

[Dr. Katju]

I am once again thankful for the reception which has been accorded. What has been said will guide us for many months to come.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill, as amended, be passed."

The motion was adopted.

NEWSPAPER (PRICE AND PAGE)
BILL

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting (Dr. Keskar): I beg to move:

"That the Bill to provide for the regulation of the prices charged for newspapers in relation to their pages and of matters connected therewith for the purpose of preventing unfair competition among newspapers so that newspapers may have fuller opportunities of freedom of expression, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

This Bill is coming before this House in pursuance of one of the important recommendations of the Press commission. You will remember that, when the House discussed the report of the Press Commission, this figured as one of the important points of attack. Some of my friends were severe that we were not doing anything in this direction to help the smaller newspapers by having a price-page schedule as early as possible. It was clear from the tone of the debate that the overwhelming majority of Members attached great importance to this recommendation and emphasised that it should be implemented as quickly as possible.

The Press Commission has based its recommendations on a number of considerations. I would like, with your permission, to make a reference to this relevant paragraph of the Press

Commission's Report. The Press Commission, in paragraph 205 has said:

"...as matters stand at present a paper with a large circulation because of its lower cost of production per copy enjoys certain advantages over other papers with smaller circulation. Similarly, a paper with large capital resources behind it is free from certain handicaps which affect another paper with limited capital."

Then it says:

"It is true that such economic advantages and handicaps exist in a number of industries but their presence in the newspaper industry is not, in our opinion, conducive to the even and healthy development of the Press. Newspapers serve as media for the free exchange of information and of ideas."

The Commission therefore feels—I am not reading the whole paragraph because it is a long one—like this. The report says:

"After examining various schemes that have been put forward for this purpose, we feel that to fix a minimum price at which papers of a particular size can be sold would be the most effective measure to bring about this end."

That is, to give protection to smaller papers and papers which have not got a big financial standing.

The Commission has made a number of references as to the reasons why certain other factors also, which govern the position of a newspaper, are also involved in this. For example, they say that papers with bigger resources are accustomed to indulge in price-cutting and thus trying to reduce the sale of a rival, and also sometimes reducing it to a position in which the paper might have to close down. This has happened in a number of papers. The Commission has labelled such practices of bigger and more powerful

papers, which I would not like to enumerate here in detail and take your time unnecessarily, as un-journalistic practices, and the Commission's opinion is that in order to protect the weaker papers with lesser financial resources, the most important measure would be fixation of a price-page schedule. The Commission also says, and it has tried to make it clear, that this is not the only recommendation; that is, it does not feel that this alone is going to solve this question of helping smaller papers but this, in its opinion, would be the most important factor.

It has also said in paragraph 211 that when it consulted the newspaper industry regarding this question, it found that there was a considerable divergence of opinion. It has also noted that the divergence has not been according to the size of the paper or its standing; sometimes it has happened that papers of long standing and even powerful position have supported the proposal for a price-page schedule, while there have been papers which might not be in a very happy position who have opposed this schedule. But, on the whole, the Commission feels that some such measure is absolutely essential, if we want to protect the smaller and weaker papers.

If we summarise briefly the Commission's views or the arguments that the Commission has put in favour of the price-page schedule, we can say that in the Commission's opinion, guaranteeing a fair price to independent small papers will enable them to resist competition from bigger and richer papers.

The other important point which the Commission has emphasised in many parts of the Report is—no doubt in a number of industries we allow such kind of competition like price-cutting or cornering which may or may not be good in other industries though I myself am doubtful whether it is a very fair practice in other industries—that

as far as the newspaper industry is concerned, the Commission feels very strongly that allowing such a practice to exist in this industry will ultimately lead to the cornering of the Press of the country by a few combines, who will then make up our opinions for us and we will have only to read those opinions; we will not get that free and varied expression of opinion which is at the base of a free Press.

Shri Kamath (Hoshangabad): It is already coming to that almost.

Dr. Keskar: That is one of the reasons why this Bill is being brought forward. But the conditions might even be worse.

I would like to enumerate the other arguments in favour of the price-page schedule because, though the House has expressed a general favourable opinion to this principle here, it is necessary, in view of the criticism levelled by various circles here and outside, we should be very clear as to why we feel that such an enactment should be placed on the statute-book. The main points which I would like to place before the House are: that such a fixation of price-page schedule is likely to help in equalising competition and also in the prevention of the emergence of monopolies, and it will also help in relaxing the stranglehold that big advertising interests have on newspapers and generally do not make the papers more independent—of course, it is difficult to say that papers will not depend on advertisements. But when papers have to depend solely on the advertisement revenue in order to live or survive from the assault of their rivals, then they have no other course left except to do what the advertisers ask them to do. While we feel that when a minimum fair price is guaranteed independent papers will have greater chances of fighting for their existence, and they will be able to subsist, they may not become rich and powerful financially; but, in any case, they can survive and carry on their work.

Shri Feroze Gandhi (Pratapgarh Dist.—West cum Rae Bareilly Dist.—East): If pressure is put by Government advertisers, will they also be affected?

Dr. Keskar: Yes. The papers can become independent of advertisers to some extent and, naturally, the Government also as an advertiser.

The scheme has been criticised by certain interests here and outside. There has been, first of all, criticism that it interferes with the freedom of the Press. Recently I have had the occasion to read criticisms in the foreign Press also regarding the Bill which is before the House.

Shri Kamath: Which foreign Press—American, Russian or Chinese?

Dr. Keskar: It is an American paper.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It was an English paper.

Dr. Keskar: No, Sir; it was an American paper.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It was observed that this was a step towards fascism or something like that.

Dr. Keskar: The criticism is that the Press is not free in any way it is fettered. Even if you make financial regulations about the Press, it is felt that the Press is fettered. I have looked the provisions very carefully, and I am yet to find out how this affects, for example, the free expression of opinion. After all, a free press means not a free Press business which carries out all sorts of business transactions, but rather it means a Press which has freedom to express any opinion it likes and not be punished for that opinion. If we fix a price at which newspapers ought to be sold, it will not stop the newspapers from expressing a particular opinion. Strong and virulent opinion can be expressed in newspapers of four pages as well as in the newspapers which have eight pages. One can concentrate the venom even

in two pages. One might not need eight to ten pages to express such an opinion. So, I am not able to understand that criticism. Of course it is possible that it might be said that we restrict the volume of freedom of expression. I am however unable to understand whether there is any volume in the freedom of expression. It is, of course, possible that some papers might like to put extra material in a paper, but it is my experience that a paper, for becoming bigger and thus having a number of pages more, does not necessarily give greater material. It is possible that a paper of four pages might give better material by becoming a paper of six pages or even of eight pages but if a paper wants to give 12 to 16 pages, it is not necessary that all the additional pages would give very interesting information, to the reader. It might give more advertisement or such other stuff.

Shri Kamath: You might stop them.

Shri Feroze Gandhi: The time will come when it will be stopped.

Dr. Keskar: The other criticism is this. It is something which is unheard of. The criticism is that this measure will ultimately lead to a restriction on the freedom of the Press. Firstly, I would like to point out that the price-page schedule is not something new. It has existed in this country during the war, and it was functioning for a long number of years. During that period, the Press did not suffer in anyway. It is existing in England today, and it has been existing for the last 15 years in Great Britain.

Recently, when the British Government expressed a wish to terminate this soon, the interesting reaction was that the large majority of papers protested against the termination of the price-page schedule. There are only one or two big papers which favour such a move. Even the papers with the largest circulation in England were against the termination of the price-page schedule. So, it would not be proper to say that we are

doing something new and unique or that the Press Commission has suggested something which has not been heard of anywhere else in the world. I am saying this in reply to criticisms made not only in this country but outside also. In Great Britain, such a schedule was existent, and the freedom of the Press was not threatened. I do not see any reason why the giving of such a schedule here will any more threaten the freedom of the Press today.

Another criticism which had been voiced by some of the bigger interests in the Press was that, "It is all right; you are doing something very nice; the object is laudable and desirable; but we are rather doubtful as to how far this will help the weaker Press which you are out to help".

Shri Kamath: Who has voiced the bigger interests in India?

Dr. Keskar: Some of the criticisms made were that though the object is laudable, it will not fulfil its purpose and that the small papers would not be helped. Naturally, that will depend on how the schedule is framed.

Secondly, the arguments that have been put forward by those interests are that, whatever the schedule, the quantum of advertisement will always govern the prosperity or the rise and fall of a paper. That might be only partially true. If a paper gets a fair price which is fixed, then, I am quite sure that on the quality of its service it can hold itself up against even the big papers. It is possible that it might not make such profit or as much profit as the big papers, but certainly, it will not go down as a number of papers had to go down and close in certain States in the country.

I have seen a number of views expressed on this question and I do not want to quote all of them. Recently, the proprietor of one of the important language papers in this country has made a very strong speech in Bombay in favour of a price-page schedule, and disputing the argu-

ment that it is going to restrict in anyway the freedom of the Press. We had long discussion and exchange of views with various Press interests, working journalists, the editorial staff and also the proprietors, and we found that the big majority of the Indian Press were in favour of a price-page schedule. In fact, they were insistent that such a schedule should be brought into force as quickly as possible so that the deteriorating financial condition of the papers might be helped to some extent and they might get some protection. It is the opinion expressed here and also by the major part of the Press which ultimately helps the Government in coming to a decision that we should try such a price-page schedule. The price-page schedule was in operation in Great Britain and it continues, and we had also the system of price-page schedule. The object of this had not been the protection of smaller papers but rather to place the newsprint distribution on an equitable basis. For the first time, a price-page schedule will be fixed in order to help the smaller papers. We are not yet very clear how this will evolve. We have, therefore, put a provision in the Bill that this Act, when it is passed by Parliament, will be for five years' duration. The idea is to see how it functions, and if it functions well, it would be easy to renew it again. The views expressed by the Press people themselves—when I am talking of the Press, I am not meaning the bigger papers but I am talking of the smaller papers—were in many ways differing. We said that in view of the desire of most of the papers and in view of the Parliament's opinion it is essential that we give it a thorough trial. If the trial proves successful, then we will certainly like to continue it until such time as it is necessary in the interests of the newspapers. This is the reason for bringing forward this Bill here today.

