

# Politicians Trying To Influence Services

## MR. CHANDA ON "SERIOUS PROBLEM" FACING NATION

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**THE** Auditor-General, Mr. A. K. Chanda, yesterday drew attention to the "serious problem" of politicians trying to influence the permanent services.

At the Centre, it had been prescribed that a member of Parliament could meet a Secretary only to elicit information and not to exert influence. But this directive had not wholly prevented members from trying to influence officials in the discharge of such administrative functions as the issue of licences.

Mr. Chanda, who was addressing the Orissa branch of the Institute of Public Administration, said that the problem was worse in the States.

### EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION

In the absence of effective opposition, he said, "officials of the Congress organisation, not necessarily only those who are members of Parliament or State Legislatures, sometimes arrogate to themselves the authority and functions of the Government and attempt to dictate to permanent officials of districts"

There had been cases of politicians trying to influence even the course of criminal investigation. There had equally been cases where permanent officials had been disgraced because of politicians' influence on the Ministry.

A situation had developed in many States in which district officials had become more concerned with keeping friendly relations with local politicians than with their official responsibilities, he said.

The Auditor-General added that it was obvious that if they were to have an efficient and effective administration, it should be free from undue influence or interference by local politicians. That could be achieved only if the party organisation was wise enough to prescribe and honour a line of demarcation between political and administrative responsibilities and strong enough to take disciplinary action against those who violated that line. The growth of an effective opposition would undoubtedly act as a check but that had yet to come.

Referring to the LIC affair, Mr. Chanda said that the effect of a Minister's disclaimer on the attitude of senior officials to their responsibilities could not be dismissed. The happy relationship that had been developing between senior officials and Ministers had received a "severe jolt" on account of the discussions in Parliament on that incident.

### LACK OF INITIATIVE

Officials had become reluctant to act on their own initiative even in matters where the policy was well defined and understood because without written orders there was the danger of their being let down in the event of anything going wrong.

Though some measure of understanding had been reached between the Minister and his department, Mr. Chanda said, "the inquisitorial role which some parliamentary committees are assuming tends to disturb that relationship and to undermine the confidence of the Minister in his official aides."

The Auditor-General said that inefficiency would in the long run be more serious from the point of view of parliamentary accountability than occasional lapses of a minor character.

Mr. Chanda said that the problem of parliamentary Government was to reconcile maximum efficiency with maximum accountability. Such reconciliation should not involve an undue

concentration of authority in Ministers but be based on mutual confidence and understanding between the Minister and his principal adviser.

The Auditor-General added that a serious obstacle in developing a proper relationship between the Minister and the Secretary was the tendency of some Ministers to expect their senior officials to adjust their recommendations to fit in with the course they (the Ministers) favoured and the tendency on the part of officials to frame their recommendations to accord with the anticipated wishes of the Ministers. That was a most unhealthy trend and unless checked might undermine the whole fabric of administration.