

the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950,

the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) (Union Territories) Order, 1951,

the Constitution (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1959,

the Constitution (Dadra and Nagar Haveli) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1962,

the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) (Uttar Pradesh) Order, 1967,

the Constitution (Goa, Daman and Diu) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1968,

the Constitution (Nagaland) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1970, and

the Constitution (Sikkim) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1978'."

*The motion was adopted.*

### THE PRASAR BHARATI (BROADCASTING CORPORATION OF INDIA) BILL, 1979

#### *Motion for reference to Joint Committee*

SHRI SHRIKANT VERMA (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Deputy Chairman, on a point of order. The Verghese Committee had submitted its report more than a year ago. The Cabinet took about 16 months to arrive at a decision. Now the Bill is being referred to a Joint Committee. This is a very clever device to make further delay. The intention of the Government....

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order; please sit down.

SHRI SHRIKANT VERMA: This is a very important issue...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, there is no point of order in it.

SHRI SHRIKANT VERMA: But, Sir,...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, please. If you continue, it will not go on record.

*(Shri Shrikant Verma continued to speak)*

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI LAL K. ADVANI): Sir, in all fairness the honourable Member can have his reservations, but this is not the time to raise any point, because I propose to make some recommendations.

Sir, with your permission I beg to move:

"That this House concurs in the recommendation of the Lok Sabha that the Rajya Sabha do join in the Joint Committee of the Houses on the Bill to provide for the establishment of a Broadcasting Corporation of India, to be known as Prasar Bharati to define its composition, functions and powers and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto and resolves that the following fifteen Members of the Rajya Sabha:

1. Shri Jagjit Singh Anand,
2. Shri Mohammed Usman Arif,
3. Prof. Sourendra Bhatta-charjee,
4. Shri Pranab Chatterjee,
5. Dr. V. P. Dutt,
6. Shri Devendra Nath Dwivedi,
7. Shri Ramakrishna Hegde,
8. Shri Krishna Nand Joshi,
9. Shri Jagdish Prasad Mathur,
10. Shri Rishi Kumar Mishra,
11. Shri Surendra Mohan,
12. Shrimati Kanak Mukherjee,
13. Prof. N. G. Ranga,

[Shri Lal K. Advani.]

14. Shri Shrikant Verma, and

15. Shri Lal K. Advani

be nominated to serve on the said Joint Committee."

*The question was proposed.*

SHRI SHRIKANT VERMA: Sir,....

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: I submit that for a Member who has agreed to be nominated on the Committee, it is not proper to speak at this stage.

SHRI SHRIKANT VERMA: I am not going into the merit of this thing...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There is no question of merit. If you object to the motion, it is not proper for a person whose name has been included in the Joint Committee to participate in the discussion at this stage. That is the convention and it may well be good to stick to this convention.

श्री उपसभापति : सदन की कार्यवाही 2-20 तक के लिये स्थगित की जाती है।

The House then adjourned for lunch at twentyone minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at twenty-three minutes past two of the clock. (Mr Deputy Chairman in the Chair.)

SHRI S. W. DHABE (Maharashtra): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, the Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill, 1979, is in pursuance of the promise given by... (*Interruptions*)

श्री श्रीलाल नारायण सिंह (बिहार) : उपसभापति जी, सेलेक्ट कमेटी में भेजना था तो क्या इस पर डिबेट करेंगे ?

श्री उपसभापति : बोल तो सकते हैं बोड़ी देर, चाहें तो।

श्री श्रीलाल नारायण सिंह : अगर सदन की राय है, क्योंकि सेलेक्ट कमेटी में इसको भेजना था, तो हम इसको सेलेक्ट कमेटी में भेज ; वहां विचार हो जाने के बाद यहां आने पर डिसकस हो सकता है (*Interruptions*)

श्री साल कृष्ण ग्राधवाणी : सरकार को दोनों विकल्पों में से किसी को भी स्वीकार करने में आपत्ति नहीं है।

श्री श्रीलाल नारायण सिंह : इस तरह दो चार नाम दे दें, आप चलाते रहें।

SHRI S. W. DHABE: Sir, we discuss it before it is referred to a Select Committee. That is the practice... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): If you want to have a discussion on this, then others should also have an opportunity; because we want to save the time of the House... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SUNDER SINGH BHANDARI (Uttar Pradesh): We have no objection.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. RAM KRIPAL SINHA): I can go without a debate. It was our understanding.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: But if somebody wants to speak, others should not be denied the opportunity. The understanding should not be with only one party... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: So far as the Government is concerned, the Government is opened to both the conditions. It was referred to a Committee without a discussion in the other House; the same thing can be done here. But if this House wants to have a discussion we have no objection.

