

into any of the directors, the civilities were always observed and no reference was made to this discussion. Much later, Environment Minister Kamal Nath told me that while criticising another activist, they had told him that at least I had no personal axe to grind.

In January 1992, at a party on the Willingdon Club lawns, another very senior director, who had generally supported me, asked me if I would resign from Tatas. My stand always was that I had done nothing wrong, that everyone was fully aware of my activities, and that in fact several Tata Companies and Trusts had supported my work. Hence I would not put in my papers but if dismissed, or asked in writing to leave, I would go quietly, without any fuss; I would not bite the hand that had fed me. Noshir Soonawala who was present said "It won't come to that" to which the reply from the first director was far more equivocal "We hope it won't come to that".

Tatas being what they are, nothing overt happened to me, though some office facilities were withdrawn, my salary was more or less frozen for many years, and I was superseded many times. All this became well known in Tatas and there was cold-shouldering by several friends along with the occasional discourteous treatment, even from juniors, all of whom knew that I was not exactly in favour.

However what was critically important to me was that I was not sacked, and was allowed to continue my work. I was also allowed, though not without several struggles, to retain my office to the end. In addition, several Tata Companies and Trusts have been generous in their support to the Bombay Environmental Action Group. From beginning to end, Dinshah Malegamvala was my staunch supporter.

"CSR" (Corporate Social Responsibility) is the buzzword these days. I wonder how many of those industry leaders who talk so much about it, would behave in the supportive way the Tatas did. If all the Fortune 500 companies followed the Tata example, what a different world it would be.

THE MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE ON HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

A news item of great historical importance, which appeared in the Times of India of Thursday January 12, 1978 best explains why the Old Yacht Club campaign was important and what it sparked off. It is reproduced below.

"New panel to buy and maintain old buildings likely

By M. J KAMALAKAR

BOMBAY, January 11: A new municipal budget head and a new municipal committee may be created shortly to buy and maintain old historical buildings in the city, it is reliably learnt.

The budget may have an initial token contribution of Rs. 10 lakhs and may find a place in the municipal budget to be presented next month.

The committee may be headed by the Mayor of Bombay, and may have as members, besides councillors, engineers and prominent citizens.

The committee will study endangered buildings and make suggestions for appropriate action.

What may be called the 'save-old-buildings' idea appears to have been born from the recent decision to pull down the old Royal Yacht Club building near the Gateway of India. It is not known whether this building, too, will be saved by the latest municipal initiative.

Bombay has a number of old buildings, which have become too costly to maintain, and which often fall victims to land-hungry builders.

There have been suggestions to pull down the grand old Town Hall and the General Post Office. The authorities have resisted both idea (sic)" (emphasis mine).

What I did not know at that time was that about 15 years earlier, some thing similar had happened in New York; the demolition of the grand Pennsylvania Station had been one of the triggers that led to the formation of the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission.

As mentioned earlier, we in Bombay Bachao Committee were engaged in a bitter battle with the Government of Maharashtra about the location of the Rewas Mandwa fertiliser plants. At that time I was an absolute novice in environmental activism. I thought then (as many people still do) that "Government" was one monolith with an all controlling brain directing it. I thought that being in direct conflict with the Chief Minister and other very