

[Translation]

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR (Balija) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, whatever happened in the House for the last two-three hours has not only brought down the dignity of the House but it has also raised a new issue before the country as to whether the foreign powers can run the Parliament of India arbitrarily? For the last six years, we have been watching the miserable state of the country on the policy issues but we have seen the miserable state of this House today only. I think if the Government had defeated at the time of division in the House it would not have fallen. But what Shri George Fernandes has said appears to be correct that attempts are being made to appease some people and I am sorry to say that despite knowing all these things the people from different sections of the House are ready to be part of it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not want to be harsh. If we go through the figures the capital which have been given to the foreigners by the Government and the way our industries have been taken over by them that would be a matter of shame for any sovereign country. I would like to submit, we should not undermine our dignity. There should be some dignity in the House either we accept or reject any motion and I would like to submit that whatever happened in this House for the last two and a half hours it is against the dignity of the House.

SHRI ILIYAS AZMI (Shahabad) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have listened the discussion held on this issue and the speech delivered today by our hon. Finance Minister. You can check the record he has repeatedly said that Insurance would remain in public sector.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I do not know why he is repeating it.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH (Balija) (Bihar) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is no need of delivering a speech on this issue. . . (Interruptions) You please held division. . . (Interruptions)

SHRI ILIYAS AZMI : The Finance Minister had moved an amendment and if his intention is clear than what is his objection to accept the amendment moved by a colleague of BJP? I think his intention is not clear and his views are vague.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I think we have discussed enough. Now I will put the amendment to the vote of the House. There is no way out for this.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : Sir, I have heard with great respect, the viewpoints of various sections of the House. I do share that some apprehensions have been raised which this Government does not want to push forward. We are very keen that the general consensus of the House should be respected and we will respect it.

May I suggest that for the time being we do not move further; we stop as it is. . . (Interruptions) We will come back after discussion with all of them. . . (Interruptions) We will not even move this Bill. . . (Interruptions) We can come back to you. . . (Interruptions) Let me finish. . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Let the Prime Minister finish his speech.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Let the Prime Minister finish his speech. Why are you so impatient?

(Interruptions)

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : I will suggest to the hon. Members that we do not move the Bill.

15.00 hrs.

We keep the Bill back. We discuss amongst ourselves and in a modified form after the consensus is evolved - we will come back. . . (Interruptions)

SOME HON. MEMBERS : No.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum) : For two or three days or even four days, we have repeatedly approached the Minister of Finance. We have approached the Prime Minister also precisely for a discussion on our amendment so that even before placing all this before the House, we can try to see each other's point of view. That was turned down. We are happy that even at this late stage, the Prime Minister is prepared to consider that. We are happy on that. . . (Interruptions) for the last four days, we have tried it. . . (Interruptions)

[Translations]

SHRI RAM NAGINA MISHRA (Pudrauna) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am on a point of order. The question of withdrawing the motion does not arise when process of division has already been started. Please give ruling in this regard. . . (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Enough, enough. Now, please listen to me. The procedure is very clear.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I have said before the lunchbreak that there is a precedent when a Bill even at a third reading stage was postponed. For that, the mover of the Bill has to move a Motion. If there is a consensus, it is all right. Otherwise, even for the postponement, I will have to put it to the vote of the House. I am very clear about it. Therefore, if you want to move a Motion for postponement, you can move it. But I will have to put even that Motion to the vote of the House.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I do not think that there is any consensus.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, I do not want to do anything without a certain consensus in the House. I am not talking about unanimity. The point is that we got stuck on clause 13 with two very sharp positions. I am not scoring a point or anything on that. One amendment has been defeated. They are entitled to press that point again. After all, it is a democracy and a system. They can press their point even after that amendment is defeated.

Then, there is another amendment which is of a more restrictive nature. According to me, there is a wider support for that amendment. Therefore, after consulting everybody, I have proposed that perhaps there is a way out having regard to very many factors including the way LIC and GIC are functioning. GIC is functioning in 35 countries. LIC is functioning in five countries. Having regard to all that, I said and I repeat it that there is no proposal to allow a foreign company or a multinational. But there is a proposal to modestly open the health insurance business to Indian companies. Therefore, I proposed the amendment. I am not moving it formally because I cannot do it without your permission. I have proposed an amendment.

At that stage, the Prime Minister interceded to say that he would like Shri Vajpayee and others to respond. All right, are we moving towards a meeting ground? I recognise your point of view. But on this, can we have a meeting ground?

