

[Dr. G. S. Melkote]

mission which they are placing before the country for acceptance. This is only a pilot programme. If intentions are not good and they are suspect, what they may do is to make the plan work for suffocation and death. What we have experienced in the recent past is that it has not been given fair trial at all. I only hope that even in these circumstances the indigenous doctors will come forward and get themselves trained to do the job under the pilot project and that they will give a good account of themselves. The present idea of pilot project is a slight improvement over no project schemes at all. There are lot of things which they have to do to come to the forefront. I therefore commend this to the rural practitioners, that they should take this opportunity to show their very best. The hon. Minister has given an assurance that he is doing his best to implement it. Keeping in view this assurance, I beg of the House to permit me to withdraw the Resolution. Thank you.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Has the hon. Member the leave of the House to withdraw his Resolution?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The Resolution is withdrawn by leave of the House.

*The Resolution was by leave,
withdrawn*

16.59 hrs

RESOLUTION RE OWNERSHIP OF NEWSPAPERS AND NEWS AGEN- CIES

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We will make sure that at least Government in the name of Shri H. N. Mukherjee—Shri Mukherjee.

SHRI H. N. MUKHERJEE (Calcutta—North-East). Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move.

"This House calls upon the Government to adopt immediate measures for delinking and democratically diffusing the ownership of newspapers and news agencies in the country."

I do not have to make a lengthy speech in order to commend this Resolution to the House because I am only asking for the implementation of a national policy already announced—whether willingly or not is a different matter—and I am calling upon the Government to shed certain dilatoriness which they have shown in regard to this matter of the diffusing of the ownership of newspapers and news agencies in this country.

Sir, the other day on the 17th of July, answering an Unstarred Question No. 504 the Minister replies that Government decision to delink newspapers and news agencies from industries is unchanged. In so far as dilatoriness is concerned his only answer was that the implications in the light of the Supreme Court judgement under examination.

17 hrs.

Now, we have heard a long enough story about the Supreme Court judgement standing in the way of delinking newspapers and news agencies from monopoly interests in industry and it is more than time that Government makes up its mind.

I took this opportunity of bringing forward this Resolution only in order to make sure that at least Government would say at the termination of this debate that before this particular present session is out the Bill, which has been long in preparation would be actually introduced.

Sir, as I said, this is a long story which I need not elaborate because

the House has heard it so often and also ex-Ministers of Government have been found so glibly offering support to the demand at public meetings, particularly, those organised by the working journalists and spokesman of the Government are fairly free with their words of assurances regarding Government's intention of fighting the monopoly in the press industry.

"In the opinion of the Commission the Press Commission went into this matter and the Press Commission had come to this conclusion on account of demands made by the working journalists and by many other people. But, the Press Commission, in spite of its miscellaneous composition, has made very definite recommendations about the diffusion of the ownership of newspapers. The Commission says—I am quoting the words from the Commission's Report—as follows:

"In the opinion of the Commission it would be ideal if the proprietor of a newspaper has no other interests but since it would not be a practical possibility, the Commission felt that the remedy lies in diffusion of effective control or diffusion of ownership among a large number of persons so that the chances of any dominant interests among the group of owners could be eliminated or cancelled mutually. One method of providing diffusion of control would be to transfer the management to a public trust. The Commission also recommended that diffusion might be brought about by the gradual distribution of shares to the employees, and to a small extent to the public both in the existing undertakings and in those to be started in future."

This was as long ago as 1954, and since the days of the conquest of the Indian Presses by the tycoons of big business the taking over of all the houses by the enterprises of patriotic journalism; from the money-lenders

the present-day successors of those money-changers had been lashed out of the temple of Jerusalem. This is a long story of taking over of the presses which is the instrument of genius collaboration between the leadership of a country and its people and not a story of the taking over of the presses but the most unspeakable tycoons who mint money out of the miseries of the other people. This story is much more and the time has come to put an end to it. In spite of this assurance which has been coming from Government in this regard, we find this peculiar procrastination. The Minister is here and he will have to be answerable to Parliament and to the country for this delay which has taken place over the years.

I feel that Government should have some pang of conscience in regard to this issue, for, on so many occasions they have come forward, through their spokesmen to give all kinds of assurances about their desire to do the right thing in regard to this point.

