

Proper Scrutiny Of Govt. Expenditure Essential

DR. PRASAD'S APPEAL AT DELHI FUNCTION

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THE President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, today hoped that the Government's decision to separate audit from accounts would be implemented "before long."

The President was speaking after he had laid the foundation-stone of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India.

"In a country like ours where huge amounts are allocated to different Ministers," Dr. Prasad added, "it is of the highest importance that a proper check is maintained on expenditure and funds drawn by the Government departments are not in excess of appropriations. It is essential that every rupee we spend it properly accounted for."

Earlier, Mr. V. Narahari Rao, retiring Comptroller and Auditor-General, said he was glad that the basic principle of separation of audit from accounts had been accepted by the Union Government and the Public Accounts Committee. He observed, however, that "there is a great deal of inertia to be overcome before practical results are achieved."

A large and distinguished audience, including the Prime Minister, the Vice-President, and members of the diplomatic corps, was present to witness the brief but impressive ceremony.

The site of the new office of the Auditor-General is off the Delhi-Mathura Road between Hardinge Bridge and the Delhi Gate. When ready, the building will be the first suitable office which the Auditor-General will have in nearly 25 years.

SPECIAL POWERS

The President said that like the judiciary, the office of the Comptroller and Auditor-General had been given special powers under the Constitution. With its widespread organisation all over the country, it had the power to see that sums granted by the Legislatures to the executive authorities were spent for the purposes meant and that the accounts were maintained in a proper and efficient manner. The Comptroller and Auditor-General had the power to call to account any officer, however highly placed, so far as State moneys were concerned.

"I consider it, therefore, not only appropriate but necessary that the office of the Comptroller and Auditor-General should be provided with all facilities to enable it to function in a way calculated to ensure the discharge of the duties allocated to it in the best possible manner," he added.

In a democratic set-up involving the allocation of hundreds of crores of rupees, the importance of a proper scrutiny of Government expenditure could never be over-emphasised, particularly when the Government was incurring a huge expenditure on welfare projects. "Apart from these, the Government has, of late, been taking up industrial undertakings in its hands which have to be worked on purely business lines," he said.

Dr. Prasad paid tribute to Mr.

Narahari Rao. "I have no hesitation," he said, "in saying that the retiring Comptroller and Auditor-General has earned the respect of the Indian Parliament by his impartial and independent observations as brought out in his annual reports. Free India has great value for these qualities which, I hope, will be emulated by all others, high or low, in the service of the State."

Mr. Narahari Rao said that on the financial side, the Comptroller and Auditor-General was the most important instrument of Parliament and the State Legislatures for securing Parliamentary control over national finances.

The control was secured by the Public Accounts Committees of the Legislatures, which examined Government departments on the basis of the audit reports, criticised irregularities and financial delinquencies and recommended remedial measures.

"The Public Accounts Committees are extremely important and I trust that they will grow from strength to strength in each State and will function with the utmost impartiality and detachment, and with wisdom and fearlessness," he added.

Mr. Rao regretted, however, that "in some of the States, the importance and responsibilities of the Public Accounts Committees have not been fully realised."