SOME HON. MEMBERS : No, no.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : I am aware of your point. Even on this, there is no meeting ground. What the Prime Minister has proposed is: on this - the formulation which I have given and the formulation which you have - is there a meeting ground? Can we talk about it? So, the Prime Minister says, "Would you consider deferring this matter until we talk about it?" I would appeal to Shri Vajpayee to respond to this. We can have a meeting ground. We will involve them also. We will involve the Congress. They want some time to look at it. The Congress really wants some time to look at it. So, let us involve everybody. We can have a formulation which takes care of the

apprehensions. You may say that Shri Jaswant Singh repeatedly said about some apprehension. I am trying to allay it. Let us see whether there is a way to allay your apprehension. I think Sections 13 and 26 are there. We will allay it even better. Let us try to meet. If there can be an agreement on that, we can defer the debate. Otherwise, I think, the appeal of the Prime Minister should be responded to by the Leader of the Opposition.

*[Translation]*

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Lucknow) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am connected with the Parliament since 1957 in one way or the other. But, the situation that has arisen today has never been there. The reason is that the Government do not form its definite opinion before introducing the Bill and it also do not assess as to whose support it would get and whose support it would not get. When the Government lands in trouble, then it starts working under pressure at every stage, it goes on following order of other parties.

Earlier, our party has said that we are against entry of foreign companies in the field of insurance but the Indian companies should get opportunities there. This fact was not accepted earlier but now it has been accepted. The Finance Minister has just now mentioned that only Indian companies would be given opportunities in this field and an amendment in this regard is yet to come. It is a good thing and we like it. But there is a need to clear the doubts that have cropped up in our minds. In the morning, I had given a suggestion to adjourn the discussion for a while and the only purpose behind it was that the Government should ponder over the amendment by us. Can the Government ponder over it? What are the difficulties in it? The Finance Minister has just now mentioned about the difficulties and actually this should have come up first in the House and moreover, these difficulties does not look convincing.

The Government say that the Indian Insurance Companies are functioning well in abroad with the help of Indians settled there and also earning well there. These companies are working for the welfare of these people and if we publish in the newspapers here that entry of the foreign companies into our country is being banned then the Indians who are settled there may face the difficulties. I think, this logic is somewhat rationale. But, we must also admit that if we let even a small loophole, it would result in influx of foreign companies at large scale.

If Chandra Shekharji is making allegations, then what are the reasons behind it? Why a doubt has been cropping up in his mind that the country is compromising with its sovereignty. We have to keep in mind what my friend George Fernandes is saying imbibed with patriotism.

[Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee]

Since, the Finance Minister has now said and the Prime Minister has also sought time, so I think that the House would not have any objection in allotting time. But, when you come up with a Bill, you should keep it in mind that the Bill should be such that it should clear all our doubts.

[English]

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, I only wish to respond to one point. I have continually consulted the leaders of the Parties separately and I wish to point out that this Bill was referred to the Standing Committee and 44 out of 45 Members of the Committee have reported this Bill for adoption with five amendments.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Once again this is a distortion.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, all I would like to point out is, here is the report of the Standing Committee. Even after that - I am not going by this report alone. I have continually consulted leaders of Parties and now recognising the force of what you say, I am proposing this. I accept what you say. I only want to say that we want time.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (Silchar) : You kindly withdraw the Bill as told by the Prime Minister. You should withdraw the Bill.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition because he has seen my submission in the correct manner. I can assure you that there is no intention on our part - on the part of the Government - to do something behind this House. We will not do that. Whatever policies are made will be made in the open and with the consent, knowledge and approval of the House. Therefore, when we defer this, please take it in that spirit. We have seen the spirit of the House and we will respect it.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ (South Delhi) : No deferment. The Government should withdraw the Bill.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : It should be withdrawn.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI (Allahabad) : It should be withdrawn.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : If the Government wants to achieve a consensus on this, let the Bill be withdrawn by them. A fresh Bill can be brought when there is a consensus.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : Let the Bill be withdrawn.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Let the Bill be withdrawn.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : The Government should withdraw this Bill.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : On this issue, a consensus is required. When there is no consensus on the Bill, it should be withdrawn.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Sir, let the Minister withdraw the Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: I think this matter is very clear. There are two-three proposals now. I am very clear that everything has to be done with the consent of the House today. If it is seeking leave for moving a new amendment, it has to be with the leave of the House. If it is a motion for deferment of the Bill, it has to be again by a proper motion and it has to be with the consent of the House. If necessary, it has to be by voting. Withdrawal also has to be with the consent of the House. The Government has to make up its mind and take one of the three courses just now. Otherwise, I will have to put the amendments to vote.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : There is a consensus for withdrawal.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (Hooghly) : Let the Minister withdraw the Bill.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : If the Government decides to withdraw the Bill, there will be no opposition.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : I am again grateful to the Leader of the Opposition. I respect his words. We withdraw the Bill.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : I beg to move for leave to withdraw the Bill to provide for the establishment of an Authority to protect the interests of holders of insurance policies and to regulate, promote and ensure orderly growth of the insurance industry and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

MR. SPEAKER : The question is:

"That leave be granted to withdraw the Bill to provide for the establishment of an Authority to protect the interests of holders of insurance policies and to regulate, promote and ensure orderly growth of the