

[Mr. Speaker]

full enjoyment of their rights guaranteed under the Constitution to all citizens and preventing recurrence of such incidents in future." (7).

*The Lok Sabha divided. Ayes 48: Noes 168.**

The motion was negatived.

Mr. Speaker: Now, I will put the motion moved by Shri Atulya Ghosh. In that case, Shri Naushir Bharucha's will be barred.

Shri Naushir Bharucha: Mine cannot be barred because it is a totally different matter. It only recommends to the Union Government to consider the desirability of assisting the Assam Government by a generous subsidy in the task of prompt rehabilitation of the riot victims in Assam.

Shri Bimal Ghosh: Sir, I would request you to put all the amendments together.

Mr. Speaker: I shall put the amendment standing in the name of Shri Atulya Ghosh and others first. The question is:

"That for the original motion, the following be substituted; namely:—

"This House, having considered the situation in Assam and the Report of the Parliamentary Delegation thereon, presented to the House on the 30th August, 1960, recommends that the Government should at an appropriate time set up a judicial enquiry to enquire into the circumstances resulting in the disturbances in the State of Assam in the month of July and to suggest steps necessary to prevent the recurrence of such disturbances in the future." (5).

The motion was adopted.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid, all the other amendments are barred. The House has accepted a substitute motion.

16.37 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

SIXTY-NINTH REPORT

Mr. Speaker: The House will now take up Private Members' Business.

Sardar A. S. Saigal (Janjgir): Sir, I beg to move:

"That this House agrees with the Sixty-ninth Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 30th August, 1960."

Mr. Speaker: The question is:

"That this House agrees with the Sixty-ninth Report of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions presented to the House on the 30th August, 1960."

The motion was adopted.

16.38 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE: DISSEMINATION OF NEWS AND VIEWS BY NEWSPAPERS—contd.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resume further discussion on the Resolution moved by Shri Indrajit Gupta on the 19th August, 1960 regarding dissemination of news and views by newspapers and the amendment moved thereon by Shri K. K. Warrior. Out of 2 hours allotted for discussion of the Resolution 20 minutes have already been taken up.

Some Hon. Member rose—

Mr. Speaker: Shri Joachim Alva.

Shri Warrior (Trichur): Sir, I have moved an amendment.

*Names of Members who recorded votes have not been indicated under the direction of the Speaker as the photo copy of Division result did not clearly show the names of all Members.

Mr. Speaker: He has moved it already. I have called Shri Alva now, I will call the hon. Member also.

Shri Joachim Alva (Kanara): I oppose the motion, but there are many points in the motion which call for our attention and consideration. The phraseology of the motion is somewhat similar to, or at least we are reminded of, the resolution that came before the House of Commons as a result of the fight put up by the Journalists' Union in Britain. The following motion was adopted by the House of Commons:

"That having regard to the increasing public concern at the growth of monopolistic tendencies in the control of the Press, and with the object of furthering the free expression of opinion through the Press and the greatest practicable accuracy in the presentation of news, this House considers that a Royal Commission should be appointed to enquire into the finance, control, management and ownership of the Press".

The presentation of news is a very important item in that announcement in the House of Commons as a result of which they had a Commission which made a very extensive study. Thereafter, we too followed suit and all these points were gone into.

The Press Commission in India did go extensively into all these matters, but we have not done enough about it at all. The presentation of news is a very serious matter and calls forth our serious consideration. In 1952, we had about 280 dailies in 13 languages, including the Indian languages of which only 27 were English dailies. That was in 1952. Unfortunately, I have not got the latest figures.

An enquiry was held into the news that was put out by the P.T.I. A kind of survey was done and the survey revealed that 25 per cent of the news was politics in the P.T.I. Then

another survey was made into the amount of lines put forth. Out of the 5,100 lines in the A service—A service meant that a daily had to pay Rs. 3,600 to the P.T.I. per month—it was found that 2,300 lines were put out by Reuters. That is the crux of the point. Out of 5,100 lines put out by the P.T.I. 2,300 lines were put out by Reuters. That comes to something between 45 per cent and 50 per cent. That is the crux of the problem. We have come to a stage in our progress when we cannot claim to have a full-fledged, dynamic and vigorous news service in India. What is wrong with us? We are an independent nation. We have got all the sinews of war with us. If we have not got the finance, we get it from abroad. But here is the Indian press, Indian journalism substantially made up of Indian language press, which gave such a great battle during the time of the Indian freedom which is ignored and which is not being served by proper news agencies. We have not yet got a good news agency. It is time that the Government set up a Corporation. I do not know what views the hon. Minister will hold. But it is time that the Government set up a Corporation, presided over perhaps by the Chief Justice of India or whosoever he may be—an eminent and impartial person—and this Corporation should disseminate the news so that we could have a first class news agency which will be the fulcrum and the centre and the real mainspring of our news in India.

In this fight for news agencies, we cannot forget the part played by the great Sadanand, who played a very gallant role from 1930 onwards until the time of his death. The Free Press news agency—the people seem to have forgotten about it—was there. Sadanand made a very gallant attempt and he died in that attempt. He wanted to have a world-comprehensive news service, but the great barons of the Indian press sabotaged it. Some of them joined up with Reuters and saw that it was sabotaged. The Government needed very little

[Shri Joachina Alva]

money to pour out on this scheme and this House would have sanctioned it if there was a scheme like that before us. But the whole scheme fell through. I cannot forget the amount of real service rendered by the late Shri S. Sadanand through those manifold struggles.

Men like K. Srinivasan ("Stalin" Srinivasan) wrote about the Simon Commission in London. I remember his telling me in jail in 1932: "Alva, I lived just on Rs. 80 in London. I did not even buy a toy for my child. I reported faithfully all that the Simon Commission said or did to the Indian press. All that was done so well and so thoroughly. K. Srinivasan was one of the founders of the A.I.N.E.C. He lived on Rs. 80 a month in London in the year 1925,—a long way off. These are the men who built up our news services and the press. Their services are ignored and nothing has come out of it. The PTI is just an offshoot of Reuters, which was the old API. Therein, the people are always fighting for posts and directorships of the news services. But who will control the organisation? Even today, in the whole operation of the PTI, manoeuvres and cliques are going on. The boys who run the service are patriotic, fine, young and able, and they are left to take care of themselves and they do a job because they are compelled to do it and they have to fulfil their tasks in the course of their duties. But there is no protection from the top. The Government of India has failed in its duty of organising a Corporation for news services so that we can have something to boast of on an equal footing with the best foreign news agencies. There we are just stranded!

We had all kinds of connections with Reuters but yet Reuters do not help us to tide over our difficulties. Reuters has its own angle, the angle of the British Empire and the British services. The Associated Press of America or the United Press of

America or any other similar news agency in the world has got some first class men. I know many of them personally. But they have to run their news services on their own angle. They have to run it for the country in which they are born.

But what is the position in our country? Though it is 13 years since we gained Independence, still, we cannot have a first class service of our own, of great international status. As I said, the PTI is there. Anyway, we have a monopoly in the news services. We allowed the Free Press to die and the great Sadanand, the great man he was, died as a greatly disappointed and bitter man. Though he suffered from a severe leg ailment, he carried on his news service.

Rajya Mahendra Pratap (Mathura): What is the rule? Can we have a discussion without quorum?

Mr. Speaker: All the non-officials are expected to be present. The hon. Member who is speaking may go on.

Shri Joachim Alva: Then came the question of the United Press of India. The source of inspiration for the United Press of India was again the great Sadanand. He started it. Later on Sen Gupta carried on the work. The Government of India permitted the United Press of India to close down. All that they could have done subsequently was, with a twist of the pen, to permit the press to carry on. Perhaps some amount of money might have been due to them, but the Government of India did not permit it to carry on. And the 400 young men were out of their jobs. We do not seem to worry about our fine, young men, who have been trained to work and who have been thrown into the dust-bin and we do not permit their talents to grow and be utilised in the service of the motherland. We have put another funeral-stone on the United Press of India. Sadanand had already one put on him.

What about our press? The journalist has to live a day-to-day existence. Take, for instance, the *Hindustan Samachar*. I do not care what its politics are!

16:49 hrs.

[SHRI JAGANATHA RAO in the Chair] I do not care who its promoters are. But it is also doing a good job in the sense that it serves the Indian language press. We want news agencies to serve the Indian language press. I quoted the figures earlier. Only 27 out of 280 dailies in India were in English in 1952. There are 13 languages in the language press and we are not catering to them. They cannot afford money. They cannot afford to pay Rs. 3,600 or so which the PTI demands. When this is the kind of variety that we see, when this is the kind of control and dissemination of news, it is time that we put it right.

