

Chapter 8

Parliamentary Committees in India and Legislative Control over Administration

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As the Indian Parliament completes half a century of its existence¹, it is appropriate to evaluate its working from multi-track perspectives. An ideal backdrop from this analysis would be the 'citizen's view' of the Indian parliament in general and assessment of the role of parliamentarians in particular. Two recent studies are indicative of the public mood in this regard. As part of the India component of the World Values Survey, citizens were asked to indicate the level of confidence they had in a few important political and social institutions². One such institution was the Indian

¹ The first *Lok Sabha* was constituted on 17 April 1952.

² The World Values Survey is a worldwide investigation of social, cultural and political change. Representative national surveys of the basic values and beliefs of publics was undertaken in more than 65 countries on all six inhabited continents, containing almost 80 per cent of the world's population. As part of

Parliament. Less than half the respondents expressed a positive view in this regard. While 14 per cent opined that they had a great deal of confidence in the Indian Parliament, another 28 per cent felt that they had some confidence in this important political institution³. In yet another survey based study of the interface between the citizen and the state⁴, respondents were asked to identify the *Lok Sabha* member elected from their constituency. Less than half the respondents were able to identify their local representative in Parliament correctly. Younger respondents and those with a higher level of education were more aware of the name of their elected representative. The respondents were also asked whether their elected representative took care of the interests of all or those of a few. Among those who expressed an opinion on the subject, nearly half felt that their *Lok Sabha* member took care of the interests of all. Another 30 per cent felt that the representatives took care of the interests of some and the rest felt that

the India component of the World Values Survey 2,000 face-to-face interviews were conducted. A rigorous scientific method was employed to generate the target sample. The survey was conducted in 18 states of India, which covered nearly 97 per cent of the nation's population. The author was the India Coordinator of the Study.

³ See Appendix A.

⁴ The State and Society Project was a joint research project with Richard Sisson, Pradeep Chhibber and the author as Principal Investigators. Coordinated by Bangalore University, the study involved examining the role of the state in the daily life of the citizens in the area where they lived; assessing the extent of citizen interaction with the state; evaluating the quality of service that the State provided and the efficiency of the state delivery system in the regard; and evaluating the role of non-state agencies in the life of common citizens. A survey was conducted in 73 districts spread across 18 states. More than 6,000 interviews were conducted.

they took care of the interests of none. Among those who felt that their *Lok Sabha* member took care of the interests of a few, nearly one-thirds identified 'the few' as being party workers and supporters, another 17 per cent felt that the representatives took care of the needs of the rich and 12 per cent asserted that those belonging to the caste of the elected representative, were the beneficiaries⁵. When respondents were asked to identify whether it was the individuals themselves, the community, the state or a combination of the three, who should be responsible for solving their problems, an overwhelmingly large number of respondents identified the state as one of the agencies which should play a crucial role. On matters relating to constructing good roads, providing continuous electricity, ensuring good educational facilities, proper ration supply, potable water and adequate health care, more than 90 per cent of the respondents believed that the state had a crucial role to play. While, the two studies are clearly indicative of the high level of cynicism among the common Indian citizens about the role and performance of an important representative institution and their elected representatives, it also draws attention to the high level of expectations among citizens about the performance of from parliamentary/governmental institutions. John Stuart Mill's statement that Parliament is the 'nation's Committee of Grievances and its Congress of Opinions' (Mill 1962:111), assumes relevance in this context.

Any assessment of the role of the Indian parliament would necessarily have to take into account the fact that the basic premise upon which the parliamentary system of government operates, is the accountability of the executive to the legislature. This system of accountability has evolved over the years, and has come to assume various forms and expresses itself through a

⁵ See Appendix B.

variety of techniques and instruments. Parliament and its subordinate institutions need to ensure that 'power is exercised within the limits set by (it) . . . and to acceptable standards of economy, propriety and justice' (Franks, see Shastri:1994:4).

Parliamentary control, the world over, has come to imply, 'influence not direct power; advice not command; criticism not obstruction; scrutiny not initiation; and publicity not secrecy' (Crick 1966:77-78). Crick rightly elaborates:

Parliamentary Control is not the stop switch, it is the tuning, the tone and the amplifier of a system of communication *which tells the government what the electorate want* (rightly or wrongly) *and what they will stand for* (rightly or wrongly), and tells the electorate what is possible . . . within the resources available (*ibid*). (Emphasis added).

This paper—which is extremely tentative in its formulations and limited in its sweep, focuses on the role and importance of one important technique of legislative control over administration that has occupied the spotlight of attention in recent years — the Committees of the two Houses of the Indian Parliament. The paper has three sections. After a preliminary overview, the paper outlines the major parliamentary committees in India and then attempts an assessment of a recent innovation in the committee system—the creation of Department Related Standing Committees (DRSCs).

