

इन का कोई कारण नहीं दिया है। इस विधेयक का इतिहास है। इस विधेयक को जब सदन में पेश किया जा रहा था तो यह कहा गया था कि इसे ज्वायंट कमेटी में भेज दिया जाय। इस बीच देश में अस्पृश्यता फैल रही है और आये दिन उसको लेकर दुष्ख कांड हो रहे हैं लेकिन उस ज्वायंट कमेटी की रिपोर्ट आने में देरी हो रही है।

श्री सच्चिदानंद (सैदपुर) : समय इसीलिए माया जा रहा है ताकि जो ज्यादातिया हो रही हैं वह भी गिरफ्त में आ सकें और सब पहलुओं पर विचार किया जा सके।

MR. SPEAKER : My experience for some time past has been that there is not a single Committee which does not ask for extension of time. Once or twice it is all right, but not every time. There are many Committee which want my permission to go out of Delhi to get some very important information here and there. If they do not go out, you will ask why they did not go out and collect information on the spot.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA (Serampore) : Consultative Committees also go out.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Dimond Harbour) : The Rajya Sabha Housing Committee went out sight-seeing.

MR. SPEAKER : Housing Committees of States come here also.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : I met the member of a State Assurances Committee in Goa.

MR. SPEAKER : There are a number of assurances which have to be attended to.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur) : We have no objection. Unfortunately, whenever I am a member of a Select or other Committee, they do not go out. But I find that the Committees are going out too frequently, to Srinagar, Bangalore etc.

These are the two places for the Committee meetings. I do not mind it, for, the climate is good. But it will convert the entire Parliament into a mobile Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER : So far as you are concerned, we will see that you go to Srinagar and Goa! (Interruptions) I shall put the motion to the House. The question is :

"That this House do extend up to the first day of the last week of the next Session, the time for the presentation of the Report of the Joint Committee on the Bill to amend the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955 and further to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1951."

The motion was adopted.

MATTER UNDER RULE 377

PRESS REPORT RE. NEWSPAPER COMPANIES

BILL, 1972

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Dimond Harbour) : Sir, under rule 377, I wish to raise the following.

In the Part II Bulletin dated 24th July, 1972, para 735, Item No. 50 mentions about the introduction of the Newspaper Companies Bill, 1972, that is, a Bill to provide for diffusion of press ownership. The footnote further states that some of the Bills included for introduction may be taken up for consideration if time permits. I was a little surprised to see in the press yesterday that the proposed Bill for diffusion of ownership of newspapers is not likely to be introduced in the current session of Parliament, although this has been mentioned in the above-mentioned Part II Bulletin. One explanation given for the delay is that Mr. I. K. Gujral has taken charge of the Ministry very recently and needs time to study the report on the diffusion issue.

My reaction to this is that instead of making a statement on the floor of the House, seeking approval of withdrawal of item No. 50 from the Part II Bulletin, para 735, the Government has chosen to go to the press to publicise it even when the House is in session.

The second thing that comes to my mind is that this is a Bill which is hanging fire since the middle of last year and I wonder why the Government has chosen to defer it further. Our learned friend, the hon. Minister, Shri I. K. Gujral, has been the Minister of information and Broadcasting for years and is fully acquainted with the affairs of the Ministry, and to mind, in the ruling party there is hardly another person who knows more about the Ministry than he does. Naturally, our expectation was that if the Government is serious to enact the said Bill, it should be done without any further delay.

May I seek, through your good offices, a statement from the Government and may I ask them to tell us the truth that they have in mind?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): Sir, when Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu gave me a compliment, I felt very apprehensive.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (Begusarai): Not so good a compliment.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I was expecting a better compliment from you.

The hon. Member has raised an objection to the procedure alleged to have been followed by Government in going to the press rather than coming to the House. I agree that such a procedure, if it had been followed by the Government, would have been open to objection. But the fact is that Government have not done so. No statement has been made to the press by or on behalf of Government. A news item to this effect has indeed appeared in a newspaper, but whatever the source of the news is, it is not based on any material furnished by Government to the press.

