

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: The Opposition has every right to criticise the executive. In fact, democracy is the one and only political system which assigns a recognised role to the Opposition. But in parliamentary democracy, the Opposition also has a responsibility not to obstruct policies which are voted upon by the Parliament. Once they are voted upon by the Parliament, they are not just the policies of a party, they become national policies. This understanding is lacking.

Some people—political parties and groups—are caddled enough to admit their lack of faith in parliamentary democracy, but still would like to remain to wreck the system from inside. Others swear by parliamentary democracy without accepting any of its elementary conventions. Today an agitation is being carried on in the name of cleansing the system or altering it. So far as I can make out, they are not sure themselves of their real objectives. Several ideas have been put forward in rapid succession. At first scrapping the present representative institutions in favour of indirect rule through people's committees, and this by people who strongly dislike the Soviet idea which began in the same way. Next, majority rule was criticised and a proposal was made for proportional representation. Now it is said that elections will be fought within the present system but without money. Yet vast amounts of money are being used for their demonstrations. Where does it come from? The present agitation is based on false premises and that is why it has taken a wrong turn. The whole campaign is giving a handle to our foes and detractors in other countries. The extra-ordinary interest which some outside people have taken in this agitation and campaign is also not a little suspicious.

There was much fanfare about a committee to reform electoral law.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (Bagusara): These do not seem to be cutting any ice with the people. You have overplayed these things.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: I am not trying to cut any ice. At the moment I am trying to get some thoughts through you.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: What is the basis? You say vast sums of money are being invested. Who believes you?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: The people who see money being spent, those are the people who believe.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Only those people, gullible lot.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: From time to time these figures are mentioned in the newspapers also, not just by us.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Which newspaper? Please refer to any paper.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Anyway, after much fanfare a committee was formed to reform the electoral law. I have not seen the report. I have seen some summaries which have appeared in the newspapers. I am sorry I do not have the cuttings or the names of the newspapers!

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Gwallor): Please do not comment.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Why cannot I comment on something which has appeared in print?

Now, it has suggested some peripheral changes but no new scheme to replace the basic electoral system so far as I could make out from those comments. It recommends that a new system should be evolved by consensus. What else have I been saying? And may I ask: did the Constituent Assembly not represent such a consensus? Are the present agitators wiser, abler,

more dedicated, more farseeing, better endowed with legal, constitutional and political insights and experience than the remarkable group of men and women who drew up our Constitution?

SHRI PILOO MODY: That was your contention when the constitutional amendments were passed here; you thought you were wiser than they.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: No. Mr Mody, they had stated themselves that they were not infallible and certain changes would be needed. This does not mean that we should throw out the Constitution, lock stock and barrel. The main grouse seems to be that the Constitution works and the anger against the Government also is that in spite of the fact that we are not, we do admit, as efficient as we should be and we would like to be, the Government also works. The system that they seem to be advocating at present is one in which there will be increased production without factories working, Government is to function better while its employees are attending rallies and are absent from their posts of duty. The executive they want to instal in the place of the present Government is one which would have the brain of the CPI(M) the heart of the Cong(O), the tongue and the lungs of the Socialist Party and the hands and feet of the Jan Sangh....(Interruptions)

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Without the stupidity of the ruling party?..(Interruptions). You consider yourself to be more progressive than me..(Interruptions)

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Alupore): That is because you recognised his heart.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: He wants your heart to be with him.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: I disagree with what hon. Member Shri Gopalan said, but what a relief to have arguments, even wrong ones, softly spoken! Is he really serious when the states that the rights of religious minorities are being suppressed? We know that there are incidents, some of them serious, and all of them we deeply deplore and condemn. We must do everything possible administratively and otherwise to see that these incidents do not recur. I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my deep sorrow at the happenings in the Jama Masjid area and my sincere sympathy to all who suffered there. There were similar incidents elsewhere, including one in Bombay which calls for great sorrow.

AN HON. MEMBER: You condemn the police atrocities.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: If the police are responsible they should be condemned, whoever is responsible should be condemned, but the very fact that such incidents take place is a blot on the country as a whole, whoever may be responsible. It is a question of social attitudes and the way we let emotions get the better of us sometimes. But if there is anything of which our people are legitimately proud, (with certain exceptions of communal elements) and which the world as a

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whole recognises in India, it is the equal rights and unfettered freedom which the followers of all religions enjoy in our country.