II

With the responsibilities entrusted to legislatures registering a phenomenal increase, the Committee system is viewed as one of the more effective instruments of legislative control. Through committees an attempt has

been made by the legislatures to more effectively and conscientiously discharge its assigned responsibilities. Committees act on behalf of and with responsibility to the parent body—the legislature (Wheare 1955). For all practical purposes, they reflect the political complexion of the House and mirror its aims and aspirations. A 'small, interacting, face-to-face group' that is both 'durable and institutionalized' (Sartori 1975:143), the legislative committee has today become the nerve centre of serious political and legislative scrutiny. Ideally:

The Conscientious M.P. spends most of his working life in committees Any complex matter put before any large association of men is commonly dealt with in four ways; by appointing a small committee, by giving that committee, as precise a definition of its functions as possible, by giving the committee as much time as possible; and by including among the committee members technical experts or giving it access to such experts (Crick 1996:80. Emphasis added).

The Committee system in the Indian Parliament has gradually evolved—both in terms of its functions and effectiveness, with the passage of time. Today, the two Houses can boast of a rich tradition of legislative control through parliamentary committees.

Both the *Lok Sabha* and the *Rajya Sabha* have Standing and Ad hoc Committees. The Ad hoc Committees are appointed to undertake specific responsibilities and cease to exist once the task is completed and the report submitted. The two Houses have several Standing Committees.⁶ The two Houses are also empowered to form a Joint Committee, consisting of members drawn from both Houses.

⁶ The Major Standing Committees in the *Rajya Sabha* include the Business Advisory Committee, Committee on Rules, General

The *Lok Sabha* has three important finance-related Standing Committees⁷. More recently, the *Lok Sabha* and *Rajya Sabha* have constituted Department Related Standing Committees (DRSCs). Their role and significance will be discussed in detail in the next section. A few controversies relating to the Finance Related Standing Committees, especially the Public Accounts Committee have surfaced from time to time. The *Rajya Sabha* has not created the three finance related standing committees in view of its limited role on fiscal matters. However, a convention has evolved that a specific number of members of the *Rajya Sabha* are nominated to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which is essentially a *Lok Sabha* Committee and not a Joint Committee. A similar provision has been made with regard to the Public Undertakings Committee (PUC). Till 1954, the PAC consisted of only *Lok Sabha* members. Earlier in 1953, the Rules Committee of the *Rajya Sabha* had suggested that the PAC be made a Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament. This suggestion was vehemently opposed by the PAC and they even characterised the suggestion of the *Rajya Sabha's*

Purposes Committee, Committee on Government Assurances, Committee on Paper Laid on the Table, Committee on Petitions, Committee on Privileges, Committee on Subordinate Legislation, House Committee, Ethics Committee, Committee on MP's Local Area Development Scheme. The major non-Financial Standing Committees in the *Lok Sabha* include Business Advisory Committee, Committee on Rules, General Purposes Committee, Committee on Government Assurances, Committee on Paper Laid on the Table, Committee on Petitions, Committee on Privileges, Committee on Subordinate Legislation, House Committee, Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions, Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

⁷ Public Accounts Committee, Estimate Committee, Public Undertakings Committee.

Rules Committee to be 'unconstitutional (and) tending to interfere with the rights and privileges . . . of the House of People on financial matters' (Minutes of PAC meeting, 23.2.53). The persuasive efforts of the then Prime Minister, resulted in a motion being passed in the *Lok Sabha* on 24 December 1953, associating the *Rajya Sabha* members with the PAC (for details see Seshadri 1975:32-62). In July 1982, a controversy arose on the question of association of the *Rajya Sabha* members with the two Financial Committees, with the Chairman of the *Rajya Sabha* ruling that the members of the *Rajya Sabha* on these Committees have the status of associate members (for details see Shastri 1994:31-36). He asserted that the *Lok Sabha* could not convert its own Committee 'into one of the House (*Indian Express*, Bangalore, 30 July 1982). With assurances from the *Lok Sabha* Speaker that there was no question of an unequal status of the members of the *Rajya Sabha* on the financial committees and the promise made by the leader of the *Rajya Sabha* to move the government to initiate measures to suitably remedy the anomaly, the controversy was resolved. However, even after nearly two decades, no change has yet been made, in the relevant rules.

While estimating the working of the Standing Committees of Parliament (save DRSCs), the major limitations and challenges, which emerge, are also evident in the functioning of the DRSCs and would be discussed elaborately in the next section. However, a few issues relating to parliamentary committees merit scrutiny.