It is true, however, that it may not be possible to introduce the Bill in the current session of Parliament.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: The cat is out of the bag.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: As the hon. Member is no doubt aware, there are various steps which have to be taken by the Government before a Bill is ready for introduction in Parliament. The first draft of a Bill containing certain provisions approved by the group of Ministers

has indeed been suggested, but the provisions have to be considered in depth by the Cabinet, and thereafter the draft fully vetted by the Government draftsmen before the Bill can receive the final approval of the Government.

The proposed Bill is an important one and is receiving careful consideration of the Government.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: How is it mentioned in Para II Bulletin 7 I want to know.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): The newspapers said that 50 Bills have been introduced and are to be discussed.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: This is published in Part II Bulletin. Now, he comes with a different story. All this has created confusion.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: It was printed in Part II of the Bulletin. The procedure here is that considerably in advance of the session, the Ministry has to indicate what type of business it might bring before the House itself.

It does happen when Shri Shyamanandan Mishra was Minister it was happening even then—that sometimes we are not in a position to come prepared with a Bill at a time when we would like to introduce it. I can assure my hon. friends that the Government's policy announcement on this issue stands; there is no question of diluting our stand whatsoever.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Gwalior): Will the Government consult the Press Council before finalising the Bill in regard to the diffusion of ownership of newspapers?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I would not like to make any commitment at this stage. The Press Council has been seized of this matter for a fairly long time and we expected some report to emerge from the Press Council.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Just as in the case of the Bill on defections the Government was pleased to consult the Members of the House including the leaders of the opposition, would it not also be proper to consult some Members of the House, particularly the Opposition with regard to the Press Bill which concerns the freedom of the Press? Does the Government propose to do it?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : I shall keep this suggestion in mind.

SHRI H. N. MUKHERJEE (Calcutta—North-East) : I had no intention of butting in, but the statement of Mr. Gujral is very disconcerting. When the Government announced their intention to have legislation of this kind on a subject which has been hanging fire for a very long time, naturally there must have been some intention on the part of the Government to seriously proceed with it. Even though the Bulletin was dated the end of July, so far, almost on the eve of the session it appears now, that the Government have no serious intention and have now referred it to the Press Council and a hell of a lot of other things happen to be made. Does it mean that the Government is going back to its accustomed habit of procrastination over this matter because there is a long record in regard to delays over dealing with questions involving big money interests... (*Interruptions*) Does the Government intend to allow this to happen? This has happened over and over again announcing things only for public consumption and getting a good chit from the public aid then coming before Parliament and saying: we do not have the draft ready yet... (*Interruptions*) This is entirely disconcerting and very reprehensible.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : To my hon. and learned friend whom I have known for ages I do not have to prove my *bona fides* on the subject. My views on the subject are well known and have often been repeated. I am keen that when the Bill comes before Parliament it should be such as has no loopholes and that it achieves the purpose it is meant to achieve. Now, we have now referred the Bill to the Press Council. Some years ago the Press Council was asked to apply its mind to this aspect and we were hoping that the Press Council would give their report and that also could be kept in mind. It is a serious matter and it concerns one of the basic institutions of democracy in the country. In view of this I hope my friends will understand that whatever steps we take they must be carefully considered to achieve the purpose we want to achieve.

DR. BANEN SEN (Barasat) : There is a news report that there is pressure on the Government to water down the Bill. We want to be assured that the Government is not under the pressure

of big newspaper magnates to water down this Bill.

SRI I. K. GUJRAL : My hon. friends know well that neither myself nor this Government is subject to any pressure.

MR. SPEAKER : May I also add something? I do not know what are his compulsions. Mr. Boau has raised point over which I also feel concerned. After sending a Bill as a proposed business for this session and after it is printed in the bulletin, it is difficult for us when a statement is made outside the House that the Bill is not coming up

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : May I make two humble submissions? We have not made any statement outside the House. We have not submitted any Bill to the office; we had only intimated our intention to introduce a Bill.

