

प्रस्तुत किया है, इसके लिये बेधन्यवाद के पात्र हैं।

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member may continue his speech tomorrow. Now we shall take up the Half-an-hour Discussion.

17.30 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION  
DIFFUSION OF OWNERSHIP OF NEWS-  
papers

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPA (Telli-cherry): At the very outset, I would like to make a request to the hon. Minister that he should not give a very formal and an evasive reply to this. Why I am saying this is because I have been going through the records and perhaps he will remember that this is the 20th year after the Press Commission had recommended that there should be certain basic reforms in the field of Press.

It was in 1954 that people like Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Dr. Zakir Husain, Shri Chalapati Rau and others—they were the members of the Press Commission—made their recommendations. Nobody will say that they were big revolutionaries or even left-minded people. But even they could not believe what was happening in the field of newspapers, in the world of newspapers.

One of them, Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, after the enquiry stated:

"I went in as a great friend of newspapers. I came out thoroughly disillusioned."

That was the kind of picture a person like Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer depicted before the country.

The Press Commission recommended that there should be diffusion of ownership and control of the newspapers should be with the journalists and with the employees and the shares should be distributed in such a manner. A price-page scheme should be introduced to avoid unfair competition between big and small newspapers. Only 40 per cent of the space should be allowed for advertising

ments, but, as you know, today we are being made to buy the bundle of advertisements printed and not the news in the newspapers. That is the situation today. They also said that News Agencies like PTI UNI should be made a corporation. These are some of the important recommendations made by the Press Commission. They also said that a watchful eye should be kept to see how the monopoly is bringing the Press under their grip. These were the main features of their recommendations.

After that, so many statements were made and particularly, after the 1971 Elections in which we all came here, the Prime Minister assured that the diffusion of ownership and the delinking of the press from the industrial houses will be made. The Law Minister, Shri Gokhale, said that the Press in India should forthwith cease to be the mouth-piece of a few and should reflect the cross-currents of the public opinion of this country. Shri Raghunatha Reddy, the Minister, who was in charge of Company Affairs at that time, said that having delinked the commercial banks from the industrial houses, it is time to free newspapers also from their grip and that the ending of the monopolistic hold over all walks of life should begin at the newspapers' end.

I am saying all these to impress upon the House that this was the declared policy. This had the general approval from the ruling party side, from the journalists, the Federation of Working Journalists and the newspaper employees and every one in the country wanted the diffusion of ownership and the delinking of the press from the industrial houses to be made. But what happened is more interesting. I have some old figures. New figures are not available. If possible, I hope the Minister will give us these figures. In 1952 the monopoly press controlled 50 per cent of the journals. After 18 years, in 1970 it became 70 per cent control and in big cities it is 80 per cent they were controlling. And this is the kind of picture which we see, Sir. When

[Shri C. K. Chandrappan]

we speak of the freedom of the press, generally, a big hue and cry is being made by the monopoly press in this country. When Nandini Satpathi first declared that who would bring forward a Bill for the diffusion of ownership of the newspapers all the big papers in the country—the Hindustan Times, the Times of India, the Statesman, etc.—all made a hue and cry saying freedom of opinion is in trouble. Some of these journals even said that freedom is in peril, take arms and fight. They all thought that it is an attempt on the part of the Government to intervene and to dictate what the Press should write or what the Press should not write. What we mean is this. When we speak of diffusion of ownership and delinking of the Press from the industrial houses, what we mean is that there should be a free press in the country and free press does not mean a press which is owned by just two or three per cent of the people, the big business people, because they are, in the name of public opinion, in the name of freedom of opinion, etc. voice their interests only and they are really emitting their old outmoded 18th century ideas in the name of the freedom of the Press. We don't want this to happen. When we say diffusion of ownership and delinking of the Press from the grip of the industrial houses what we mean is that the journalists should have a say. The workers in the Press must have their say. The readership in the country must have their say. This is the kind of formula which was what the Government had promised which should be evolved. And a Bill must be immediately brought forward in this regard and there is no point in just saying: 'We will bring, we will bring'. We have been hearing this for the last so many years. We have been hearing this for the last four years continuously. For the last 20 years this has been a kind of slogan. We had to wait for 22 years after the congress having adopted the Resolution for the Nationalisation of Banks and only after 22 years they introduced a Bill in the House to nationalise the big banks in this country. That is the way things are moving!