For the purpose of analysis the working of the Parliamentary Committees during the period October 1999 to August 2001, is being considered. In Table 8.1⁸, the work done by the Financial Committees of the *Lok Sabha* is outlined. It is evident that the PAC has been

⁸See Appendix C.

extremely active, having held 32 meetings (in 2 years) while the PUC and the Estimates Committee (EC) have had very few meetings. The PUC has submitted just 3 reports and the EC has submitted 6 reports of which 4 are Action Taken Reports. During this two year period, the PUC met for just over seven and a half hours while the EC met for a little less than 16 hours. The attendance at the meetings is also disappointing. The PUC averaged 36 per cent attendance, while the PAC averaged a little less than 48 per cent. The EC too had an attendance record of just over 50 per cent. To some extent, this is indicative of the seriousness with which members view Committee deliberations.

If the records of three important Non-Financial Standing Committees (Committee on Government Assurances, Committee on Subordinate Legislation and Committee on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare) are assessed for the same period (Table 8.2), it is noticed that the Committee on Subordinate Legislation held just 4 meetings (of less than 4 hours duration) and submitted 2 reports in 2 years. While the Committee on Government Assurances had more frequent meetings (15 meetings spread over 16 hours), it submitted merely 6 reports. The attendance level in all the three Committees was less than 60 per cent, with the Committee on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare recording 40 per cent attendance.

Two other developments, especially in the context of the Financial Committees, need to be taken into account. The reports submitted by the committees are generally not discussed on the floor of the House⁹. A former Chairman of a financial committee and veteran parliamentarian, N. G. Ranga explained this development in the following words:

⁹This point was confirmed by the successive Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

...Parliament has become fully representative of the people and Cabinet wholly responsible to Parliament, and Government would be expected to accept and implement the recommendations of the Committee, which is in a way a miniature Parliament. (Ranga 1971:13)

A former Secretary General of the *Lok Sabha* has also stressed that the Reports of Committees are not discussed on the floor of the House as the 'extent of control of the House may suffer a setback if the reports become a matter of debate and subject to vote' (Shakdher 1971:92), where party principles and political considerations may dominate. This convention has had an unintended consequence. Much of the good work done by the Committees and the recommendations that they make in their Reports, often go unnoticed. It also becomes much more difficult for the Committees to ensure that the government takes action on their recommendations. It is in this backdrop that at the Annual Conferences of the Presiding Officers of the Union Parliament and State Legislatures and the Meetings of Committee Chairman, a consensus view emerged that any debate on the floor of the House should confine itself to assessing the pace of implementation of the Committee recommendations and should not focus on questioning the recommendation itself¹⁰.

Secondly, the true yardstick to measure the effectiveness of the Parliamentary Committees (especially Financial Committees) is the earnestness with which its recommendations are accepted and implemented. It needs to be stressed that when the Committee recommendations involve action in the form of issuing a circular or memoranda to the concerned Departments, the recommendations are invariably accepted. However,

¹⁰Interviews with Speakers of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and Secretaries of the Karnataka Legislature.

if the recommendations involve the initiating of disciplinary proceedings against an official, the Government often delays action and prefers to take the cautious—at times safe—course of appointing a Commission of Enquiry or initiating a Departmental Inquiry. Such a step involves inordinate delays and many a time defeats the very purpose of the Committee recommendations. The Parliamentary Committee reports frequently have the comment that 'timely action against erring officers would have acted as a deterrent' or 'the implementation of our earlier recommendation would have prevented the recurrence of the lapse'. The above issues are discussed more in detail in the next section.

III

With a view to ensuring that the accountability of the administration to the legislature is more meaningful and effective, Parliament took the initiative in the early 1990s to constitute Department Related Standing Committees (hereinafter referred to as DRSCs). A brief outline of the factors and developments that triggered off the formation of DRSCs would be appropriate at this stage.

In keeping with the spirit of parliamentary democracy, Article 112(1) of the Indian Constitution states that the President shall in respect of each financial year, cause to be laid on the table of the Houses of Parliament a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for that year. These estimates of expenditure are submitted to the *Lok Sabha* in the form of demands for grants and may be passed, refused or reduced by it (Article 113[2]). Over the years, a discussion on the demands for grants in the *Lok Sabha* have not permitted a detailed scrutiny of the budgetary proposals of the government. In most cases, the Lower House has approved the demand for grants

even without discussion. An analysis of the discussions in the *Lok Sabha* on the demands for grants during the period 1985 to 1995 (both years included)—11 budgets—shows that the House has concentrated mainly on seven ministries/departments (for details see Shastri 1998:185-86). The demands for grants of 11 ministries/departments were not taken up for detailed discussion even once during this period. During the above period, more than 85 per cent of the demands were passed without any discussion.¹¹