It is not necessary for me to embark on a full review of the economic scene, because the President's Address has dealt with the question. But I should like to correct some misunderstandings and misapprehensions. There has been quite a controversy on both sides of the House about the Minister of Industry's remarks regarding private participation in public undertakings. Because of the shortage of resources and in order to give the people a greater sense of participation in national projects, my colleague suggested that the investing public might also subscribe to a part of the capital of a public undertaking. This was a proposal for discussion. If you like you could call it food for thought. It certainly does not mean that Government is going to disinvest or that private participation is going to be allowed in all public undertakings.

SHRI PILOO MODY: Why not?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: I am just expressing my view, if you have no objection.

Some public undertakings already have some private holding either because they existed earlier or because the formation agreements allowed it, and this has not in any way altered their basic character. If at all such a policy is to be adopted, it has to be done very carefully and on a case to case basis. There is absolutely no

question of a sell out of the public sector nor of allowing large houses and others like them to enter this field.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: How do you prevent that?

SHRI PILOO MODY: They will be sold only to the CPI.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: That is a matter that is being discussed. If there are difficulties we should see how they can be overcome; if they cannot be overcome, some other way may have to be found. The question is whether savings should be mobilised only through taxes or can the public at large contribute in some way directly to public investment? When savings are dispersed and funds are necessary for public investment, can there be a method of direct investment of such savings? These are the questions which we have to consider and I would certainly like the views of the hon. Members opposite. I believe the Government of Kerala did some such thing. It had the right idea when it mobilised capital from the rural people in every district of Kerala for a coastal shipping centre. This is the way in which one could involve people in what is happening in their state and their district.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Have the same form of Government here also. Coalition has worked very well there!

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: This is a particular way of mobilising public saving. Some people speak of the public sector as though it was solely

their concern. Not so long ago, the public sector was decried day in and day out and every attempt was made to dispense with it. But we did not lose heart. We stood firm and expanded it to cover many important areas. It has grown big and is doing well. I am sure it will grow further and do even better and play a crucial role in our national life. And I hope, even Mr. Mody will welcome it.

SHRI PILOO MODY: When will it start performing?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: It has already started performing.

Some hon members have complained that very little progress has been made in irrigation during the last 25 years. This is far from true. Our irrigation potential has been doubled from 22 million hectares to 44 million hectares. Because of this and the corresponding increase in food production, we have been able to look after ourselves in good years, and only in bad years do we have to make marginal imports. But we must make every effort and we must work towards a situation in which we can support ourselves in good and bad years and also accumulate reserve stocks. I do not think it is fair to our farmers or to our agricultural scientists and many research programmes to say that nothing has been achieved in the field of agriculture.

75 major irrigation projects and 155 medium projects, are now under various stages of implementation. We

hope that most of them will be completed in the next 4 to 5 years, so that a substantial irrigation potential can be added. There is also scope for more economic use of water and better utilisation of the available irrigation potential. I have given instructions that special attention should be paid to these aspects, because we all realise how very important this is to our economy and our future.

Some hon members expressed anxiety about the delay in settling inter-State water disputes. We all share this concern but all of you know with what difficulties the problem bristles. Water is a State subject and issues have to be settled mainly between the concerned States themselves. We at the Centre have been doing our utmost to bring the States together. One hon member accused the Centre of taking a partisan attitude in the case of a particular dispute. I would say this is wholly unjustified. The Centre has been trying hard to bring about a just settlement of disputes whether regarding the Cauvery, the Narbada or any other. However, such matters are surcharged with emotion. Hon members know that as soon as such a question arises, all party divisions are wiped out. Instead of getting together on something positive, we only get together on such issues. Even if a reasonable proposal is made, nobody is willing to agree, for fear of criticism and unpopularity in his own region. If it is fair, then both sides consider it unjust. There was a proposal of declaring water as a national asset. I am all for it and if need be, (with Mr.

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Mody's permission!) to amend the Constitution to enable us to do it. But the consent of the States is necessary and most of them have disapproved this move. I would appeal to all parties not to politicalise this vital question but to adopt an attitude of give and take, keeping in mind not only the local interest, which is of course important, but the overall national interest.

One hon. Member considered Government's policies to be anti-farmer. In fact, this is a slogan that is often repeated in some parts of the country. Others accuse us of being pro-Kulak. We are neither. All these years it has been our effort to make all that is necessary to increase agricultural production,—water, electricity, fertilizers, or improved seeds,— all these things are made available at reasonable prices, and to ensure that the farmer gets remunerative prices for his produce. During the last two years, agricultural prices rose steeply and farmers had a good return. When there is some fall in prices, there are complaints. But how can prices come down generally unless there is some fall in the price of agricultural commodities, industrial raw materials and finished goods?

