

Defence Audit Report Controversy Continues

MR. A. K. CHANDA'S LETTER TO SPEAKER CONFIRMED

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THE controversy over the Defence audit report, 1960, continued in the Lok Sabha today when Mr. Feroze Gandhi once again seized on a reference to it virtually to question Mr. Morarji Desai's contention regarding the manner of its presentation to the House.

Mr. Gandhi had alleged yesterday that a "grave violation" of the Constitution had been committed in the presentation of the audit report (by Mr. Desai) to the House without the relevant appropriation accounts.

The Finance Minister, for his part, contended that the Public Accounts Committee of the House had decided in 1952 that, whenever there was likely to be a delay in the presentation of appropriation accounts, the audit report might be presented in advance.

NOT WITHOUT PRECEDENT

Intervening on a point of order today, Mr. Gandhi said that the Finance Minister had claimed that the Public Accounts Committee's decision "authorised" him to present the report by itself. "What the committee had actually said was that, whenever the presentation..."

Before he could complete his argument, the Speaker intervened to declare: "I will give him an opportunity tomorrow when the House takes up the Finance Bill. Only, I must be satisfied as to the relevance of it. Subject to this I will allow him..."

Of interest was Mr. Gandhi's disclosure that his objection to the manner of the presentation of the audit report was not without precedent. Indeed, the Speaker had, as a mem-

ber, "objected to certain procedures adopted by the Auditor-General some years ago."

The last Auditor-General, he added, had, at that time, "taken objection to what you had said in the House." Subsequently, the matter went before the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor-General made a statement on the subject. "I invite your attention," said Mr. Gandhi.

IRREGULAR PROCEDURE

The point of order was raised by Mr. Jaipal Singh (Jharkand), who claimed that the Defence Minister's request for placing on the table of the House the Government's statement in regard to items in the audit report was "out of order" and should not be allowed.

Any explanations to that report, he said, should first be placed before the Public Accounts Committee. If that procedure was not followed and if the Defence Minister was allowed to place a statement, it would lead to "a see-saw struggle" of statements and counter-statements.

The Speaker, however, overruled the point of order. He said that Mr. Krishna Menon might or might not place a statement. A point of order would arise only when Mr. Menon actually sought to place the statement. The question of a ruling would arise only at that stage.

Answering a query from Dr. Sushila Nayar (Cong.), Mr. Ayyangar confirmed that the Auditor-General, Mr. A. K. Chanda, had written to him on the controversy. He said that he would consider whether the letter should be placed before the House as desired by the members.