In view of this trend and to permit a more detailed scrutiny of the budgetary proposals of the government, Parliament took the initiative to establish DRSCs. On 11 March 1993, a joint sitting of the Rules Committee of the *Lok Sabha* and *Rajya Sabha* was held to discuss and approve the proposal relating to the formation of the DRSCs. The two Houses of Parliament approved the rules pertaining to the creating of the new committees on 29 March 1993 (India, Debates, *Lok Sabha* 20:24:610-639 and India, Debates, *Rajya Sabha* 156:23:156-66). The new committee system was formally inaugurated on 31 March 1993. Speaking on the occasion, the then Vice President of India stressed that with the creation of the DRSCs a new dimension was being added to the parliamentary system. He drew attention to the fact that in the United Kingdom¹², the new committee system had resulted in increased flow of information and general toning up of the debates

¹¹ More recently, a study of the *Lok Sabha* debates on the demands for grants for the years 2000-01 and 2001-02 reveals that in the first year, the House discussed in detail the demands of only three ministries—Communication, Home and Human Resources Development and in the second year the demands for grants of only two ministries—Rural Development and Disinvestment, were taken up for discussion with the demands of all other ministries being guillotined—passed without any discussion.

¹² The Committees were created there in 1979.

(*Economic Times*, 1 April 1993).

There are today 17 DRSCs¹³, each consisting of 45 members of whom 30 are drawn from the *Lok Sabha* and 15 from the *Rajya Sabha*. While the Chairman of the *Rajya Sabha* appoints the Chairmen of 6 DRSCs, the Chairmen of the remaining 11 DRSCs are appointed by the Speaker of the *Lok Sabha*.

The Committee's functions are four fold: (a) considering the demands for grants of the concerned ministry/departments and submitting a report on the same to the two houses; (b) examining bills pertaining to the concerned ministries/departments that may be referred to it by the Presiding Officers; (c) examining the annual reports of the concerned ministries/departments referred to it and submitting a report on the same; and (d) reviewing long-term policy documents that are presented to the house and referred to the committee by the Presiding Officers. The rules specifically state that the Committee shall not examine matters relating to day-to-day administration and not consider those matters which are being examined by other parliamentary committees (Rule 331 D — M, Rules of Procedure, *Lok Sabha*).

To permit an in-depth analysis of the demands for grants of the various ministries/departments by the DRSCs, the two Houses of Parliament are adjourned for a specified period soon after the general discussion on the budget. During this recess, the DRSCs are required to consider the demands for grants and submit a report on the same within the stipulated time allotted. With regard to Bills referred to the DRSCs, they are required to consider the general principles and clauses of the Bills and submit a report on the same. The reports of the DRSCs are to be based on broad consensus. Members are

¹³ For details see Appendix D.

permitted to submit notes of dissent, which need to be presented along with the report to the House. The Rules specifically state that the reports of the DRSCs shall have 'persuasive value' and 'shall be treated as considered advice given by the Committees' (Rule 331 N, Rules of Procedure, Lok Sabha).

Ever since the DRSCs were constituted in 1993, a series of political developments have prevented them from making a detailed scrutiny of the budgetary proposals of the government. In 1993, in view of the delay in the framing and approval of the rules, the DRSCs had limited time for completing their study of the demands for grants and submitting their reports. As a result, it has been argued that the DRSCs scrutiny in the inaugural year was extremely cursory. In 1994, a controversy arose with regard to the adjournment of the two Houses of Parliament, for permitting the DRSCs to complete their examination of the demands for grants (for details see Shastri 1998: 191-92). In 1995, in view of the elections to some state legislatures, the Election Commission directed that the budget should be presented in mid-march. As a result, the two Houses were adjourned only for three weeks (and not a month) for the DRSCs to complete their work. Most of the DRSCs were not able to set aside more than one session for oral examination of witnesses.¹⁴ From 1996 to 1999, the DRSCs were not able to undertake an in-depth assessment of the budgetary proposals either on account of the delay in the presentation of the budget, resignation of the government, dissolution of the *Lok Sabha* and other major political developments. Since 2000, some efforts have been made to stabilize the functioning of the DRSCs, as they have had the required time and congenial political

¹⁴In fact, the DRSCs on Finance and Welfare did not have time for recording oral evidence and submitted their reports on the basis of written evidence only.

atmosphere to undertake their task.¹⁵

A review of the work done by 11 DRSCs (whose Chairmen are nominated by the Speaker of the *Lok Sabha*), during the period October 1999 — August 2001, reveals interesting trends (Table 8.3¹⁶). The DRSCs have focused attention on the demands for grants relating to the ministries under their purview and most of the meetings held and reports submitted are linked to the budget proposals. It is also noted that the DRSCs, which deal with a single ministry¹⁷, have submitted far fewer reports. What is most distressing is the poor attendance at committee meetings. Save the DRSC on Railways, the records of all the other DRSCs reveal that the average attendance was less than 50 per cent and in the case of five of the DRSCs, it was in the 35-40 per cent range. The low attendance at DRSC meetings is not linked to the fact that members are busy attending the sessions of the House as most of the committee meetings are held during the month-long recess after the presentation of the budget. This low attendance is a sad reflection of the seriousness with which members view the responsibilities assigned to the DRSCs.