Sir, certain matters have got to be taken into account when we look at the situation of the Press in India today. What is the view of the Editor? What is the real editorial freedom? What is the freedom of the journalists in assessing a situation and writing a story? They have been saying this very recently. If you had gone through the monopoly presses in the country, you would have seen that the monopoly presses had written: Congress party had been wiped out in UP, in Orissa and everywhere. Editorials were written, what will happen to the country after this. I am sure the journalists who went there would not have liked to write like that. But it was the dictates of the Tatas and Birlas and the big industrial houses who are asking the newspapers what they should write.

There is an interesting thing about these editors and this was said by Mr. G. N. Acharya, a Journalist. About editorial freedom, when he was speaking of the editors, he said: Most of the editors particularly those of the big papers are in the position of the character in the Elizabethan play who said, 'you cannot ravish me; I am so willing'. That kind of attitude has been created by these very industrial houses on the editor's activity and initiative and free thinking and their free assessments have been killed by these monopoly houses. There are various examples if you take the Congress split, the Presidential election, the Bank Nationalisation, the legislation regarding the Privy Purses, and very recently, regarding the recent elections. If you take all these things you can see very clearly that the monopoly press in the country had presented the most vulgar and distorted type of picture about the whole developments. That was not the objective situation as they were trying to depict. These big industrial houses were only making the press the mouth-piece of reaction, of obscurantist ideas and they are taking them to the lap of imperialism. This is what is happening in the world of press in the name of press freedom. A few industrial houses who are owning it are controlling even the

thinking of the people now and the thinking of the people to come.

Regarding the PTI and the UNI, I would like to know specifically from the hon. Minister whether he has made up his mind to make these two news agencies corporations which could then be brought under the scrutiny of this Parliament so that to that extent the people will have a say about the functioning of these bodies.

Regarding the diffusion of ownership and the delinking of the newspapers from the industrial houses, I would like to ask a specific question of the hon. Minister. If he has not made up his mind to bring forward a comprehensive Bill, an all-pervasive Bill, I would like to know whether he will take the intermediary step of delinking the press from the industrial houses. That is an important step forward to reach the desired goal.

So, I would like the hon. Minister to give specific answers to the following points which I have raised, firstly, immediate delinking of the press from the industrial houses, secondly, taking steps to make the PTI and the UNI into corporations, and lastly the bringing forward of a Bill. For Heaven's sake, the hon. Minister should not say that he is discussing and seriously thinking and he will come forward with a Bill. We have been hearing this for the last five years, and in this House itself at least 20 times this answer has been repeated. We do not want to hear it for the twenty-first time....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then, what does he want him to say?

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPA: He should say that he would come forward with the Bill during this session itself.

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय (मुरै),  
सभापति ज: प्रैस और रेडियो, यह दो ही समाचार देने के बहुत ही महत्व के साधन हैं। सरकार की शायद मोनोपोली प्रैस पर नहीं हो, उन्हें अपने हाथ में लेना चाहती है। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि प्रैस में मोनोपोली है या नहीं इसकी जांच कौन करेगा? और इसी के साथ साथ क्या प्रैस काउन्सिल ने इस सम्बन्ध में कोई अध्ययन किया है? यदि हाँ तो, तो क्या रिपोर्ट दी है? मोनोपोली कमीशन ने कोई रिपोर्ट दी है तो उसके तथ्य हमारे सामने रखने चाहिये। क्या सरकार कोई नया प्रैस कमीशन बनाना चाहती है? या समाचार पत्रों को अपने हाथ में लेने की नीति पर विचार कर रही है? मैं सहमत हूँ कि मोनोपोली नहीं होनी चाहिये। परन्तु समाचार-पत्र ही नहीं रेडियो भी। और सरकार की मोनोपोली किसी पर नहीं होनी चाहिये। जितने बड़े-बड़े समाचार-पत्र हैं इनकी सारी व्यवस्था प्रैस में काम करने वाले वर्कर्स और पत्रकारों के सुपुर्द करनी चाहिये, इस पर हमें कोई आपत्ति नहीं होगी। परन्तु सरकार उन पत्रों को हाथ में लेना चाहती है जो उसके खिलाफ लिखते हैं। सरकार के खिलाफ कोई समाचार छपे नहीं, यह सरकार की नीति है जो ठीक नहीं है।