SHRI S. W. DHABE: Sometimes, such a discussion has taken place. There is nothing wrong in it... (Interruptions)

I want to raise only one or two points in this matter. The object of the Bill seems to be to have an autonomous corporation. But in the provisions of the Bill it is very clear that the Government does not want to lose its control over the All India Radio or Doordarshan. Clause 20 of the Bill says that the programme of its activities during the forthcoming year as well as financial estimates in respect thereof shall be submitted to the Central Government for its approval. That means, they are to be previously approved by the Central Government. It means that everything, the programmes and also the financial matters are to be controlled by the Central Government. Therefore, this talk of autonomy of Prasar Bharati is meaningless. Secondly the most important thing is that even in the appointment of the Director General, no qualifications are prescribed. The qualifications for the other posts are to be prescribed by the Corporation and the Government. But nothing is said about the qualifications for the Director General. Any politician or any person whom they like would be appointed as the Director General. It is a very important post and it should not be given to any politician or any person attached to a political party. It should go to a professional man who is really interested in promotion of the objective of the Corporation. I am surprised to find that although those who are supposed to be appointed on this Corporation include persons in the field of literature, education, culture, dramatics and so on, sport and industrial relations are specifically omitted. I would like the Minister to consider these specialised fields when the matter comes up before the Select Committee. Lastly, I have to say that in this whole scheme, it is very essential that the employees get protection of service because although there is a provision for transfer of service, there is no provision

for protection of service. As happened in Coal India and one or two other corporations, the employees did not get sufficient protection. When the staff which has been working for such a long time is transferred, it should get protection of the length of service and other benefits. Promotions and seniority should not be affected.

I will say that if the Government or the hon. Minister really wants that it should be autonomous, then the Government should give up the idea of giving any grant or subsidy or having any control. They may give some charges or make some payment of fee for services rendered as is done by other corporations such as B.B.C. If the Government controls the finances, it will control the Corporation. Therefore, it is a very retrograde and derogatory step. It is also against the principle of autonomous corporations. When the Government has kept complete control regarding programmes, activities and finances, appointments cannot be independent. I would also say that it will be a very good idea if the professional men and the technical staff have been given a complete say. They should be associated with every activity of the Corporation and they should be given complete freedom to manage their affairs. If these things are included and if politics is not brought in, I am sure that Corporation experiment will be a good success. I welcome the proposition made by the hon. Minister in this Bill that the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha will have a say in the appointment of Chairman. The idea of the Chief Justice being associated and involved in many matters is not a good thing from the point of view of independence of judiciary. On the other hand, in the matter of departmental inquiries, the Supreme Court has been brought in under clause 7. I would like the Select Committee to consider this aspect and should not allow matters to go to the Supreme Court for departmental inquiries, etc. With these words, I welcome the measure though some provisions of which are derogatory because they provide

[Shri S. W. Dhabe.]

complete control of the Government over the Corporation. I would like the Select Committee to go into these aspects. With these words, I welcome the Bill.

**SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA** (West Bengal): We have to be very brief because we have got the other discussion. Now, my friend, Mr. Advani, discreetly chose not to make any speech. Normally, the Minister in his position is a talkative Minister. But we have in him a silent Minister and silence is significant because Mr. Advani knows that he has hardly any case to make out and the more he speaks the more he will be liable to questioning and criticism. Now, Sir, here we have got the Bill. It is going to the Select Committee. Let the Select Committee consider it. But the bluff has to be called before we go to the Select Committee. Now, I have provoked him. The bluff has to be called. We are told that they are giving autonomy or creating an autonomous body. This is the cliché for the Government to pretend as if it is extending autonomy, at the same time make the contrivance in order to retain its control. That is to say, what is done through the front door, openly and publicly is sometimes undone through the back door secretly and clandestinely.