An assessment of the issues that DRSCs have raised in their reports on the demands for grants show that they relate to a wide range of areas. Most commonly, DRSCs have commented on the decline in the percentage of grants or insufficient grants to a ministry/department. In its Seventh Report (demand for Grants 1994-95) and Thirteenth Report (Demands for Grants 1995-96), the DRSC on Agriculture expressed its concern on the

¹⁵In 2002, the developments in Godhra and the rest of Gujarat and the tensions caused by the developments in Ayodhya have once again deflected attention away from Committee investigations.

¹⁶See Appendix C.

¹⁷DRSC on External Affairs, Railways.

decrease, year after year, in the proportion of the budgetary allocation in the total central plan made to the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DRSC on Agriculture, Compendium 1994:1; DRSC on Agriculture 1995:7-8). Commenting on the budget allocation for the Ministry of Water Resources in the 2000-01 budget, the DRSC on Agriculture in its 10th Report (Demands for Grants 2000-01), pointed out that the allocation was much less than the minimum allocation proposed by the Ministry in the Annual plan (DRSC on Agriculture 2000). The Committee on Labour and Welfare, in its Fifth Report (Demands for Grants 1994-95) noted that during the Seventh Five-Year Plan, the Ministry of Welfare was allocated 2 per cent of the total plan outlay and this had come down to 0.87 per cent in the Eighth Five-Year Plan (DRSC on Labour and Welfare, Compendium 1994:86).

The DRSCs have also recorded their displeasure about the wide variation in the budget estimates and revised estimates of expenditure of various departments. The Committee on External Affairs, in its second report (Demands for Grants 1994-95), noted that the revised estimates for the Ministry for the year 1993-94 saw a 20 per cent increase as compared to the budget estimates. The committee also felt that such a trend of 'excess expenditure resulted in Parliament being presented with a *fait accompli*' (Second Report, Compendium 1994:86).

Non-utilization of budgetary grants by departments has also found mention in DRSC reports. The DRSC on Agriculture noted that in the Ministry of Food Processing, the funds allotted for scheme to assist in deep sea fishing and processing ventures during 1993-94 and 1994-95 could not be utilized at all (DRSC on Agriculture, 23rd Report 1995:19). The DRSC on Energy, in its 13th Report (Demand for Grants 2000-01), was critical of the Ministry of Coal for not utilizing the funds laid out for

specific research programmes (DRSC on Energy, 13th Report 2000). The DRSC on Communications in its 11th Report (Demand for Grants 2000-01), pointed out that the Films Division was not in a position to make use of even 50 per cent of the allocation during the first three years on the Ninth Plan (DRSC on Communications 11th Report 2000).

Departments spending the grants allocated only at the fag end of the financial years has also been severely criticised by the DRSCs. The Committee on Food, Civil Supplies and Public Distribution, in its 10th Report (Demands for Grants 1995-96), while examining the expenditure incurred on the scheme relating to Intelligence, Enforcement and Manpower Training for the Public Distribution System, found that out of a sum of Rs 19.92 lakh shown as spent during 1994-95, Rs 12.17 lakh was spent during the last two and a half months of the fiscal year, implying that only Rs 7.75 lakh was spent during the first nine and a half months (DRSC on Food, Civil Supplies and Public Distribution 1995:5). The DRSC on Labour and Welfare while examining the Demands for Grants for 2001-02, stated in its 13th Report, that the Ministry of Tribal Affairs had huge amounts of money under different heads remaining unspent till the beginning of March 2001 (DRSC on Labour and Welfare 2001).

The observations and recommendations made by the Committee while examining the demands for grants are often not strictly restricted to financial matters. The Committee on Agriculture, in its 22nd Report (Demand for Grants 1995-96) relating to the Ministry of Water Resources, recommended that it was the 'moral duty' of the government to conduct a survey to find out to what extent the water of major rivers in the country is polluted (22nd Report, DRSC on Agriculture 1995:5). The DRSC on Communications, in its 11th Report on the demands for grants for 2000-01, expressed its deep sense

of anguish that the Prasar Bharati Board had not been constituted in its true sense and that the Broadcasting Bill introduced in Parliament in 1997 had not been enacted as yet (11th Report DRSC on Communications 2000).