जो समाचार-पत्र सरकार का सामर्थन करते हैं उनको अच्छे विज्ञापन मिलते हैं और अन्य समाचार-पत्रों को नहीं मिलते। "जनयुग" के पहले ही अंक में ही काफ़ी विज्ञापन दिये गये। लेकिन "मदरलैण्ड" अखबार को नहीं मिलते हैं। और मिलते भी हैं तो नाममात्र को मिलते हैं।

सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्री (श्री आई० के० गुजराल): वह अखबार तो हमारे साथ ही है।

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय: तब तो उसे विज्ञापन अधिक मिलने चाहिये। लेकिन ऐसा होता नहीं। रेडियो भी समाचार का एक अच्छा साधन है। चन्दा कमेटी ने अपनी

[श्री. हुकम चन्द कछवाय]

रिपोर्ट में यह कहा है कि ग्राल इण्डिया रेडियो को लोकतांत्रिक बनाना चाहिये ।

श्री मूल चन्द डागा (पाली) : यह डी-लिकिंग का सवाल है, रेडियो का प्रश्न नहीं है ।

सभापति महोदय : माननीय कछवाय जी, यह विषय डिफ्यूजन ग्राफ अनरशिप ग्राफ न्यूज पेपर्स से सम्बन्धित है इसलिये उसके सम्बन्ध में जो सवाल पूछने हैं वह पूछिये । विस्तार में ग्राप जायेंगे तो बहुत बातें हो सकती हैं ।

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : मेरा उद्देश्य यही था कि यह दो साधन हैं जो अच्छे समाचार देश की जनता को दे सकते हैं ।

सभापति महोदय : यह डिफ्यूजन में नहीं आता है । क्या ग्राल इण्डिया रेडियो का भी ग्राप डिफ्यूजन करना चाहते हैं ? ग्राप प्रलग से इसको लाइये, इसमें नहीं ।

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : मैं केवल इतना कहना चाहता हूँ कि रेडियो का निगम स्वतन्त्र बने जो अच्छे समाचार दे सके ।

जहां तक विज्ञापन की बात है काफी मात्रा में ऐसे समाचार पत्रों को विज्ञापन नहीं देते जो सरकार की कटु आलोचना करते हैं ।

सभापति महोदय : यह तो कह दिया आपने । ग्राप सवाल पूछिये । क्या ग्राप बचाव नहीं चाहते हैं ? कुछ तो समय मंली महोदय को देंगे कि नहीं ?

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय : मैं खत्म कर रहा हूँ ।

मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या सरकार इस बात के लिये तैयार है कि जितने भी समाचार पत्र हैं उनमें पत्रकार और वहां के कर्मचारी रहें, और सरकार अपने हाथ में नही ले । और जो पहले बात पूछी मैंने सरकार बताये कि यह कौन तय

करेगा कि प्रेस में मोनोपली है कि नहीं ? और साथ ही रेडियो को भी निगम बनाने का प्रयास करें ।

SHRI DASARATHA DEB (Tripura East: It is alleged that *The Statesman* is the most mismanaged newspaper and therefore calls for diffusion of ownership. What is the opinion of Government in this regard? What steps are Government going to take to see that the employees, both journalist and non-journalist, are associated with the running of the newspaper?