Now, Sir, if you go through the provisions of the Bill, you would see that there is little of substance in it by way of autonomy. Even if I take, for the sake of argument that the so-called autonomy is necessary for an institution of this kind, even then, hardly any autonomy would be left. The shadow of autonomy and the substance is not there. There is flirtation with the autonomy and the shying away from the substance of autonomy, if you take it that way. Sir, my fear is that the so-called Corporation envisaged in the Bill, under those who will control it ultimately, and under the collusion between them through their officials and the Government, well, it may well be *Papachar Bharati* instead of *Prasar*

*Bharati*. You know Bengali, I hope. *Papachar Bharati* means sinful *Bharati*. It may indulge in sinful practices—lies, distortions, suppression of news, vulgarisation of truth, partisan propaganda, class propaganda, running down the working class, peasants and the Harijans, boosting certain individuals. All these things may happen. Therefore, Sir, my fear is that under the dispensation of the Bill, it will be *Papachar Bharati*—another projection of corruption, pure and simple in the official mass media of our country.

Now, Sir, coming to the other things, it is no solution. We discussed the matter for many years. When I was sitting in the House as a journalist and Mr. Advani was a journalist and not yet a Member of Parliament, even at that time, we were discussing it. Ultimately, now we have arrived at the so-called autonomy corporation to be created, imitating the BBC style. They said the *Prasar Bharati* Bill, and within the brackets they have said, the Broadcasting Corporation of India. Well, Sir, is it going to be a solution, the first thing I ask. Sir, we are for such an institution being under the effective—I underline the word 'effective'—control of Parliament. That has been our stand. And if the effective control of Parliament as distinct from bureaucratic and narrow Ministerial control is there, then, much that has happened would not have happened. And well, I think, we can gain a measure of objectivity and truthfulness and service to the nation. I think that idea of control of Parliament is being abandoned. I do not say that we will have no say whatsoever. But, under the cover of autonomy, I think, there will be an attempt to denigrate the Parliament's role in regard to this institution. Well, that augurs no good for the institution. You know what role the mass media of this type play. I think that in the set-up of today, the mass media is very, very important for defending progress and democracy and for bringing about counter-revolution also. As you know, Sir, whenever there has been an attempted counter-

revolution or counter-revolution, well, you see the trends in the street. And one of the places immediately captured by them is the Radio, the official mass media. This is not insignificant. Therefore, we are dealing with a very powerful institution. Mr. Advani may not look powerful that way. No, who looks powerful in this disarrayed Government? Nobody. But the institution is very powerful. It can make or mar the nation. Therefore, we are interested in how it is being run or will be run. Sir, at the moment it is well-known that it has passed virtually under the control of the R.S.S. I know, Mr. Advani is very allergic. But one good thing about him, and a dangerous thing also in a way, is that he does not get provoked. But everybody knows it because he is cold-blooded Yond Cassius and has a lean and hungry look.

DR. RAM KRIPAL SINHA: A lean and hungry look he has. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Now, Sir, such men are dangerous. I can say this thing about our good friend, Mr. L. K. Advani. Sir, we have read literature not for nothing. We should learn from them. (*Time bell rings*). Therefore, Sir, it is already in the hands of the RSS. You see, nothing is reported there. Doordarshan, why doordarshan. What he sees right under his nose is not reported. For example, about the rally of the agricultural workers that took place on March 20, hardly anything was given. That is not an important event for them. Now, I think so many conferences and other things are taking place for progressive causes. Do you get any reference to them? Nothing of the kind, black out, black out, black out. This is called Doordarshan, this is called media. This is called an institution for the dissemination of news. This, we are told, in objectivity and truthfulness. Nothing of the kind. So, Sir, I need not reveal more of this thing. It will take time. I can say,

I wish there was some discussion. But I hope our friends of the Select Committee will examine how the mass media, the Doordarshan and the All-India Radio, under one pretext or the other, has been literally taken over by the RSS in the service of the RSS, by people who are openly RSS and by people who are under cover RSS.

Now, Sir, in this autonomous body, as they have given here, in the scheme of things, who will be there? We have seen that the Chairman will be appointed. But the Chairman will be appointed by whom; in consultation with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. I do not cast any reflection on them. Well, Sir, is this the best way of appointing a chairman? What are we here for? Why cannot we appoint a chairman, after discussing in this House and the other House, by a resolution of Parliament, if necessary, passed by a two-thirds majority, so that he does command the confidence of an overwhelming majority in Parliament? Why should it not be so? I am making no reflection on the Speaker and the Chairman. I do hope that the Speaker and the Chairman, should it come to that, will take the necessary steps to see that the mood of Parliament and the Members of the Houses, and, above all, the mood of the country is duly reflected.

