

[Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha]

- cle 338(2) of the Constitution and to report to both the Houses as to the measures that should be taken by the Union Government in respect of matters within the purview of the Union Government including the Administrations of the Union Territories;
- (ii) to report to both the Houses on the Action taken by the Union Government and the Administrations of the Union territories on the measures proposed by the Committee;
- (iii) to examine the measures taken by the Union Government to secure due representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in services and posts under its control (including appointments in the Public Sector Undertakings, Statutory and Semi-Government Bodies and in the Union Territories) having regard to the provisions of article 335;
- (iv) to report to both the Houses on the working of the welfare programmes for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Union territories; and
- (v) to examine such other matters as may seem fit to the Committee or are specifically referred to it by the House or the Speaker;
- (3) That the members of the Committee shall hold office for a period of two years from the date of the first meeting of the Committee;
- (4) That in order to constitute a sitting of the Committee the quorum shall be ten;
- (5) That in all other respects the Rules of Procedure of this House relating to Parliamentary Committees shall apply with such variations and modifications as the Speaker may make; and

- (6) That this House do recommend to the Rajya Sabha that the Rajya Sabha do join in the Committee and communicate to this House the names of members elected from amongst the members of the Rajya Sabha to the Committee as mentioned above."

The motion was adopted.

12.39 hrs.

MATTER UNDER RULE 377.

Proposed increase in Prices of Newspapers

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (BEGUSARAI): With your permission, I want to draw the attention of the House as well as of the Government to the fact that the newspaper organisations have joined together and decided to raise their prices and also the advertisement rates as a result of the 30 per cent cut in the supply of newsprint effected by the Government.

This decision by the organization of the newspapers has adversely affected the newspaper-reading public as well as the small newspapers. It is feared that all the amount ear-marked for advertisement will be used up and appropriated by the big newspapers.

Then, the most important thing is the adverse repercussion of the Government's Order of 30 per cent cut on the report of the Parliamentary proceedings. There has been a drastic attention of the report of Parliamentary proceedings. Sometimes, these have been leading to a complete black-out of the contributions made by the private Members. The worst casualty, Mr. Speaker, is the Opposition side because the Government side is fully represented through a comprehensive coverage of their speeches. The Opposition side of the case is completely blacked out

SHRI VIKRAM MAHAJAN (Kangra): If the Opposition talks sense, it would be reported.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: You will take some time to understand the case. Now, Sir, this imbalance in the reporting of the Parliamentary proceedings creates a distortion and a wrong impression about the proceedings in the House. It also denies the facility to the public to know what their representatives in Parliament have been doing.

So, we want that the Government should take some urgent steps to see that the prices of the newspapers are not raised, that the small newspapers are not adversely affected and also that the Parliamentary proceedings are not attenuated in a drastic manner as is being done now.

श्री सतपाल कपूर (पटियाला): इस तरह से हाऊस के जरिए कनवेंसिंग करना ठीक नहीं है। बाकी बात तो ठीक है।

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. The Minister is there to reply. Don't get up without my permission.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): You have rejected my adjournment motion on this. At least you may give me half a minute to make my submission...

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry, I cannot allow this. Suppose you are not reported for two or three days. How do you feel? As Shri Mishra has already put it, he is speaking on that on behalf of all of you.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): So far as the cut in newsprint is concerned, I was always under the impression that you raised an important point. For example, Mr. Bosu raised about the thirty per cent cut.

MR. SPEAKER: Please address the Chair.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: About the 30 per cent cut, if I may say so, that has not been because of non-availability or

limited availability of foreign exchange. The cut has been there because the newsprint is not available. We have tried to write to everybody and if my hon. friends could help me in buying it from elsewhere, I am very glad to buy.

Then, Sir, Shri Mishra has raised two points. They need some elaboration on my part. So far as small newspapers are concerned, I hope he knows that the small newspapers mean the papers which have a circulation below 15,000, and this 30 per cent cut in newsprint does not apply to them.

The other aspect of it is regarding the advertisements cut etc. There is no such proposal before the Government that these papers will be affected.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Some also think that the advertisements earmarked for the small newspapers are consumed by these big newspapers.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: So far as Government advertisement is concerned, a meeting of the IENS was held where they discussed the possibility of raising the prices for the papers as well as for raising the rates for the advertisements. Two days ago a deputation, on behalf of the IENS came to me and did put their points of view before me. I have told them that the Government is not in a position to react till a detailed study is made. One thing should be understood basically by this House. The House will recall that some time ago the Government had set up a fact-finding Committee. The main idea of setting up the fact-finding Committee was that the newspapers should be able to put before them the details of their economy. Unfortunately, a very large number of newspapers, particularly, the bigger ones amongst them, did not give all the data to the fact-finding Committee. As a result thereof, the House will also recall that I had made

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an announcement here that we had given powers under the Commissions of Inquiry Act to the Committee. Now some data are coming up. If a newspaper comes to us and says that the price should be raised only because the newsprint has been cut, that is not acceptable to us *prima facie* unless a detailed costing is done and a detailed case is made out.

