

NOTE

Of GOI and Swiss Bank

A B writes:

RIGHT NOW THE GOVERNMENT of India (GOI) is in a trap. Scams are coming out to the surface one after another. The Spectrum Scandal, the Adarsha Residential Scandal, the Commonwealth Games Scandal and the Swiss Bank Scandal- all have made it clear how the Government of India is running its affairs. This is one part of the story however. The Government of India has argued that the money illegally taken out of the country is only an example of tax evasion, and now Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee has declared his intention for an amnesty. This is how the cookie crumbles. Those who are unwilling to bring back Warren Anderson of Union Carbide notoriety cannot be expected to do better. It is well-known that significantly before the Bhopal gas tragedy, attention was drawn to inadequate safety measures, but the management of the Union Carbide, in their drive for maximum profits, completely ignored this question. The light nature of the punishment given to some executives shows how the system of justice runs in this country. This time, however, the Supreme Court seems to have awakened to the loot of the wealth of the country. Pranab Mukherjee's flimsy excuse about non-disclosure of the names of the culprits is itself an exposure. Mr Mukherjee is aware that their own interests will be at stake if the names come to be known before the public, and the way the money was obtained and illegally transferred out of the country is exposed. When money is acquired through fraudulent and patently illegal means, it is much more than tax evasion. It is not like the case of a teacher earning several thousand rupees a month through private tuition and not showing it in his income tax returns. This money has been acquired through bribes, commissions, illegal trafficking etc, which is why the Government is unwilling to inform the Supreme Court of the sources of this income, let alone the names. This is one facet of mainstream politics. Politicians plundering the resources of the country are not capitalists and do not know how to invest their illegally acquired wealth in industry or trade. Besides politicians, there are others whose support these mainstream politicians badly need for activities like election campaigns. Hence foreign banks are safe places where the money should be stashed away.

Dr Binayak Sen is in jail for his selfless service to the people of Chhatisgarh. He has been dubbed a traitor to the country. But politicians who are playing havoc with the resources of the country will go scot-free or even go on haranguing about the security and sovereignty of the country, while reiterating their own phony commitments to the people. The Swiss Bank affair cannot be appraised in isolation from the greater socio-economic scenario, however. When globalization, liberalization and consumerism come to hold sway, growing corruption is an inevitable concomitant. Struggles against this corruption should hence go on hand in hand with other struggles affecting the lives of the people directly. □□□