Then, Sir, who appoints the Members? Now, first the Director will be appointed by the Chairman. Now, Sir, here I want to point out one or two things because I do not wish to take the time of the House. The Director General of the Corporation shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the Chairman. He can consult but there is nothing binding. And he is appointed by the President. The President acts on the advice of the Council of Ministers, that is, the Government. So, he will be appointed on Mr. Advani's advice in the present case, pure and simple. He will be appointed on the advice of Mr. Advani or whoever happens to

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta]

be the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. On his advice, passed through the Prime Minister, the President will appoint. And the Chairman will be consulted. He may or may not accept the advice given by the Chairman. There is nothing binding. It is not even the concurrence of the Chairman, but only consultation. Consultation does not mean acceptance of whatever is said. It only means the fact of consultation. This is one thing. And then, every member will come that way. Therefore, this is the composition. And then, the consultation that is given is: "not more than eleven and not less than seven non-official members, to be appointed by the President from amongst persons..." They will be appointed by the President. And who is the President? On whose advice is he going to appoint? Therefore, it will be virtually a packed body, President's packed body of the nominees of the Government; may be, here and there, there will be some concession and Nikhil Chakravarty may be here and somebody else would be there. But the body will be the same. The body will be packed with people who stand for the establishment, liked by the establishment and who carry out the behest of the establishment. That is what is going to be, and that you call autonomy. Sir, I leave it at that because the time is short, though much I can say. Therefore, bluff is to be called.

Then, Sir, this will depend on the PTI and UNI mainly. It will have no agency really of its own. You can understand who controls them. It is not necessary to say more. What will be the expansion, we do not know and how the regional institutions will be run, is not clear.

Then about money. It will be from the subscriptions, radio licences and all that, and from the Government. And we know very well that a deficit will be there and the Government will pay the money.

Then, there will be the Secretary from the Finance Ministry and Secretary from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. Well, these officers will be the real ring-masters to run the show. This is the apparatus. This is the set-up Mr. Advani is creating and they call it autonomy.

Sir, I am not enamoured of Mr. Varghese's report. I am not going into it as to where he departed from. All I say towards the end is, let our friends in the Select Committee go into the whole question as to how best we can ensure freedom, fairness and objectivity in our mass media. This is what should be done. I would request the Members of the Joint Select Committee not to go by what is given to them. Well, they cannot go completely out of it but it is possible to go into this whole question starting from the principles of it in a way, the composition, its functions and its other aspects.

It is very essential, Sir, that the mass media is saved from the dirty class influence of the upper classes, of the exploiting classes. It has been done so in the Congress days. We had seen how a misuse was made of it during the emergency. We have seen it. We have seen again and are seeing it every day how this institution of mass media is being abused and misused. We saw it during the emergency. One common theme is always there and that is the bias in favour of those who are exploiting, reactionary forces, against the working people. Therefore, please consider this. I would ask my hon. friends of the Janata Party: Do not be carried away by this grandiloquent, flamboyant, title 'Prasar Bharati Bill'. We know what it means. There is a manoeuvre, camouflage, in order to establish still greater control over this institution. About services and other things, what will happen, we do not know. That's all I say. Please consider this.

SHRI N. P. CHENGALRAYA NAIDU (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, when are the Special Mentions to be taken up?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It will be taken up after this.

SHRI N. P. CHENGALRAYA NAIDU: You can allow the Special Mentions. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SADASIV BAGAITKAR (Maharashtra): Sir, I was on my legs when you adjourned the House. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Master.

SHRI K. CHATHUNNI MASTER (Kerala): Sir, when I speak on this Bill, I remember our Kerala *Vellikol*. This Bill is intended to confer autonomy on Prasar Bharati. *Vellikol* is a customary weighing tool in Kerala. *Vellikol* means silver stick. The paradox is, this *Vellikol* is made from coconut trunks. This is used for the manufacture of *velli*. But there is not even an iota of *velli*, namely, silver, in this *Vellikol*. Similarly, I searched in the whole Bill, for an iota of autonomy. Miserably I failed. If our hon. Minister, Mr. Advani, can find out some autonomy in this Bill, I will be grateful to him. I miserably failed. Sir, in the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill, it has been stated:

"The intention is that the proposed corporation will function as a genuinely autonomous body which is innovative, democratic, flexible, autonomous and responsive to its opportunities."