We must profit by the experience in Ceylon. A woman there has come in to her own a woman who has not been to a university, but a woman who seems to have a lot of courage, guts and stamina in her. She seems to have taken a very courageous step. Ceylon may be a small island physically, but it has set an example to the rest of the world. They knew what were the pangs and throes during the election time. They have come out saying that "we are going to nationalise the press." At least they are taking over two newspaper combines and making them a public corporation. But here we are, a few people or a half a dozen people who own an independent press. They want to dictate to us and control the news. When those two news agencies to which I referred were dead and buried and the funeral, mortuary stones put on them, we have got new ones in their place, coming out like snakes from under the grass. Who are going to run these? They are run by capitalists. Mr. Goenka is running a chain of newspapers. He is now going to start a news agency! Mr. Birla is going to start a news agency, and I think the hon. Minister will give the information at his disposal as to the

number of news agencies for which he is going to give facilities for starting. They all seem to be coming out with a vengeance, out of big battalions! But whose views will they put forth? Will they put forth the views of the minions behind them or will they put forth the will of the people? Will they put forth the views of the millions of people of the country? They can start a news agency in no time. But the newspapers which struggled during the darkest days of the Indian freedom movement have been allowed to die. We have allowed those young men to rot in unemployment and we have allowed these news agencies to come. It is time that Government took note of the public opinion in India. If the public opinion in India has not yet been consolidated, if there is no direction from the public opinion, it is time that Government gave direction to public opinion and created a corporation. Instead of going ahead with the proposals for having a real public corporation embracing the Press Trust of India and all these interests, we shall be allowing this mushroom growth of news agencies with high capital behind them, directing the news and directing the policies of the nation. Whether it is the China policy, the Russian policy, the American policy or the U.K. policy, they shall put forth their own views, which shall not be in tune with the views of the masses of the people of India. These are the great dangers. Though we oppose the resolution of the mover, there are many important things arising out of it, which we cannot ignore and which we can ignore at our own peril.

Reuters has not altogether run into a very healthy line. When I was in Moscow about two years ago, I delivered a lecture to the union of journalists. I rang up Reuters and asked them to kindly put down these two lines: "Alva found great friendship for India in the Soviet Union and he addressed the union of journalists". The gentleman on the other side demanded 50 roubles. My companion said, "We will pay the 50 roubles". We gave him the number of my room

[Shri Joachim Alva]

in the hotel for payment and three days after we asked him whether the message had gone. He said, no; it had not gone! This is how they co-operate. It is not a question of Alva; I am a very small fry. It became a question of what slant to put on the friendship that we found in the Soviet Union for India or that someone felt that this friendship should not be continued. When I took up the matter with the then News Editor in London and now the Chairman of Reuters, Mr. Walton Cole, who is a friend of India, he expressed regret about the incident and even said that the services of the gentleman who answered me on the telephone had been dispensed with much earlier. I say this only to show how news agencies can suppress good news, news which can help in bringing countries and nations together. That is where we have to use the stick and use it very firmly and not allow things to go on as they have been going on for several years.

Even now the PTI is in collaboration with a French Agency—Agence Francaise de Presse. I want to know how this French agency can send out news on the Algerian patriots, what kind of angle it will take and what kind of news it will give to the PTI not only about the Algerian movement, but about the colonies like Morocco, Tunis, Libya, etc. These are very vital things. I would say that it is a great shame that the Government of India and the people of India cannot collaborate together and give a directive, start, to a great news agency which shall vibrate with the sense of Indian nationalism, which shall vibrate with dynamism. During the Indian freedom movement and even thereafter, we have never been accustomed to toil any untruth. We have never told any lies. To the utmost of our ability, always, during the years of our freedom struggle and even now, we always give expression to truth.

So far as the foreign agencies are concerned; I do not blame them; they have got their own high power politics. Some of them stand for imperialism, of colonialism, this way or that way. Perhaps in the course of their business, they are being directed by the powers that be in their own countries. They perhaps cannot tell all the truth to us. That is not any consideration to us. We want a truthful news agency, true to the nation, so that we can build up our nation. For the reader in India, printed word is the last gospel of truth. We have to direct the Indian reader. If the reader is directed in the wrong channel it will be a bad day for us. That is why I suggest we build up a truthful agency.

Though we on this side of the House are opposed to Shri Gupta's resolution, yet it has raised some important considerations and they cannot be ignored, in the interests of our nation. I hope the hon. Minister who has given much of his time to matters about the press, who was responsible for setting up the Press Commission and who has also brought forward many important proposals, will see to his way, will gather strength and at least next time will come with a proposal that we shall have a first-rate news agency for India, national, built on truth, and built not merely on expediency, as the other news agencies in the world are. We are a young nation wherein independence is concerned, we have not much experience of news agencies. We are not so technically high and advanced as the other nations of the world. I hope we shall have a news agency which will stand for truth and stand for correct information.

Shri Narasimhan (Krishnagiri): Sir, the resolution in my humble opinion is inconsistent with what is described as a free and independent Press. If it is to be implemented, I am really afraid that freedom of expression and freedom of the press will be greatly jeopardised. Therefore, in principle, I oppose it.

While a free and independent press is necessary, it is also incumbent on the press to observe what can be described as restraint. Independence should not mean licence. I am particularly worried about what has come to be known as the yellow press. Referring to yellow journalism, the Press Commission said—I quote:

“Yellow journalism of one type or another is increasing in this country. It is not confined to any particular area or language, but is perhaps more discernible in some than in others. It was a matter of grave concern to us to find that while instances of such yellow journalism are to be found everywhere, the majority of the journalists who appeared before us had little to say about it, except of course, to condemn it in general terms. Such condemnation too was restricted to a paragraph or two in the memoranda and had not appeared in any of their writings in the Press.”

The problem is not only not diminishing, but it is steadily increasing. Even in the Indian language field, a number of journals of this type are coming up, vitiating the atmosphere and having a demoralising effect even on the class of persons newly initiated to politics.

A kind of Press Council was also thought of to deal with such matters. One of the tasks of the Press Council was expected to be this kind of control over press standards and such things. But the Press Council has not come into existence and this problem has been allowed to remain like that.

Pending the formation of the Press Council the best thing would be, the newspaper editors and those who are immediately concerned with this aspect of journalism should form a kind of all-India body and observe a voluntary code, create public opinion within the limited field of journalism to maintain a standard and make it impossible for yellow journalism to exist. This must be attended to both by the Government and by the news-

paper world. It is not only in economics that “bad displaces good; bad money takes the place of good money” that is what is described as Gresham’s Law of economics. But even in this field of journalism, it is sad to see that bad journalism substitutes itself for good journalism. This problem must be attended to at once.

As for news agencies and their existing conditions, more can be said in their favour. We must be happy that we have a kind of news agency functioning all these years. So, it is no use condemning the existing news agency, which has been doing good work all these years and which has played its part well in difficult times. It is also not wise to throw away what we have already got and then create a new thing. The better course would be to improve the existing thing rather than thinking of creating a new thing.
17 hrs.

Shri Warior (Trichur): I have moved an amendment to the Resolution, which seeks to add the words “as recommended by the Press Commission of 1954”. This amendment is very important in view of the fact that we do not want to go now at present, in the present context, a step further than what is recommended by the Press Commission. The Press Commission has given us a very elaborate report of the conditions existing in this country, as far as the news agencies are concerned and as far as the newspaper industry is concerned. But we find that after this Report had come to the Government in 1954, with such serious recommendations as such a Commission have made for the first time in the history of the Indian newspaper industry, the Government had sat upon it and did not take it with much seriousness and did not implement the foremost recommendations which, to all intents and purposes, are not at all a reflection upon the existing conditions, as Shri Narasimhan wanted to make out. In fact, going through this Report, one will find that it is an unbiased report and the findings in it are based on facts and figures.

[Shri Warrior]

Here I will only refer to two points, and one of them is about the news agency. Everybody knows that the PTI has the sole monopoly of circulating news in this country, both for English and language papers. There were certain other news agencies like the UPI but they crumbled down as they could not stand the opposition and the competition of the PTI. There are some others, but they are only serving limited purposes and limited areas. We all know, especially people coming from the South know, how much we get from the PTI. There are so many things which I think the ordinary people do not know.