Secondly, there has been an agitation among employees of *The Statesman* Limited for a long time, both at Calcutta and New Delhi, against the injustice done by the management to the employees. Some goonda elements had been employed to murder workers, particularly in *The Statesman* office around its compound at New Delhi. The police also registered some cases against them. But the police did not pursue the matter. Am I to understand or presume that there is some sort of arrangement between the management and the police not to pursue these cases? What is the opinion of Government?

Thirdly, it is alleged that the management of *The Statesman* has indulged in various malpractices including the newsprint *raddi* scandal and harassment of journalists. Will Government inquire into the alleged irregularities?

My last question is this. It is alleged that the superiority of the managerial wing over the editorial wing is not restricted just to promotions, transfers, increments, recruitment and posting of journalists but also covers the matter of arrangement of functional facilities for editorial staff from editor downwards. It is learnt that in order to solve the problems and to remove the difficulties, *The Statesman* Journalists' Association had in April 1973 submitted a memorandum containing certain suggestions. Are Government aware of these demands made in the memorandum? Will Government study this matter? What steps will they take to force

the management to concede the demands of the workers?

**SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER** (Ausgram): On 17th August, 1973 when a non-official Resolution moved by Shri H. N. Mukherjee for diffusion of ownership of newspapers was discussed here, at that time, Mr. I. K. Gujral, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, said that "the Government would soon bring forward a measure to delink the press from big business-houses." He further said that "the freedom of the press must be preserved both from the Government and from the industrial interests." Further, he said that "money should not flow into the press in benami, whether from political parties or from the owners or through some foreign powers."

Sir, on 20th September 1973, Mr. I. K. Gujral said at Hyderabad that "the Government's determination is to delink newspapers from big business-houses and the freedom of the press meant freedom of those who own the papers...." etc.

On 30th December 1973, the Deputy Minister, Mr. Sinha, said in Mysore that "the Union Government's decision to delink newspapers from the ownership was firm and the Government would not be cowed down by the big newspaper magnates..." etc.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** What is your question? Is it your question whether they stand by those statements or not?

**SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER:** When you are in the Chair, please allow us to make our points.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** My only concern is that I want some time to be given for the Minister to reply. Please keep that in mind.

**SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER:** On 3rd March 1974, in Indore, the General Secretary of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists said that "if the Press in India is to discharge its duties and function faithfully to-

wards the people as enshrined in our Constitution, it must be freed from the clutches of big business."

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** Do not quote any more. Ask your question. You are wasting your time. There is one more Member yet.

**SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER:** The resolution of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists said about the "Fascist attack on newspapers to prevent them from giving publicity to the people's movement and exposing the vested interests," as enunciated by my friend Mr. Deb.

So, the Ministers have repeatedly expressed their pious wish regarding the diffusion of ownership of newspapers, but up till now, the Government has done nothing except using high-sounding words. Through you, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the recommendations of the Assurance Committee of Parliament, to take note of the assurances given repeatedly on the floor of the House which have not yet been fulfilled.

Further, I think that the delay to bring in the Bill on diffusion of ownership of newspapers is only because that there is an unholy alliance between the monopoly houses and the Government. Though we know that the diffusion of ownership of newspapers will not solve the problem, but still, we want the delinking of the newspapers from big business.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** This is not the occasion to make speeches. You have to ask questions only. You have already taken five minutes. You have not asked a single question. What is the use? There is one more Member to put questions. When will the Minister get the time to reply? We have time only up to 6 O'clock.

**SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER:** I am putting the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What have you been doing up till now? This is not fair.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER: I would like to know what are the reasons for the delay, and whether the Minister will bring a comprehensive Bill in this budget session.