I have have a number of pronouncements made by Ministers of Government, for instance, by Mr. Gokhale who spoke on the desirability of the elimination of monopoly at the Eighteenth Annual Session of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists. He said on that occasion—and this was a couple of years ago—

"The press in India should forthwith cease to be a mouthpiece of the few and should really reflect bona fide the cross-currents of public opinion in the country."

And he added:

"From a competitive institution, the drift unfortunately now is towards monopoly. In my view, it must be reversed."

'Forthwith' was the expression used by this Minister of Government who made one of his early pronouncements

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before the Indian Federation of Working Journalists.

Then, in April, 1971, again, before the Federation of Working Journalists, Mr. K. V. Raghunatha Reddy made a speech; he was at that time Minister for Company Affairs, and he said:

"We have to start with the press in order to fight monopolists."

He said further:

"Having delinked commercial banks from industrial house, it is time to free newspapers also from their grip."

Another former member of the Government, Srimati Nandini Saipathy also made a statement before this House in July, 1971 where she reiterated that the control by monopoly over the press and all the news agencies in particular must go, and she referred to that premier news agency, the Press Trust of India, saying that the Press Trust of India had promised to turn itself into a public trust which would be run on lines which could be popularly and democratically organised and on that basis had taken loans, in fact, a very large loan of Rs. 55 lakhs—this was said in 1971—for the construction of their building, and yet they had not responded to the recommendation made by the Press Commission and that Government was trying to think out what steps should be taken in order to implement that recommendation.

The Press Commission's recommendations, therefore, have been given lip-service to, sometimes in very effusive language, because Ministers understand very well the value of publicity through the newspapers, and addressing gatherings of journalists, they are always very careful to see that their ideas are supported at least for the time being with some fulsome and

exaggerated statements of intention, but if those statements of intention were really intended to be disregarded then that really is a most pathetic state of affairs.

The Press Commission's recommendations in regard to the attack on monopoly, in regard to the diffusion of ownerships and trusts of newspapers, in regard to the concentration of ownership, in regard to advertising agencies and so many other things, which are not part of my resolution, have been given the go-by. They are remembered only for ceremonial occasions for certain Ministerial pronouncements which are not really intended to be implemented. This is a state of affairs which has to be put an end to once and for all. I would ask the Minister definitely to give an idea to this Parliament that it has no intention of delaying any further, and that before the end of the present session of Parliament he would introduce here the promised Bill for the diffusion of the ownership of the press as well as of the news agencies which play such an important role in our country at this moment.

The story of this conquest of the press by big business is such a sordid one that I hate to have to recall it, and I have so many details in regard to it that I feel perhaps I should not make a reference to it because this House is very well aware of the facts of the situation. But even so, one has to remember at least a few things in order not to let this medium of relationship with our people to deteriorate and to degenerate in the way it has been doing in the last two decades and more. After all, the press at one time was run by people in the days when the struggle for freedom was going on, by people who had a sense of mission, who had a feeling that to be a journalist was to be almost performing a mission for the country. From a mission, it turned out to be a sort of vocation to which a certain kind of people

were called; then it became a profession, very rightly because without professional expertise journalism as a technical performance cannot be conducted properly. But for journalism to become a profession should not at the same time have implied a deterioration of journalism into service of monopoly interests.

The fact of the matter is that today the control of the press is in the most undesirable hands, because big money in India is among the worst sharks in creation; big money in India includes some of the louisiest people that you can find anywhere in the world, big money in India is represented by those who have not the slightest sensibility about the needs and desires of our people, and if some of the best minds who are trained to journalism are bought up by the representatives of big business and are treated the way they are, then heaven help the future of this country, the future of any attempt at communication between the leadership and the people of this country.

This kind of process has gone on for such a long period that today we find that all the big newspaper chains in the hands of people who are big guns in industry and who are notorious for their monopolistic practices, not merely in the sense of monopolistic practices in the more advanced countries, but practices which stink to high heaven.