The House will recall that it has already passed an enactment called the Newspaper (Price Control) Act (No. 15 of 1972) which has given Government powers to control the prices of newspapers. I can assure you that we will not agree to the price being raised unless a very comprehensive case is presented and unless we are convinced that it is in the public interest that the prices should be raised. Therefore, the House need not get worried about this for the moment.

So far as advertisement rates are concerned, as the House knows, and as my hon. friend particularly knows, newspapers are free to fix their rates of advertisement so far as the private sector is concerned. So far as Government are concerned, the rates offered are examined by us at great length, they have to be correlated to circulation, type of coverage given, the areas that will be covered, the type of readership and then we decide on the rates. Naturally, this will need a detailed study, but if on its own, *suo moto* a newspaper decides that it is going to revise its advertisement rates so far as the private sector is concerned, it is for it to consider. But I may tell the hon. House that, by and large, the rates fixed by the DAVP have an influence on the private sector also because the private sector, by and large, decides on the basis of rates which are permitted by the DAVP. Therefore, at the moment, there is no question of our agreeing to any revision of rates till, again, a satisfactory costing is done and a satisfactory case made out by the newspapers. Only then can we come to some conclusion.

My hon. friend is bothered about coverage given to parliamentary proceedings, particularly the Opposition viewpoints. I think it is a very wrong way of looking at things so far as newspapers are concerned, because I do not think the 30 per cent cut essentially means essential coverage so far as the national life is concerned, should be either cut or ignored. Newspapers in this country and elsewhere have in times of emergency evolved new formats, I have spoken elsewhere, outside this House, suggesting that this is one such occasion when a great deal of professional skilled is called for when newspapers should think in terms of reconsidering the stereotype concept of reporting and coverage. While the essentials of life, like parliamentary life, must be covered, equally important for newspapers is that they should be able to cut non-essentials. I could give an example regarding the page which is given by most of the newspapers to the stocks and shares movements. Naturally, compared to parliamentary proceedings, stock and share movements are not so important, and I think newspapers should start thinking about it.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: How do you enforce it? We are already the victims of it.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Similarly, I feel some of the newspapers in India give a great deal of coverage to horse-racing. Some people may be interested in horse-racing; probably, my hon. friend, Shri Shyamnandan Mishra, is also interested in another race, but not horse-race. Therefore, he would not be interested. But I am certain, that by and large, the country would like to see more of what Shri Shyamnandan Mishra says than about a horse which ran in Bangalore, Poona and so on.

Therefore, I do hope that what we are saying here will have an effect on thinking journalists and on editors and they will start thinking in terms of new formats, a new approach, a new type of coverage, a new

method in which the papers should be reorganised. I am certain that without Government trying to draw their attention to the distortions that might be affected, if Shri Shyamandan Mishra's apprehensions prove to be true, wisdom will prevail.

My hon. friend, Shri Mishra, said that to an extent, he has started suffering already. I think to an extent also some newspapers are doing so to use it as an arm-twist. I hope they will not try to do so.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): I am on another issue, the issue which I raised last Friday when the Deputy-Speaker was in the Chair. I expected the hon. Minister of Industrial Development would make a statement today about the NTC's attitude and their decision to increase the price of cloth...

MR. SPEAKER: But there must be some intimation sent to me beforehand. He should not abruptly get up and speak like this.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: I expected the Minister but he did not come. Please direct him to come here. (Interruptions). The Minister did not turn up.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order. We will now resume discussion of the Agricultural Refinance Corporation (Amendment) Bill.

12 50 hrs.

AGRICULTURAL REFINANCE CORPORATION (AMENDMENT) BILL—Contd.

MR. SPEAKER: We have only 30 minutes left out of the time allotted;

how much time would the Minister like to take?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHATGI): 15 to 20 minutes.

MR. SPEAKER: Then there is no use asking any other Member to speak. There is no chance for them.

SHRIMATI SUSHILA ROHATGI: I can cut it down to 10 to 12 minutes.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHURAMAIAH): There are yet two or three speakers.

MR. SPEAKER: 12 minutes is all right. I will give three or four minutes each to one or two Members. Now, Shri Daga.

श्री मुखर्जी डागा (पार्ली) : अध्यक्ष मैं इस बिल का स्वागत करता हूँ। भा एक बात पर विचार कीजिये। पहले आप की कोऑपरेटिव सोसायटीज कोई स्कीम बनाती है, उस के बाद उस का एग्जामिनेशन होता है प्रपेक्स बैंक में, और प्रपेक्स बैंक को फाइनेंस करता है ऐग््रीकल्चर रिफाइनन्स कारपोरेशन। एक स्कीम को बनते हुए कितना समय लगता है? पहले स्कीम का एग्जामिनेशन करती है स्टेट्स की कोऑपरेटिव, उस के बाद प्रपेक्स बैंक उस की जांच करता है और उस के बाद वह ऐग््रीकल्चर रिफाइनन्स कारपोरेशन में जाती है। मेरी समझ में नहीं जाता कि जब आप कोई स्माइ इतिहास स्कीम बनाते हैं तब उसकी रिफाइनन्स करने में इतना समय क्यों लगता है कम से कम आप उस का