श्री मूल चन्द्र डागा (पाली) : सभापति महोदय, मैं एक बात पूछना चाहता हूँ कि पत्रकारों को इन सरमायेदारों और पूंजीपतियों के चंगुल से अलग करने के लिये आप कब तक प्रेस काउन्सिल ऐक्ट में कोई संशोधन पेश करना चाहते हैं और वह निर्णय अनर्स और जो उनके पत्रकार हैं उन पर लागू हो इसके लिये कोई प्रयत्न करेंगे ?

दूसरा सवाल यह है कि जिस तरह से ब्रिटेन में होता है कि एडिटर्स के चयन के लिये पब्लिक सर्विस कमिशन जैसी कोई संस्था होती है उसी तरह से आप यहां पर कोई बोर्ड आदि बनाना चाहते हैं ताकि जर्नलिस्ट और एडिटर उन के द्वारा अप्वाइंट हो सकें और वह स्वतन्त्रतापूर्वक अपनी भावनाओं को व्यक्त कर सकें। जिस तरह से ब्रिटेन में उनका चयन होता है उसी तरह से यहां हो ताकि वह पूंजीपतियों की चाटुकारिता न करें, उनकी सर्विसेज सुरक्षित हों। इसीलिये मैंने यह प्रश्न किये हैं मैं उनका उत्तर चाहता हूँ।

Indecision is the most disappointing.

बीस साल हो गये। पत्रकार लोग आपकी ओर देख रहे हैं। आप निर्णय दीजिये और उनके लिये उपयुक्त कदम उठाइये ताकि पत्रकार लोग उनके चंगुल से बच सकें।

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): I am grateful to the hon. Member for having brought this discussion to the focus again. I do take pride in the fact that I am one of those who from the beginning of my public life have always been pleading for such de-linking as the need of the hour. The Press Commission examined the whole scene of the newspaper world as it were. I think that in this country by and large all

those who value freedom of expression are definitely and unanimously of the opinion that one of the most valued institutions of democratic life that India has built up is the freedom of the press. Freedom of the press did not come to us only as an attitude after our country's freedom. Even before freedom came to our country even at that stage, every time we were talking about the definition of the freedom. We were clear in our mind that it did not only mean that we wanted the yoke of the foreign power to be removed but also we were keen and we spelt out every time what we meant by freedom. Our leaders in whose name we took pride and who built this country and architected the freedom struggle and who also visualised the type of the nation that we were going to build, felt, and aid rightly, that there could be no freedom which did not guarantee freedom of expression. That is why when the nation became free and when the founding fathers of our Constitution met in this House and in the next House, they enshrined in our Constitution the fundamental rights and the freedom of expression. One of the things about which our nation can take pride is that, in this country, perhaps better than in many of the countries in the world, we have freedom of expression, complete and full.

We have always felt that freedom from Government's interference is something which has been enshrined in the Constitution itself. We have always felt and still feel proud of the fact that the freedom of the press to us is not a matter of policy, nor is it a matter of convenience; it is a matter of commitment and a matter of faith. We have always felt, those of us particularly who had the good fortune to participate in the freedom struggle and who know the value of freedom of expression because we have seen those days also when it was denied, that when we talk in this House of democracy or elections there can neither be democracy nor elections, nor a democratic nation, nor a nation which believes in the assertion of the will of the people when they are denied this fundamental approach to the freedom of expression. But unfortunately it happens that we generally lose the sense of

history, not in the sense in which I have enunciated, but in another sense. Whenever in the past the freedom of expression was spelt out in countries where industrial revolution came earlier, we always thought of the intervention and the interference of the sovereign and the king.

Therefore, when they expressed fear or apprehension about the freedom of expression, they were always thinking of the Government. Times have changed, things have changed, institutions have undergone a change and the scene is totally different today. Everywhere in the world we see today that a great deal of struggle is going on, not only in the sense that we wish and we want to feel that there should be freedom of expression, we also have felt that everywhere, even in those countries where this concept came earlier, there is a feeling and realisation that the power of big money which is emerging is trying to compromise that freedom of expression. Unfortunately, sometimes it happens that whenever a situation changes and whenever a scene changes, the new forces that emerge which might have been progressive at a certain stage of growth of human history which had played a role, are not so forward-looking, nor in the interests of the institutions which require safeguards.