We find the biggest newspapers in our country today like the *Hindustan Times* and its allied organs, the *Times of India* group, the *Indian Express* group, the *Statesman*, the *Hindu*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Anand Bazar Patrika*. All these combines have come into the picture as business operators. Now, after all, if the Birlas

and the Dalmias and such people, whose names one finds it unsavoury to recite in Parliament so often, come to hold all the powers of the dissemination of news as well as of political views to our people, then we can very well imagine the kind of society we might have.

I need not go into details because they are so many that we cannot just bother about them; besides, they are fairly well known particularly to this Parliament. But it is truly a sordid thing—and we cannot forget it—that the Vivian Bose Commission report, for example, had shown how dreadful the story was when the *Times of India* chains of newspapers was bought up by the Dalmia Cement and other interests. We know how shares were transferred, how the moneylenders took over, how the Dalmia-Jains took over Bennet Coleman and other companies with people's money which they had manipulated. All this is part of reports which had been presented to Parliament and known to the country. The Vivian Bose Commission had found that the Dalmia-Jains robbed their shareholders of Rs. 2.61.00,000 odd and defrauded the exchequer of Rs. 14,51,979 and all that. From all these companies came Rs. 187 crores which was the price paid for buying the Bennet Coleman Co., which has brought out of *Times of India* since 1850 and so on and so forth.

I do not want to go into the details about these matters. They are very well known, but these are the papers which mould public opinion in our country. And here are the industrialists who, the Press Commission had said and who, every decent working journalist and every well-meaning citizen of this country would agree, should be out of control of this medium of propaganda, medium of education and medium of inspiration of all the social ideals which should inform our country at this present moment.

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Sir the Press Commission, when they made their report, took into account the state and trend of monopoly which existed in the Indian press in the early fifties. In the seventies, the position has become very much worse. I only refer to a few facts in order to put the matter in focus. While in 1952, the Goenka newspaper chain controlled 15 per cent of the Bombay circulation, 29 per cent of the Madras circulation and none in Delhi, in 1970 it was the second largest group in Delhi and Bombay and the dominant group in the southern region. During the same period, the *Times of India* group grew from a total of eight newspapers to 27. In 1952, 330 dailies had a circulation of 2.5 million. In 1969, there were 650 dailies with a circulation of 7.8 million copies. While the number of newspapers doubled, the circulation trebled.

Circulation alone, however, is not an indicator of monopoly, but we see, for example, from the Enquiry Committee on Small Newspapers on which I had the privilege to serve, that it pointed out in 1965, when the report was published, that the seven newspaper combines—*The Hindustan Times*, *The Statesman*, *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, the *Anrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Ananda Bazar Patrika* and *The Times of India*—consumed 39.8 per cent of imported newsprint and 33 per cent of NEPA newsprint. They take the lion's share of whatever supply of newsprint there is in the country. This increasing trend towards the proliferation of common ownership units which would be the dominant feature in our press is a very dangerous factor in the social life today.

In the case of Bennet Coleman which owns *The Times of India* group, we find the shareholders are Sahu Jain, Portland Cement Co, Jai'rur Udyog and so on and so forth. In the *Hindustan Times* group, the principal shareholders, of course are the B'ia Brothers and their satellites. They

have also control over the *Searchlight* and *Pradeep* of Patna. The Goenka group is the largest in the country. Its ownership has certain peculiar features because of its operation in a spiderish fashion in different areas. But their main consolidated base of operations is the press.

We find all sorts of things happening. Then, one major shareholder in the *Express* chain is Shriyans Prasad Jain, brother of Shanti Prasad Jain of Bennet Coleman. There is a peculiar family link between those newspaper magnates. This person's daughter is married to B. D. Goenka, son of Ramnath Goenka. Shri B. D. Goenka looks after the newspaper business almost exclusively while the father runs between newspaper and jute. Suddenly B. D. Goenka's wife, a lady named Saroj Goenka, blossoms up into a director of *Indian Express*, Bombay. This story is so sordid. I say it is sordid because only the other day, on the 24th of July, there was in Parliament an Unstarred Question No. 290 when it was asked if the CBI had completed its probe into the charges of cheating, forgery and falsification of accounts and stocks against the directors of *Indian Express* group of companies and if so what was the result and what happened in the Law Court. A long answer was given to it and all these worthy persons belonging to the Goenka family, namely, Shri Ramnath Goenka, Shri Bhagwandas Goenka, Shrimati Saroj Goenka and so on and so forth were all accused and charged under different sections of the *Indian Penal Code*, but because they have tonnes of money they go to Court and get writ petitions admitted in their favour at least as an interim proposition to delay the matter where cheating, forgery and falsification of accounts and stocks were made. The fact that they control the newspapers and the formulation of policy is very clear from the comments and views of such a man as Mr. M. C. Setalvad, who has gone on record to tell the world how they have

