

बनाने वाला नहीं है, यह बजट केवल इलेक्शन का भोगू बजाने वाला बजट है।

अन्ववाद।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The debate will continue after the Calling Attention.

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Acute Shortage of Newsprint in the Country

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA (Delhi): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to the situation arising out of the acute shortage of newsprint in the country and the action taken by the Government in this regard.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I wish to make the following statement in this connection. The overall newsprint requirement for 1983-84 was initially estimated at 3,50,000 tonnes—1,90,000 tonnes to be met by indigenous production and the balance of 1,60,000 tonnes to be met through imports. Following a review of the indigenous production of newsprint by the three domestic mills in the first half of 1983-84, it was decided to import an additional quantity of 20,000 tonnes to meet the shortfall in domestic production.

Domestic production of newsprint itself in 1983-84 was appreciably higher than in the previous years. The output of standard newsprint from the three newsprint mills in 1983-84 was 1,70,000 tonnes (approx.), which is more than 65 per cent production in the preceding year.

Arrivals of imported newsprint during the year amounted to 1,76,459 tonnes. Inclusive of the quantities

carried over from the previous year, the total arrivals of imported newsprint should have been 2,03,000 tonnes.

For most part of the year, newsprint availability position continued to be satisfactory. From the beginning of 1984, however, the availability position came under some strain because of higher monthly liftings and depletion of STC's buffer stocks. The port worker's strike further worsened the situation nearly 15,000 tonnes of newsprint had been accumulated in various ships at different major ports which could not be unloaded due to the port workers' strike.

To meet the situation, Government have taken a number of measures. These are:—

(a) The three domestic newsprint mills have been asked to make special efforts to achieve maximum production. The constraints in this respect have been identified. In this context, MSIB wrote to the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala to make available adequate power to the newsprint mills in their States. The question of ensuring adequate coal availability has been taken up with the Ministry of Energy and their speedy movement to the mills, with the Ministry of Railways.

(b) STC has been asked to step up arrivals of newsprint from Bangladesh from the present level of 75 tonnes to 150 tonnes a day and even higher, if possible.

(c) The question of priority berthing for ships carrying newsprint has been taken up with the Ministry of Shipping and Transport to ensure that the 15,000 tonnes of newsprint in various ships in different ports are quickly unloaded so as to become available for newspaper consumption.

(d) STC has been asked to ensure import arrivals at the rate of 25,000

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tonnes every month during the first half of 1984-85 within the ceiling of Annual Import Programme of 1.85 lakh tonnes of imports for 1984-85.

(e) The Finance Ministry has already released foreign exchange for 1,08,000 tonnes for 1984-85 out of the projected requirements of 1.85 lakh tonnes of imported newsprint for 1984-85. The Finance Ministry has been approached for the release of foreign exchange for a balance import of 77,900 tonnes for 1984-85.

(f) A proposal is under consideration for allocation of white-printing paper (cream-wove) to newspapers for allotment through RNI in lieu of newsprint.

Once the current situation which has mainly arisen due to the port-strike is overcome, it is hoped that the situation will improve considerably.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gupta, you will get seven minutes. So, please be brief.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, and honourable Members as a new Member of this august House. I am conscious of the great honour that has been conferred upon me, by being elected here. In this Hall, many a great stalwart of our nation has once stood and declaimed on our right to freedom. Many great names come to mind of those thereafter who have guided the democratic destiny of our beloved country. Before such people I must consider myself a puny person but, nevertheless, having been admitted to this hallowed council I must, by my very presence here, consider myself to have been transmuted into the spirit of our illustrious forerunners. I shall consider it my duty to uphold the loftiest traditions and values which this House has stood for and so relentlessly pursued to maintain and cherish.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, as an ardent votary of democratic values it is my fervent hope that we, representing the sovereign will of the people will always be the beaconlight in the turbulent times we are passing through today and in the staggering challenges we shall be facing in the future..

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I deem it a great privilege that so early in my membership of this House, I have been given an opportunity to rise here and address you through a calling attention notice. I recall, Sir, that thirty six years ago the precious heartbeat of the country, Jawaharlal Nehru, spoke about our trust with destiny. Today we are witnessing just that. We have achieved great heights of glory and established the incredible potential of a nation that has freed itself but lately, and sat forth on the adventure of progress with determination and purpose. We have set up ice stations in the frozen continent of Antarctica, one of our young men has gone up in space and orbited the earth and we are the first free Asian nation to implode a nuclear device for peaceful purposes. Whenever you look you witness impressive progress. And thus with the illustrious daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru at the helm of affairs our dreams and aspirations towards a prosperous, just, equitable and democratic society take tangible shape with each passing day.