18 hrs.

The concept of democracy and the concept of secular life itself is very closely associated with the emergence of the printing machinery and mechanised manufacture of paper. But, as technology built up, it became expensive, and those who had the money tried to monopolise the technology itself and they used this power basically to influence the public opinion. They thought, foresaw and realised that if they were able to control the media, they would be in a position to influence thinking.

In our country also we have undergone that process to an extent. The newspapers which we are now hinting at and those names we are thinking of in the

Indian scene were divided, by and large, into two parts—the press which we called the national press before freedom and the press which we called the Anglo-Indian press before freedom. Unfortunately it happened that those papers which were nationalistic in their outlook and with whom very big names of our national life were associated, because of the monetary situation, passed into the hands of those who had no other attitude towards the Indian community except trying to use the public opinion for their own purpose and for their own ends. Whether it was the Press Commission, or this House, or the Working Journalists Federation, or the other associations of working journalists, or the leaders of public opinion, all of them over the last 20 years or so felt very much concerned about it.

My hon. friend has tried to quote me. I consider it as a compliment, because I am one of those who would not change his conviction with the times. I stand deeply rooted to my convictions and to my commitments, and I take pride in the fact that our the fundamental issues before the nation I have a basic attitude. One of the implications of that basic attitude is, to my mind, freedom of expression and freedom of newspapers, which means that the power of the big money over them must be removed.

I do feel and believe firmly that the real communication will become effective only when these people who have no other interest in the newspapers except to derive monetary benefit out of them are kept away from the newspapers. If they were interested only in their earnings, perhaps I would not have minded it much. But they are interested in going one step further. They are interested in using the press as a medium to fulfil their own vested interests which are outside the interests of the newspaper as a whole. In this House, time and again a humble person like me, and before me giants of leaders of India like Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and our worthy Prime Minister have stated that Indian freedom will always remain in jeopardy as long as these papers

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are controlled by big money, and by freedom at this stage we mean freedom of expression. Therefore, whenever I have said time and again that we want to delink, I have said so because I feel it must be done. In this country, we have enshrined many other institutions also.

Judiciary is one such institution. We have built up the Supreme Court and we revere it because we do feel that in democratic life, judiciary has a place. We do feel that Parliament, judiciary and all the limbs of democracy must function effectively and, in this balance, with checks and counter checks, democracy survives and builds itself.

The Supreme Court has been mentioning about this issue often in its various judgements. For instance, one of my friends mentioned about one of the recommendations of the Press Commission regarding the price-page schedule. As you know very well, this House and this worthy Parliament actually passed a Bill about the price-page schedule. It was promulgated. But it was struck down by the Supreme court. Therefore, this imposed some limitation on us.

Then, last year, you will recall that another Supreme Court judgment came when the 10 page restriction was enforced. Another judgment came on the Twenty-fourth and Twentyfifth Constitutional Amendments. These judgments put together put obstacles in our way as to how we should proceed so that we do not pass a Bill which again gets struck down. That has been the real anxiety on our part. If any delay has been caused, I am sorry for it. I would like to take pride in the fact if during my term of office this Bill is passed. It will give me a great deal of pride if we are able to de-link newspapers while this House has placed confidence in me and permitted me to discharge my responsibility as the Information Minister. But this responsibility by itself implies that I must draft a Bill, I must bring before the House such a Bill which stands the test judicial scrutiny. It should be so comprehensive that it meets the commitment that we have to delink it from big indus-

try. Also, at the same time, it must assure us that the custody of freedom of press, the freedom of expression, passes from the management's office to the editorial office.