I was astonished to hear, even though the speech was in Tamil, from one hon. member that we are callous to the drought in Tamil Nadu, and that although I had gone to the State, I did not express any sympathy to the people there. This is an extraordinary charge. On the contrary, I had several functions there and in almost every

one of them I spoke of my deep concern. I am told the Member even blamed the Congress for the drought in the State. How I wish I did have that much control over the clouds! As it is, it did drizzle while I was there, but not enough to meet their needs, their urgent needs.

Droughts have done enormous harm to us, and a succession of droughts and wars have put us back by a decade. Even more worrying is the damage that drought causes to young people and children and to their physical and mental development, even though relief programmes have prevented starvation. No State Government should make drought an occasion to try to get as much money as it can from the Centre, and every effort must be made to see that what is available and the funds that come from the Centre are properly used and reach the people who are in greatest need. But national sympathy should not be measured merely in terms of funds; it should be measured in the effectiveness with which relief is rendered. Water conservation works should be built. This would help if the rain should fall again. Government itself could mobilise the local people to do as much of this work as possible, instead of engaging contractors who might exploit the people for their own ends.

Earlier on, other States like Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal had an equally bad experience, the after effects of which will long be felt. Our sympathy also goes out to all those who have suffered from earthquake in Himachal Pradesh. Sitting here we think it is cold in winter. But, can we imagine not being able to have the shelter of a roof in sub-zero temperatures day after day? This is what the people there had to face before relief could reach them.

One of the amendments urges the taking over of the wholesale trade in all the essential commodities, and another is about nationalisation. Hon. Members know that we are trying to-

improve the distribution as well as the production of basic essentials of domestic use. But obviously, we can undertake only as much as we can manage at any given time. Yet, I am fully conscious that a very vigilant eye should be kept on private trade to prevent them from exploiting the consumer.

I have expressed my views on nationalisation many times. Nationalisation by itself does not improve performance, unless we have the organisational and managerial ability to make it a success. We are now busy modernising what we had earlier nationalised. But, for all this we need awareness in the public and their co-operation.

Some members have stated that perhaps the drive against smugglers is slackening. That is not so. I am kept in touch with the situation. I have reminded my colleagues and I am assured that they are pursuing the drive. But public cooperation and information is very important.

A complaint was also made about the delay in the Industrial Relations Bill. We are trying to expedite it. But in such a complex matter, we must carry people with us. So, various aspects of the Bill are being considered in detail by a Cabinet Committee.

I was also astonished to hear from an hon. Member that it is I who was propagating a snap poll. I am sure, nobody has heard me say that there would be a snap poll. I have been asked questions to which I have given very clear negative replies.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Why did the Government ask the Election Commissioner to expedite the revision of electoral rolls in a hurry so that lakhs of voters are being deprived of their valuable right?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: You should see that they are not deprived. I certainly do not want to deprive

them. Normally we do not pay sufficient attention to electoral rolls. It is not only today that I have remarked on it. At every meeting I tell my party to enrol voters. We did tell the Election Commissioner not to delay this work. But it did not mean ...

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: It has not been done properly.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Then they should do it properly. Hon. Members will please note that all these suggestions always emanate from that side and we are blamed for them, whether there will be a poll or there will not be.

Shri Shyamnandan Babu's suggestion that all major issues should be discussed is a welcome one. I have said this before. I am prepared to start at once. I do not think we should always bother about who approaches whom. We should try to meet halfway so that somehow the meeting begins. Every time we get bogged down in an argument as to who spoke to whom and whether the right person was informed or not informed. If the Opposition wants to function as a unit, one of them take the responsibility, not of expressing the views of all because that would be impossible, but just of consulting them.

My point is that all these controversial and major issues should be discussed not only by us in the House but all over the country, asking the people's opinion on them.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: You have told the country about dialogue. Dialogue with whom and for what? What kind of dialogue?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: That was in reply to a very specific question. The name and everything was mentioned. It had nothing to do with the Opposition parties sitting here.

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One B.K.D. Member who spoke here felt that I was standing on prestige. I can assure him that this is not so. No engine works if it's not kept in constant repair. No system will work well without vigilance. As I have said time and again, even the best of houses cannot avoid decay if dirt and cobwebs are not removed. We know that there are shortcomings in the administrative system, and perhaps, in the electoral system. But I do not think these shortcomings are in principles; they are only in the way of working. These we are anxious to correct. We are ready to consider every constructive suggestion and take counsel with any individual or group who is interested. Perhaps we can have a sort of round-table discussion on electoral reforms as one of the subjects.