MR. SPEAKER : I quite accept your explanation. That was not directed to you, but to the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Since he is not here, I gave that explanation.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR) : I am very much here (*Interruption*).

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : The Minister has tried to take us for a ride. How can this news break out to the press unless you had spoken to them?

SHRI SHYAMANANDAN MISHRA : The Minister should have come out with a contradiction.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD (Bhagalpur) : Will the result of the mature consideration being given by Government be known at least in the next session?

MR. SPEAKER : Government should send a list of only those Bills which are mature and ready. Otherwise, there is no use indicating something, because we send it to the members and members are all the time expecting copies of those Bills and we have nothing in hand. I request Mr. Raj Bahadur to bear this in mind.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR : I bow down to your ruling, but may I say, there is no intention of misguiding the House? We expressed the intention that we shall try to introduce it this session.

MR. SPEAKER : In future, you must be sure of everything.

SHRI RAJ BAHADUR : I will make double enquiries in future.

MR. SPEAKER : Be sure about other Bills also.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : I have written another letter to you, Sir, about the Malhotra business in the State Bank. 1 year and 3 months have passed. Rs. 60 lakhs was given out by this public sector bank and we do not know anything. Government does not say anything. They are drawing a curtain. We want to cooperate with you in running the House, but it is becoming difficult. Let the Finance Minister make a statement as to what has happened to the enquiry that was instituted by the State Bank against Mr. Malhotra. Otherwise we shall be obliged to take recourse to other measures to extract the information from Government. There is a front page news item about this in today's papers. It is a very serious matter. We have been lowered in the eyes of the people. When we go back to our constituencies, people ask, "Did you get a share of the Rs. 60 lakhs?"

MR. SPEAKER : Please resume your seat.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Kindly give us an assurance that you will ask the Finance Minister to make a statement..

MR. SPEAKER : I am saying "Please, Please" and you are going on.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : You have a very hard task and I have a hard task too.

MR. SPEAKER : When I say "Please, Please" ten times, you do not listen.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : What is your ruling ?

MR. SPEAKER : We discussed it for so many hours in the last session.

SHRI SHYAMANANDAN MISHRA : The desire of the House should be conveyed to the government so that they can make a statement on a matter which is causing some anxiety to hon. Members. There should be some response from the hon. Speaker.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : It has appeared in the *Hindustan Times* today Will you kindly read it ?

MR. SPEAKER : This was discussed a month earlier. So, why should it come up again so early ?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : The departmental enquiry of the State Bank against Shri Malhotra is within the purview of the Finance Minister. Would he kindly explain the position to the House?

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : According to the press report, Shri Malhotra is going to be promoted. We would like to know what is happening.

MR. SPEAKER : So long as you are alive and so long as Shri Malhotra is alive, this subject will not die.

SHRI SHYAMANANDAN MISHRA : Rather, so long as this government is there.

12.46 hrs.

PAYMENT OF GRATUITY BILL
—contd.

MR. SPEAKER : We will now take up further consideration of the Payment of Gratuity Bill.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR (Quilon) : Sir, let me at the outset point out that the bureaucrats entrenched in the Labour Ministry and the weak-kneed policies of the Labour Minister, who never in his life understood the feelings of the working class of this country, they have watered down the provisions of this Bill. They have taken away some of the beneficial clauses which all sections of both Houses wanted to be incorporated in this Gratuity Bill.

Firstly, I do not understand why the Minister is opposed to the transport workers being included in this Bill when he knows fairly well that the transport workers are organised and they are getting many other benefits. They cannot be denied this benefit, especially when in many States they are enjoying this. If he is only anxious about the contractors of transport of goods in North India, let the country decide for itself in future.

The second aspect is the rate of gratuity should be 21 days instead of 15 days. Since many of the allowances and privileges which the workers are getting are