These are all well and good. We welcome all this. But when we go through the body of this Bill, in the clauses, what do we see? When we go through the contents of the Bill, we will be faced with a dilemma. We will be compelled to ignore or neglect these nice and sacred intentions. If the character of the Prasar Bharati is to be genuinely autonomous and democratic, how should we build up and implement it? The whole fabric of the governing body of the Prasar

Bharati will be nominated by the Indian Union President. This is a wholesale nomination. The Chairman, the Members, the Director-General and so on, are all wholesale nominations. May I ask one pertinent question: What is the relationship between autonomy and nominations? Is there any connecting link between autonomy and nominations? No. When nomination comes, democracy and autonomy should go. Of course, by the backdoor. Nominations are poisonous antidotes to autonomy and democracy. Here is a wholesale and total nomination. This is bad. I think, this is more than bad. If this is the position of the so-called autonomy and democracy, I would suggest the name of this Corporation to be "Nominees' Broadcast India." That this name will be more matching for this Corporation. Sir, nominations are generally bad in a democratic country, but I think at times it is worse also. I am not prepared to blame the personalities or dignitaries involved in the process, but the blame rests with the system and the conception itself. Whoever may be the nominating authority or whoever may be the nominated person, that will not give any concrete answer to the basic question. Sir, nomination itself is a bait when we think of autonomy and independence. A salient question will arise as to autonomy from whom and independence from whom. As far as our mass media are concerned, the most deplorable happening was and is that they are used as the tongues of the rulers and the vested interests by whom the rulers of our country were being served for long. If we continue this hated and heinous tradition, all talks of autonomy and independence would be a futile exercise of lip service to these sacred aims.

The power of nomination is not only a bait, it is a magic stick also. In our Indian society, personalities of bias and slant can be attracted easily by this magic stick to its owner. With all regard and respect to the President of India, all of us know, the President is

[Shri K. Chathuruti Master]

acting for whom. He is the Constitutional head of the Government. He is acting for the Government. Mass media want autonomy and independence from Government. That is a must. Therefore, Sir, let us do away with this system of nomination first.

Then what is the alternative? We are a democratic people. Our country has got a democratic set-up of doing things. So, let us find out a democratic set-up for this Prasar Bharati also. Without a democratic set-up this kind of institution will never become autonomous. So, we are compelled to find out some democratic alternative. I would suggest an elected body corporate for the Prasar Bharati. That will be of a permanent nature. We must envisage some electoral colleges instead of nomination. Election should take place from such electoral colleges. From staff and employees of the Prasar Bharati there should be a provision for electing their representatives. From our universities, colleges and student unions the representation may be fixed. Some representation of the registered trade unions and Government employees should be there. Representatives of the kisan and agricultural workers organisations should also be provided. Representatives of news media and newspaper editors and working journalist unions must be there. There should be a few representatives from each of the State Legislatures and three or four representatives elected from each of the Houses of Parliament. There should be some representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and small scale industries. Why are we afraid of this kind of elected corporate body having the authority of the autonomous corporation? From this elected body, why can't they elect their Chairman, Director-General, Directors etc. I strongly plead for this kind of governing set-up for the Prasar Bharati. For real autonomy, this is a must. Why should we unnecessarily drag the

President of the country into an unhealthy practice against our good democratic traditions? We have got a democratic set-up here. We are a democratic body here. But it is a paradox that we are creating a permanent body in the name of autonomy which will be permanently under the President's rule. Sir, this is a mini-American model. We do not want this American model. We should stick to our own democratic traditions and practices to give real autonomy to the Prasar Bharati. I hope this subject also will be considered in a proper way by the Select Committee and then by both Houses of Parliament also. Therefore, I hope that this Bill will be a stop-gap arrangement to build up a real, autonomous and democratic governing body for the Prasar Bharati. We should envisage and stipulate proper provisions and clauses for the achievement of the sacred and nice intentions of the Bill.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister.

SHRI SADASIV BAGAITKAR: Kindly give me some time.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I have not received any list from the Janata Party.

SHRI SADASIV BAGAITKAR: When the House adjourned. I asked for time.

श्री हरी शंकर भाभड़ा (राजस्थान) : उपसभापति महोदय, आपके पास लिस्ट नहीं है तो इधर से लोगों को बोलने दीजिए ।

श्री उपसभापति : मैं तो कह रहा हूँ कि आपकी पार्टी से कोई नाम नहीं आया है ।

श्री हरी शंकर भाभड़ा : नाम नहीं आया है इसलिए तो खड़े हुए हैं ।

श्री उपसभापति : एक प्रक्रिया है एक तरीके से काम करने की ... (Interruptions)

श्री भीष्म नारायण सिंह : श्रीमन्, लोक सभा में कोई वाद-विवाद नहीं हुआ । यहाँ पर तो काफी समय दे दिया गया है ... (Interruptions)

श्री हरी शंकर भाभड़ा : हम भी अपनी विचारधारा रखना चाहते हैं ।



We are not discussing clause-by-clause.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We have a system of working. The Whips have to give the names. We proceed accordingly. I cannot deviate from the prescribed procedure. If the House wants to have a debate, I have no objection.