You will agree with me, as I have said again and again, that the Bill must be framed within three defined perimeters, as my hon. friend has quoted. One of the perimeters I had spelt out was that the press must be free from Government intervention. So, I would not like to have a Bill whereby the Central Government or the State Government or any of its agencies, directly or indirectly, has anything to do with the ownership of newspapers or it has any say in the policy-making of newspapers. Secondly, I am equally keen that when delinking takes place, the monetary vacuum that is likely to be caused, is not filled by some *benami* transactions, either on the part of the owners themselves or on the part of those whose intervention we would not like in this very sacred area of public opinion. The third perimeter I had spelt out was that the pattern of newspapers which emerges should not mean that the newspapers stop functioning. They must remain a viable proposition. We do not want to stop newspapers; we do not want to close down the newspapers. We only want that their freedom of expression is assured and guaranteed. And this I am saying not only as a part of my attitude to India but an idea that this is the part of the world-wide movement that is going on now.

I have earlier in this House spelt out that in the world to-day there is a big movement in the name of communication freedom and those who are asking and fighting for communication freedom, they are to-day very keen that this gay of communication can be filled only if those who wield the pen decide what they want to write. Our Constitution and our institutions have guaranteed freedom of expression to those who wield the pen and have something to tell to the people as such. Therefore, I do feel . . .



SHRI M. C. DAGA: What are the concrete steps you are taking? That we want to know.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I think my friend, Mr. Daga....

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member must have some patience to listen to the Minister.

SHRI DASARATHA DEB: We want a categorical and complete answer. What concrete steps are you taking?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: When I said earlier that newspapers should not be dealt with like the jute mills or the cosmetic factories in management, I would expect the same thing on the patience of my friends. When they ask specific questions, you must realise the delicate institutions with which you are dealing. After the last discussion here, I have said that the Law Ministry was going in detail and at length and they were studying the 700 pages judgment on the 24th and 25th amendments. I think about three weeks ago I had a meeting with the Law Minister on this subject. Fortunately, they have already finished their study of that judgement and a committee was set up of the Law Ministry and our Ministry and the Department of Company Affairs at the officers' level which is now examining and trying to formulate as to how it can be projected and what type of Bill can possibly stand the test that I have tried to enunciate here. I do know, and I very much appreciate and share the impatience of my friends because I am equally impatient about it. The things being what they are, the limitations being what they are, the type of issues being what they are, we have to see and keep one thing in mind, that we cannot and we should not in a hurry bring such a Bill before you which either damages the institution as such or this House can ever be accused that in our anxiety to throw out the tube water, we throw the baby also. We have to preserve the life of the baby and we are keen that this institution must be further built.

I have been asked some questions, but I think one thing you should kindly keep in mind. In debates, sometimes when we

use the word 'Press', I think we talk of the whole press as such, which, I think, may not be a very fair enunciation of the situation. We are dealing with a limited section of the Press, what we choose to call either 'monopoly press' or the press controlled by industries other than the press itself. Therefore, let us also keep in mind at the same time that in India fortunately, in the last 20—25 years, the press, as an institution, outside this section, has grown into a very healthy press, as for instance, the emergence of the language press in India. I think in India we can be proud of the Bengali press, the Marathi press, the Malayalam press, the Tamil press and, to a great extent, the Hindi press and we have come to a stage where they may be called a mature press and most of it is outside the monopoly. This is something we should keep in mind. At the same time, we should also keep in mind the fact that when we talk that the press is suffering from certain ailments, we must draw this line. It will be very unfair, perhaps, on our part to try to blame the entire press as such.

A question has been raised regarding news agencies. About news agencies, I would like to say that the Press Commission has recommended that a corporation should be set up.

The Press Commission's document is very valuable and we have been trying to interpret it in our own way as to what is meant by the corporation. If corporation means a company only then the major news agencies are companies as such. The other possibility is whether it can be a public sector company. Naturally I don't think my friends would expect a public sector company as Government interference would come in. The third alternative can possibly be that it should be some sort of a charter given by the Parliament like some news agencies in some parts of the world. The only issues which emerge now are these. Number one is, how to run it, who runs it, who is the board of management, etc. These are precisely the issues on which we are about to close on and we will be in a position to come before you with a

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more defined picture of the whole situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They are anxious to know how long it will take for you and whether you can give some idea.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I beg your pardon; I am not in a position to say in terms of time, but I can only say this thing that our anxiety is that we should try to finalise it within the course of this year itself.

