

[Shri Dasaratha Deb]

Coming to the newsprint shortage, why are we having this shortage? We are not short of raw materials in the country. There is shortage of newsprint because we have not built up the paper industry in the country. This should not be left in the hands of individuals and foreign producers, Government should come forward and take over all the paper factories and develop newsprint production in the country. Very recently in the west coast, in a paper factory, where 500 workers were working, unnecessarily a lockout was declared for 50 days. Government failed to intervene. As a result of this, thousands of people have suffered. The Government should have intervened, taken over the factory and run it under government control.

In India, there is no shortage of bamboo and other raw materials. These are available in the eastern sector. If Government take it up and develop newsprint production, the country may become self-sufficient in paper production. But Government is reluctant to do it. That is why I suggest that Government should start paper factories under their control.

MR. SPEAKER: That is a different matter.

SHRI DASARATHA DEB: Secondly, Government must see that weightage is given to the small newspapers so that they are able to run their papers satisfactorily.

MR. SPEAKER: I can accommodate two or three members, starting with Shri Mahajan. After that, the Minister will reply.

13.04 hrs.

RE. BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

—Contd.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contai): I heard there was a discussion about postponing the motion standing in my

name concerning the ICAR. I am agreeable to accommodate my friends on the other side, though they have set up only a party committee and not a national committee to accord a reception to the distinguished foreign dignitary visiting our country.

MR. SPEAKER: We cannot postpone your motion of today if you are not agreeable.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I was willing to accommodate them. I was saying they have set up a party committee with the General Secretary of the Congress Party as the Secretary and the President of their Party as the Chairman. Since it is a party meeting, how can I go there?

MR. SPEAKER: Just to accommodate your request I am postponing the discussion. I think we should accommodate it. This might be postponed to some other day. It is all right?

We are very much afraid of you.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH): It may be postponed to tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: We have already decided before the hon. Member came, but there were different reasons other than the reasons he has mentioned.

SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH: We can have it tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: We can decide it later on; it depends on the business that is coming tomorrow.

SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH: It is for your consideration.

MR. SPEAKER: We will see.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: It will be better if it is tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: For your convenience we can do it.

13.08 hrs.

The Lok Sabha adjourned for Lunch till Fourteen of the Clock.

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Four Minutes Past Fourteen of the Clock.

[SHRI S. A. KADER in the Chair]

PRESS COUNCIL (AMENDMENT)
 BILL—Contd.

SHRI Y. S. MAHAJAN (Buldana): The Bill before the House deserves to be supported because it is of a formal character. Government requires time for consulting leaders of different parties before bringing forward amendments in the Bill. Though formal in character, it is important because it gives an occasion to discuss the objectives and functions of the Press Council. The Press Council consists mainly of editors or journalists and it includes a few laymen. It is an autonomous body consisting of professional people mostly. Its objectives are to maintain the freedom of the Press and to see that newspapers and editors maintain the dignity of the profession.

Such a Press Council has been established in a number of countries like Japan, Israel, Chile, Turkey, Burma, Philippines, Korea and the U.K. In most of these countries it has functioned fairly well. In our country, the Council has carried out its objectives with a great deal of understanding and objectivity. The complaints which come to it are mainly of two kinds. Firstly, there are complaints by individual against newspapers about defamation or casting aspersions on their character. This is a widespread tendency on the part of newspapers, whether local, district, provincial or national, to publish material of this kind. It is sensational in character and is likely to increase the circulation. The Press Council has the power

to investigate such cases even without a complaint being made, but the report does not contain any such case. I would urge upon the Council to investigate such cases on its own initiative because it is very difficult for individuals to move the machinery and seek redress.

The second type of complaint is against Government for withholding advertisements, and alleging that thereby the freedom of the press is curtailed. In such cases, unfortunately the advice of the Council has not been accepted by the State Governments, viz., the principles on which advertisements are released to the press should be enunciated and made public. In an advertisement is withheld, the reasons for it should be made known to the persons concerned. Sometimes there are reasons for withholding the advertisements. Some newspapers, even after receiving a handout from a public authority, one publish or distorted information and news which cast aspersions on the character of the people in the official body. Therefore, if reasons are made known, there will be no ground left for such complaints to the Press Council.

There are a number of misunderstandings about the functioning of the Press Council. It is necessary to make it clear that the Council has only a moral authority. It investigates a case, gives its verdict, makes it known to the person concerned and censures him. It has worked fairly well in our country. This means the Council has no juridical authority. If the press does not maintain its dignity and taste and proper professional etiquettes, it may be necessary to arm the Council with teeth and give it authority to inflict punishment. This is a subject which can be considered coolly at a later stage.

Hon. members opposite have made some complaints. Mr. Mavalankar said that the press is not free because the government side gets more publicity than opposition members. On that ground he says, press is not free. It is