As far as the details of the Bill are concerned, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Members to two things. Firstly, the Bill itself is an enabling Bill, that is, the Bill gives

[Dr. Keskar]

powers to fix a schedule. In our discussion with the Press people, it was found that unless we have got power, it was very difficult to get all of them and get their views and ultimately decide on a schedule. So, we felt that it is more practical to have the power first to fix a schedule and then only proceed further. No doubt, we have taken certain preliminary steps of consultation with the papers. But any detailed consultation would have been rather unreal unless the Government had the powers sanctioned by Parliament to proceed further. That is the reason why in the legislation as put before the House, you will find that only enabling powers are being taken here. The schedule is to be fixed after that in consultation with the Press people themselves.

4 P.M.

The second point is this. Even after we have clarified it in the discussions in the Rajya Sabha, I find that confusion still prevails or probably some people want to persist in the confusion regarding the Bill and its objects. For example, it is clear that the object is not to fix the price and the number of pages of any newspaper. The object is to fix the relationship between the price and the number of pages; i. e., we do not want to say to any paper, "you publish only 20 pages". What we say is, "If you want to publish 20 pages, you will have to fix a particular price for the paper"; that is all. The paper is quite free to publish as many pages as it likes, provided the price is related to the number of pages published. Really speaking, it is not a restriction either on the price or on the pages; but, there should be a relationship between the price and the number of pages. I find that in criticisms voiced here and there, this has been completely misunderstood. I do not know whether it is a case of misunderstanding or criticism even though they have understood our object. I want to make it clear that this does not preclude any paper from publishing any number of

pages it likes. Only, the papers will have to relate the number of pages with a particular price and they are free to decide as to what is in their best interest.

One or two criticisms have been made regarding competition to which so much reference is made and about which there is so much hubbub in the smaller papers. I would not take much time, but there is no doubt that in a number of languages, it has happened, more especially during the last seven to ten years, that people with money earned not in newspapers, but in other businesses, have decided to put in newspapers, and as is done in other businesses, they have tried to put it in newspapers, and as is done in other businesses, they have tried to corner the market in that particular area by reducing the price of the paper further and further, until the rival, which is an old standing paper, is not able to continue cutting its price to the same extent and is ultimately closed down. It has happened in Gujarati papers, Marathi papers and in a number of other languages. Later, when the old paper closes down, the other paper again increases the price, because now there is no rival and they can fix any price they like. The names of the papers also can be given, but I do not want to take up the time of the House by giving all these details. Some cases were mentioned here by some Members representing the Gujarati Press. I remember my friend, Shri C. C. Shah, who gave a very detailed exposition of this kind of competition in Gujarati papers. It exists in other language papers also.

Lastly, as far as what is known as the "Language Press", i.e. "non-English Press" is concerned, I would like to say something. Because English has been the official language in our country, the Press first began in English to a great extent; some of the most important papers were started, flourished and are established in English. At present these papers are in a very favourable position.

That is due mainly not only to English being the official language, but also to the bulk of the advertisement revenue going to these papers. The question of advertisement revenue is a different question and I would like to deal with it in detail. It is in many ways a complex question, because India is one of the few countries where a large part of the advertisement revenue comes from foreign countries; and automatically that revenue goes in a large measure to the English papers. This has created a very favourable position for the English papers. We, in India are going to have soon our own languages as the official languages and so, building up a healthy and strong regional Press is very essential for our future national life. Unless we are able to build up a good regional Press, whether in Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati or Hindi, the future of democracy in this country will not be as good as it should be. In fact, the development of democracy will be hindered very much, unless we are able to build up a really healthy and good Press in all our regional languages. That is a difficult task because, as I said, the English papers are placed in a very favourable position. As far as the language Press is concerned, there might be a paper or two in Calcutta or Madras which are well established; with these very few exceptions, the regional language papers are poor and they have not got much revenue. Their advertisement revenue is also very poor and they live from hand to mouth. Conditions of living from hand to mouth apply not only to the people who are working in those papers—the journalists—but also to the business of the paper. If we want to build up a good and healthy Press, we have to see that some help or some protection is given to the regional language Press, so that those papers may start, if not in ideal conditions, at least under some minimum favourable conditions, for growth and development.

My submission is that the price-page schedule is one of the important

measures which will help the language papers to a great extent. I do not say that this alone is going to help them; other things also will help them, because there are some good language papers which have been functioning for sometime, but which are not able to build themselves up for the reason that they cannot get protection against the favourable conditions of the English papers and also advertisements. A newspaper structure in which such a kind of competition will be minimised will enable them to stand on their own feet to a great extent.

These are the few points that I wanted to put before hon. Members in commending this Bill for their consideration and passing. I would reply to whatever points arise during the course of the debate later.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Motion moved:

“That the Bill to provide for the regulation of the prices charged for newspapers in relation to their pages and of matters connected therewith for the purpose of preventing unfair competition among newspapers so that newspapers may have fuller opportunities of freedom of expression, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration.”

The time allotted is 3 hours for this Bill. May I know how the allocation is to be made between consideration stage and clause-by-clause discussion?

Dr. Suresh Chandra (Aurangabad): More time can be given for the consideration stage.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It can be two hours for the consideration stage and one hour for clause-by-clause discussion. Already we have spent about half an hour and another 15 minutes may be taken by the Minister for the reply. That means, out of two hours, 1½ hours are available for hon. Members to participate. May I

[Mr. Deputy-Speaker]

know the number of Members who want to speak? I see eight Members standing up.

Dr. Keskar: The time-limit for the speeches may be restricted a little.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It should not exceed in any case 15 minutes. That would be all right.

Shri Chattopadhyaya (Vijayavada): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, when I think of big newspapers and small newspapers, I am reminded of a conundrum. The conundrum is what is the difference between a dog with its tail on and a dog with its tail off. The answer is that in the case of the dog with its tail on, every dog has his day and in the case of the dog with its tail cut off, it has only a week-end. Actually the position of newspapers has been very similar to what has been described in this conundrum. I am extremely glad to see that this Bill has got a clause which promises to help smaller newspapers.

I am in agreement with the Bill, but with a few modifications. I take it that the purpose of this Bill is to render help to newspapers with smaller resources and such newspapers as are published in our languages. I am rather doubtful whether it would actually come to the rescue of such papers and whether it would be able to fulfil this ideal, of guaranteeing freedom of expression. This ideal of course, could be fulfilled only if the financial resources of such newspapers can be made sound, steady and stable, giving these papers a sense of security. Money makes a mare go;—that is the proverb—where there is no money, the mare ceases to be a mare but becomes a nightmare. That is precisely the case with newspapers with small resources. If there is no financial security, naturally, the small papers will constantly be full of the fear of the morrow and will have the experience of the sword of Damocles hanging over their little heads.

Newsprint, I venture to say, plays a vital role in the control of news-

paper finance. Big newspapers are in the merry position of being able to buy newsprint whenever they like, whenever it suits them. But, this is not the case with the small newspaper. It is a case of the bigger fish swallowing the smaller fish, a fishy situation, I take it, stinking with the inequity of control. Newsprint, as we know,—as far as I know—is not manufactured in our country, not even one inch of it. All the newsprint, we get from countries abroad, from Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany and Canada. Of course, as far as I know, the greatest import is from Norway and Sweden and Finland. During the war, our requirements were about 36,000 tons a year. Today, it is over a lakh of tons a year. It is, as I said, only the big newspapers that can afford to import this newsprint. With the honourable exception of Bengal perhaps, all these large newspapers in big cities have formed a strong chain, every link of it of pure steel. Only those who have large bank credits—I am referring of course to the Birlas, the Goenkas and Dalmias and other malimias—can pile up stocks of newsprint. Newspapers have their own economics. It is from the sale of newspapers that the cost of this newsprint is met. The rest of it is from advertisement, which, of course, means that the big newspapers have to toe the lines of the Government. Government dictates a certain policy and they have got to abide by it and it is not difficult for them to abide by it. Unfortunately our democracy smacks somewhat of capitalism. Naturally, therefore, the leftist papers, progressive newspapers, have not even the shadow of a ghost of a chance to secure advertisements.

We have all seen further how off and on big newspapers come out with pompous Supplements: Agricultural Supplement, Engineering Supplement, all kinds of Supplements. This is met by big advertisements, for which no extra price is demanded. The repercussion, I venture to suggest, on

the smaller newspapers, therefore, become tragic since they are in the helpless position, the ironical position of having to compete with their big brothers with large paws embroidered with clause with power to strike and strangle. To rescue these smaller newspapers, this Bill is essential.

But, I feel that it does not go far enough, not as far as we had expected. In this Bill, the Government is only asking for powers to make rules to introduce price page schedules.

Dr. Keskar: Not to make rules, but to introduce price page schedules.

Shri Chattopadhyaya: I beg to submit that such blanket powers in the hands of the Government are not conducive to the growth of democracy. For instance, during the last war, modified price page schedules were introduced by the Government. But they were used chiefly to control the policy of the newspapers. Allow me to refer to sub-clause (4) of clause 3 on page 2 of the Bill. It says:

"Before making any order under this section, the Central Government shall consult associations of publishers, and such publishers likely to be affected by the order as it may think fit with respect to the action proposed to be taken."

What actually does this mean? It has not an inch of space left for the journalists. Where do they come in? They have been overlooked. Without journalists, the position is that of a bath room without soaps, of the Treasury Benches without Ministers, of Parliament without Speaker or Deputy-Speaker. Do we realise how important the journalists are? It has been forgotten that they are the creators of newspaper interests. But, this Bill seems to support only the interests of the proprietors. I must confess that I did not expect this, having been constantly made to understand that our Government is democratic. I would like to know whether the Government, in fixing the prices, will take into consideration the different sizes of the papers. And we should like also to understand what is the goal of the newspaper in a

free country. It is certainly, obviously, the creative activities of the people, but unfortunately this has been totally neglected so far and will remain an impossibility so long as newsprint is not made available to the mofussil papers. I say let the big newspapers continue their grandiose distribution of international news, but the mofussil papers tell us about our people. Let our country know all about our people. Let them have a full chance. Let us know about their life from day to day, their problems, their joys, their sorrows. Let us know all about them. Unfortunately this has been almost a black out for us all these years.

Lastly, I should like to refer you and the House to clause 7 which says:

"No court shall take cognizance of any offence punishable under this Act except upon a complaint in writing by the Press Registrar appointed under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, or by any officer authorised by him in writing in this behalf."