Having been an "angry" young person myself, although it was quite some time ago, I can appreciate Shri Sharad Yadav's anger and I understand his attitude. I welcome him to the House and, I hope, he will inject a constructive freshness and originality here, and not get swept off by the jaded politics of those who surround him. He has spoken of minorities and Scheduled Castes. As I said a little while ago the situation with regard to these leaves much to be desired. But which country, with a long history of religious strife, has been able to overcome it in a few years as we have?

AN HON. MEMBER: It has worsened.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: It has not worsened. This is not true. Many problems such as unemployment are part of the general economic malaise. They do hit the weaker sections more, and in that sense a person belonging to a minority community or a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe is affected more. But it is part of the general situation. Atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are evidence of the fight against centuries-old entrenched social attitudes. Instead of wasting our breath blaming one

another, we should forge a united front to change such anti-social attitudes and to help these weaker sections in every way.

Young people are worried about the use of MISA for students. I must say that myself have been very unhappy about it. But I should like my young friends and also my old friends to find out how student disturbances have been, are being, dealt with in all the countries around us and even in far-off ones? Which country has been so tolerant and tolerant towards agitations? Some young people may be arrested here, but compared to the population of students, this is a small number. Even so, I deplore this, I am not condoning it; but I am mentioning it only so that the problem can be seen in proper perspective. And whenever we say anything about India let us consider with which ideal country or society we are comparing ourselves.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Let us have a firm declaration that MISA would not be used against political persons or groups.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Just as all kinds of people rushed to join us, we see that many undesirable elements and corrupt persons are jumping on to the bandwagon of the present agitation.

Corruption forms the centre of any debate. Charges are made without any shred of evidence. The test seems to be not "Is it true?" but "Is he on our side or on the other side?". A campaign is being carried on to the effect that, if you remove Congress, you remove corruption. It does not matter if, to fight the Congress you take support and money from the most corrupt groups and individuals. As the President has said the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill is before the House. Several States have already either adopted Bills or made some arrangements of their own, and I sincerely hope that it will be passed quickly here also. But corruption is of many kinds and it

permeates different levels. I have earlier, mentioned the need for greater vigilance by citizens—men and women—over the affairs of their neighbourhood. And I personally think that that will go a very long way as a corrective to cleaning up our society; Whether it is a question of hoarders or black-marketeers, the people who live in that area are the people who know most and they are the people who should be able to help.

SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA (Allahabad): What about Maruti?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: There is no corruption in Maruti. Since the hon. Member has raised it, I can say that every question that has been asked has been replied to; nothing wrong has been done; no special favour should be, or has been, given because it is concerned with the Prime Minister's son.

What I was saying is that we are just as anxious as anybody else to remove corruption. I do not want to go into the details I have earlier spoken about the stage by stage actions we have taken. I have said it in public meetings and I have discussed it with leaders. But today there seems to be a very selective type of campaign or accusation. Corruption will not go in this way. If the real intention is to remove corruption, then it must be an honest way of dealing with it at every level....

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: A certificate of honesty should come from you?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Not at all.

SHRI NARSINGH NARAIN PANDEY (Gorakhpur): From JP, your leader, it should come.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Just a couple of days ago I made a statement on Kashmir and soon we shall have a debate in the House. I should only like to reiterate that there was nothing surreptitious which some people are trying to hint at. All relevant papers have been made available. We welcome Sheikh Sahib back to our fold and into the national mainstream. We have taken a big step and so has he. Constitutional and political clauses and nuances matter, but I think that even more important is the overcoming of the bitterness of the past, so that the future can be based on trust. I sincerely hope that the mutual confidence which has made the agreement possible, will continue to mark the relationship between the new regime of the State and the rest of the country.

It is a matter of regret that our neighbour should think it fit to interfere in our domestic matters. No matter what we do or say, we seem to be pounced upon. Prime Minister Bhutto chose to criticise Sikkim, the very week he himself had quietly deposed the ruler of Hunza which is in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Neither the foreign press nor our own press paid much attention to it. Had we spoken about the tragedies and sufferings of Baluchistan or the North West Frontier Province, we would not have heard the end of it yet.

On the US arms supplies to Pakistan there are no two voices in India. It is natural that we should feel strongly, for it is we who have been the victims of Pakistani belligerency, time and again. The arms build-up and militarisation of the whole region is bound to increase the tension in the Indian Ocean. All this will cause deep anxiety and will increase the need for greater vigilance and preparedness.