For instance I will give my own experience. We are subscribing to the PTI. They give us a long tape after 9 or 10 in the night. How can a morning paper make use of this long tape? We cannot make use of it, because already the press is closed, and papers come out in the morning without those important news. Even the most important decisions taken in this House cannot be published in a language paper if the news comes from Delhi after 8 or 9 O'Clock. There are some handicaps like this. But the PTI are charging us the full fees. They do not take into account all these difficulties. The difficulties of the language press, like translation etc. are mentioned in this Report.

Apart from that, the PTI indulge in so many discriminatory practices in imposing subscriptions, in giving news and so on. Now they have got three services, called A, B and C. The language papers do not take the A service, because it is a long one out of which we cannot even get a summary. So, naturally B or C service is taken by them. But, sometimes it happens that even the most important speeches or events, both national and international are blacked out from the B services and not even a mention is made, and that is mentioned in this Report also. I will give you an instance here. In the Disarmament Conference Mr. Khrushchev made a long speech for about three hours, cover-

ing so many pages. In fact it was a matter for the whole page of an English paper. In the B and C services not even a mention that such a person has made a speech was given.

Then, we have to compete with the bigger English newspapers; not only English newspapers but even with the language papers: There are some big language papers who have their printing machinery and things like that. Smaller language papers in the districts cannot compete with them at all. So, this sort of discrimination in the dissemination of news is practised by a news agency, which has got a monopoly.

I will not go into the details. On page 138, in the last paragraph, the Report says:

"It is, therefore, difficult to decide on long term arrangements. On this ground they have been charging at higher rates to Newspapers situated at centres other than those mentioned above. In certain cases, when new subscribers came up at the same centre, a slight reduction is made in the the subscription charge of the earlier subscribers. In other case, this concession does not appear to have been given. The reasons given by the Press Trust of India do not appear very convincing. For instance, they have decided to charge the standard rate of subscription at Ambala. As far as we are aware, they have only one subscriber at Ambala and the centre is not, therefore, comparable with the others they have mentioned. There are five subscribers in Kottayam and each of them is being charged Rs. 100 more than the standard subscription."

So, when there are more subscribers, the PTI charges more from each party. When there is an isolated or single subscriber, like in Ambala they charge a lesser amount. Now, if it is a question of the extension of the teleprinter service, if it is a question of other establishment charges, for the

maintenance of the PTI office in those localities, we can understand that. But in Kottayam only one single person with one or two assistants is managing five or six newspapers. In Ambala also the same establishment is necessary, the same teleprinter is necessary, the same service is necessary and so the same charges are necessary. But, still, they charge a lesser amount for Ambala. So, this is an illuminating instance where they are deviating from the normal business standards. If it is only a question of making profits, as was put by some hon. Members, we can understand their charging more for an isolated centre where only one single newspaper is there. But, on the other hand, they charge less when the establishment charges are more, as in the case of Ambala.

There are so many other instances also in other pages of this Report. Why is this done? The Press Commission has dealt with all these aspects in this Report. It is a very illuminating Report. I wonder why the Government had sat upon it all this time. The finding of the Press Commission after an enquiry is that the PTI depends for more than half of its revenue on a few big newspaper organisations and that all the other papers together contribute less than half of their income. Of course, the Commission has rightly pointed out that if the rates favour some subscribers rather than others, the situation has not necessarily been brought about by the voting power of the favourite subscribers. Actually voting power of the favourite subscribers may be less than the voting power of the other subscribers, who are contributing the other half. But actually in PTI the influence is wielded by these few subscribers, on whom the PTI mainly rests for its financial resources, and it is in their interest that the whole show is run according to their liking, and thereby there is so much of discontent, not only on the question of financial subscription and other matters connected with the PTI but also on the question of the dissemination of news.

I will give you only two instances which have come my way and I will close it because there is no necessity of reading the whole thing. I only want this House to take cognisance of such a report. That is all. These two instances are very very interesting. One, to which my hon. friend, Shri Indrajit Gupta also has referred, relates to 1938 when our national movement was at its height. There was a State in the South—I do not want to mention the name of the State—which subsidised the PTI, that is, the then API the parent of the present PTI, to the tune of Rs. 25,000 per month. You must know that the usual charges of the PTI for a Daily comes to about 2,000 or Rs. 3,000 per month for A service. But the State Government gave Rs. 25,000 per month. What was the effect? The effect was that the national movement was absolutely blacked out and all the anti-national movement propaganda of the authorities was given wide publicity, not only here in India but abroad also. Thus the organisation got its full rent from the Government and at the same time the Government was able to use this organisation which was supposed to serve the public for achieving its own end. The interests of the newspaper world, the interests of the general people, their freedom movement, their national aspirations, all these were jeopardised for a sum of Rs. 25,000 per month. All these were sold out.

This was in 1938. Recently in 1958-59 also we had a similar instance, when in Kerala there was so much of political turmoil and confusion. The PTI under its present set-up was able to give some fair display of news and they were doing so in the beginning. But all of a sudden we saw a *volte face*. We do not know why. Maybe, wires were pulled behind the scene. We came to know that certain interested and influential parties in Kottayam, the centre of the anti-governmental activities in the State pulled the wires and threatened the PTI. The PTI succumbed to their will and pleasure and began to black out the entire thing or began to dis-

[Shri Warrior]

seminate news in a biased way. Finally, I am given to understand that one of those influential personages was taken on the Board of Directors of the PTI.

These are the stories which are in our own experience. The Press Commission hence has very rightly pointed out that the Press Trust of India should be a public corporation. The recommendation is very clear in its terms. It is paragraph No. 420, page 150.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh (Sasaram): What, 420?

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): That is why they have recommended this.

Shri Warrior: Shall I read this?

Mr. Chairman: No. He has referred to the page. That will do.

Shri Warrior: But this is important and the House may take cognisance of it.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member has taken more than 12 minutes.

Shri Warrior: It says:

"The entire responsibility of the management of the new Corporation should be entrusted to the Board of Trustees. The Chairman of the Board should be appointed by the Chief Justice of India." etc.

This is a mandatory recommendation. That is what I hold. It is not an ordinary recommendation that willy nilly if you accept all right, otherwise never mind we make the recommendation. That is not the spirit in which it has been made. It has been made in the spirit of a mandate to the Government that it must be implemented in the interest of India.

If you give me two more minutes...

Mr. Chairman: I am sorry.

Shri Warrior: Then the other point will be left out. The most interest-

ing thing is the owners of the newspapers. I have to make only the point about the owners. There are not very many speakers.

Mr. Chairman: There are so many hon. Members who are anxious to speak. I am sorry. I take it that the hon. Member has concluded.

Shri Warrior: In the beginning I made only two points.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member has taken more than 12 minutes. So many hon. Members are anxious to speak.

Shri Warrior: The usual 15 minutes may be given to me.

Mr. Chairman: No, only ten minutes. Dr. Ram Subhag Singh.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Resolution of Shri Indrajit Gupta calls upon the Government to appoint a committee to go into the question of dissemination of news and views by newspapers in the country with a view to making proposals for ensuring truthfulness, objectivity and good moral standards in the field of journalism. I think, according to the Resolution, the standard of our journalism has been doubted and the hon. Mover has in a way, by implication, thought that reporting made in our papers is not of the nature of truthfulness, objectivity and good moral standards.

I am opposed to it. I think our press is discharging its duty generally properly. I say generally because prior to our independence our press played a role which can never be found to have been played anywhere in the world. At that time they played a very glorious part. But after 1940 or so a tendency crept in our society that we should have a chain of newspapers. That was also natural in a way because when the press took the form or the shape of an industry and when its expenditure went up it

became inevitable to pass on the management of the press into the hands of big capitalists. This is a very bad tendency, but it is a fact. Today some of our most powerful papers are under the control of certain big persons. We may accept their views or we may not, but this is the truth today. But because of this can it be doubted that the news and views printed in those papers are not of good moral standards?

In the recent past we found two examples. During the past two months two big events occurred in our country—first the strike and second the Assam situation. Many hon. Members have doubted the role of our press regarding the Assam situation. I also share that view regarding some of the papers published in our eastern zone. But even in those places I can give examples of very good papers. I am not enamoured of any particular paper. *The Statesman* published from Calcutta and Delhi or *Sanmarg* published from Calcutta were not prevented from going to Assam even during the riot period. Therefore I say that news and views published in most of our papers are of good standards and they can be favourably compared to any newspaper in the world. I will go to the extent of paying my tribute to the correspondents who report for most of our papers and also to the editors who express views on events that occur in the country and in the world. Our papers generally print good material. They do not indulge in publishing trivial stuff as some of the papers in several parts of the world and even in our country do. From the point of view of politics there are three or four important political parties in our country. The Congress is the majority party, but unfortunately it is not having any paper worth the name.