You have imposed a penalty on the contravention of the price-page schedule, but there is a snag in it. I humbly submit that there is a snag in it. The snag is that unless the Registrar makes a written complaint in a court, the court shall take no cognizance of the contravention, which means that all is dependant on the sweet or bitter will and pleasure of the Press Registrar. While we want the price-page schedule to save the life of the smaller newspapers and help their growth, we certainly do not want such blanket powers to be left in the hands of the Government. We hope, we wish, nay, we ask fervently that the rules be framed by persons of experience, persons who are intimately connected with newspapers as active journalists, not by proprietors, without any experience who only stand and look on hoping perhaps for a harvest of profit.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy (Mysore): I generally agree with the objects of the Bill. When the Press Commission's Report was discussed on the floor of the House a few months ago, except one Member all the other Members unanimously sup-

[Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy]

ported the idea of having a price-page control. I only feel sorry that all the recommendations of the Press Commission have not been brought simultaneously in the form of a Bill. I wonder why the hon. Minister believes in bringing measures by instalments. Anyway, this measure is good in a way though as the previous speaker said it does not go far enough.

Today to start a paper is a Herculean task. A man of moderate means, possessing about Rs. 10,000 or Rs. 20,000 is not able to start a paper, much less run it. Moreover, we have passed a few days ago another measure providing for wage boards for journalists. Unless the press is prosperous, unless it is on sound lines, it is not possible to give adequate pay and create adequate facilities for journalists. Though they are very necessary, how is it possible to create such good facilities for journalists unless the weaker sections of the press are protected? The greatest danger to the freedom of the press is the big press itself. The giant monopolists who are controlling various newspapers do not allow the smaller and weaker papers to grow. Unless they grow, they cannot fulfil the conditions laid down in the Bill that we have already passed. So, the price-page control is a necessary step. I feel that the price-page control is not only a desirable proposition but a necessary imperative.

The Bill does not provide for the rates or rather the price-page schedule. Without the price-page schedule, I am afraid the Bill will become a formal affair. The most important thing is missing in the bill. We really do not know what type of schedule will be drawn up by the Government in their order, and we are not sure whether the price-page control will be adequate enough to permit the growth of the smaller and weaker papers. The best thing would have been to allow the House itself to consider the reasonable rates and to fix those rates and include them in the Bill. That would have really given us a definite picture of the shape of

things to come, but unfortunately this omission has put us in the dark. At present we are giving power to Government to issue an order fixing the rates. And we are in a way giving this power to the bureaucracy which has not always proved impartial in such delicate matters wherein capitalist interests are involved. So, without a price-page schedule the Bill suffers from a great handicap and that will make it just a formal enactment.

A little while ago the Minister was speaking about the advertisements and also the cost of production. He said that the price of a paper should be such as to meet the cost of its productions as far as possible. That means to say the paper should not depend mostly on advertisements and advertising interests. I agree with it, but there is no use expressing a laudable objective in words unless it is carried out in reality.

He has not given us any indication of the steps that he would take in regard to the fixation of advertisement space in papers. Of course, there is a reference in the Bill that the order may provide for regulating advertisements.

Dr. Keskar: The hon. Member has probably forgotten that we laid on the Table of the House certain recommendations of the Commission which Government has accepted, and in that the proportion of advertisement to the other material is one which we have accepted already.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: I am sorry I was not able to look into it. But I feel that the Government should bear in mind that definite proportion of advertisement space in relation to news should always be provided while making any order. Unless that is done, I am afraid big newspapers will carry away most of the advertisement and the small papers will be left without advertisement.

The hon. Minister said that he is not fixing any ceiling or flooring on the pages of newspapers. I do not know whether that will be a sound

principle to be followed in the existing circumstances because I feel that though we fix the price for the number of pages I am afraid, some big papers may still compete with the smaller papers if the overall maximum pages of a paper are not fixed. Moreover, that is necessary in view of the fact....

Dr. Keskar: I have not clearly understood the hon. Member. When we fix the price for number of pages, the maximum number of pages has to be fixed. If the hon. Member reads the Bill he will find that it is very clearly given in the Bill.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: As I understand, the Bill provides the relation between the price and the page.

Dr. Keskar: The maximum and the minimum. It is given in the Bill.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: It does not fix the maximum number of pages that a newspaper can give to the public.

Dr. Keskar: It is there in clause (3).

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: I am afraid it is not made clear. So I feel that in the existing conditions a limit may be placed and the clear indication should be there.

Dr. Keskar: If the hon. Member looks at clause 3, section 1, he will find in line 11, the words "prices charged for newspapers in relation to their maximum or minimum number of pages".

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: Yes. That does not fix the maximum number of pages.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: It is the regulation of the prices charged for newspapers in relation to their maximum or minimum number of pages.

Dr. Keskar: I do not know how it can be made clearer.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: You do not say that a paper should adhere

to that maximum number of pages...

Dr. Keskar: It can go up to that. But it need not give that.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: That is my point. You do not state that the paper should only give so many pages and not more. So I think that would be necessary in the existing circumstances because there is so much demand for newsprint. We are not having adequate newsprint and we have to import newsprint from abroad. Various big papers will monopolise the newsprint and may indirectly starve the smaller papers.

The hon. Minister has agreed that this is only one of the ways of protecting smaller newspapers and it is not the only way of protecting them. But there are other handicaps which have to be overcome. Smaller newspapers suffer from lack of financial resources and they do not enjoy the bank credit; so they cannot hold stock of newsprint for a long time. There the big papers will have a decisive advantage over the smaller papers. So, unless there is regulation of the maximum number of pages that a newspaper can give at a time, say during a week, the smaller papers will be in difficulties. For instance, the hon. Minister was referring to Sunday supplements and special supplements. These supplements do not, as he says, have news value. They are issued from time to time because they get large sums of money from various business interests. Much of these supplements is just propaganda stuff and the public are not in any way interested in these supplements and I feel that from the point of view of the utilisation of newsprint it is just a waste. So, I suggest that there should be a conditional ceiling, a qualified ceiling on the number of pages given by a newspaper. Some hon. Members may say that this is a restriction on the freedom of the press. But we are not restricting any news item that is published in a newspaper or any opinion that is expressed there. We are putting only a ceiling on the number of pages given by a

[Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy]

newspaper. Thereby, we will be controlling the utilisation of news-print also. I feel that point must be made very clear.

Then, the hon. Minister has not told us the ratio between price and page. I feel that one anna for four pages will be a reasonable price and there are papers....

Shri Jaipal Singh (Ranchi—west Reserved-Sch. Tribes): Of what size?

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: Usual newspaper size.

Shri Jaipal Singh: Standard size?

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: Usual demy size. The price should be one anna for four pages. There are very many papers which are charging this amount, one anna for four pages. If this yardstick is applied to all the papers and if the maximum limit on pages is made applicable there will be better equity and justice in the newspaper world. I feel that one anna will be a reasonable limit and it should be accepted by the hon. Minister.

Secondly, there are various one-sheet papers, which charge one pice, two pice etc. They are not able to pay their staff adequately. However legally they have to adhere to certain principles in regard to pay and emoluments. But, unfortunately, most of these papers are not able to carry on in such conditions. I feel, therefore, that such papers must be asked to co-operate with each other and set up co-operative unions. For instance, in Mysore there are various sheet-papers issued for one pice per day. There are very many people employed by these papers on Rs. 10 or Rs. 15 per month. In such cases, I suggest, the Minister should take care to see that advice is given to all these papers to come together, and start a paper under the auspices of the co-operative union.

That way, we shall be helping the small papers to consolidate their position.

I welcome this measure, though it is very limited. But I expect that the Minister would take all these things into consideration before he passes the order fixing the price-page ratio. And I hope that the price-page schedule will come into operation very soon.

Shri Jaipal Singh: I am grateful to you for having given me a few minutes to lend my support to this Bill. I know things might have come in a stream one after the other. But I do appreciate the difficulties of Government in not having brought a composite Act, which should have included all the recommendations of the Press Commission.

Before I go any further, may I repeat on the floor of this House, the wonderful work that has been put into the Press Commission, particularly by the late Mr. Justice Rajadhyaksha, and not only by him, but also by the secretariat, especially, in regard to this particular matter? A great deal of research had to be put in to enable us, commissioners, on the Press Commission, to arrive at a reasonable solution.

What was the problem before us? The problem was one of bringing health into the fourth estate in our country. That was the problem. People may have all manner of solutions. The question was how we could strive for a *via media* whereby we would be working within our capacity, according to the conditions prevalent in this country.

Now, a Bill of this sort would not have been necessary in countries where journalism is developed, where the newspapers are highly developed, where the reading public knows what it is reading, and where the reading public can discriminate between truth and falsehood. We are a democratic country, and one of the biggest problems that we have not only in regard to the fourth estate, but in regard to every other estate, and every other problem in this country, is how the different viewpoints and interests of people have to be handled, how far we

can permit people to handle them, and in what way.

I know there is a great deal of murmuring in this country by the big newspapers. The Press Commission, at no stage, ever wanted to handicap greater newspapers, the national newspapers and the metropolitan newspapers from growing bigger and bigger. Let them become as big as some of the biggest newspapers in advanced countries. The Press Commission were never against it. But the whole question was how the provincial and the district papers could be given, shall I say, a new lease of life. They were up against not only big money but the enormous circulation of newspapers by vested interests.

My hon. friend who preceded me talked about advertisements. It may be just one of the many problems that we have to grapple with. A particular class of manufacturers may pick upon only one kind of a paper and give all the advertisements to it. Why talk of one class of manufacturers? Government are one of the biggest advertisers in this country. If Government were to favour one particular paper, be it an English paper, be it a language paper, or be it a periodical, what can be the net result? They would be giving it an advantage over the other newspapers which would not have that revenue from the advertisement.

So, the Press Commission had to strike a balance. The whole question was that if we had to reach the masses, it would not be the national and metropolitan papers that would be reaching the masses, but it would be the local newspapers. We have, as it were, now to lay a foundation whereby we build from the bottom. In other words, hitherto, a newspaper in this country meant only the city papers, and by city papers, I mean papers coming not from small cities, but from our metropolitan cities. That was the position we had to face.

My hon. friend has also referred to the legislation that we have already

passed in regard to payment of wages to working journalists and the like. There, again, we had the same problem. We knew that if the district papers had to survive, the restrictions we were forced to place were not going to be much of a help to them, but then, as in every field of labour legislation, we were up against this fact that if we wanted better standard of news, better standards of honesty in objectivity of news, well, the newsmen, working journalists and the whole lot of them would have to be paid decent wages. It was not an easy matter.

