

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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Saturday, September 12, 1959/Bhadra
21, 1881 (Saka)

*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock.*

[MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

News Agencies

S.N.Q No 16 Shri C. D. Fande:
Will the Minister of Information and
Broadcasting be pleased to refer to
the reply given to Starred Question
No 1257 on the 9th September, 1959
and state:

(a) whether any criteria for the
News Agencies has been finalised, and

(b) if so, what are the broad out-
lines thereof?

**The Minister of Information and
Broadcasting (Dr Keskar):** (a) and
(b) Government receive requests from
time to time for the provision of
special facilities for the purveyance of
news to the public and have been con-
sidering what requirements Indian
news agencies should be capable of
fulfilling to serve adequately the
needs of newspapers and other sup-
pliers of information to the public
consistently with the general princi-
ple of free availability of correct and
unbiased information

The special communication facilities
at concession rates consist of leasing
of teleprinter circuits, reception of
multi-address news service on wire-
less and hiring of transmitters for
transmission of Press messages.
Ordinary postal means of communi-
cation like letters, book post or press
telegrams do not come within these

facilities and are open to all persons
or bodies who are authorised to use
such channels

In view of the numerous requests
coming from time to time and the
limited number of channels that Gov-
ernment have at their disposal, they
have recently examined the question
closely.

In this connection, they broadly
accept the definition proposed by the
UNESCO that a news agency is "an
undertaking of which the principal
objective, whatever its legal form,
is to gather news and news material,
of which the sole purpose is to express
or present facts and to distribute it
to a group of news enterprises and,
in exceptional circumstances, to pri-
vate individuals with a view to pro-
viding them with as complete and as
impartial a news service as possible
against payment and under conditions
compatible with business laws and
usage"

The Indian Press Commission while
drawing attention to the UNESCO de-
finition had further observed that
news agencies should not merely keep
themselves free from bias and follow
the principles of integrity, objectivity
and comprehensiveness, but should
also appear to newspapers and to the
public that they are following such a
course

Keeping the above in view, in con-
sidering the request of any news
agency, the following factors will be
taken into consideration:—

- (1) that it has as its principal aim
and objective the disseminat-
ion of news on the principles
of objectivity, integrity and,
as far as possible, compre-
hensiveness, and conforms to
the accepted standards of

journalistic ethics in the coverage and dissemination of news;

- (2) that it is managed as a public trust or a registered society, or a public limited company and is not ancillary to a commercial enterprise, or a newspaper, or connected with a political party; and
- (3) that its services are available to the whole body of the Press, the radio and information services on payment or, where appropriate, on terms of reciprocity amounting to payment.

The financial stability and solvency of any agency will naturally have to be taken into consideration also in order to see that it is able to pay its dues regularly. Though fulfilment of these general conditions might make any agency eligible, it is not possible to guarantee facilities. The provision of such facilities will have to depend on availability of channels and equipment. These facilities are liable to be withdrawn whenever in the opinion of Government the agency has ceased to function in accordance with the aforesaid general principles.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I do not think there is any necessity for any supplementaries. He has read one statement.

Shri Bhakt Darshan: Then why was the statement not given to us?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: As it is a long one, it could have been laid on the Table so that hon. Members could study it and then put supplementaries.

Shri C. D. Pande: At present there is a stipulation that any foreign news agency which comes to this country has to be sponsored by a member here. Since the press has got certain political bias, has it not been brought to

the notice of Government that such dictation from one press which sponsors the foreign news agency impairs the freedom of the press and dissemination of news from foreign countries?

Dr. Keskar: The import of the question is not clear to me.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It is rather suggestive and some information is given. The question should be brief and to the point.

Shri C. D. Pande: At present there is a stipulation that any foreign news agency which disseminates news here has to be sponsored by one newspaper in this country. Since the newspaper which sponsors dictates the terms, the incoming agency suffers from that dictation.

Dr. Keskar: There is no question of sponsoring. The rule is that foreign news agencies are not allowed to distribute news internally in this country, excepting through an Indian news agency. Now, simply because there is only one news agency here, we are allowing, as an ad hoc measure, foreign news agencies to function by arrangement with one newspaper. It is not a question of sponsoring.

Shri Hem Barua: Besides enunciating the general principles, may I know what steps Government have so far taken to ensure objectivity in presentation of news by national news services as well as international news services functioning in this country.

Dr. Keskar: I do not know what Government can do except to impress on the news agencies the desirability of such a course.

Shri Braj Raj Singh: Since the criteria for the news agencies have now been finalized, may I know whether, in addition to the PTI, any other news agencies in India have been given recognition and these facilities.

Dr. Keskar: It is, in fact, on account of the applications of one or two

news agencies that we felt that we should lay down certain general rules. At present we have not got any other all-India agencies. There are small agencies. But, as far as my recollection goes, we have only received applications, we have not got anything functioning.

Some Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Let hon Members study the statement first and then put supplementaries. Next question.

Bengal-Nagpur Cotton Textile Mill, Rajnandgaon

S.N.Q No 17. Shri Vajpayee: Will the Minister of Labour and Employment be pleased to state

(a) whether the Bengal-Nagpur Cotton Textile Mill at Rajnandgaon, Madhya Pradesh, has closed down from the 5th September, 1959,

(b) if so, the reasons thereof and the number of workers rendered idle as a result of the closure of the mill, and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to get the mill restarted?

The Deputy Minister of Labour (Shri Abid Ali): (a) Yes. From 6th September, 1959.

(b) Some of the reasons given by the management for closure are un-economic working and financial difficulties. About 3000 workers are affected.

(c) The State Government being the appropriate Government tried to persuade the employer to postpone the closure for another 3 months pending an enquiry but the employer wanted to affect a wage-cut of 22½ per cent to be treated as a deferred payment to be made good when the mills make profit. A survey party was appointed to investigate into the technical and financial position of the mills. Government of India have since issued a

notification appointing a Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri G. D. Somani, M.P., to investigate into the affairs of the mills.

Shri Vajpayee: Has Government received from the workers any proposal to work the mill on a co-operative basis and, if so, what is the reaction of Government to that proposal?

Shri Abid Ali: No such proposal has been received, so far as I know.

Shri Vajpayee: May I know whether the proprietors gave notice of their intention to close down the mills before they actually closed it down and, if so, what action Government took before the mill was closed down?

Shri Abid Ali: I have already stated as to what action was taken.

Shri Vajpayee: The first part of my question has not been answered. I wanted to know whether the proprietors gave previous notice.

Mr Deputy-Speaker: He wants to know whether notice was given of the intended closure.

Shri Abid Ali: Yes, Sir. They did give notice.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Since the Government of India has appointed a committee, may I know whether the closure notice has been withdrawn till the Committee submits its report?

Shri Abid Ali: The mill has been closed with effect from the 6th instant.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: According to the decisions of the Naini Tal 10th Labour Conference, the millowners have to give a notice of two to three months before they close down. Was such a notice given by the owners of this mill?

Shri Abid Ali: Yes, Sir. Notice was given.

Shri Anthony Pillai: Has any action been taken by the Government