Shri Rajendra Singh (Chapra): Why? All the papers are yours.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Maybe, they are ours, but there is not any organ of that nature. You can say

that the AICC Economic Review is its organ.

Shri Rajendra Singh: What is the use of having one when all the papers are owned by you?

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: You will not be able to understand it. That is your misfortune. Generally speaking the Congress is not having any paper. But there are other parties also. Even the PSP is not having any paper whose circulation is country-wide. The Communist Party is having a paper, or a chain of papers I should say, and those papers are having countrywide circulation.

Shri Narasimhan: Probably theirs is the biggest chain.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: That is what I am trying to head to. If they publish something in *New Age*, the same thing might be published in *Navyug* also or in Bengali or in any other press. In that way, they can succeed in disseminating the news and views they like. Therefore, I want that we should not introduce regimentalisation in our country, because we are a free country, a democratic country. With a view to create democratic traditions, it is necessary that we should give full scope to our correspondents, editors, sub-editors and the whole gamut of people who are running the press. No corporation, no Minister, no Government or political party can possess the sense for news. It is a very gifted person who has that. He may be a poor small man; he may be employed by any employer. But, that kind of a person possesses the nose for news. It is he who can go into the Assam riots or the strike riots and get news. Two or three parties were interested in creating a strike in the country.

Shri Rajendra Singh: Everything was truthfully reported?

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Yes; that is what I say. The papers of India stood by the nation, not by the Government. They realised the truth. They

[Dr. Ram Subhag Singh]

were not misguided by Shri Rajendra Singh. I want that Shri Rajendra Singh should himself have gone to the jail rather than sit in the South Avenue flat. He should have taken courage and gone to jail. The papers favoured him by publishing his statements.

Shri Rajendra Singh: I was sitting in the North Avenue flat. Nobody came to arrest me. I was not in hiding.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: My hon. friend Shri Rajendra Singh ought to be grateful to the press of India who got all his statements published without verifying whether he is really interested in the strike or not. So, I think, our newspapers did well during the strike time. They defended our democratic traditions. They defended the interests of the nation and they knew how the news and views on the strike should be given and what the people of India are in need of. The best news is that which an account of any readable material and is of a truthful nature. This should be given in the press. Those correspondents who stand by this theory are the best correspondents.

My hon. friend Shri Joachim Alva gave the example of Ceylon. Other friends may give the example of Russia or China, etc. Today, we get news from China. There is a very powerful news agency there. There is no other source to check up the authenticity of the reports that that news agency gives. Therefore, it is essential that 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 news agencies should function in the country. More so in the languages for catering to the requirements of the language newspapers. So, I think our press had stood by the country during the pre-Independence period. They stood by the country during the strike period and also during the Assam riot situation. Three or four papers might have gone wrong. But, the majority of the press criticised the action even by implication of those papers.

I quite agree with what the Prime Minister said that there are sometimes tyrants who prevent expression of thought. Our structure is based on freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. Unless we have a free and democratic press, we won't be able to give free news to our people and views also. Therefore, it is essential that regimentalisation of the type of Russia or China or the chain system of newspapers should not be allowed to be imposed on our country.

Shri A. C. Guha (Barasat): Mr. Chairman, it is good that Shri Indrajit Gupta has brought this subject before the House though there may be difference of opinion about the wisdom or usefulness of having a committee of 45 Members of the Houses to go into the question.

I think the press in India is fully free and it has been discharging its work in a fairly good manner. But, one tendency is developing, that is, chain of newspapers under the control of one group of persons or one person. I think Government may take certain steps to stop or as far as possible to curb that tendency. In Bengal, newspapers are not under any capitalists as such. It is under men who are primarily journalists. When *Ananda Bazar Patrika* was started. I was living in the first floor of the same house and *Ananda Bazar Patrika* was being published from the ground floor of the same house. I think Shri Makan Lal Sen and Shri Suresh Chandra Mazumdar had not got more than Rs. 200 or 300 in their pockets when they started the paper. Now, the newspaper has become an industry and a very costly one too. I do not know whether it would be possible for the Government to reverse this tendency. I do not think that now-a-days it will be possible to start a newspaper with even Rs. 20,000 or Rs. 50,000 or 100,000. I do not know whether it could be made possible for a common man to start a newspaper. That has held the development of this chain system of

newspapers which should, as far as possible, be discouraged.

About the news services, I think every Member of this House will regret the death of the United Press of India. I should say the Government strangled that news service. The United Press of India has done a tremendous service to this nation during the struggle for Independence of the country. The nation owes some debt of gratitude to that news agency. Even now, if it is possible for the Government to revive that name, I think it should be done. That name has some charm with us. Apart from that, it is bad to have only one news service. No country can have a proper supply of news from one news service. We have been hearing for some years that the Government are contemplating to encourage another news service. I wish the Minister discloses today how far that has progressed. I think the Chief Minister of West Bengal Dr. Bidan Chandra Roy was also taking some initiative. I am not sure whether the Central Government or the Ministry in the Central Government here has shown any responsiveness to the initiative of Dr. Roy. Something should be done to have another news service in addition to the P.T.I. Monopolist organisations are always bad. The P.T.I. also must have fallen into some wrong methods for which it is now being criticised in this House.

My hon. friend Dr. Ram Subhag Singh has referred to the Calcutta press. I know the Calcutta press for the last 50 years starting from the days of the "Sandhya". It is a very powerful press. I am proud the Bengal press is so powerful and it can really form and sway the ideas and sentiments of the people of Bengal. It has rendered good service even from 1905, 1906 up till today.

About the Assam episode, the Calcutta press has come in for criticism in the last few days. Also my hon. friend Dr. Ram Subhag Singh has referred to it. I should explain to this House that there was almost

a complete black out of the horrors that were being perpetrated in Assam. The Assam Government or the news services there or even the Press Information Bureau of my hon. friend Dr. Keskar were not supplying adequate news about the happenings in Assam. Some energetic adventurous journalists took the risk of their life and supplied news. At such a time, there is bound to be some exaggeration. I admit in some cases, there was exaggeration. But one case of exaggeration or false news should not justify whole-sale condemnation. Two journalists of the Calcutta press were killed for supplying news to the people of the country. It should be recognised that they did a real service to the nation in exposing the whole thing to the country.

I quite agree that sometimes the tone of the editorials or some shift in putting forward the news or some adjectives in the headlines might have been or should have been avoided, but it was a time of excitement and horrible stories were coming. Yet, I expect the Calcutta press will better exercise control over itself.

I would like the hon. Minister to see if he can try to develop some code of conduct for the newspapers. There is a press advisory council or something like that in some of the States, and as far as I know these are mostly ineffective bodies. Why not make them effective? If the Prime Minister takes the initiative and invites the editors and other people interested in journalism in India and asks them to set up a code of conduct for themselves, I think it will not be difficult to develop such a code. We cannot do anything to fetter the Press. The press is becoming more and more powerful. So it is time that it is regulated in the service of the nation by developing a code of conduct.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh also referred to the Central Government servants strike. I was in Calcutta. I know to what tension the feelings of the people were roused by these two

[Shri A. C. Guha]

events, the Assam trouble and the Central Government servants strike. It was due to the tactful and firm handling of Dr. Roy that the situation could be controlled there. The Calcutta press also played its part, at least to the extent that no untoward event occurred in Calcutta as a repercussion to the Assam incidents. So, all these things should be recognised, and Government should see that the newspaper editors develop a code of conduct for themselves. They should not incite but should rather control the popular passions, they should see that news is disseminated in the proper way without appealing to passion.

I have nothing more to say, but I oppose this idea of having a committee of 45 members as such a committee cannot serve any purpose. Still, I congratulate Shri Gupta upon his having brought this matter before the House, because the matter requires some consideration from Government.

Shri Rajendra Singh: How do you reconcile the two?

Shri A. C. Guha: I would not like to learn from Shri Rajendra Singh about parliamentary technique. I have been here as a Member for three times the period he has been.

This requires some consideration from Government, and I have specifically suggested to the Minister two things. He should develop another news agency for the dissemination of news, and not depend only on PTI. He should also try to develop a code of conduct among the journalists of India.

Mr. Chairman: Shri Rajendra Singh. Ten minutes.

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Firozabad): We may have each five minutes.

Shri Inder J. Malhotra (Jammu and Kashmir): Let him take five minutes, and I will take five.