Similarly, here again, we have to face that problem. Do we or do we not want that our newspapers should reach even the most distant villages? Can anyone tell me that a paper in Bombay would be reaching the villages in the heart of the Thana district where the tribal people live? That would be beyond the means. We must somehow or other make up our minds that it will have to be the district paper. So, when I talk of the district paper, I want hon. Members of Parliament to realise this. Take a place like Delhi. How many hon. Members realise how many hundreds of newspapers are published here, yellow journals and all that sort of thing? How are they going to stop all this? The only way to stop all these things, to my mind, is to put a premium on decent journalism. I do maintain that though I accept that this piece of legislation may put a handicap on the bigger newspapers, yet, taking the picture over the whole of India, I am convinced in my own mind that the only way we can encourage nationalistic tendencies in journalism would be by having this Bill.

My hon. friend who preceded me, somehow or other, could not appreciate the mathematics of the pricing of newspapers in this country. There is no such thing as a minimum or a maximum. This Bill does not put any maximum limit. Let the newspaper-

[Shri Jaipal Singh]

man go on printing a hundred pages in a daily newspaper; let him do that, but if he prints hundred pages, he begins with four pages per anna—I think that was what my hon. friend mentioned—and if he goes on increasing the number of pages, he has got to go on increasing the price also. So, the limit or the maximum is limited by the capacity of the paper to run at a particular price.

Similarly, there is no such thing as a minimum. The minimum is what one can afford. So, there is neither a minimum nor a maximum. But the point is that the norm is there. You begin with a particular norm. If you want to go beyond that norm, then, that going beyond that norm must not be a handicap to the smaller newspapers in this country. That is the picture in this Bill.

I do hope that we shall not be pessimistic. I know it is going to be a handicap, because, already, in certain quarters, there is murmuring that, perhaps, newspapers will cease to be newspapers, and will become advertising papers. That apprehension has been expressed. But I personally am one who is not frightened by that. I do not think that can be the position. I think what will happen is that the advertising material will now have to be spread throughout the rural newspapers.

I personally have no hesitation in supporting this, because we must bear in mind, that any piece of legislation that comes to this House is in relation to other pieces of legislation and other mechanisms that the Government of India must have, as for example, the Press Council. The Press Council will see to it that the operative aspects of every piece of legislation in connection with this that is brought in is in keeping with the general objective that we have to have in this country.

I heartily support this Bill.

श्री भक्त बर्दान (जिला गढ़वाल—पूर्व व जिला मुरादाबाद—उत्तर पूर्व) : समाचार (मूल्य तथा पृष्ठ) विधेयक यहां पर हमारे माननीय मंत्री डा० केल्कर जी ने प्रस्तुत किया है; उसका समर्थन करते हुये मैं उन्हें साधुवाद देता हूँ। जैसा कि विधेयक के मन्तव्य में दिया गया है, समाचार-पत्रों के अन्दर अनुचित होड़ को रोकने, जिस में समाचार पत्रों को स्वतंत्रता पूर्वक अपने विचार प्रकट करने का और भी अधिक अवसर प्राप्त हो सके, समाचार पत्रों के मूल्य को उन की पृष्ठ संख्या के आघार पर विनियमित करने और तत्संबंधी उपबन्ध करने के लिये यह विधेयक लाया गया है।

इस विधेयक के मूल सिद्धान्तों के सम्बन्ध में चूंकि सारे देश में और इस सदन में कोई मतभेद नहीं रह गया है, इसलिये इस बारे में मैं अधिक समय इस सदन का न लेकर, जहां मैं इस विधेयक का स्वांगत करता हूँ, वहां मैं माननीय मंत्री महोदय का ध्यान इस बात की ओर भी आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ कि प्रेस आयोग ने जितनी महत्वपूर्ण सिफारिशें की थीं, उन में से अभी तक दो वर्ष के परिश्रम के बाद भी केवल दो मर्दों पर ही कार्रवाई हो सकी है। एक तो प्रेस रजिस्ट्रार की नियुक्ति हो गई है और दूसरे श्रमजीवी पत्रकारों के सम्बन्ध में पिछले दिनों एक विधेयक स्वीकार किया गया है। यद्यपि उसके सम्बन्ध में जो प्रगति हो रही है, उस से हमें सन्तोष नहीं है, यहां तक कि हम लोगों ने जो आशा की थी कि बड़ी क्षीघ्रता से नियम बनेंगे और उनके अन्तर्गत पत्रकारों के जीवन-स्तर को ऊंचा किया जायेगा वह आशा भी अब धीरे धीरे मिटती जा रही है। मुझे तो सन्देह है कि शायद ही सन् १९५६ के अन्त तक हमारी उन आशाओं की पूर्ति हो सके।

इस के साथ ही यह जो विधेयक रक्खा गया है, वह राज्य सभा से स्वीकार किया

जा कर इस सदन में विचार के लिये प्रस्तुत है। जहां तक प्रेस काँसिल (परिषद्) का सम्बन्ध है, उसे राज्य सभा में प्रस्तुत किया जा चुका है, लेकिन जहां तक मैं समझता हूँ कि कार्य-भार भी उस सभा के सामने इतना अधिक है कि उस विधेयक पर इस सत्र में शायद ही विचार किया जा सके। हमें अगले सत्र तक उसकी प्रतीक्षा करनी पड़ेगी। तभी शायद हम इस सदन में उस पर विचार कर के उस को स्वीकार कर सकेंगे।

मैं माननीय मंत्री महोदय का ध्यान आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ कि आज से दो वर्ष हुए जब प्रेस आयोग ने अपना प्रतिवेदन प्रस्तुत किया था। दो वर्षों से आज तक समय-समय पर दोनों सदनों में इस प्रश्न पर विचार होता रहा है, और मैं ऐसा कहने में कोई कंजूसी नहीं करना चाहता कि हमारे मंत्री महोदय और मंत्रालय ने इस सम्बन्ध में काफी परिश्रम किया है, लेकिन कुछ ऐसे विषय हैं जिनकी ओर ध्यान देने की बड़ी आवश्यकता है, जैसे कि अखबारी कागज के सम्बन्ध में, जो कि विदेशों से चला आ रहा है, और एक प्रकार से उसका एकाधिकार बड़े समाचार पत्रों के हाथ में है। इस विधेयक के स्वीकृत हो जाने के बाद जब तक उस स्थिति में परिवर्तन नहीं होता, और छोटें पत्रों को भी बाहर से अखबारी कागज मंगाने की स्वीकृति नहीं मिलती, या जो प्रेस आयोग ने कहा है, उसके अनुसार सारे देश में एक ही कौरपोरेशन (निगम) नहीं बनता है, तब तक मैं साक्ष्यता हूँ कि यह मूल्य निर्धारण अधिक लाभदायक नहीं हो सकेगा।

जैसा मंत्री महोदय ने कहा, आज बहुत से विदेशी पत्रों में भी और हमारे देश के पत्रों में भी बहुत से लोग इस बात की आलोचना करने लगे हैं कि पृष्ठों के मूल्य पर जो नियंत्रण लगाया जा रहा है, वह शायद विचारों

को प्रकट करने की स्वाधीनता पर नियंत्रण लगाने का एक तरीका हो, लेकिन, जैसा कि मंत्री महोदय ने स्पष्ट कर दिया, उन की यह दुर्भावना गलत है। मैं निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि जो बड़े-बड़े समाचार पत्र हैं, जिन्होंने अपने को स्थापित कर लिया है, जो भारत की पत्रकारिता के प्रतिनिधि बने हुए हैं, और जिन्होंने अपना एक प्रकार से एकाधिकार और प्रभुत्व स्थापित कर लिया है, वे इस सिद्धान्त के जबर्दस्त विरोधी हैं और इस का स्पष्ट-प्रमाण यह बात है कि भले ही हमारे मंत्री महोदय पर इस का बहुत प्रभाव न हो, लेकिन विधेयक के अन्दर ऐसा मालूम होता है कि बहुत काफी प्रभाव इस बात का पड़ा है, क्योंकि हमारे मंत्री महोदय ने बतलाया कि इस विधेयक को केवल पांच वर्ष के लिये स्वीकार किया जा रहा है। यहां पर हमारे प्रेस आयोग के एक माननीय सदस्य बैठे हुए हैं, और जहां तक मैं ने प्रेस आयोग की रिपोर्ट को पढ़ा है, मैं ने कहीं पर भी यह नहीं देखा कि इस चीज को पांच वर्ष के लिये परीक्षण के तौर पर लागू किया जाये। माननीय मंत्री महोदय ने स्वयं कहा कि पिछले महायुद्ध के समय हमारे देश में पृष्ठ-नियंत्रण किया गया था और इंग्लैंड में दस पन्द्रह वर्षों से इस पर अब भी अमल ही रहा है। जैसा कि मंत्री जी ने स्वयम् बताया, जिस किसी ने हाल-यह सुझाव में इंग्लैंड में दिया कि इस नियंत्रण को हटा दिया जाये, वहां के अखबारों ने एक आन्दोलन खड़ा कर दिया कि इस नियंत्रण को न हटाया जाये। जब क्रिटेन जैसे देश के अन्दर, जहां कि पत्रकारिता काफी उच्च स्तर की है, यह माना जाता है कि इस को हटाना नहीं चाहिये, तो मेरी समझ में नहीं आता कि क्यों केवल पांच वर्षों के लिये इस विधेयक को लाया जा रहा है? इस से मन में शंका होती है कि शायद हमारे मंत्री महोदय पर, या मंत्रालय के ऊपर, जो बड़े-बड़े समाचार-पत्र हैं, जिन के हितों को इस विधेयक से आघात पहुंचने वाला है, उन का प्रभाव पड़ गया है।

[श्री भक्त दर्शन]

दूसरी बात मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि इस नियंत्रण को इस लिये भी रक्खा जाना चाहिये कि हम अपने देश के अन्दर एक प्लैन इकानामी (आयोजित बचत) अर्थात् एक सुनियोजित अर्थ-तन्त्र स्थापित करना चाहते हैं, इस प्लैन्ड इकानामी के अन्तर्गत सब जगह पर कुछ न कुछ प्लैनिंग होने जा रही है, जब हम अपने समूचे अर्थ-तन्त्र में इस प्लैनिंग को छा देना चाहते हैं, तब जो यह विचारों को प्रकट करने का काम है, जो जनता के अन्दर प्रचार का सब से बड़ा माध्यम है, यह जो महत्वपूर्ण शस्त्र हमारे हाथ में है, उस के लिये हम केवल पांच वर्ष के लिये ही यह प्लैनिंग क्यों कर रहे हैं। इस से मुझे शंका होती है, और मैं आशा करता हूँ कि माननीय मंत्री महोदय इस को स्पष्ट करेंगे कि वह केवल पांच वर्ष के लिये क्यों इस विधेयक को स्वीकार करने जा रहे हैं? और इस को आगे बढ़ाने के सम्बन्ध में वे कहां तक आश्वासन दे सकेंगे?