A perusal of the DRSC reports show that time and again mention is made of the fact that the recommendations contained in the previous reports have not been implemented or taken seriously (for details see Shastri 1998:195-98). The 11th Report of the DRSC on Communications (Demands for Grants 2000-01) and the 13th Report of the DRSC on Labour and Welfare (Demands for Grants 2001-02) point out to the fact that non-implementation of previous recommendations had resulted in non-utilization of grants (DRSC on Communications 2000 and DRSC on Labour and Welfare 2001).

A perusal of the reports reveal that various ministries have rarely accepted the recommendations/observations of the DRSCs when they relate to substantive issues like changing procedures, taking action against errant employees or disturbing the status quo. It is relevant to note that the Presiding Officers have on occasions been forced to publicly express their concern over poor implementation of the DRSCs recommendations (*The Hindu*, 18 May 1995). A newspaper editorial rightly warned that if DRSCs recommendations were to be 'consigned to oblivion on account of official apathy' it would 'negate the very concept of executive accountability to the legislature' (*Deccan Herald*, 19 May 1995).

The new committee system is now nearly a decade old. It is now possible to take stock of its achievements and devise strategies to improve its effectiveness. It has rightly been argued that 'these new structures constitute significant improvements in the existing instrumentalities' (Parameshwaran 1995), for scrutiny of government and are indicative of the potential for effective change in the working of parliamentary democracy.

DRSCs symbolise the attempts made to extend 'the range of parliamentary scrutiny', deepen 'parliamentary accountability (and widen) . . . the public policy debate' (Giddings 1994:684).

An indifferent administration can prove to be the greatest obstacle to the success of the new experiment. If the Action Taken Reports are any indication, the government (read bureaucracy) does not appear to be too enthusiastic about this initiative. The existence of an administration system that is willing to provide necessary facts that the Committee desire, is responsive to the demands for constructive change and views suggestions with an open mind would make DRSCs investigations more purposive. It would be useful for the government to bear in mind that critical reports submitted by the DRSCs are at the most an irritant or an embarrassment, but no more (Saifuddin Choudhury and P. Upendra as quoted in *Times of India*, 12 November 1994).

In order to increase the effectiveness of the DRSC, the secretarial and research assistance that is available to them needs to be strengthened. Specialists from the concerned fields could be associated with the Committee in an advisory capacity. Such a step would immensely strengthen the hands of the DRSCs.

The meetings of the DRSCs are today held *in camera*. There has been an increasing demand that the meetings should be made open to the public, at least on a selective basis. In UK, Canada and Australia, the committee meetings are held in public. However, Presiding officers of Legislatures (in India) have argued that the *in camera* sessions provide for a relaxed and informal atmosphere and given the confidential nature of the committee proceedings it would be difficult to throw it open to the press or the public (Lok Sabha Speaker in India, Debates, Lok Sabha 20:24:638; also Ramesh Kumar former Speaker, Karnataka Legislative Assembly in an interview with the author). A decision could be taken to hold the

meetings of the DRSCs in public on a selective and experimental basis. If this change has any negative impact on the nature of DRSCs deliberations, the practice could be discontinued.

The two Houses of Parliament could also set aside time to specifically discuss the pace of implementation of DRSCs recommendations. During these discussions, ministers could inform the House of the steps taken in their respective ministries to give effect to the DRSCs recommendations.

The above mentioned reforms have become vital in order to strengthen the DRSCs. These changes will also enhance the quality of parliamentary control over administration. The nurturing of an atmosphere of mutual appreciation, wherein the government views the DRSCs recommendations with respect and the DRSCs in turn, are sensitive to the problems faced by the government, is vital for the growth of a responsible system of effective accountability. An effective and strong committee system is a vital element in any strategy to re-assert the supremacy of parliament and parliamentary institutions.

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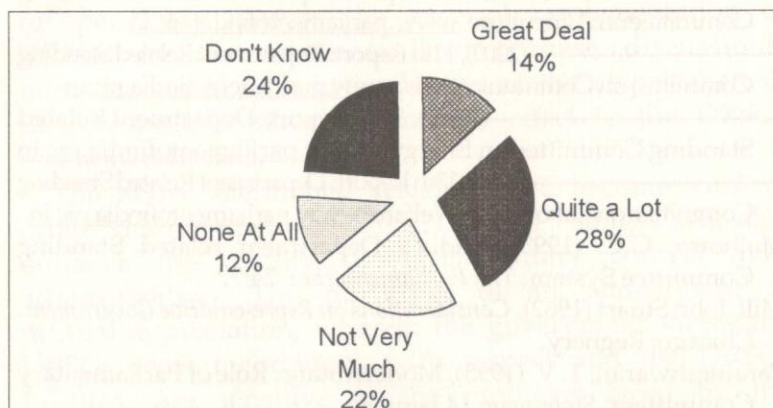
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APPENDIX A

