in the Janata Party?

A: The compromise will improve the overall image of the Party, and now we can get down to the job of implementing electoral pledges we made to the people last year. The unity of the Party was essential for this implementation.

Q: The general feeling is that even this compromise is not going to last, but will only be another patchwork solution which may soon come apart.

A: I do not like patchwork solutions and neither do my colleagues in the Party. For the last 50 days we have all been straining every nerve to try and reach an amicable settlement all round—one that will be acceptable to everybody. We have been burning the midnight oil with the firm view that if unity is not achieved, the future of democracy in this country will be jeopardized.

Q: Is Mr Charan Singh happy about the terms of the compromise?

A: Chaudhary Sahab has agreed to be Party president, and also accepted the formula. He feels he can now guide the Party, and work for its betterment, to his heart's content. He has furthermore indicated his reluctance to return to the Cabinet. Chaudhary Sahab is a

self-respecting man. He has a mass following, and his credibility would be eroded if he compromised on fundamental issues. He did agree to call off the Kisan Rally but that was only a subsidiary issue, a means to an end. The major goal he has before him is to see that the Party fulfils its electoral promises.

In this regard I must say that by expressing his desire to quit his post of Party president in favour of Chaudhary Sahab, Chandrashekhar has exhibited wonderful statesmanship. It shows that he can rise to great heights. I commended his efforts when Chaudhary Sahab withdrew his resignation from the National Executive of the Party on Chandrashekharji's initiative. The Party should be thankful to Chandrashekharji for his foresight and spirit of sacrifice, as well as for his timely hunch that Chaudhary Sahab with his vast administrative experience would be ideally suited for the post of Party president.

Q: What about problems like the resignation of Mr Madhu Limaye?

A: Madhu and I have been comrades in arms for many years now. He has not resigned because of the present crisis. He has only resigned because of a deeper disillusionment with the affairs of the Party and Government. He is very conscientious and may have felt that he could not function properly in the present setup. It is possible that if these unity efforts succeed he may

be persuaded to withdraw his resignation.

Q: When will the terms of the compromise formula be put into effect?

A: I cannot tell you the exact date, but it will be soon.

Q: The major stumbling block seems to be that the Prime Minister wants Mr Charan Singh to withdraw his allegations against Mr Kanti Desai.

A: Chaudhary Sahab has only requested that an inquiry be instituted into other people's allegations against Kantibhai. He has not personally levelled any allegations.

Q: There is apprehension that CFD elements like Mr Bahuguna and Mr Jagjivan Ram are likely to resort to drastic action due to their patent unhappiness with the compromise.

A: If these gentlemen hold the prospect of unity uppermost in their minds then they cannot but accept the compromise. This formula is acceptable to everybody. Later perhaps we can try to bring skeptics to accept our point of view, and I am sure Chaudhary Sahab will assuage their doubts. Fair play and justice will be the sheet-anchor of Party policy under Chaudhary Sahab. There will be no persecution because of past misunderstandings.

Q: Personally how do you foresee the future of the Janata Party and Government? The feeling is that things have gone too far to be remedied.

A: For me, the present moment is most important. I believe in the test of immediacy. Right now I also believe that this unity formula should be pushed through vigorously. If it succeeds we will definitely go ahead with a dynamic programme for both Party and Government. If it fails I foresee nothing but disaster and calamity. It is a life-and-death situation. I hope reason and good sense will prevail. People all over the country, Party workers, ordinary citizens, and leaders like JP, have been expressing happiness at this compromise. Should we in Delhi not respond to their sentiments? Personally I am not very happy with the situation, but I am glad about the formula, which has unanimous support. I am unhappy because certain people are bent on creating obstructions and keep bringing things to a deadlock.