behaved in so far as controlling the editorial policy is concerned. I have no time to go into the details about it, but Mr. Setalvad in his reminiscences refers to the incidents of the Statesman where he was made Chairman of the Trust to control it and when the Tatas, Martin Burn and Mafat Lal came together to get hold of the paper. Mr. Setalvad has put it on record, that for the wrongest possible reasons pressure was put by the representatives of Tatas and their allies on the Statesman Board in order to get rid of an editor, Mr. Prann Chopra, who was accused of being a pro-communist in his slant on reporting and commentary in regard to the United Front Government in West Bengal in that period. Mr. Setalvad being the upright jurist that he is, says that it was absolutely against all canons of control over editorial policy which could be legitimately employed by those who are owning the newspaper. We know all this. We know how a man like Mr. Frank Moraes, who could come one day and find on his table a letter of dismissal. We know how smaller people are treated and how these newspaper magnets treat the top people under their employ, because they pay them well atleast so far as those who are at the top are concerned. Not everybody in Journalism is paid very well. I have here an article by a leading journalist Mr. Chaturvedi, who has said—out of his reminiscences that Mr. Bhola Paswan Shastri began as a journalist in 1946 with a salary of Rs. 25 and he took up something else because he could get Rs. 50. Even today in the newspapers which are not in the favoured category, people are getting wages, which are absolutely much below the minimum which should be given to people particularly of the sort of talent that the Journalists are supposed to have.

Here are the people controlling newspapers which have absolutely nothing whatever to do with the interests of our people. Here are some

people posing as editor-in-chief. I can name the papers, the names of whose editor-in-chief are advertised on top everyday but who cannot write a leader to save their lives. I said it long ago. In the newspaper industry there are people now who put their names as editor-in-chief, but who cannot write a leading article even if they are to save their lives by doing so. Yet because they have the purse strings, they control it. This is the kind of thing which goes on and our journalism is conducted in the interests of some people.

I have found a very useful brochure by Sumanta Banerjee published by the Federation of Working Journalists which tries to show what happens with reference to the day to day reporting in the different newspapers especially in India's monopoly press, in the five groups which are the most important in India's monopoly press, not only in the editorial comments, which they are free to make against the national policies of the country, but also in factual reporting takes a prejudiced and partisan view. In this book, very carefully documented references are made. The writer refers to about 10 items in regard to which, quite apart from editorial views of these monopoly papers, reporting was so prejudiced and one-sided and intended to mislead our people. These were the items he has taken in the last few years: The crisis in the Congress leading to the split, the question of bank nationalisation, Presidential Election of 1961, abolition of privy purses in 1970, communal riots in Ahmedabad in 1969, the fall of the West Bengal U.F. Government preceded by alleged lawless activities, the fall of the Kerala U.F. Government preceded by interference, Punjab-Haryana dispute over Chandigarh in 1969-70 and the mid-term poll in 1971. This book shows, by documented references to the manner in which reporting is made in the monopoly press, that their idea is to vitiate and distort facts even in order to produce a completely different influence and impact upon the minds of our people.

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I would like at this stage not to go any further into it, because many members, I am sure, would like to take part in this debate and I do hope that the debate when it continues gets a longer tenure, because many members from different parts of the House would like to stress on the Government the absolute urgency of legislation on this point. I would only say, it is the most scandalous thing that this Government has permitted so much delay and dilatoriness, which I think is more than suspicious. This delay and dilatoriness only suggests that Government's links with big money and monopoly are still so strong that they really do not dare to strike at big monopoly at a point where it might hurt their interests in the long run. This is why Government which has been procrastinating over this matter over the years, promising to bring legislation over a couple of years and more now, this is why Government which sometime ago even announced publicly—one of its ministers, I think Shri K. V. Raghunatha Reddy had told a public meeting that there was a draft already ready of the Bill which is only waiting to be produced before Parliament, has not done it and now for umpteen years we are listening to the fact that because of the price page schedule case having been decided in a particular way in the Supreme Court, Government cannot do it. This is absolutely a lame argument which does not hold water and that is why in order to emphasise on Government the absolute urgency of the immediate introduction of legislation for the diffusion of the ownership of newspapers and news agencies, I want Government to give us an assurance that they will do it here and now, as soon as ever that is practicable. There is no need to delay it any further. I would not take any more of the time of the House, though there is a great deal more to be said, and I do hope that the members would take that amount of interest which is needed in order to put maxi-