Shri Rajendra Singh: Two views have been put forward. There is an apprehension that if there is a curb on the press and dissemination of views and news, it may degenerate into something like the regimentation that we hear of in Communist countries. On the other hand, there is a feeling that if it is absolutely left in the hands of capitalists who have reasons to be partisan, our objective of socialism and democracy would suffer a lot. It cannot be denied that both have some substance. Since we are a unique country in the sense that we are trying to be, at least we have professed like that, a socialist and at the same time a democratic country, we have neither to copy anything from Russia nor from England or a country like that; we have to apply our own mind and through the force of our own genius bring about a balance, a synthesis and a sort of integration.

My hon. friend Shri Ram Subhag Singh has submitted....

Dr. Krishnaswami (Chingleput): Doctor Ram Subhag Singh, please.

Shri Braj Raj Singh: He is always known as "Dr."

Shri Rajendra Singh: You do not worry. I have much more respect for him than any one else.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh said that the press in India had behaved perfectly, and that the state of the press in India was something quite commendable. Maybe, I do not dispute it. But instead of discussing the ownership of the press and the news agencies, he said something which is of course true and tried to prove a fact which was not there. So far as Indian correspondents and journalists are concerned, I dare say they are a fine lot, and very few in other countries can compare with them. But the question is not of our correspondents or journalists, the question is of the ownership of the news agency, of the

press, where you would like to keep it. Some people have talked about freedom of the press. What is this freedom? If Shri Goenka, Shri Dalmia and Shri Birla are trusted to disseminate news and views, do you think it is freedom of the press? That means, you are giving licence to vested interests to do whatever they like and letting down the common man. The common man can never have the capacity to run a press. A few days before I was discussing with the Prime Minister, and he confessed to me that it is so difficult to have a press in India. It involves an expenditure of about a crore of rupees.

Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri (Nabad-wip): In other countries it is much more.

Shri Rajendra Singh: I am giving a modest figure. For a common man to think of having a press is like letting his imagination run amuck. Therefore, the resolution brought forward by my hon. friend Shri Indrajit Gupta is not only necessary but exceedingly desirable, and there should not be any objection to its acceptance.

You have seen some Members accepting everything that Shri Gupta has said, but because of the fear of the party whip....

An Hon. Member: There is no whip.

Shri Rajendra Singh:.....they add one sentence that they are not for the resolution. They are afraid of the control of the party. Even in this matter there is control of mind in the Congress Party. We criticise Russia for brain-washing, subjugation of the brain for State or party purposes, but what is happening here today? My hon. friend Shri Guha supported everything that was said by Shri Gupta and others, endorsed their feelings, but at the same time he was not for the acceptance of the resolution. Why this split personality? Why this lack of moral courage to stand by something which is truthful, to call a spade a spade. Democracy dengene-

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rates under this control of mind, and it is time we take care of it. Otherwise, as there was a Hitler or a Mussolini, there might be somebody coming on the scene in this country. And the whole thing would go to pieces. Man must remain truthful to himself and moral to himself.

The question of what has been done in Ceylon has been raised. I am most happy to acknowledge in this House that a Government run by a woman Prime Minister, a lady Prime Minister, has had the courage to bring about a curb on the press and at the same time initiate the people and the press in democracy.

Our Prime Minister is in the habit of telling so many things, but before the ink dries on the paper, he forgets about it. The Prime Minister has said that when a high-powered commission is appointed, its recommendations have a certain sanctity. He has scolded us, and branded us as something like intransigent and irresponsible when the strike situation was there. He said that the Pay Commission had made certain recommendations, and those recommendations had sanctity and certain sacredness about them, and, therefore, the working classes and their leaders should accept it.

In the Press Commission, we had men of integrity, high character and high position.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao: Like Shri Jaipal Singh.

Shri Rajendra Singh: Yes, like Jaipal Singh. Let not my hon. friend worry about it. And they made some recommendations. May I know from this Government why all those recommendations which were made by a commission appointed by the Government themselves were put in cold storage for so long?

Shri Indrajit Gupta: They were unanimous recommendations.

Shri Rajendra Singh: Yes, they were unanimous recommendations. Does it not indicate that this Government is held in the bondage of the capitalists, whose interests they do not want to violate much less to injure? Therefore, it is a very serious situation. And I would submit that if the temporary gain of keeping the Congress in power demands that they must keep the situation as it is, then it will be an ill day for this country, an ill day for our times, and an ill day for our generation and for generations to follow.

Shri Ajit Singh Sarhadi (Ludhiana): The intention of the resolution is to ensure truthfulness and good moral standards in the field of journalism. That may be good, but the method suggested, namely to have control is certainly very objectionable.

The hon. Mover of the resolution has mainly emphasised the tendency to have monopolies of a chain of presses in India. But I am afraid that free enterprise is a prerequisite of a free press. If we want to have a free press, naturally, we must have free enterprise. Also, we have got to see that the standards are kept. I concede that. But we have also to see the circumstances and the conditions, whether the evil has reached a stage which calls for a control. On that aspect, we had a commission some time back, and I believe my hon. friend the Mover knows it very well that the Press Commission held a sort of examination as to the manner in which news was given by the press, and also views, and the views were also commented upon. For that purpose, they selected a series of newspapers, made a list thereof, and had an examination. And they came to certain conclusions. I would only draw the attention of the House to those conclusions which relate to dissemination of news as well as the comments on the views. At page 341 of their report, the Press Commission say:

"Instances are not many of the essential facts being deliberately

omitted or suppressed to suit the editorial policy of the newspaper. In most cases, the mistakes are unintentional and can be attributed to many causes; the newsprint situation, inadequate and not highly skilled staff, hurried handling and translation of news reports, and economic and general conditions of working journalists obtaining in different language sectors of the newspaper industry."

Again, while discussing the presentation of news, they say:

"In the very large number of newspapers studied and the variety of topics in respect of which the study was carried out, there have been very few instances where a report has been twisted and only some cases where the comment has been, to some extent, unfair in the light of our definition above."

Further, while dealing with the views, they have come to the conclusion:

"In their comments also on the particular items selected, the newspapers have been quite fair."

So, when we have had an examination only five or six years ago, and a Commission has come to the finding that there has not been distortion of news or of comments by and large, I do not think any necessity arises for a control on the newspapers in the way in which this resolution envisages.

As I have already said, free enterprise is necessary for a free press. In this connection, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to certain recommendations of the Press Commission to which attention has not been paid so far, namely the recommendations pertaining to section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and sections 124A, 153A and 295A of the Indian Penal Code. My hon. friend knows it very well. But I am sorry to have to bring to his notice how

grossly section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code has been abused in the Punjab. Pressmen have been arrested under section 144 and put in jail, and there was opposition from the newspapermen, and it was on the decision of the advisory committee only that they were released. If these recommendations had been implemented, and section 144 had been amended, and it had been specifically laid down that this would not be used in the matter of the Press, then I submit that such abuse would not have taken place. It is profoundly bad that section 144 should be used in their case. Similarly, my comments also apply to sections 124A, 153A and 295A of the Indian Penal Code.

While I oppose the resolution on the ground that it is not necessary, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to these recommendations, and request that it would be well if he has these recommendations implemented, or has some other commission about these things.

Shri Inder J. Malhotra: At the very outset, I must say that my hon. friend Shri Indrajit Gupta has certainly focussed the attention of this House on a very basic and important question. Certainly, I do agree with my other hon. friends also who have said that we should not put any curb on the freedom of the press. I am one of those persons who would like to see that no curb is put on the freedom of the press.

But in the resolution, the main point is the "dissemination of news and views by newspapers". In a democratic country, the press and especially newspapers, play an important role. It is of importance how the news is reported in the newspapers, how distinction is made between objective reporting and bad reporting. So are these are certainly very important questions.

My hon. friend Dr. Ram Subhag Singh has given certain examples that at the time of the recent Central Gov-

ernment Employees strike and other occasions also he said that the Indian press had done a wonderful job. I agree with him. But there are other instances also. I would like to cite just one instance. When Premier Chou En-lai was in India during his last visit, our Defence Minister Shri Krishna Menon met him. I read that news story covering this meeting reported on the second page of *The Indian Express*. On reading this news story, I was given a sort of impression, and it conveyed the idea to me through this news story that as if Shri Krishna Menon had done some kind of conspiracy against India. Do we call this objective reporting? When it is a news story, it must be an objective news story reported objectively, and no views of any newspaper or news agency or any person who controls the news agency or the newspaper should come in.