जहा तक मुझ मालूम हो सका है, और जो कुछ मैंने समाचार-पत्रों में देखा है, बहुत से लोग, जो हमारे श्रमजीवी पत्रकार हैं उन को आड़ लेना चाहते हैं। वे कहते हैं कि एक ओर तो सरकार हम से यह कहती है कि हम श्रमजीवी पत्रकारों के वेतन बढ़ा दें और दूसरी ओर मूल्य नियंत्रण किया जा रहा है। उन का तर्क यह है कि एक ओर तो समाचार-पत्रों पर यह भार डाला जा रहा है कि वेतन बढ़ाये जायें और दूसरी ओर मूल्य में कमी करने का विचार किया जा रहा है, यह दोनों बात एक साथ नहीं चलेंगी। लेकिन जैसा कि प्रेस आयोग ने स्पष्ट कहा है, इस से बहुत अधिक भार समाचार-पत्रों पर नहीं पड़ेगा और पत्रकारों का वेतन बढ़ाने के बाद भी उन को किसी बात की असुविधा नहीं होगी। जैसे एक पैसा प्रति पृष्ठ औसतन के हिसाब से लिया जायें, जैसा श्री गुरुपादस्वामी जी ने स्वीकार किया कि चार पैसे में चार पृष्ठ

देने का विचार है, मैं ने एक पैसा प्रति पृष्ठ के हिसाब के सिद्धान्त को स्वीकार कर के हिसाब लगाया तो पता चला कि उस के अन्तर्गत पत्रकारों का जो वेतन बढ़ाया जाने वाला है वह भी आ जाता है, और उचित मुनाफा भी आ जाता है। इसलिये इस बारे में भ्रम नहीं होना चाहिये।

दूसरी बात मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि इस विधेयक में यह बात रक्खी जा रही है कि यह तो एक 'इनेबलिंग ऐक्ट' है, माननीय मंत्री जी ने भी बताया कि इस विधेयक के अन्तर्गत हम सरकार को मूल्य निर्धारित करने का अधिकार दे रहे हैं, मूल्य का निर्धारण नहीं किया जा रहा है। इस अधिकार को प्रयोग में लाने के पहले समाचार-पत्रों से और जो पब्लिशर्स हैं, प्रकाशक हैं, उन से परामर्श किया जायेगा। इस सम्बन्ध में मैंने कुछ संशोधनों की सूचना भी दी है कि पत्रकारों के परामर्श को किस रूप में लेना चाहिये। जैसा मैं ने राज्य सभा की कार्यवाही में पढ़ा, माननीय मंत्री जी का कहना है कि इस कार्य का सम्बन्ध बिजिनेस साइड से नहीं है। लेकिन मैं इस सम्बन्ध में बड़ी विनम्रता के साथ अपना मतभेद प्रकट करना चाहता हूँ, क्योंकि हो सकता है कि बहुत से पत्रों के मालिक इस बात का तर्क पेश करें कि चूंकि वे पत्रकारों का वेतन बढ़ा रहे हैं इसलिये वे मूल्य नियंत्रण के नियम को पूरा नहीं कर सकते। यह सम्पादक व पत्रकार जो अखबारों में काम कर रहे हैं, जिन्होंने देश के लिये एक बड़ा अर्थशास्त्र स्थापित किया है, एक आदर्श सामने रक्खा है, उन में ऐसे भी लोग हैं जो कि अखबारों की सारी मशीनरी को जानते हैं, अतः मैं चाहता हूँ कि उन का भी परामर्श ले लिया जायें, जैसा सुभाष श्री जयपाल सिंह जी ने दिया कि अगर प्रेस कौंसिल (प्रेस परिषद्) इस देश में होती तो यह अनिवार्य था कि उस से परामर्श लिया जाता, लेकिन चूंकि इस के बनाने में अभी काफी देर लगेगी, इसलिये मैं इस पर जोर नहीं देना चाहता हालांकि, जैसा कि बहुत से

साथियों ने कहा है कि प्रेस कौंसिल से परामर्श लिया जाये और अगर ऐसा हो सकता तो बहुत अच्छा होता।

दूसरी बात जो मैं कहना चाहूंगा वह मूल तथा पृष्ठ के बारे में जो नियम बनने वाले हैं, उन के सम्बन्ध में है। हम लोग श्रम जीवी पत्रकारों वाले विधेयक से बहुत आशा किये हुए थे, लेकिन अब वह एक प्रकार से कहीं निराशा में परिणत न हो जाये। अब तक वह नियम इस सदन के सामने आ नहीं सके, लेकिन क्या हम यह विश्वास करें कि सन् १९५६ के अन्त तक, या वर्तमान पालियामेंट के जीवन की समाप्ति के पहले इस विधेयक के अन्तर्गत बनने वाले नियम स्वीकृत हो जायेंगे। कहीं ऐसा न हो, कि जैसाकि लोग कह रहे हैं कि सन् १९५७ आ रहा है, गदर होने वाला है, पालियामेंट बदलने वाला है, सरकार बदलने वाली है, युग परिवर्तन होने वाला है, तब तक के लिये यह टल जाये। कम से कम हम लोगों को यह स्थाल रखना चाहिये कि सन् १९५६ की समाप्ति के पहले इस विधेयक के अन्तर्गत जो अधिकार हम ले रहे हैं, उन के अनुसार मूल्य निर्धारण हो जाना चाहिये।

डा० केशकर : जरूर होगा।

श्री भक्त दर्शन : धन्यवाद।

5 P.M.

अब एक बात की ओर मैं माननीय मंत्री जी का ध्यान और आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ। मैं मंत्री जी का आभारी हूँ कि उन्होंने ने अपने कर्तव्य में यह कहा कि हम हिन्दी और दूसरी भारतीय भाषाओं के जो समाचारपत्र हैं उन की रक्षा के लिये तथा उन का विकास करने के लिये ही मुख्यतः यह विधेयक ला रहे हैं। मैं उन की उस भावना का आदर करते हुए उन के ध्यान में कुछ बातें लाना चाहता हूँ। उन की इतनी उत्कट इच्छा होते हुए भी तथा सुयोग्य हाथों में इस मंत्रालय का कार्यभार होते हुए भी, मैं यह कहे बिना नहीं रह सकता कि हिन्दी और भारतीय भाषाओं के दूसरे

समाचार पत्रों के साथ अभी भी अच्छा व्यवहार नहीं हो रहा है। मुझे प्रेस इन्फारमेशन ब्यूरो की जानकारी है। वहाँ पर अंग्रेजी के अखबारों को ही प्रधानता दी जाती है। यहां तक कि अंग्रेजी अखबारों की तो १६-१६ प्रतियां ली जाती हैं, जबकि दूसरी भारतीय भाषाओं के समाचारपत्रों की एक-एक और दो-दो ही प्रतियां ली जाती हैं। प्रतियां लेने के आधार पर ही मैं कोई उदाहरण नहीं देना चाहता। पर इस का मतलब यह होता है कि इन समाचार पत्रों में जनता की समस्याओं के बारे में जो बहुत से समाचार व विचार निकलते हैं उन को शायद हमारे मंत्रालय महत्व नहीं देते हैं। यह दृष्टिकोण का प्रश्न है।

दूसरी बात मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि माननीय मंत्री महोदय ने पहले भी कई बार आश्वासन दिया है कि विज्ञापन देते समय जो छोटे छोटे अखबार हैं, जो हिन्दी के समाचारपत्र हैं, जो दूसरी भारतीय भाषाओं के समाचारपत्र हैं, उन का विशेष ध्यान रखा जायगा और उन को हर प्रकार से प्रोत्साहन देने की चेष्टा की जायेगी; जहां तक मेरी जानकारी है इस आश्वासन पर अमल नहीं हो रहा है। इसलिये इस ओर मैं माननीय मंत्री जी का ध्यान दिलाना चाहता था. . . .

डा० केशकर : मैं माननीय सदस्य को बतलाना चाहता हूँ कि नान-इंग्लिश पेपर्स को कितना दिया जा रहा है और इंग्लिश पेपर्स को कितना दिया जा रहा है इस को बिला जाने इस तरह का विधान यहाँ करना गलत होगा।

श्री भक्त दर्शन : मैं केवल इस ओर आपका ध्यान दिलाना चाहता था। मुझे प्रसन्नता होगी यदि मेरा अनुमान गलत सिद्ध हो। मैं केवल इतना ही कहना चाहता था कि उन के प्रयत्नों के बावजूद भी अभी तक पूरी तरह इस चीज पर अमल नहीं हुआ है।

[श्री भक्त दर्शन]

इन शब्दों के साथ मैं इस विधेयक का समर्थन करता हूँ और आशा करता हूँ कि इसे जल्दी से जल्दी स्वीकार कर लिया जायेगा।

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I now call upon Shri D. C. Sharma. It is very difficult to recognise whether the hon. Member has risen in his seat or not.

Shri Feroze Gandhi: The hon. Member should stand up on the bench.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Hoshiarpur): I thank you, Sir, for the compliment that you have paid to me and the compliment is very well deserved. But I do not come here to thank you for the compliment but to offer my congratulations to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting for bringing this measure before the House.

I have seen the sorry fate of reports of Committees and Commissions in this House. Committees are appointed; Commissions are appointed; they consist of very distinguished persons; they collect evidence; they go about from one part of the country to another; they take the trouble of writing the reports; some persons take the trouble of writing also minutes of dissent. But after that has been done, the reports are put in cold storage and one never hears about them. And if one hears about them, one hears about them in the context which is not always favourable to them. But I must say that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting appointed the Press Commission. The Press Commission Report is a monument of labour, hard thinking and valuable suggestions. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, acting upon the old adage, step by step has tried to implement most of the recommendations of the Press Commission. I wish other Ministries also could do something like that.

Shri Feroze Gandhi: Appoint more Commissions.