imum pressure on the Government to make sure that this long delayed legislation is adopted by the House.

SHRI PILOO MODY (Godhra): I want to put it on record that an honourable Member of Parliament was mentioned by Prof. Mukerjee and there was no objection from the Chair.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Resolution moved:

"This House calls upon the Government to adopt immediate measures for delinking and democratically diffusing the ownership of newspapers and news agencies in the country."

There is an amendment by Shri Daga. Is he moving it?

SHRI M. C. DAGA (Pali): Yes, Sir, I beg to move:

That in the resolution,—

for "delinking and democratically diffusing the ownership", substitute—

"a democratic and national control and management" (1).

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Burdwan): Sir, the Resolution which has been moved by the hon. Member, Shri H. N. Mukerjee, if I may say so, is very timely. It brings to the notice of the House and of the public the failure of the Government in implementing the decision which they allegedly have taken a long time back, namely, to bring forward appropriate legislation for delinking and diffusing the ownership of newspapers and news agencies in this country. We have been reading in newspapers, from time to time that Government have been making policy decisions as a ritual to bring forward this legislation but like many other policies they have been saying, this is one of the most important legislations which has not yet been introduced in the House.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He may continue his speech when this subject is taken up next time.
17.31 hrs.

HALF AN HOUR DISCUSSION

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MODERNISATION OF POLICE FORCE IN GUJARAT

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House will now take up the Half an Hour Discussion.

SHRI P. M. MEHTA (Bhavnagar).
Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, sometime back I had seen a press report that the displaced Deputy Home Minister of Gujarat had disclosed that the Government of Gujarat had prepared a master plan for the modernisation of the police force and that they have forwarded it to the Central Government for financial assistance. I thought that this is a very important matter and I should seek some information from the Central Government. Therefore, I gave notice of my question. But the answer does not give any information nothing comes out from the answer. That is why I am raising this half an hour discussion.

Though the discussion relates to the modernisation of the police force of Gujarat, the issue involved is much larger and concerns all the States. The question is whether the time has not come when the police force requires immediate modernisation and overhauling. It has been reported on various occasions in the press that several States like Bihar, Assam and Maharashtra are considering this important problem. It is unfortunate that the Government of India is indifferent to this basic problem, the solution of which is very essential for maintaining peace in the country.

What has happened recently in Uttar Pradesh should not be forgotten. It should not be taken as a normal event or incident. The unrest and discontent of the police force in UP

ultimately resulted in the police mutiny. The civil administration there got completely paralysed and the popular government broke down. This was because of the carelessness and negligence on the part of the State Government and the indifferent attitude of the Union Government. The State Government failed to take the necessary steps to redress the grievances and remove the discontent of the police force in time and the Union Government also failed to assist the State Government.

The concept of modernisation should not be a narrow or limited one. The supply of modern equipments should not be the only concept of modernisation of the police force. The concept should be much broader and wider and should cover the humane aspect of the problem of the police force.

Therefore, a new comprehensive approach to the working of the entire police force is required. The Union Government should evolve a model master plan covering the modernisation inclusive of human aspects of the police force problems.

One Police Commission has come to some interesting conclusions. I would like to refer to it because these observations are of such nature that will apply to the State of Gujarat very much today. I quote the observations as reported by the *National Herald* dated 26th May, 1972. It says:

"The U.P. Police Commission... has come to the "irresistible" conclusion that "concealment of crime has been indulged in on an extensive scale" in the State.

The Commission observes that the crime statistics since Independence "bear on their face marks of unreality. Indeed, they run contrary to the experience of everybody, and their unreality does not need much