I have no time at my disposal to speak further. I am grateful to you for giving me a chance to participate in the debate. I must congratulate my hon. friend on bringing forward this Resolution. Certainly, I agree with Shri Ajit Singh Sarhadi also that there may not be an immediate need for any Committee of Parliament Members to go into this question. At the same time, I would request the hon. Minister, as some other hon. friends have also pointed out, that it is high time we should started doing something to put an end to the growing monopolistic tendencies in the Indian Press

Shri Braj Raj Singh: Will Government advise the PTI to have a representative of the employees on the board of directors of the PTI as recommended by the Press Commission? If the PTI does not agree to this, will Government consider the possibility of not subscribing to the PTI in the manner in which they have been doing? Secondly, will Government take any steps to break the chain of newspapers as disclosed in the latest Report of the Registrar of Newspapers?

Shri Joachim Alva: I support the demand my hon friend has made that there should be a director on behalf of the employees on the board of directors of the PTI.

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting (Dr. Keskar): I have carefully listened to the speech of the Mover and also the speeches, some of them very eloquent, made by hon. Members here. In the short time at their disposal, they have tried to dispose of many points and many important questions.

Now, there are two ways in which I can deal with this Resolution. The hon. Mover has put forward a particular objective in his Resolution. At the same time, in speaking on the Resolution he has mainly spoken on the Press Commission's Report. So I am put in a difficult position of having to deal either with the objective that he has placed or with the Press Commission's recommendations in regard to which he has charged Government that they had, by and large, failed to carry out their recommendations.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: May I make it easier for the hon. Minister? Shri Warrior moved an amendment.

Dr. Keskar: I have seen it.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: I accept that amendment. That makes it easier. It just adds to the end of my Resolution, 'as recommended by the Press Commission, 1954'. It deals with the whole thing.

Dr. Keskar: No doubt, in that part of the Resolution, he says 'as recommended by the Press Commission'. But in his speech, he has, first of all, made an accusation that the Government have, by and large, failed in implementing the Press Commission's recommendations.

The Press Commission's Report is a very big document running into hundreds of pages: It was debated in this House twice and at very great length, for the whole day. It will be beyond

my power to deal all those points in the short time at my disposal. At the same time, it would not be possible for me to ignore what the hon. Member has said. So with your permission, I will, first of all, very briefly deal with the points that he has raised which are, of course, linked with the other question that he has mentioned but which is more general.

I would like to mention briefly the important recommendations of the Commission. If we take all, there are hundreds of recommendations of all types that the Commission has made, and many of them are minor, some are procedural and some are quite important. Now I will take up the important recommendations. In taking them up, I would like to state here very frankly that hon. Members when they discussed this question here gave the greatest importance to probably what, in my opinion, was the most important recommendation of the Commission, that is, in regard to the service conditions of working Journalists. When the debate took place here on that question, all the hon. Members insisted that it was a most important and revolutionary recommendation and Government should try to implement it as quickly as possible. The Working Journalists (Wages and Conditions of Service) Act was passed and it is functioning at present.

I shall briefly mention all the main recommendations, one by one. But I may remind the hon. Members that the Commission expressly asked the Government to take up certain recommendations while the others were addressed generally to the Press. The Commission was extremely cautious and careful and they did not ask the Government to take up anything which would infringe the freedom of the Press completely or curb the freedom of expression of opinion by the Press.

Then there was the price-page schedule. This is an important question and hon. Members know that when we deal with this question we

should do it in such a way that we are not accused of trying to curb the freedom of the Press. At present the draft price page schedule has been published for the information of the newspapers and by the middle of this month their comments would be available and the Government will pass final orders and promulgate the schedule very soon after that.

Two important questions were mentioned by Shri Gupta and I shall take them up later. Now, they had asked about the question about the Press Registrar. The Commission had given very great importance to have a central agency which would register the facts and statistics relating to newspapers in a fair and truthful manner so that we can judge the trends in the Press and have authentic information about it. The Registrar has been appointed. The Press (Book and Registration) Act has been amended and recently there was another amendment and a full discussion then.

Two other questions have come up. One is about the news agencies. I would like the hon. Members to read carefully the Commission's recommendations. They say that the Press Trust of India, the most important news agency, should be transformed into a Trust and there should be other organisational modifications. But the hon. Members have forgotten to read the other part of it. The recommendation is addressed, not to the Government, but to the directors. The Commission have said: We trust and hope that the management of the PTI will bring about this transformation as soon as possible. I have had the benefit of a talk with the Chairman and Members of the Commission and I have always consistently expressed the reluctance for any Government intervention in the matter. My hon. friend Shri Alva very eloquently said that there was only one news agency and other hon. Members 'okayed' it. There should be more; at least two or three agencies should function in the country. But it is not proper to ask the

Government to start them. First of all you say that Government should have nothing to do with the Press. At the same time you want the Government to start news agencies or to have them started. That is a contradictory position.

18 hrs.

Shri A. C. Guha: The Government has to give facilities.

Dr. Keskar: What facilities?

Shri A. C. Guha: I particularly mentioned the initiative taken by Dr. B. C. Roy, and I think nothing has come out.

Dr. Keskar: Do you think that is a facility?

Shri A. C. Guha: Yes.

Dr. Keskar: I do not call it a facility.

Shri Rajendra Singh: Sir, certain industries are reserved for the Government, for public sector enterprises and certain industries are reserved for the private sector where the Government is aiding, helping and assisting financially. Therefore, if such modifications and adjustments can be brought about in the field of industry, cannot something of that nature be done for bringing into being some other Press agencies?

Dr. Keskar: It is for the Government to support. If a good news agency starts on the lines that the hon. Member is mentioning, the Government certainly will subscribe to such a news agency, but I think it is wrong to ask the Government to start a news agency or have it started, because I am sure the hon. Members opposite will be the first persons to come and attack that news agency saying that it is a Government news agency.

Shri Narasimhan: That will be putting the cart before the horse.

Dr. Keskar: So it is easy to criticise both ways. The Government is careful to see that we do not take any such steps. Shri Guha referred to the efforts made by Dr. Roy. Dr. Roy felt very much about the passing away of the U.P.I., and he tried to see that agency started again. We said and even now we repeat it here that if any news agency of that type is started and it works on principles recognised by us as necessary and fair for a news agency, certainly we will look to such a venture sympathetically.

There was the question of facility to be given. All the necessary facilities are available for any *bona fide* news agency, as mentioned in the statement that I had occasion to place on the Table of this House. The point is—I insist that this is a very important and fundamental point—saying that the PTI is doing this or doing that is not enough. I do not want to go into the details, but a number of things have been quoted. I must have the explanation of the PTI before I can say whether they are correct or not. It is very difficult for a news agency, for example, which has to select from hundreds of items a particular number of items which it has to send. They may have their own explanations, and I must have them before I can pass any opinion on what the hon. Members have said.

But, Sir, I say this, that we would welcome the formation of other news agencies, and we have laid down the criteria for formation of *bona fide* news agencies in the statement that has been placed on the Table of the House. If other agencies come up certainly Government will look with sympathy on the coming up of such agencies. That does not mean, of course, that Government helps every agency; Government does not help. Government might subscribe to agencies which it finds useful. But agencies are free to come up and if they fulfil the minimum criterion those agencies will certainly be given, what can be called, the necessary, commu-

nication facility that might have to be given. Therefore, I would beg the House not to take a wrong perspective.

Shri Feroze Gandhi (Rae Bareilly): Why not ask for the advice of the Prime Minister of Ceylon?

Shri Rajendra Singh: The Prime Minister of Ceylon has got more courage than the Prime Minister of India.

Dr. Keskar: As long as the present democratic structure exists here and the definition of freedom of speech that we have in our country continues, I am afraid, I will not be able to call for that advice.

Another important point Mr. Gupta has tried to make is about the Press Council. In fact, after listening to his speech I was under the impression that it was probably the most important recommendation of the Commission. Probably, because the Press Council has not been set up the hon. Member has tried to emphasise as if this is the most important recommendation. I know it is one of the important recommendations, not necessarily the most important. At the same time, I would like hon. Members to remember one or two things regarding the Press Council. We should not run away with the idea that the Press Council, though it will be a statutory body—will have any punitive or other powers. The Press Council will be a body with moral power only, just as the Press Council in England. Only, that is a voluntary establishment, and this will be a statutory establishment. Therefore, some of the things that some hon. Members expected from the Press Council are not possible of realisation, excepting that the public will know about certain papers or the trends of ownership; but that will not bring about a change in the trend excepting to the extent that is possible by pressure of public opinion and no further. Therefore, in the matter of a Press Council that is contemplated,

we should also remember that the Council's powers and functions are limited and, even though it is statutory, it is meant to be a kind of self-regulating Board in the industry.