This year is International Women's Year. The importance of it lies not only in the development...

SHRI PILOO MODY: So, you cannot remove her this year.... (Interruptions).

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: The importance is not only in what happens to the individual woman but because of the influence which mothers wield on the younger generation during the most formative years of their growth. We do want this year to be one which will highlight the role of women in contemporary society. How women who form just under half the population can participate in transforming society, in bringing about reforms and the more rational and modern thinking in society, which is so necessary for our progress. But we do not wish the problem to be considered merely as a women's problem. We think it concerns men and women. And they must both work together to make it a success.

May I tell a story which is a little old? I think it happened in the fifties. The Secretary-General of the International Union for Child Welfare came to Delhi. A programme was arranged for him in a nearby village. There were the usual speeches, garlanding and so on. When it was all over, he said, 'I have brought my own interpreter and I would like to remain back. I would like my hosts and others to return.' So, everybody came back. This was told to me by the gentleman himself. He wandered around until he came across a group of old men. He surmised that they might have an entirely different point of view. He asked them, 'What is the major change since Independence?'. And one of the old men, after some thought, said: 'Our women and children are much more alive now. The visitor was astonished at this answer and asked: 'Do you think this is a good thing or not? Do you welcome it?' And the reply was: "Had you asked us some years earlier we would have said, we don't want this to happen, but now that we see the difference it has made to our homes

and to the village and we think it is a good thing." At the time I was the Vice-President of the International union. That is how I came to know of the Secretary-Generals' experience.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: We hope you have also made some difference to the national home!

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: I sit a proper compliment or a left-handed one?

SHRI PILOO MODY: For you everything is left.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: If you cannot think of paying compliment, why do you interfere with other people's doing so?

SHRI PILOO MODY: We are prepared to pay as many as you wish.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: I have taken the time of the House. We know that much is wrong in our society. But the question is whether it will be or can be corrected by encouraging indiscipline,—indiscipline in the army, indiscipline in the police, indiscipline in Government service. Only dedicated and disciplined hard work can give new direction. India can hope for a glorious future only if our bright young people and our experienced old people take a creative and constructive attitude. Of course, many of us are middle aged and I don't exclude them,

In trying to change society democratically, many told us that we were attempting the impossible. But my faith in mankind and in the Indian people is boundless. I know that they have the capacity to transform the impossible into the possible. But, is it not the task of all of us here to give them that direction, that guidance and that support which they will need in this great task?

So, I hope, Sir, that the Opposition which has been kinder to me than usual, will withdraw their amendments and support the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address//

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: There are a number of amendments which have been moved. Unless any hon. Member wants any particular amendment to be put to the House,...

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR (Ahmedabad): I wish to press my amendment.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: That is what I am asking. Which amendment?

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR: Amendments Nos. 494 and 495. The Prime Minister has not made any reference to Gujarat whatsoever.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Sir, I want amendments Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5 to be put to the House for vote.

SHRI K. S. CHAVDA (Patan): Mr Deputy-Speaker, Sir.. (*Inter-ruptious*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order please. I am not able to hear anybody. Why don't you allow me to hear. Let us take up one at a time. What is your amendment please?

SHRI B. S. BHAURA (Bhatinda). Sir, I would like to press my amendment No. 67.

SHRI NOORUL HUDA (Cachar): I would like to press my amendment No. 583.

SHRI N. E. HORO (Khunti): I would like to press my amendment No. 523.

SHRI K. S. CHAVDA: I would like to press my amendments Nos. 227 and 99.

SHRI RAMAVATAR SHASTRI (Patna): I would like to press my amendment No. 121.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You can press only for one particular amendment, if you want that to be voted. I shall put these amendments one by one.

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR: I would like to press my amendment No. 494.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I would first put the amendment No. 494 moved by Shri P. G. Mavalankar.

SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR: Please read out that.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: That is regarding the holding of early election in Gujarat.

The question is:

"That at the end of the motion, the following be added, namely:—

"but regret that the Address fails to give a clear assurance about the date of the new elections in Gujarat" (494)

The Lok Sabha divided:

AYES

Division No 1

14 51 hrs.

Bhattacharyya, Shri Dinen
Bhattacharyya, Shri S. P.
Cnatterjee, Shri Somnath
Chaudhuri, Shri Tridib
Chavda, Shri K. S.
Chowhan, Shri Bharat Singh
Deo, Shri P. K.
Desai, Shri Morarji
Dhote, Shri Jambhuwant
Gowder, Shri J. Matha
Halder, Shri Krishna Chandra