Shri D. C. Sharma: I do not want them to appoint more Commissions, but I do want them to take the Commissions seriously which they have already appointed and to implement the Reports which they already have got. My friend, Shri Feroze Gandhi, knows what I have in my heart because he knows me and I know him. But I also welcome this measure because it is democratic. Democracy stands for the common man, for the small man, if I could use that expression. Democracy does not stand for protecting and safeguarding the interests of the upper classes or few other persons at the top; it stands for protecting the small man and the common man. This measure is in consonance with the spirit of democracy which we are trying in this country, because without taking away anything from anybody or any newspaper, it is going to safeguard the interests of the language newspapers.

I read English newspapers every day and language newspapers every day but I think when our generation goes away the English newspaper will win here a thin time.

An Hon. Member: Not so.

Shri D. C. Sharma: He may be immortal, but I am mortal. When our generation goes away....

An Hon. Member: We will not let you go.

Shri D. C. Sharma: For every five persons who read English newspaper today, there will hardly be one who will read an English newspaper at that time and the English newspaper may boast of its past glory, may boast of 5-07 P.M.

[SHRI BARMAN in the chair]

its past achievements, but the English newspaper will not have much to do. The future belongs to the language newspapers, and they are going to occupy the stage in every part of India. If you go to a village or a small town, you do not find the English newspaper in the bazaar or streets or homes there; you find people reading language newspapers.

Our language newspaper have come to stay and have to mould public opinion in India in the years to come. But so far the language newspaper have been having a very precarious sort of life. It is because we have been dominated by other factors and other things. But I believe that by means of this measure we are going to give a reasonable chance of existence to the language newspapers, and that is not only in consonance with the democratic principles for which we stand, but also in consonance with the democratic principles which we have in our Constitution.

Again I believe that I have been seeing a strange phenomenon in this country after the Partition. When I was in the United Punjab, I used to see papers which could be called provincial papers, papers of provincial importance. I also could see some papers which could be described as papers of all-India importance, but I used to find so many papers, and good papers at that, which used to be run at the district level. All those papers used to serve a very important purpose; they used to canalise the opinion of a particular region in very healthy channels. But what do I find after the Partition? After the Partition I find that those district papers have disappeared; the big fish have eaten the small fish; the big papers have swallowed the small papers. I tell you that democracy will not depend on the big papers; they have so many interests to serve. Democracy will be served much more by the small papers, by the regional papers and by the language papers than by any other papers. These big papers, as my friend, Shri Jaipal Singh, said he was a member of the Press Commission—are there and you can forecast their opinion on any subject under discussion. Without opening them, you can know what they are going to say on a particular thing or problem. Their minds move in a particular groove. But the small newspapers have a freshness of outlook and independence of opinion and independence of judgment, which, I am afraid, these big newspapers do not have. So, this Bill is meant for

the protection of the smaller newspapers and hence, I welcome it.

Advertisements are good; I do not say that they are bad. It is the age of advertisements and no paper can live without advertisements. But advertisements do not always exercise a wholesome effect on the newspapers which publish them. I wish one of my colleagues had been here to tell you how some of these advertisements lead to a lack of freedom of expression and independent judgment.

We are a great country. We are perhaps the second largest nation in the world in the production of films. I would ask you to read the reviews of these films published in the papers. You will see how much of independence these papers have. They dare not expose their true worth; they dare not call a film bad because those film magnates give them advertisements, which bring them money. This money keeps the wheels of the printing press and other things moving. It means that we are going to limit this also. So, this will be very helpful from that point of view also.

Again, I would say that this is going to cut at the root of unfair competition. Here is my friend, Shri Moitra, who has been associated with so many daily papers. What was the fate of those papers? They were very good papers, I know. But, they could not carry on because of this unfair competition. So, this is a good provision that we are having.

I would make one suggestion. You are going to promulgate the orders after consulting only the associations of publishers. My feeling is that it is not only the publishers who bring out these newspapers. The newspapers are co-operative concern. The editors and the working journalists have as much to do with these newspapers as the publishers. So, before the hon. Minister promulgates any order, he should call for a tripartite conference of publishers, editors and working journalists.

Shri Feroze Gandhi: They will break each other's heads.

Shri D. C. Sharma: Only then he should promulgate the orders. My friend, Shri Feroze Gandhi says that they will break each other's heads.

Shri Feroze Gandhi: Including the Minister's.

Shri D. C. Sharma: If they break each other's heads, nobody would be sorry. It is only the big newspapers that would break each other's head and the small man will not break anybody's head and he will also see that his own head is preserved. These orders should also be placed before the House so that we can have a look at them as early as possible.

I welcome this measure and I do not think that it is going to put any kind of curb on the freedom of expression. Some felt that it was going to be a curb but it has been contradicted. I have been reading some papers and I found that the people had taken kindly to this measure. The newspapers have taken this measure in good humour and they have taken it more or less as a settled fact. Therefore, I think that this measure is going to do a lot of good to our democracy and to our country and I hope the orders issued will be placed before this House as early as possible.

Shri M. K. Motra (Calcutta-North-West): Sir, the history of journalism in this country is associated with the history of the freedom movement. Journals appeared in this country to play the role of opposition against the British imperialists. Shri Jaipal Singh told us today that in foreign countries like U.K., journalism has set up a standard. Yes; it has set up a standard. We are reminded of Lord Northcliffe who has been described as the stock-exchange man of journalism. We know that it was he who set to winds all ethics of journalism and to whom success meant everything; it was success that he admired. That ideal of Northcliffe crept into this land where journalism was a

profession and where journalists took it up as a mission.

During the thirties of this century, when the Gandhi movement was at its full swing, the foreign advertisers took it into their heads to control the tone of the newspapers and the then Government helped them. I know that in 1930, when the Indian journals were waging a war against foreign goods and were publishing headlines: 'Boycott British goods', there came a request I should say that it was a request—from the foreign advertisers, that, if the headline 'Boycott British goods' was used, then, all foreign advertisements would be stopped. Some of the papers submitted to that and that was the black day in the journalism in India.

After that, we have seen in the Government reports that instances are not rare where the Government publicity officers have infiltrated editorials written in the Government secretariat to national newspapers; they have been published. The price that was given to those newspapers was the judicious distribution of advertisements under the control of the Government. This judicious distribution of advertisements still continues and if I may be permitted to say so, I must say that free expression of opinion is still a casualty, even in free India.

The Bill proposes to give some protection to smaller newspapers against unequal competition from bigger ones who have established themselves by the income from foreign advertisements and Government advertisements. We know that big papers do not stand on their sales. Big papers can distribute their papers free, if they can get advertisements. It is advertisement that they want to draw and they do not care for distribution of news. Therefore, any measure to help the growth of smaller newspapers, to help the growth of district papers will be welcome.

Sir, it is necessary that our papers should give publicity to the creative

activities of the people. If you open a big paper, you will find that in a ten-page paper there are about 80 columns, and out of those 80 columns 40 are occupied by advertisements and out of the remaining 40 columns about 20 or 25 columns are taken up by international news with the result that the news of this country gets very little space. What we want is that the news of the activities of the people of this country must get a prominent place in newspapers, and for this reason we want that newspapers in the districts must be developed. They must be made free from undue competition from bigger newspapers. This Newspaper (Price and Page) Bill alone cannot help the growth of that free Press, the growth of that independent Press in mofussil areas. Sir, something more is needed.

During the course of these 9 years we have not seen that in post offices and telegraph offices teleprinter lines have been installed to transit messages through teleprinters at a cheaper rate. That would have helped the growth of this language Press. Then, the language Press has, in this year of Grace, to translate news from English. That is a handicap. In the course of these 9 years our Government have not been able to make arrangements for transmitting news service in our mother tongues, in the national languages prevailing in this country. Over and above that, what we require today is the Statutory Board for distribution of newsprint. One of my previous hon. speakers has said that not a single inch of newsprint is manufactured in India and all our requirements have to be imported from foreign countries like Finland, Scandinavia, Austria and others. So, along with this price-page schedule, if you want the growth of smaller papers, you will have to establish the Statutory Board for distribution of newsprint; otherwise the purpose for which this Bill is being passed will be frustrated.

Now, I come to this Bill. If you look to clause 2, you will see that "daily newspaper" means a newspaper which is published on not less than six days in a week. We know that big newspapers are published for seven days a week and they are registered under the Press and Registration of Books Act. There are two kinds of newspapers. First of all there is the newspaper that is published for six days in a week, and then there is the Sunday newspaper. The Sunday newspaper is registered under the Press and Registration of Books Act as a separate newspaper. When you will fix this price-page schedule, will you take into consideration these two kinds of newspapers? I want to know whether those newspapers which publish for six days and then also publishes a Sunday edition will be taken as a single daily newspapers, or will the six-day edition papers will be taken as daily newspapers and the Sunday editions will be taken as weekly newspapers where they will get extra benefits of a weekly newspaper. That is the first question which I hope the Minister will clarify.

Then sub-clause (4) of clause 3 says: "in making the price-page schedule the Government will consult the associations of publishers." Here there are two recognised associations of publishers: the India and Eastern Newspaper Society and the Indian Language Newspaper Association. The subscription for the India and Eastern Newspaper Society is Rs. 1000 a year and no small newspapers can become its member. So, when you consult the associations of publishers, you really consult the bigger newspapers against whose interests you want to protect the smaller newspapers. Will the Minister be pleased to give us an assurance that he will make some arrangements for consulting the smaller newspapers when this price-page schedule is fixed?

The Minister while moving the motion for consideration of the Bill has expressed his anxiety for healthy

[Shri M. K. Moitra]

growth of the smaller newspapers, and in the course of his speech he said that he was anxious to give some sort of protection to the smaller newspapers. We would like to know whether he wants to give this protection in the shape of some subsidies to these smaller newspapers. If he proposes to give subsidies to smaller newspapers, we will oppose it. We hope the Minister will clarify.

Dr. Keskar: There is no intention of giving any subsidy.

Shri M. K. Moitra: You suggested protection; what will be the shape of it?

Dr. Keskar: Fixing a reasonable minimum price is a protection.

Shri M. K. Moitra: Then there is another thing. We want to know whether these newspapers will be given bonus pages on occasions, say, in a month, when they will be allowed to publish some 10, 20 or 30 extra-pages. It has been stated in the Bill that on national occasions like the observance of the Republic Day and on the 15th August, these newspapers will be given concession to publish extra pages. Will the same privilege be extended to leftist papers when on the 9th of August or on May Day or some other day to commemorate the revolutionary activities they will also be anxious to issue some extra pages?

Shri Jaipal Singh: Why not?

Shri M. K. Moitra: If this privilege is granted to bigger newspapers, the same privilege should be granted to leftist papers.