Here, I would just refer, in a sentence, to the experience of the Press Council in England on which model, to some extent, the Press Commission based its recommendations. The working of the Press Council has revealed broadly that though it is useful, it had not proved to be as useful as it was expected to be, because, in many cases, where the papers were censured by the Press Council, the papers had just ignored the censure and continued to do what they wanted to do. One of the papers has defied the Press Council also. I do not say that for that reason, a Council is not necessary. It is necessary in the sense that there will be at least one body which can express an authoritative opinion about a particular paper. That is a very desirable thing. But here, we come up against the difficulty: as you know, the Government tried to implement that particular recommendation, but when we brought a Bill before the Rajya Sabha, in the course of the discussion, it was revealed that there had developed a fundamental difference of opinion between the two sections of the press about the directors of the Council. The working journalists felt that the composition of the Council should be changed and the proprietorial section said that they did not need any statutory Press Council and that if at all anything was needed, there can be a voluntary Press Council. In spite of the proprietorial section's rejection of the proposal, we would even now like to pursue it provided we feel that the general basic composition, as recommended by the Press Commission, is not changed. When I mean composition, I mean the composition of the Council. There are other matters also on which difference of opinion was expressed. I personally feel that we can come to an understanding about these differences, but I feel

that if the views that were expressed then, regarding the composition of the Council, still persist, it would be difficult for us to proceed further in this matter, because,—unless it is going to be a moral body—if both the wings of the press, for different reasons, reject the Press Council, what is the use of having such a moral censoring body or a body which will try to exert moral pressure?

The main point is that the Council will have to be composed of certain members, a certain number of them being working journalists and others representing the proprietors or some other persons as recommended by the Press Commission. The definition of working journalists led to some difference of opinion, and it was said that editors should not be included in the term "working journalists", because they are or they might be on the proprietorial side. This led to a difference of opinion and we felt that until we have had further talks with both the sections and come to a clear understanding of the question, it would not be desirable to consider this question, because, we do not want to have this Act, creating a Council, in which both the sides disagree with us, and the Council thus starting under very unfavourable auspices. At least we should have a large section of the Press with us in this matter before we proceed further. Otherwise, I can assure the hon. Members that I certainly like the Council to come up and to function, so that it might at least serve the purpose of bringing before the bar of public opinion those opinions which do not observe journalistic standards and also other things which have been recommended by the Press Commission.

In this connection, a question was raised about the Press Commission's recommendation on concentration of ownership, monopoly, etc. I would like to remind hon. Members that the recommendation if they read it carefully—is not for having any legislation by Government. First of all, they have asked that we should watch

[Dr. Keskar]

carefully for trends which will increase the concentration of ownership or increase monopolistic trends and later to think to what we can do about it, because the Commission has repeated in other parts of the report that whatever we do must be done in such a way that the freedom of the Press is not infringed. So, it is not an easy proposition. So, the Commission had recommended that once this has been carefully considered and it is felt that there is a monopolistic trend to a very considerable extent, then we should think carefully as to what can be done about it or whether anything can be done about it. This is not an easy question.

Of course, the Press Registrar's reports were quoted. I myself was going into this question of chains and groups which are on the increase. As the hon. Member had once said, it takes a lot of money to start newspapers now. The chains are growing because those who have money can start a new paper easily and those who have not are not able to do it. But we should not rush into saying that monopolies or chains can be curbed or we will be able to curb them in a particular way, because when I looked at the chains, I was surprised to find that apart from some chains like the Birla chain or the Dalmia chain, the chain of papers of the Communist party of India is as large—there are 7 dailies, more than 8 or 9 weeklies and a number of monthlies.

Shri Rajendra Singh: When I said it, it applied to everybody. It is not about communist or capitalist papers.

Dr. Keskar: I am not here to quote Shri Rajendra Singh. I have got my own figures. They have got every liberty to start any number of papers they like. But this fact first came to my notice when I began to look at the various chains existing in the country.

Supposing we take up the question of control of monopolies. Will it be

proper for me to think of controlling the chains of papers of political parties as important as the communist party of India? I will have to think very carefully about it. These questions are there. I am not saying that we should not curb monopolies.

Shri Warrior: You are comparing Dalmia with the Communist Party and the Congress Party. Dalmia is not in the Congress Party.

Dr. Keskar: Is it not for me to say whose chain it is. The question is, the hon. Member is so subjective that he only thinks of the person. I am here to consider the fact. Does it mean that we should allow chains of political parties only and nobody else? So, all sorts of questions will come up. My point is, we have to consider this question very carefully. In fact, the Commission's recommendation was that the Council, when it is formed, should consider these matters very carefully and if they feel that the tendency is increasing, in that case, they should suggest as to what can be done about it. Even there they were not very sure as to what we can get, and they have suggested one thing e.g. the diffusion of ownership. There also they have been very careful in suggesting not to the Government but to proprietors that we should try to create a greater diffusion of ownership than is existing today.

Now I come to the Resolution of my hon. friend, where he says:

“to go into the question of dissemination of news and views by newspapers in the country with a view to making proposals for ensuring truthfulness, objectivity and good moral standards in the field of journalism.”

Now, the object of ensuring truthfulness, objectivity and good moral standards is very good. The only thing is how are we going to enforce it? How are you going to bring

about an equation between the freedom of the press and some kind of control by which you can enforce it? Let us consider this very carefully. I personally feel that in such matters where the freedom of the press is involved, we must think ten times before we take a step which will infringe on the freedom, which has been gained after great labour and which I consider as a very precious thing for the foundation of democracy.

Hon. Members here have referred to various aspects. Some have referred to the question of agencies. I think Shri Indrajit Gupta and Shri Warior stated that certain new agencies or papers omitted or purposely left out something. If a paper leaves out something, does it mean that paper has or has not a right to leave it? I can quote also from other papers. For example, I was looking at the *New Age* where, while the Chinese expedition climbing Everest was given high priority, no mention at all was made of the Indian expedition team to Everest. I cannot blame them for that. They give importance to what they consider proper. It is not possible for me to blame them for doing this.

Shri Warior: There was no Everest expedition from our side at that time.

Shri Raghunath Singh: They did not publish anything about our shipping.

Dr. Keskar: So, there is no question of imposing any control for that. Every press has got a right to publish what it considers proper. I think one of the important functions of a newspaper is the selection of news, here as elsewhere, before publishing them, and on that the hon. Member opposite has the same right as some hon. Members here. I can take out any number of quotations from the papers of my friend's party where news has been left out, important news has been left out and some other things put instead. I consider it their right to do it. Why should we try to

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stop them? We will have to be careful before we do it.

If they so desire, let them come to me, let us talk it over and we can see whether any such action will not ultimately result in stopping the papers from publishing what they feel, what they consider to be the most important piece of news. The selection of news is an essential part of the freedom of the press. I personally do not like a number of important things to be left out or highlighting some things which need not be highlighted e.g. for the security of the country etc. But if I do that for a particular paper, I might have to take away the freedom of the other paper also.

Therefore, this question should be considered from a special point of view. I think any such thing is likely to lead to an undesirable control over the right of newspapers to select their news and views. 45 Members of Parliament are not going to suggest a wise method of selecting news and views. That, I am of the opinion, would be putting too much of a terrible burden on those 45 Members.

It will not be an easy thing for them. In fact, it is possible that they might try to be non-committal in the end. Though the object is desirable and I am one with Shri Gupta in wanting that there should be high standards of the press, in that matter the Press Commission was very careful in recommending that we should try to put moral pressure on papers, for example, condemning or expressing a kind of dis-approbation about papers, for example, the yellow journalism to which a reference was made, so that they felt that. Even in a matter where a paper tries purposely to suppress something if we try to stop that particular paper from doing that, we will have to stop the others also. Ultimately it will lead to a kind of control over newspapers by which free expression of opinion cannot take place.

[Dr. Keskar]

The matter is very important and requires to be discussed at great length. I have just mentioned a few of the very important points which cropped up. At some other time I shall be very happy to take it up again and discuss it at length. It is a very important question. If we want to see in this country that our press by and large functions in the best way and observes the best standards of journalism, we should see what can be done about it. I would not call it regimentation, but rather any strong pressure to do this or that or some kind of an enactment or a directive is not likely to achieve that object. In any case I would not like my hon. friend to put this burden on the 45 hon. Members of Parliament.

