

[Sardar Jagjit Singh Aurora]

I feel that the basic concept of this Bill has everything to commend it. There may be certain restrictions which may be unwanted at the moment. But one has to realise that neither the Government nor the new organisation has had any experience of working of an autonomous electronic media. Maybe, we are erring on the side of having more restrictions that it would have been desirable in the end. But you can never achieve perfection in one step. *Ho*, I find that basically this Bill is sound.

A certain amount of criticism has been made about the selection of the Prasar Bharati Committee. I am surprised at it that because the selection committee for selecting the key members of the Committee could not have consisted of people more respected than the Vice-President, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the President himself. In constitution of the Committee it has been seen that the Members of workers and engineers and the staff have been included.

Similarly, the criticism about the Broadcasting Council, I think, is uncalled for. I find that possibly people have not understood or misunderstood its functioning. It is really a committee which would be accessible to the public. The public shall come out with their complaints and suggestions to it. Its job is to shift those complaints and suggestions and pass them on to the Prasar Bharati Committee.

The inclusion of a Parliamentary Committee is innovative, and I consider it extremely useful and a good idea because this would show that the final control or judgement is going to rest with Parliament and not with the Government itself. Therefore, it is up to Parliament to see that the media functions, the Prasar Bharati functions, properly, and if there are any failings and shortcomings, these can put right.

So, I commend this Bill, and I do hope that the Members of this House would give this Bill a real chance and let it work. If there are any changes to

be made, any amendments to be carried out, those can be done later.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, the discussion is over. I would request I the Minister to reply.

RE. ARREST AND RELEASE OF TWO MEMBERS

SHRI KAHNU CHARAN LENKA (Orissa): Madam, I would like to make one submission.

Yesterday, I myself and Mr. Basudeb Mohapatra, a Member of the House, had been arrested at Bhubaneswar at 11 a.m. and we had been released at 7 p.m. in the evening. I doubt whether the information has come to you. But we had been obstructed on the way. We had to come yesterday to Parliament to attend Parliament for voting today, but we have been obstructed. This is a question of privilege of the House.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN. You had mentioned it to me in my chamber. I enquired from the Secretariat if they had received any intimation. I was informed and I have got a telex before me. The Secretariat received the intimation at 11 a.m. today. It says about your arrest and release, both. It says; "Hon. Chairman, Rajya Sabha, New Delhi. INF DGP Orissa, Cuttack, Special...." I don't know what all. It says: "Reference this Office WTMSG," some number, Sarvasbri Kanu Charan Lenka and Basudeb Mohapatra, both MPs, Rajya Sabha, who were arrested on 4/5-9-90 at 12 noon have been released on PR bond, the same day at 6.20 p.m. from Khandagari Police Station."

SHRI KAHNU CHARAN LENKA: Madam, this is not correct that we have been released on PR bond.

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THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: O.K., but this is the information which came and I have read it out.

SHRI BASUDEB MOHAPATRA (Orissa): We have been released unconditionally.

SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU (Orissa): Madam, I would like you to read Rule 222 (A) that says the information should come immediately to the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. Now, the House is going on. Two Members were arrested at 11.40 A.M. yesterday and today only you are getting the telex. That means as if they were silent during that period. This is horrible. There should be some justice and respect. Here also there is another false, allegation, that they have been released on P.R. Bond,

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would ask the Secretariat to find out and give instructions immediately if a Member of Parliament is arrested anywhere, the information should come immediately. It has just come when Mr. Lenka bought it to my notice about ten minutes ago.

SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI (Uttar Pradesh): You should also enquire about this fact. Mr. Lenka is denying that he was released on personal bond. The information given by the police must be checked.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would like to ask the Secretariat to get the information and we will report it to the House as soon as we get the information. Now, Mr. Minister.

THE PRASAR BHARATI (BROADCASTING CORPORATION OF INDIA) BILL,

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. UPENDRA) : At the outset I would like to thank Members from all sides, who participated in the debate on this historic Bill. (*Interruptions*)

Madam, I was a little disappointed by the speeches made by some hon. Members opposite. I would not like to refer to the accusations, innuendos and barbed comments made by some hon. Members because I am very keen that the spirit of cooperation and understanding which was evident in the other House should also prevail in this House while we discuss and pass this historic Bill.

I would also appreciate the genuine fears and apprehensions expressed by the Members. I do not suspect their motives, when they made their criticisms. We all know all charters of freedom and all progressive legislations always face some obstacles in the beginning and also Such legislations particularly when we are embarking on a new venture are definitely

accompanied by some genuine 2 P.M. fears and apprehensions.

Therefore, I don't quarrel with the members who made their comments. While framing this Bill and tabling the amendments and formulating the views of the Government, we had to reconcile two extreme positions. There is a very vocal—may be a minority—a very vocal section demanding complete freedom and autonomy for the media in this country, electronic media in this country. On the other side there is an equally vociferous section which says autonomy should not be a licence to do everything; autonomy should not be unbridled autonomy. We had to reconcile these two positions and arrive at a consensus. I am very happy that all the political parties in the other House applied their mind, spent hours to discuss various amendments and we came to a conclusion. There may be a communication gap between some Members • here and there. But I am happy that ultimately we are coming to a happy conclusion. In the other House some hon. Members opposite called it "our Bill" meaning the Oppositions Bill. I had occasion to comment. It is neither your Bill nor my Bill; it is our Bill. I hope by the time we complete this business, it will emerge as our Bill as a result of the collective wisdom of all the sections of this House. That is why I am not referring to what Mr. Salve has said. I will take it as a part of the record. I don't want to comment on that.

Then, there are amendments suggesting reference of this Bill to a Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha. The purpose of any Select Committee is to elicit the opinion of various sections of the people so that some improvements can be made in the Bill. When the Bill was introduced on the 29th December, 1989, I myself said