Shri A. M. Thomas (Ernakulam): Now leftist papers have begun to observe Independence Day.

Dr. Keskar: Whatever privilege is granted, it is granted to all newspapers.

Shri M. K. Moitra: Sir, I thank the hon. Minister. Whatever privileges he wants to give to bigger news-

papers will also be extended to smaller ones, especially the leftist ones. I am thankful to him for that.

With these few words I support the principle underlying the Bill and I hope, along with the fixation of price-page schedule the Government will see its way to establish the Statutory Board for distribution of newsprint, because, unless newsprint is made easily available in mofussil areas, unless newsprint is made easily available to smaller newspapers, this price-page schedule will not serve the purpose for which it has been made.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi (Nellore): Sir, I feel that I am in a very embarrassing position inasmuch as my voice might be a lone one in expressing a doubt and dissatisfaction at a Bill like this. Instead of bringing a comprehensive Bill on the floor of the House, we have been given bits of Bills concerning a few aspects of the Press Commission's Report, and this Bill seems to be less desirable and less sound of all the recommendations that have been made by the Press Commission.

I do not in the least suggest that the smaller papers which require protection should not be protected. But, at the same time, I would say that there is no need to have an overall control of the type that this Bill wants on the established newspapers. I take this opportunity of telling the House that in between the proprietor, the worker or the working journalist and the Government, the consumer seems to be very much hard-hit for the simple reason that the control that is now envisaged to be placed on the freedom of the Press will certainly affect the interests of the consumer.

The Bill mainly proposes, as noticed in clause 3, to regulate the prices charged for newspapers and to fix the maximum or minimum number of pages and also stipulate the sizes and areas of papers and lastly it seeks to prescribe the space

to be allotted for the advertising mater in relation to other matters therein. Everyone of these things that have been noticed in clause 3 requires the very careful attention and also the careful consideration at the hands of the Government.

5-31 P.M.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

They are very important especially in view of the fact that very large powers are vested in the hands of the Press Registrar who is appointed under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867. The Government are likely to invest in his hands dictatorial powers to deal with the papers in any fashion that he likes and also to squeeze out some of those bigger papers with a view to help papers of the Government's own liking. The Bill imposes that there should be no increase in pages without increase in the price. On the contrary, the Bill also says that there should be no reduction in price without reducing the pages. These two things are very difficult to be encountered by any decent, established newspaper which has been catering to the consumers or the readers. By a pushing up of the price as is now envisaged in the Bill, the consumer certainly suffers, and it is not known to what extent the big papers have been able to squeeze out the smaller ones. It has now become more or less a fashion to decry everything that is supposed to be big and encourage, at least verbally, everything that is supposed to be small.

I am unable to understand how far an unfair competition by the established papers against the smaller papers has been proved. As a matter of fact, the advertisement revenue to the bigger papers is more or less the mainstay of those papers and they can make the paper more attractive by having a larger number of features in the paper, and that is evidently supported by a large volume of advertisement which they can com-

mand. In fact, the advertiser does not advertise in a paper as a matter of favour, but he thinks that he will certainly get the return for the money that he spends on advertisement by way of orders and publicity through the largely circulated papers. It is not a favour that is shown, but, it is, on the other hand, the utility point of view that is taken into consideration by the advertiser. No question of favour comes in, unless the advertiser is the Government. Government, as has been pointed out by several hon. Members, can show favouritism to certain papers that can cater to their needs and can publicise their greatness. It is, therefore, not desirable that favouritism should be imported into the public Press and that the Government should, in any form, come in the way of circulation or the size of papers.

I could also mention that some of the weekly papers, especially the language papers, do not exist throughout the time. Some do exist from time to time; some come into existence all of a sudden just before election time.

Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy: Because they are weak.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: Is there any provision in this Bill that such papers will be watched and be eschewed in the matter of any support or protection that the Government are going to give? Or, is the Government going to ignore that fact and say that, whatever might be the tenure of the paper or the life of the paper, simply because it is a small paper or a new paper it must be protected at all stages and by all means? I do not think that that is the idea of the Government. But how could they discriminate between such papers and some other papers which are already established ones in the weekly sector? I feel that the very basis of the Bill seems to be due to a certain amount of pressure for enacting a law of this type. I do not know from whom the pressure

[Shri Ramachandra Reddi]

comes, but symptoms are there to show that unless there has been some pressure they would not have attempted to frame a Bill like this.

Much power is now sought to be given to the Press Registrar. He is going to be a dictator and he is going to be invested with the powers of punishing any paper in any manner whatever.

Dr. Keskar: How can they be punished?

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: By making a complaint, whether it is right or wrong.

Dr. Keskar: Where is the power given in the Bill for the Press Registrar to punish anybody?

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: There are certain things mentioned in clause 5. There, powers are given to him in the matter of securing "weekly returns and statistics with respect to any of the particulars referred to in section 3 as the Press Registrar may, from time to time, require and the publisher of every newspaper shall comply with such direction". Further, "if any newspaper is published or sold in contravention of section 4, the publisher of the newspaper shall, on first conviction, be punishable" etc.

Dr. Keskar: Punishable by the court and not by the Press Registrar.

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: How? It can be only on the complaint of the Press Registrar. Otherwise, the courts cannot take cognizance of the offence. The Press Registrar is the complainant. That is what I could understand from this Bill.

In clause 7, the courts also have been deprived of the power of taking any cognizance until there is a complaint by the Press Registrar. The clause says:

"No court shall take cognizance of any offence punishable

under this Act except upon a complaint in writing by the Press Registrar appointed under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867...."

So, either way, there must be a complaint from the Press Registrar. These provisions seem to be very harsh and probably dictatorial powers are going to be invested in the hands of the Press Registrar.

I would not grudge giving any subsidies by the Government to some of these papers which require them. But, is it possible for the Government to give subsidies to all such papers? How can they discriminate between a good paper and a bad paper? If any question of subsidy comes in, naturally they would like to support their own party papers rather than other papers.

Dr. Keskar: Where is the question of a good paper and a bad paper?

Shri Ramachandra Reddi: A good paper from the point of view of Government will be a paper which supports the Government; and, a bad paper from the point of view of Government will be a paper which does not support the Government. I am only saying how it is not possible to give a subsidy as things stand today. Therefore, I suggest that the matter has to be carefully gone into and whatever amendments are necessary to make the newspaper industry a safer and healthier one should be made. Otherwise, the newspaper industry will be very much hit; more than the industry itself, the consumers will be much more hit.

Mulla Abdullahai (Chanda): There is no quorum in the House.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The bell is being rung. Now, there is quorum.

Dr. Suresh Chandra: The hon. Minister deserves congratulations for bringing this Bill before the House. There has been a desire of the whole House that all the recommendations

of the Press Commission should be implemented by the Government. In pursuance of those recommendations, this Bill has been brought in here. I only wish the hon. Minister had brought a comprehensive and consolidated Bill implementing all the recommendations made by the Press Commission. However, even if the recommendations are being implemented step by step by pieces of legislation, it is welcome.

As has been pointed out, the purpose of this Bill is to provide for the regulation of the prices charged for newspapers in relation to their pages. It has been made clear by Mr. Jaipal Singh and also by Mr. Gurupadaswamy that there is no question of fixing a maximum or minimum number of pages. It is a question of fixing the prices for newspapers in relation to the maximum or minimum number of pages. This Bill therefore, will help the smaller papers in the country.

Mr. Reddi has said that it has become a fashion of the day in this country to support smaller things and decry bigger things. I do not know whether it is the fashion or not; but, I feel it is in the fitness of things to support the smaller things which do not get protection from anybody. If the Government comes forward with a legislation to protect the interests of the smaller people or the smaller interests, then the Government deserves congratulations for that. Therefore, this is really a matter for congratulating the Government.

Objection has been raised by some Members to clause 3(4) which provides that the Government shall consult associations of publishers and such publishers likely to be affected by the order. I feel that this is a necessary and important clause. There is no need for any amendment to this clause. Whenever an order has to be issued, it is the Government which is going to deal with the publishers in regard to the prices and the number of pages. Therefore, it has to consult the associations of publishers

and also such publishers which are bound to be affected by the order.

I only want to say one thing with regard to the regional press, the importance of which has been emphasised by the hon. Minister. As we all know, in this country the newspapers flourish on account of the bulk advertisements which they get, and as referred to by the Minister, the bulk of the advertisements comes from foreign countries and mainly they go to the English newspapers. It is very unfair that the bulk of the advertisement revenue should go only to English papers. We know that in a few years, time, the importance of English is going to decrease and the importance of the regional languages is going to increase. Therefore, it is very necessary that the distribution of advertisements should also be fair and even more than fair to the language newspapers. Then only we shall be able to build up a healthy regional Press in our country and give news to the people at large at reasonable and cheap prices.

In conclusion, I welcome this measure which has been brought in by the Minister and I congratulate him for this.

Dr. Keskar: I am glad that the consensus of opinion in the House is emphatically and definitely in favour of this measure. My friend, Mr. Reddi's, has been the lone and strong voice against the Bill. I have carefully heard his arguments against such a legislation. At the time of the Press Commission debate, we also found that parliamentary opinion in general was strongly in favour of Government taking up the question of such a legislation. When Shri Ramachandra Reddi referred to pressure, he was hinting very darkly at a certain sort of pressure. There has been pressure. The pressure has been from the newspapers, from Parliament. Naturally, Government has to pay heed to what Parliament

[Dr. Keskar]

says and also what the newspapers, as a whole, say. If we have accepted that pressure, I plead guilty to what Shri Ramachandra Reddi has charged me with. I may assure him there has been no other pressure. In fact, I am personally reluctant to proceed with such a measure because it burdens you with a very difficult responsibility. Because you fix any price and there is bound to be somebody who will say, the rate does not suit me, therefore, I agree, the Government should not have fallen this up. Always you are the target of criticism. This responsibility is not something which we want to accept lightly or with pleasure. But, as I said, it is the opinion of the majority of the press and a very pressing opinion which has asked for this. We would have been guilty of not heeding public opinion in the press circles if we had not brought this Bill before the House.