I feel that though the intention of the Resolution is good, it is misconceived. It is said here "as recommended by the Press Commission". The Press Commission's recommendation is that we should use our moral powers of persuasion—I am saying by and large. They have made certain recommendations. Slowly and gradually we can put the force of public opinion on the press to see that they conform or try to conform to it. We should not try to go beyond that. In my opinion such a committee is not likely to improve upon the recommendations of the Commission.

Shri Indrajit Gupta (Calcutta—South West): Mr. Chairman, Sir, my worst fears and apprehensions have been confirmed by the hon. Minister's speech because this proves that the Government has no intention whatsoever—at least at the moment—of progressing in the direction of attempting, whether by persuasion or by discussion or by any other method, the implementation of these two or three vital recommendations which I had mentioned earlier. I do not say that they were the only recommendations or that they were the most important recommendations, but they were certainly among the very important recommendations of the Com-

mission regarding the PTI and the Press Council.

Lots of bogeys have been raised here about regimentation, pressure, control, thought control, freedom being violated and all sorts of things. As far as I understand it, my Resolution and the way I moved it that day—and now as I accept this amendment which Shri Warior has moved—makes it quite clear that there is no burden, which Dr. Keskar is so afraid of and does not want the 45 hon. Members of Parliament to be saddled with. The burden has already been dealt with in the pages of this Report. We do not want to go over the whole ground again. It is not necessary. What I am asking the 45 hon. Members to do is to go into the question, to assist the hon. Minister in finding out as to what are the difficulties and problems that the Government is facing in implementing these recommendations which have already been made by the Press Commission as a result of a very exhaustive enquiry. There is no question of duplicating the enquiry all over again. So what is the objection? I do not understand it.

There is no question here of regimentation. What I have suggested applies equally to all papers or to all chains or monopoly groups, whether they include the Communist Party or not. I do not want to make an exemption for the Communist Party. If the impact of such chains on the dissemination of news and views is harmful to objectivity and good standards of journalistic reporting, let them be gone into.

Somebody suggested a code of conduct. Very good. I support that. A code of conduct has actually been suggested by the Press Commission itself. But was it to have a statutory force? No. All codes of conduct are voluntary things.

I may point out that much has been said here about the freedom of the press. My whole contention is that an impression is being created that a certain freedom exists which is being

sought to be curbed or controlled or regimented in some way, whereas "the whole object of my Resolution is to show that, in fact, freedom of journalism is today subjected to certain control and undesirable regimentation by virtue of the way that the proprietors in this newspaper industry are exerting their financial and economic power to distort the freedom of the press. Actually, there is regimentation, and control being exercised by these powerful groups which control these papers".

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh waxed eloquent about the way news was disseminated about the strike to serve the interests of the nation. I would like to ask him also, when the Government of India decides that in the interests of the defence of the country, they should build their military trucks for the Army, and the *Hindustan Times* runs a campaign against it and runs it down in every possible way because it conflicts with the interests of Mr. Birla. . . .

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Your papers are advocating the giving of 15,000 square miles to China. That is what you want. Should that be the standard in this country?

Shri Indrajit Gupta: Let my paper's standards be gone into. All right.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Your party and papers also?

Shri Indrajit Gupta: Let them be gone into. I have nothing to hide. This is the first time, incidentally, that I have heard that the Indian Expedition to Everest which did not reach the top of Everest, should be given the same prominence as any other Chinese or other expedition which actually reached the same.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: You ran down the Indian expedition.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: Mr. Birla's interests as a motor manufacturer are

at stake and he has to run a campaign. Is it standing by the nation?

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Nobody wants it. It is your party. . . .

Shri Indrajit Gupta: Wait a minute. When the newspapers run a systematic campaign against the public sector which the Government has started, which the nation has started, which is the core of the Third Five Year Plan and of any Five Year Plan, is that standing by the nation?

When I was moving the Resolution, I referred to the hon. Prime Minister's speech on foreign affairs in the other House. I think it is a matter of shame that our Prime Minister had to admit that. It is not his fault. But, look at the condition the country has come to. Discussing the question of the Congo and the reports that have come in the press and that are reaching the country regarding the events in the Congo, the Prime Minister of our country had to stand there and say that the reports that we have been receiving so long have turned out to be mostly exaggerated. I have no time go into all that.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: The Prime Minister also said here yesterday something about your party and papers.

Mr. Chairman: Order, order. Let him proceed.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: I do not know why the hon. Member gets worried. I never interrupted him.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: You are misquoting therefore. I am interrupting. Please remember that the Press Council was suggested to be set up in the report of the Press Commission. May I read one para from the Press Commission's report? The whole object was to safeguard the independence of the press. It says here:

"We have discussed earlier, the need for maintaining editorial independence, objectivity of news

[Dr. Ram Subhag Singh]

presentation and fairness of comment. These aspects should be looked after by a Press Council which will also have the responsibility of fostering the development of the Press and protecting it from external pressure."

So, the Press Council should not be held up as a bogey, something which will be a sort of pressure or regimentation on the press.

The hon. Minister quite correctly said that though it is suggested to be set up by statute, it will function purely by moral sanction and moral persuasion. Why is it not being set up? Because certain people objected. Why did they object? What are the difficulties they are facing? What are the problems that they are having? Who is going to go into that? Is it such a burden that 45 Members cannot cope with and find out what is the difficulty in the way of setting up this Press Council?

Since Shri Joachim Alva made a reference to the Press Commission and the Commission in England, may I just for the information of the House read a small quotation from this Book? Perhaps the hon. Minister has seen it. It is a very recent book called *Dangerous Estate*, dealing with the function of the press and newspapers in Britain, written by a very eminent gentleman Mr. Francis Williams, who is quite a leading figure in the newspaper world in Britain. This is what he says:

"The journalist ought to accept and ought to be required to accept standards of professional integrity morally not less mandatory than those of the barrister, the solicitor or the doctor. But, what is required in their case to safeguard the public against professional malpractice is required in his case not only for this reason, important though it is, but also to provide the journalist himself with a safeguard against those

pressures to which one who is dependent upon a single master may find himself vulnerable: a professional power to set against, and if necessary act as a counter-balance to, the immense and growing power of financial control in the newspaper industry."

"It is possible that the Press Council will provide such a counter-power."

He is talking about Britain. Then he says:

"...there would have been great advantage in establishing the Council as a statutory body with powers analogous to, although not identical with, those of the General Medical Council. Such a statutory body would from the beginning have entered the field able to provide a valuable counter-balance to the massive power of commercial interest, which ought not to be left to decide alone the standards by which popular journalism is to live. Yet it is possible that a voluntary Press Council may in the end succeed in doing this no less effectively."

So, these things should be put in their proper context and perspective, and not distorted to create bogeys. Government should at least tell us what they have done to try to encourage the PTI to convert itself into a public corporation. Nothing has been said about that. They may not use pressure or compulsion, but certainly there is a moral responsibility on the Government to encourage the PTI, to help it, to advise it as to how to make this change. Nothing has been said.

Therefore, it is my suggestion that the committee envisaged in my resolution should be set up for this specific purpose. It is not going to make a new investigation, but we should know what things are blocking the way, what is preventing the imple-

5795 Resolution re:

Dissemination of BHADRA 12, 1882 (SAKA),
News and Views
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mentation of this very vital recommendation, about which, I submit, no satisfactory answer has been given on behalf of Government. Many Members have agreed with the disease, it is only when the remedy is suggested that they throw up their hands in horror and say they oppose the resolution. I cannot understand this. Therefore, I commend my resolution.

Mr. Chairman: I shall first put the amendment to vote.

In the Resolution,—

add at the end—

“as recommended by the Press Commission, 1954.”

The motion was negatived.

Mr. Chairman: The question is:

“This House calls upon the Government to appoint a Committee consisting of 45 Members of Parliament, 30 from Lok Sabha and 15 from Rajya Sabha, to go into the question of dissemination of news and views by news-

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Resolution re:
Target of Shipping

papers in the country with a view to making proposals for ensuring truthfulness, objectivity and good moral standards in the field of journalism.”

The motion was negatived.

18.32 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE. TARGET OF SHIPPING

Shri Raghunath Singh (Varanasi)
Sir, I beg to move:

“This House is of opinion that the target of shipping be fixed at least at 5 lakh G.R.T. and Rs. 100 crores be forthwith sanctioned for this purpose.”

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member may continue on the next Private Members' day.

18.33 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till eleven of the clock on Monday, 5 September, 1960/Bhadra 14, 1882 (Saka).