India Component of the World Values Survey

Level of Confidence in the Indian Parliament



APPENDIX B

State and Society Project

Chart 1

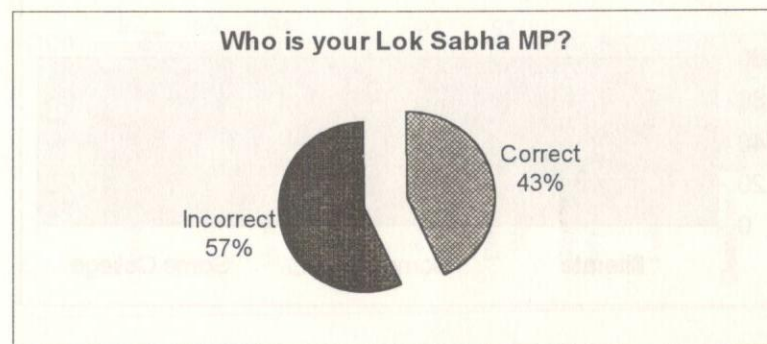


Chart 2

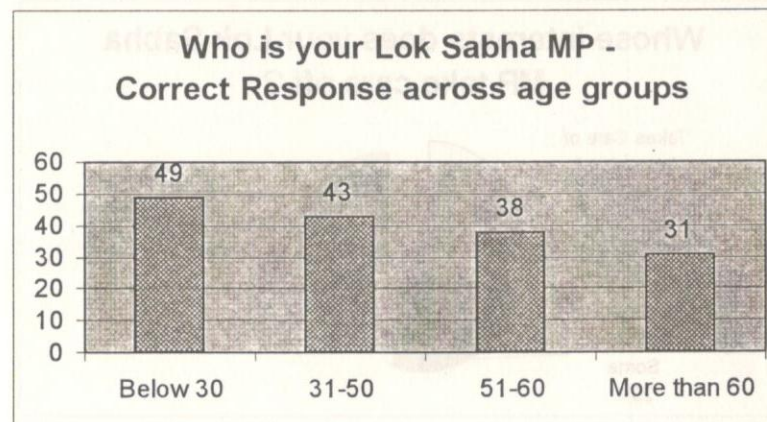


Chart 3

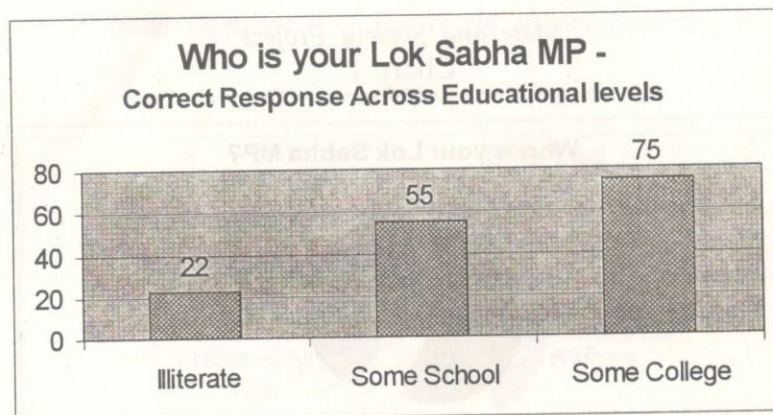


Chart 4

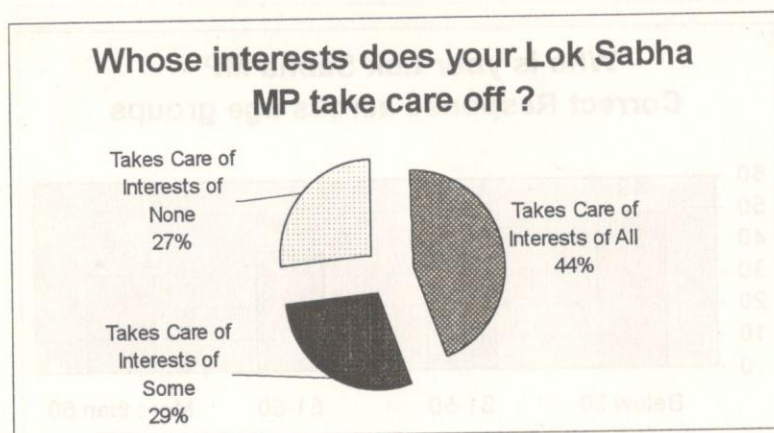
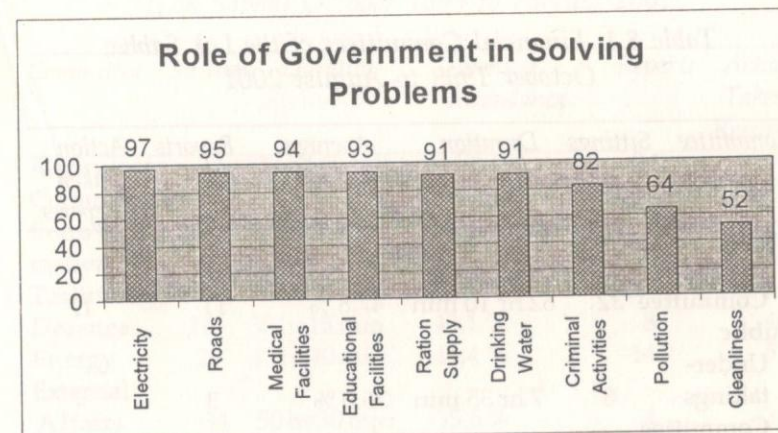


Chart 5



APPENDIX C

Table 8.1: Financial Committees of the Lok Sabha:
October 1999 to August 2001

Committee	Sittings	Duration	Average Attendance	Reports	Action Taken Reports
Public Accounts Committee	32	62 hr 10 min	47.8 %	11	17
Public Under-takings Committee	8	7 hr 35 min	36.0 %	3	-
Estimates Committee	11	15 hr 45 min	50.2 %	2	4

Source: Tabulated from data in the Parliament website:
www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

Table 8.2: Major Standing Committees of
the Lok Sabha: October 1999 to August 2001

Committee	Sittings	Duration	Average Attendance	Reports	Action Taken Reports
Committee on Subordinate Legislation	4	3 hr 45 min	55.0 %	2	
Committee on Government Assurances	15	16 hr 20 min	57.0 %	6	-
Committee on SC/ST Welfare	19	27 hr 45 min	40.6 %	3	13

Source: Tabulated from data in the Parliament website:
www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

Table 8.3: Department Related Standing Committees
(Lok Sabha) October 1999 to August 2001

Committee	Sittings	Duration	Average Attendance	Reports	Action Taken Reports
Agriculture	22	39 hr 55 min	43.7 %	24	
Communications/Information Technology	47	74 hr 10 min	39.4 %	22	5
Defence	16	30 hr 15 min	43.1 %	8	4
Energy	29	47 hr 40 min	44.4 %	14	5
External Affairs	34	50 hr 30 min	35.6 %	4	3
Finance	23	56 hr 20 min	39.9 %	13	5
Food, Civil Supplies	12	40 hr 55 min	37.4 %	6	5