Regarding the Press Council Act, at present there is a Committee which is sitting these days comprising the Members of Parliament from both the Houses to advise the Government about the amendments to the Press Council Act and that will come either by the end of this session or early next session.

And, so far as delinking is concerned it is not so easy to say delinking. I don't want to take the time of the House by quoting from Supreme Court judgements. There are a series of them. The main issue is, how do you get across those hurdles. And that is the real difficulty. And, if my friend Mr. Daga or any of my friends here had come to some sort of a studied solution I will be very glad to entertain them and I will be glad to discuss it with them if they have any specific suggestions in this regard.

Shri Kachwai has asked if the Press Council has exerted itself on monopoly. Unfortunately it has not. This is one of the points being discussed by the Members of a Parliamentary Committee because under the last Press Council Amendment Act, one of the responsibilities given to Press Council was to study growth of monopoly and give to Government for its recommendations. Unfortunately the Press Council thought it fit to ask the Government its views before they could come to some conclusion and I wrote back to them saying that they should not be influenced by Government's thinking; Press Council is not a wing of the Government nor is it a limb of the Government. Therefore Press Council independently should come to some conclusion about monopoly itself. I hope either the present Press

Council or the next one will try to attend to this.

Mr. Kachwai has raised the issue regarding radio. He has only tried to repeat his well known arguments. As you have rightly said the issue today is only about delinking. That is an issue which needs a detailed reply and I will restrain myself in not replying.

I would only say this thing, that is, Government in this country is not something imposed from outside. Government represents the people of this country and if radio or any communication system is run by the community for the community's benefit, to try to equate it or even compare it with the intervention in a media by a few money bags is a very unfair judgment because that way Mr. Kachwai is spelling out some lack of faith in the people as such. And I think the people and their elected representatives express their opinion here and I as a custodian on their behalf, am responsible to them, in respect of whatever policy is decided.

श्री हुकमचन्द कच्छवाय : हमें तो विश्वास है, लेकिन आप उसका दुरुपयोग करते हैं। मोनोपली आपने बना रखी है। रात दिन रेडियो आप के गाने गाता है अगर किसी की बात देता ही नहीं है। उत्तर प्रदेश के चुनाव में हमने देख लिया।

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN: May I seek a clarification? The hon. Minister said that there was no study so far made about the monopoly influence..

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: By the press council.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN: But is it not a fact that Shri R. C. Dutt of the Monopolies Commission had made a special study and Mr. Mahalanobis of the Planning Commission had also made some studies?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I am talking of the Press Council. I admit that those studies are there. So far as the facts are concerned, the definite question asked of me was whether the Press Council had made a study and I was replying to that question. I have not suggested that these

studies have not been made.

As I said, I am not going to deviate from the course that I have indicated on this basis that studies are not available; I am of the opinion that monopoly exists; I am of the opinion that delinking is called for. I am of the opinion that it is an area which in the national interest and in the interests of wider social expression should be safeguarded and taken away from those who have no other right on it except that they own it and have money to own it. Therefore, my policy enunciation is very clear on that point.

Shri Dasaratha Deb had raised some issues regarding *The Statesman*. It is a fact that journalists working in *The Statesman* had brought to my notice some of the issues or problems to which the hon.

Member has drawn our attention. Should the journalists want to come and discuss with me again and enlighten us on some of the problems that are facing them. I shall be very glad to help them. Wherever I can or bring them to the notice of the West Bengal Government wherever they can help.

I would conclude by saying that we in this country have a great deal of faith in freedom of expression, and we do feel that delinking is called for and it must be achieved within the framework of our Constitution.

18.21 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, March 7, 1974/Phalguna 16, 1894 (Saka).*