SHRI HARI SHANKAR BHABHARA: But you have allowed certain persons.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Because their Whips have given names.

SHRI HARI SHANKAR BHABHARA: But you have allowed certain persons.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No party can have it both ways—not to give a list and then insist on speaking.

SHRI SADASIV BAGAITKAR: If we have a different viewpoint, we can express it here.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But we have a system of working. If you want to deviate from it, I have no objection.

SHRI HARI SHANKAR BHABHARA: Under your system, you have allowed them to speak.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Because their Whips gave their names; that is why I have allowed them. I have been repeating this. Now the hon. Minister.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: May be both the ruling party as well as the main Opposition party were of the view that this Motion is to be adopted without a discussion; so both of them did not give names. Whereas others who gave their names, you have permitted them. Therefore, this situation has arisen.

Sir, even though the debate has been brief, I am grateful to the Members who have participated in it for

spotlighting the issues which really the Select Committee has to go into.

3.00 P. M.

I can understand the very sincere reservation in regard to what has been proposed. But all that I would like to impress upon the House is that this Bill is not a casual Bill. This is a matter which has been discussed thoroughly. As Shri Bhupesh Gupta rightly said, even when I was not a Member of this House but just a journalist and when he was a journalist as well as a Member of the House, this has been discussed since then. First of all, it was in 1948 that the then Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, had in the course of a debate on External publicity referred to this and expressed the wish that sometime in the future the All India Radio would be converted into a semi-autonomous Corporation something on the lines of the B.B.C.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Something like a Union territory.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: He said that. Subsequently in 1964 when Mrs. Gandhi was the Minister of I. & B, the Chanda Committee was set up. That Committee gave its report in 1966 and recommended that the All India Radio and the Television be converted into an autonomous Corporation. The then Government did not accept the recommendation and what followed subsequently we have witnessed.

This new Government when it came into office one of the commitments it had made to the people was that it would convert the A.I.R. into an autonomous Corporation. Immediately thereafter this Government proceeded to set up a working group headed by Mr. B. G. Verghese to examine the issue of conversion into an autonomous corporation from all angles and make its recommendations. It was in

[Shri Lal K. Advani]

March 1978 that the Verghese Committee gave its report to the Government one year back. And even while giving its report it said that this is a report about which we would like a national debate to take place; there should be discussion all over the country. The discussion did take place at very many seminars, at very many conferences. A discussion took place in this House and in the other House. A discussion took place in the Consultative Committee of Members of Parliament attached to my Ministry. In all the discussions I noticed one thing in common that while every one supported the principle of autonomy and every one said that an organisation like broadcasting, an organisation like the A.I.R. and the television where creativity is of the essence, if it is a government department, then that creativity would not get full scope. So in order to ensure that creative talents of artistes in the field of arts, in the field of Doordarshan get full scope, it should not be a government department as it is today, it should have autonomy, functional autonomy. In the day-to-day administration of the organisation the Government should not interfere. But while this was accepted by every one we have felt that autonomy is necessary from another point of view also, namely, to ensure that this broadcasting corporation does not weaken democracy in the country. And so it is necessary even from the point of view of coverage of current events, projection of current events that the broadcasting set-up should have autonomy to decide what approach they should adopt.

Furthermore, it has been also felt very strongly by Members from this side as well as that side that the Government cannot abdicate its responsibility completely. It may be all right for the press to be completely free as it is, the Government having no control whatsoever over the press and as a result of which over the

