

AMENDMENTS IN RESERVE AND AUXILIARY AIR FORCES ACT RULES

The Deputy Minister of Defence (Sardar Majithia): I beg to lay on the Table, under sub-section (4) of section 34 of the Reserve and Auxiliary Air Forces Act, 1952, a copy of the Ministry of Defence Notification No. S.R.O. 6-E, dated the 18th December, 1954, making certain amendments in the Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force Act Rules, 1953. [Placed in Library. See No. S-526/54.]

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

SUPPLY OF NEWS TO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE BY P.T.I. AND U.P.I.

Sardar A. S. Saigal (Bilaspur): Under Rule 215, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Communications to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The supply of news to private enterprise by the Press Trust of India and the United Press of India and the steps taken by the Government in that direction."

The Minister of Communications (Shri Jagjivan Ram): Sir, at present the Posts and Telegraphs Department rent out teleprinter lines to the PTI and UPI for the collection, transmission and distribution of news in the various centres in India. Other news agencies, newspapers, commercial subscribers, Government Departments, etc., are also allowed teleprinter lines and these parties as well as news agencies, including PTI and UPI are permitted to use the circuits for the purposes specified in the hiring contract.

With regard to the inter-urban circuits and other long-distance circuits leased out to the PTI and UPI, the hiring contract clearly lays down the type of information that can be passed on these lines and the conditions for divulging the information to any party. According to these terms

contained in the hiring contract read with Rule 135(2) of the Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951, the circuits can be used only for transmission of Press telegrams admitted for transmission at Press rates and these messages shall not, before publication in a newspaper, be communicated to an unregistered newspaper or to any private individual or to any establishment, such as a club, cafe, hotel or a stock exchange. We are advised that the minute to minute transmission of telegrams containing stock, bullion and commodity prices to any one except registered newspaper, contravenes the provisions of the hiring contract since any minute to minute communication of such telegrams to third parties is bound to be before their publication in a newspaper.

The Posts and Telegraphs Department became aware as a result of their own monitoring as well as through complaints received from public that these two news agencies and certain other news agencies had not been following the rules and were sending minute to minute quotations concerning bullion, grain, stock exchange, etc., and communicating these to private subscriber. In addition to these, cases have been found in which they were found transmitting buying and selling orders sometimes openly and at times in code on behalf of private parties and acting in other ways in contravention of the hiring contract.

Even though the Posts and Telegraphs Department and the Government have been aware that these lines were being used for purposes other than those for which they were leased, strict application of the penal clause was deferred due to the fact that the parties are all-India news agencies who are otherwise fulfilling a primary and essential service in the collection, transmission and distribution of news to all the newspapers in

the country. The two news agencies particularly referred to here are the premier ones. The sudden stoppage of teleprinter facilities to these news agencies would have completely dislocated the entire news distribution and this consequence naturally is not desirable. We have, therefore, before exercising the powers to enforce the penalties, pursued the case vigorously with these two and other news agencies in order to ensure that the circuits are not used for purposes other than for genuine news transmission and dissemination. The attention of the two news agencies was drawn more than once to this aspect of their business and they were warned to discontinue these practices and adhere strictly to the terms of the hiring contract. A meeting was convened by me with the representatives of the two news agencies in March 1954. In this meeting the attention of the two news agencies was drawn to the fact that there was considerable misuse of some of the teleprinter circuits leased out to them and that such misuses must stop. Later notices were issued to the news agencies for disconnecting certain important circuits leased out to them. In a second meeting held in July 1954 the two news agencies gave assurances that they will desist from these practices. In this meeting they agreed that all such misuses will be stopped by the end of October, 1954 and drastic action may be taken against them if these practices did not stop by that time.

Though a certain amount of improvement is now discernible in the case of one of the two agencies, the misuse of the circuits has not yet fully stopped. This has been found from the monitoring of the messages sent out on certain of the lines used by the two news agencies after 31st October 1954. We are issuing notices to the news agencies pointing out this feature and then Government will take suitable action if the abuse continues.

Government are determined that any kind of misuse by any lessee in-

cluding the important news agencies like the P.T.I. and U.P.I. should be stopped. Various steps are contemplated to meet this objective and it is not proposed to detail these in this statement since it will not be in the interest of the Government to reveal their position now.

As far as the loss to the Posts and Telegraphs Department is concerned, it is difficult to make even an approximate estimate, but it is realised that the loss of revenue is considerable. From the information supplied by the P.T.I. and U.P.I. a few months ago, the amount of money earned on account of all commercial services provided by them to parties other than newspapers are given below:

P.T.I. Rs. 11,62,000.

U.P.I. Rs. 2,68,000.

Out of this, the amount which the P.T.I. and U.P.I. pay to the Posts and Telegraphs Department on account of rental for all their telegraph circuits (News and Commercial) is Rs. 5,00,000 and 2,00,000 respectively.

The Posts and Telegraphs Department are now leasing out teleprinter circuits to any individual commercial subscriber or business enterprise for the transmission of news connected with their business provided this is not disclosed to other parties. This facility is already available and may be availed of by any business user. They, however, do not get any concession rates as the news agencies get. On a long-term basis, the Posts and Telegraphs Department are also introducing a new kind of service called Telex or trunk teleprinter service which will be available to all members of the public. Such a service is already working in Bombay and Ahmedabad, and if the experiments prove successful, it will be introduced in principal centres. This Service enables any one subscriber to get into touch immediately with any other by dialling and he can then pass any message to that party.