I would like to refer to two or three points very briefly regarding certain general principles which were raised here. Firstly, many hon. Members have referred to the report of the Press Commission, and said that we have been very slow in implementing the recommendations in that report. I might say on behalf of the Government that it is an unfair charge. As I said before, when we put in a detailed statement regarding all the recommendations of the Press Commission, that there are only a few recommendations of the Commission in which the Commission has directed the Government to pass legislation. Of these, the main thing which is pending is the matter of the Press Council. Legislation regarding the Press Council has already been introduced in the Rajya Sabha. It is really unfair even now to come forward and accuse the Government of being remiss or reluctant and delaying the implementation of the recommendation of the Commission. There are a large number of recommendations,—other recommendations, I mean—which are addressed to the industry, journalists and others. No

doubt, they should pay heed to them. We will certainly press them to pay heed to the recommendations of the Commission. But, you should not ask the Government to take up legislation for that purpose. That was not also the intention of the Press Commission at any time.

The first question to which I would like to refer is the question of not giving a schedule here. Though I quite sympathise with the desire expressed by the Members—I wish myself that the Members had some idea regarding it—I feel that it is not at all a practicable proposition. It is not a question of the rules being presented to Parliament or some schedule or draft schedule being presented to Parliament. It is a question of fixing rates for newspapers, which rates may vary in two months or six months, because the rates of newspapers depend on many factors, as hon. Members who have anything to do with newspapers know. For example, tomorrow if the price of newsprint goes up, suddenly, it will not be possible for the newspapers to adhere to the particular rates that may be fixed, or we may have an intention to fix. Suppose we take up draft rates and keep them pending dependent on the vote of this House, it will play a great havoc in the industry. That is not right. If hon. Members refer to other industries, they will see that where the question is of fixing rates or prices, it is done by executive order. It is always open to the House—it has got the inherent power—to call the Government to account if it takes a wrong decision. But, I think the hon. Members will be putting the newspaper industry in a very unfair position if they ask that every time the rates are fixed, there should be a prior discussion here and after discussion and voting here only the rate should be fixed. That would keep the newspapers in a very uncertain position. It may even lead to a very undesirable sort of lobbying for a particular type of rates or prices. I therefore hope that they will not insist that such a

thing should be done. If my friend Shri Gurupadaswamy feels, for example, that Government have fixed wrong rates, he can certainly call Government to account. That can always be done. Parliament has got the power always to do that.

Shri Kamath: He cannot call you, only your party can.

Dr. Keskar: If Government is taking this action it is not because we do not want such a thing to be put before Parliament, but because purely from a practical point of view, it is not a possibility. It can always be discussed later, and if anything wrong has been done, Members can draw the attention of Government and it can be rectified.

The third point which I would like to emphasize is that there should not be any misunderstanding that when we are trying to fix the prices of papers for a certain maximum number of pages we are in any way trying to stifle newspaper competition. That would be a very wrong thing to do, because the excellence of a newspaper does depend on competition. If there is no incentive for a newspaper, for example, to gain in circulation or in prestige or popularity, then there will be no excellence in it. Here, what is aimed at is that there should be, as I said in the very beginning, no unfair and unjournalistic sort of competition for beating the opposite paper. That is what we are trying to stop. We are not trying to stop or come in the way of competition. We think there should be competition. Papers should by their attractive material and other legitimate things try to gain more readers and more circulation. That is very legitimate and I do not think we should come in the way of that. In fact, we should try to help them. I am mentioning this because some friends think that this action is taken only to protect the smaller papers. It is meant to stop unfair competition amongst papers, unfair cutting of prices, cornering of readers and such sort of thing, and also protection to the smaller papers in order that they, by the quality of their service, might

build themselves up. So, there is no bar to competition. It is not coming in the way of those papers which want to go forward, to increase their circulation. This can be judged only from this, that in Great Britain where the price-page schedule has been existing for more than 15 years now, there are papers with a circulation of three to four million and fixing the rate does not come in the way of their circulation.

Lastly—I am talking of the general points—I would like to mention the important point of the freedom of the press. This I mentioned in the beginning and explained that this cannot be considered at any time as a curb on the freedom of the press. In fact, I would go further and say that if fair prices are charged by newspapers, it might permit even a better freedom of the press than what exists today. This point has been stressed by a number of papers, and as I said in the beginning we ourselves have taken this rather onerous task at the behest of the press and Parliament. We ourselves are reluctant any time to come and intervene in any matter concerning the freedom of the press. We do not want all sorts of legislation. It is only when press opinion and parliamentary opinion have compelled that we have been coming forward with these pieces of legislation. Therefore Government should not be accused of trying to control this and that. Whatever we are doing, we are doing in the general interests, in the interests of the press itself.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Has the hon. Minister concluded?

Dr. Keskar: I will finish in five minutes.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: If the House agrees to sit for a few minutes more, we might finish this.

Dr. Keskar: Certain points have been raised by my friends here. The important point is that we have not mentioned here in the Bill that we will consult journalists, editors etc. Now, though nobody can say that we do not realise the importance

[Dr. Keskar]

of the working journalists and editors, this is a matter concerning the business side of a paper. We will be consulting a number of people, all interests concerned. I regret to say that I am unable to accept the view that because a journalist, however good a journalist he may be, is working there, he has a right to advise what the price should be because the price of a paper concerns the management. We are bound to consult those who are dealing with it, who are managing it. We are getting the opinion from all; but we do not accept all the opinion. Out of that we will take what we consider best in the general interest of the press as a whole. I do not agree that in this matter the editors and journalists should obligatorily be consulted. I have no objection to consulting them but I do not think they are mainly concerned with it; only the management or the business side of a paper is mainly concerned with it. It might be that there is a co-operative paper and in that case this question may arise. But in ordinary papers it does not arise. Of course, hon. Members might disagree with me and I do not say that they should agree with me. But I am not able to see any reason why obligatorily we should consult them.

6 P.M.

Shri K. P. Tripathi (Darrang): Since you are not accepting the opinion, what is the harm in consulting them?

Dr. Keskar: I am speaking about "obligatorily consulting". I will certainly consult all those who are interested in the press. That I can assure.

Shri Kamath: Informal consultation.

Dr. Keskar: Certainly. Then there has been attack on the Press Registrar. A point was raised as to why the Press Registrar alone has been given the power. The Govern-

ment has taken the task of enforcing the price page schedule and naturally Government must have some agent who will take up the work of seeing that this is enforced and that the newspapers are not contravening it. It cannot be left with everybody in the street to see that the schedule is being obeyed by the newspapers. For this purpose some responsible person has to be named who will take up the question and see whether the newspapers are following the schedule or not and if anybody is not observing the schedule, a complaint has to be lodged.

Shri M. K. Moltra: Probably, the hon. Minister has misunderstood it. The point raised was that it depends on the sweet will of the Press Registrar to institute an application before a court. If he does not like, he may not file an application and no step will be taken.

Dr. Keskar: If a Press Registrar does not file such an application and permits a flagrant disobedience of the schedule by newspapers, I don't think for long he can remain as Press Registrar. It is not possible. We are dealing with the most vocal section of our people, that is the press; and I think my hon. friend should be reasonable and should expect the Press Registrar to do his duty.

Shri M. K. Moltra: We are grateful to the hon. Minister for the assurance he has given. But we were afraid because after being guilty of such flagrant violation, Government servants are still in service.

Dr. Keskar: The hon. Member can certainly bring the Government to book for that.

Shri Kamath: It is easier said than done.

Dr. Keskar: There is another question regarding the important point of supplements. If the hon. Member who mentioned this reads the Bill very carefully, it will be very clear to

(Price and Page) Bill

him that this refers only to supplements on occasions of special importance and no commercial supplement is allowed under this. There is no special provision going to be made for commercial supplements. But I think it is reasonable that we should expect our papers, small and big, to bring up, for example, supplement for Independence Day. Only for one or two or three very important occasions this will be allowed and a very small quota will be given. But commercial supplements are completely outside the purview of the supplements mentioned here. That I can assure and he need not carry the suspicion that by this backdoor papers will be allowed more quota than they ought to get.

Then, certain rates had been mentioned. I might say that the question of what price per page should be charged etc. is too premature to discuss here. We propose, after the Bill is passed, to call the newspapers, small and big, and have a thorough discussion with them, before we prepare any schedule. And I might assure my hon. friends who have mentioned rates that whatever they have mentioned will also be carefully taken into consideration at that time.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Is that all?

Dr. Keskar: These are the main points that I wanted to make.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The question is:

"That the Bill to provide for the regulation of the prices charged for newspapers in relation to their pages and of matters connected therewith for the purpose of preventing unfair competition among newspapers so that newspapers may have fuller opportunities of freedom of expression, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

GYPNUM

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The House will now take up the half-an-hour discussion on gypsum.

श्री भक्त वरुण (जिला गढ़वाल-पूर्व व जिला मुरादाबाद-उत्तर-पूर्व) : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, १३ अगस्त को मेरे मित्र श्री सी० आर० नरसिंहन साहब ने तारांकित प्रश्न संख्या १०१८ प्राकृतिक संसाधन मंत्री महोदय से इस आशय का पूछा था कि हमारे देश में जब जिप्सम पूरी मात्रा में हो रहा है तब उसे सिदरी फट्टि-लाइजर फैक्टरी तथा दूसरे कारखानों के लिए विदेशों से और खासकर पाकिस्तान से मंगाने की क्या आवश्यकता है ? इसीलिए यह आश्चर्य का विवाद यहां प्रारम्भ किया जा रहा है, और मुझे आशा है कि माननीय उत्पादन मंत्री जी इस प्रश्न पर प्रकाश डालेंगे कि किस कारण से अपने देश के अन्दर जिप्सम पूरी मात्रा में होते हुए भी बाहर से जिप्सम मंगाना पड़ रहा है ।

जहां तक हमारे देश में जिप्सम के उत्पादन का प्रश्न है, सरकारी आंकड़ों से ज्ञात होता है कि सन् १९५२ में हमारे देश में ४,११,२०४ टन जिप्सम निकाला गया, सन् १९५३ में ५,८५,८३९ टन निकाला गया, और सन् १९५४ में ६,१२,००० टन जिप्सम हमारे देश में निकाला गया, अर्थात् प्रत्येक वर्ष में हमारे देशके अन्दर इस मामले में प्रगति होती चली जा रही है और अधिक से अधिकतर मात्रा में जिप्सम का उत्पादन हो रहा है ।

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): Will the Minister understand Hindi?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: If he has no objection, then, he must be following.

Shri A. M. Thomas (Ernakulam): A doubt has been expressed whether the Minister can follow Hindi or not.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: That should be for the Minister to say. If he has any difficulty, he will express it.

श्री भक्त वरुण : मेरा अनुमान है कि माननीय उत्पादन मंत्री महोदय यद्यपि हिन्दी में