course of time now the demand is there that the Government should make laws in order to ensure that the present press ownership does not use the powerful press media for its own interest. This is the demand. Vested interests which have got into control of the press media—their manner of operation has resulted in public pressure being put on the Government to intervene and to bring in statutes for that purpose. We have been reluctant to do so and we have entrusted this task to the Press Commission, to advise us what can be done in this regard to see that the unhealthy aspects of the present pattern of press ownership can be corrected. Now here is an established set-up—the broadcasting set-up—far more powerful than the press, far more pervasive than the press. The press does not reach out to the millions whom the broadcasting network reaches out. And the broadcasting set-up, despite our differences with this party or that party, insofar as development is concerned, in so far as arousing social consciousness is concerned, in so far as agricultural growth is concerned in so far as eradicating social evils is concerned, already performs several roles about which I feel very proud. I would think that this should continue to be the role and function of the broadcasting set-up forever irrespective of who controls it. Therefore, the Bill that we have brought, the *Prasar Bharati Bill*, lays down a charter under which the new Corporation is to function. Having laid down that charter, I think that the Government is accountable to Parliament to ensure that the charter is being adhered to. We cannot just sever the umbilical cord altogether, and then if something goes wrong, say, "After all, the set-up is independent. What can we do? We cannot do anything." Yes, we cannot do anything so far as day-to-day functioning of the autonomous corporation goes; we cannot do anything as far as the day-to-day programming of the new set-up goes. But if basic principles of the charter are violated,

then the Government is certainly accountable.

All the while that the discussions went on in Parliament or in the Consultative Committee, there was emphasis from all sides that there is need to balance the demands of autonomy with the demands of accountability. I would humbly say that while bringing forth this *Prasar Bharati* Bill to Parliament, the Government has sincerely and honestly endeavoured to strike a delicate balance between the two, to strike a reasonable balance between the demands of autonomy and the demands of accountability. Now, in trying to do so when we lean on this side, you see only that particular side and you say that we have done something wrong. If you look around the whole world and compare the set-up as we proposed in *Prasar Bharati* with any analogous set-up in any democratic country, whether it be in the U.K., whether it be in Australia or any other democratic country, you will find that the kind of autonomy given to this is in many ways more than what is conceded there. And as the Verghese Committee has said it is not merely laws that are going to ensure autonomy; it is going to be the practice and convention and traditions and the men who run it, above all, which are going to ensure whether autonomy would be genuine and real or not. Merely providing it in the law or in the Constitution is going to be no guarantee here. Our own experience bears that out.

When we considered the procedure for determining the Chairman of *Prasar Bharati*, we had before us the example of Chairman of other autonomous bodies in the country. There are thus universities which are functioning as autonomous bodies. There the Government has the right to appoint Vice Chancellors. The Government's right to appoint Vice-Chancellors is untrammelled. But here even though the President is empowered

to appoint the Chairman, he is not given this right untrammelled. It has been hedged in. He has been asked to appoint him after consultation with the Speaker and the Chairman. The original conception was to bring in the Chief Justice and the Lokpal, but many Members here and many Members in the Committee also felt that the Chief Justice and the Lokpal should not be brought in. So, the Chairman and the Speaker have been brought in. But, what I would like to emphasise is that Government's authority in this regard has been hedged in. Furthermore, something that has not been done in any other organisation, in any other autonomous body, something which does not happen in any other country, once appointed the Chairman, the Government has no right to remove him, no authority to remove him. The university vice-chancellors can be changed, the heads of other autonomous bodies in the country can be changed, but here in the *Prasar Bharati* once the Chairman is appointed, the only basis for removing him is on grounds of misbehaviour, and that too with the sanction of the Supreme Court, just as the Chairman of the UPSC once appointed cannot be removed, similarly, the *Prasar Bharati* Chairman once appointed cannot be removed. These are the in-built safeguards which have been provided in this Bill, and having provided them we think that something that has been pending for 30 long years, which has been long over-due, has been implemented. The Chanda Committee had recommended it, but the Government did not accept it. Pandit Nehru conceived it, but he could not implement it. But here is a Government that told the people two years ago that if they came to power then this very powerful organisation, this very powerful media that was completely in the control of the Government, . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You have not provided for the appointment in consultation with Shri Balasaheb Deoras and an astrologer.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: I am afraid some Members have an obsession with the RSS. (Interruption) Their obsession with the RSS is pitiable. So, I have nothing to say in that regard. But I would certainly say that here is a move which has been made in a very conscious and deliberate manner, a move which I believe, has the support of the general people. There is a wide consensus in favour of autonomy but there is also a wide consensus that autonomy by itself will not ensure that the AIR serves the role of informing, educating and entertaining the people, the three fold role that a broadcast media has to perform and also contribute to the development and progress of the country. I expect that under the Bill as presently drafted—which, I am sure, will be improved upon; there will be embellishments when it goes to the select Committee—the organisation will be performing a very valuable role. In this respect the introduction of the Prasar Bharati Bill and the Government's decision to convert this body into an autonomous corporation is really a historic one. Criticism that comes from any quarter will always be welcome. It will enable me to improve the Bill further. But, so far as the intentions of the Bill are concerned, so far as the objectives of the Bill are concerned even a critic like Shri Chathunni Master had to say that it is a very sacred and a noble intention. Of course he held that if there are nominations, nominations go against autonomy. This view can be his, because he differs with the whole system itself, just as Shri Bhupesh Gupta differs with the system. It is significant that, while Bhupesh Guptaji thought that autonomy would best ensured if the Chairman is elected by both the Houses of Parliament, Shri Chathunni Master said that autonomy would be best ensured if there is election by the employees of the Prasar Bharati. Now these are two approaches.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I did not say that. I said, why not by two-