Labour and Welfare	13	28 hr 50 min	38.9 %	9	5
Petroleum	22	30 hr 55 min	42.7 %	9	10
Railways	15	29 hr 10 min	51.2 %	2	7
Urban and Rural Development	37	55 hr 05 min	49.6 %	11	16

Source: Tabulated from data in the Parliament website :
www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

APPENDIX D

Table 8.4: Department Related Standing Committees

Sl. No	Name of Committee	Ministries Covered
1	Commerce	Commerce and Textiles
2	Home Affairs	Home, Law, Justice, Company Affairs, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
3	Human Resources Development	Human Resources Development, Health and Family Welfare
4	Industry	Industry, Steel and Mines, Disinvestment
5	Science and Technology, Environment and Forests	Science and Technology, Electronics, Space, Oceanography, Biotechnology, Environment and Forests
6	Transport and Tourism	Civil Aviation, Surface Transport, Tourism
7	Agriculture	Agriculture, Water Resources, Food Processing
8	Communications (now called Information Technology)	Information Broadcasting, Communications, Information Technology
9	Defence	Defence
10	Energy	Energy, Coal, Non-conventional Energy Sources, Power, Atomic Energy
11	External Affairs	External Affairs
12	Finance	Finance, Planning and Programme Implementation
13	Food, Civil Supplies and Public Distribution	Food, Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution
14	Labour and Welfare	Labour and Welfare
15	Petroleum and Chemicals	Petroleum, Natural Gas, Chemicals, Petrochemicals, Fertilizers
16	Railways	Railways
17	Urban and Rural Development	Urban Development, Rural Development

The Chairmen of the first six committees (1-6) are appointed by the Chairman, *Rajya Sabha* and the Chairmen of 11 committees (7-17) are appointed by the Speaker of the *Lok Sabha*.