thirds majority of the two Houses of Parliament?

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: Bhupesh Guptaji, my submission is that we are functioning under a certain system for which you can have a contempt. Unless the system is changed, you will not be satisfied. But so far as we are concerned, we are fully satisfied with the parliamentary democracy system that we have. We think that of the various political systems in the world this is the best. Under this system nomination by itself does not detract from autonomy. After all, so many people are nominated in the whole country. Even the Governments are nominated. Once a Chief Minister is elected, he nominates his colleagues. The Prime Minister is elected and he nominates his colleagues. (Interruptions) I know that a party nominates its representatives. But the mere fact that the person is a nominee....

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR (Uttar Pradesh): The USSR Prime Minister nominates his team.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: It is like saying—and you might have as well said—that the parents nominate the children. What an analogy?

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: I do not accept basically that because at a certain stage nominations are made, autonomy has been denigrated, that autonomy has been violated. That is not my acceptance. With these words, I commend the Motion for reference to the Joint Select Committee, to the House. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The question is:

“That this House concurs in the recommendation of the Lok Sabha that the Rajya Sabha do join in the Joint Committee of the Houses on the Bill to provide for the establishment of a Broadcasting Corporation for India, to be known as Prasar Bharati, to define its composition, functions and powers and to provide

for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto and resolves that the following fifteen Members of the Rajya Sabha:

1. Shri Jagjit Singh Anand,
2. Shri Mahammed Usman Arif,
3. Pof. Surendra Bhattacharjee,
4. Shri Pranab Chatterjee,
5. Dr. V. P. Dutt,
6. Shri Devendra Nath Dwivedi,
7. Shri Ramakrishna Hegde,
8. Shri Krishna Nand Joshi,
9. Shri Jagdish Prasad Mathur,
10. Shri Rishi Kumar Mishra,
11. Shri Surendra Mohan,
12. Shrimati Kanak Mukherjee,
13. Prof. N. G. Ranga,
14. Shri Shrikant Verma, and
15. Shri Lal K. Advani.

be nominated to serve on the said Joint Committee."

*The motion was adopted.*

#### RE. SPECIAL MENTIONS—contd.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Special mentions. Shri Bhupesh Gupta.

SHRI DEVENDRA NATH DWIVEDI (Uttar Pradesh): Point of order, Sir.

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE (Maharashtra): Point of order, Sir.

SHRI SHIVA CHANDRA JHA (Bihar): Point of order, Sir.

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE: Sir, all good things must come to an end. On this motion regarding the Joint Select Committee we have been debating for

two hours. (Interruptions) More than one hour, Sir.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Forty-five minutes.

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE: The entire debate sounded as though we had been debating for one week. My submission before you is, if there are matters of special mention and if the Members are anxious or making some special mentions, everything must have proper priority. There is an important discussion fixed under rule 176. Time has been fixed and the entire House is awaiting that discussion. My submission is on procedure because there should be proper priorities according to the importance of various discussions in this House. I submit for your consideration that special mentions may be kept for tomorrow or after this debate is over.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: No. The Chairman has even agreed.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI (Assam) At the very begining the hon. Chairman told us that today the special mentions will come after the discussions, and, Sir, he did not give any indication of changing it. And, Sir, I would like to know, if you follow the practice that today the special mentions will come up before the discussion, is it that the same practice will be followed tomorrow also? I would like to have a clarification. I think, Mr. Bhupesh Gupta was shouting for a discussion. When this discussion comes, he himself is not interested in this whole discussion.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: As you know very well, I am interested in this discussion. I am very much interested in it. If you like, I can go out, I need not discuss it. I am very much interested in it. But I am also interested in my special mention. (Interruptions) You may not be.

SHRI ANANT PRASAD SHARMA (Bihar): How can you be equally interested in both?