As a member of the fourth estate in this sovereign body I do feel that the press and other media are the most important organs that seek to protect the cherished values of our people. It is the media that communicate to the tribals living in the jungles of Madhya Pradesh, in the desolation of the Andamans, on the shores of Mahabalipuram and in the lagoons of Kerala, the strides being taken by our country and the world. It is this very media again that evocatively projects the pain and misery, the agony and the suffering of our people living everywhere. It can also elevate and instruct us through the communication process. Alas, it can

also misinform, disinform and misguide. Today the vast technological strides made in the communication industry pose both a challenge and an opportunity toward a better informed, more conscious...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gupta, please reserve this speech for some other occasion. You can now put some questions on the Calling Attention, otherwise your time will be up. You cannot read the whole speech. I am sorry. You can put some questions on the shortage of newsprint because other matters will take your time.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: appreciate it, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is not a full-fledged debate.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: This is my maiden speech. I want two minutes indulgence.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The watch is going very fast.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: I will come to the point. I am asking the questions. Sir, as you are, perhaps, aware and so may hon. Members be, the flow of newsprint either coming in from abroad or produced in this country is determined and controlled by the Government and the State Trading Corporation—STC. The prices charged by our mills are the highest anywhere in the world and the quality of the product is nowhere near international standard. Yet these mills have increased and are allowed to increase their prices frequently and arbitrarily with no regard whatsoever to the interests of the newspaper industry and the nation. But the bulk of our newsprint comes from abroad and is canalised through the STC and regulated by the Registrar of Newspapers of India—RNI.

Both the STC and the hon. Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting have been giving assurances that there is no shortage and no lack of newsprint in the country. The stark truth, Sir, is that there is no stock of suitable newsprint at all in the godowns of STC. Whatever small

stock is available is either damaged or in sizes that are unusable by the Indian Press. Sir, every representative organisation of the press, and there are several of them, have been clamouring for a long time that the handling of newsprint flow by the STC and RNI has been unsatisfactory and without any sense of phased scheduling. They had been repeatedly warned of the impending crisis in vain. Sir, today the crisis is upon us. Some papers have had to reduce the number of their pages. Some small and medium newspapers have been forced to come out irregularly by suspending publication from time to time, and some are on the verge of disappearing altogether. No amount of crisis management on the part of the newspaper industry is going to stave off disaster. And, Sir, I would discourage the Government seeking shelter behind the recent dock strike for the crisis. The facts are otherwise. The amount held up was not significant in the total context.

And yet, Sir, it is indeed ironical that this should be so. At the moment world newsprint availability is easy. There are several contracts yet to be honoured with the foreign suppliers by STC. But because of lack of coordination between the ministries Newsprint shipments have not been regular or evenly phased. Sometimes there is bunching of shipments in some months, sometimes no shipments at all in other months. All newspapers have not uniformly received imported newsprint. And despite the recommendations of the Newsprint Advisory Committee buffer stocks in the country have not been maintained at the level prescribed. Indeed they have been eaten into to an alarming extent.

To add to the multifarious worries of the press a new and serious problem has arisen by an untoward and arbitrary action of the Ministry not honouring for the first time the entitlements which have been unserved during the year in the subsequent

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year. Inevitably each year some newsprint is carried over to the next year. It has always been the practice to release such unserviced allocation. This year on the incorrect pretext of lack or lapse of foreign exchange. Ministries have refused to honour the entitlements issued by the Registrar of Newspapers for 1982-83 which have been carried over through no fault of the newspapers themselves. This has led to a further crisis. It is true that the hon. Minister of Finance was good enough on the basis of applications made to him by the Indian & Eastern Newspaper Society to release Rs. 28 crores in February for advance contracting of 54,000 tonnes of newsprint. Much as we appreciate this gesture it is inadequate in the overall situation which is extremely grim.

Sir, unless a thorough overhaul is made in the entire outlook and handling of this subject and a new modus operandi is formulated and carried out, I fear the problem of newsprint shortage and crisis will be chronic. May I suggest for immediate action, a constant review of indigenous production of newsprint every month, an additional buffer stock sanctioned for 25,000 tonnes, priority to unloading of newsprint from ships in the docks and immediate distribution of newsprint to newspapers. I would also like to mention at this stage that the Ministry has been importing 52,000 GSM newsprint while we can explore the possibility of importing 45,000 GSM newsprint with the consequent saving of about a million dollars a year I would like to know what measures on a crash basis Government propose to take to tide over this fearful situation which is now prevailing and what long-term measures are being envisaged to maintain the tranquil existence of newspapers? I thank you once again for the opportunity given to me.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I firmly believe that our country is still a democracy and the people of India will elect successive Governments which have a firm commitment to democracy and any Government which is committed to democracy should also be, as a natural corollary, committed to the freedom of the press. If the freedom of the press is to be a reality, then it follows that the newsprint requirements or the raw material for the Press, being newsprint which is like Oxygen should be carefully attended to. I would have been more happy if along with the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, the only person who is dealing with this and who is responsible for the newsprint crisis, namely, the Commerce Minister was also present here. I was told that a copy of the Calling Attention was also sent to him, but I regret to find that neither he or his deputy have cared to be present because there is absolutely nothing other than policy which the hon. Minister, Mr. Bhagat, who is present here, can answer. Most of the bungling in the newsprint field, over a period of two or three decades, has been solely done by that giant monolith, which is called the State Trading Corporation of India, Sir, if you and I were to have a contract for selling tickets at the New Delhi railway station, the only thing which you and I will do is to appoint a number of clerks who will sell the tickets and give the cash to you. The State Trading Corporation is in a similar position. In fact, it is in a much better position. They have a monopoly. . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: It is in a much worse position.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: Yes. In a much worse position. Not only that. Constantly, when the Press has been demanding decanalisation of newsprint, without any proper rhyme or reason the Government of India, in its wisdom or the lack of it has been saying that decanalisation is not

possible it is not in the interest of small and medium newspapers which itself is not true. Why should not the Government of India come forward and appoint the STC itself as one of the agents for importing newsprint? Do whatever they want to do or the small and medium newspapers. Give them at a lower prices if the Government wants to contract with international suppliers and allow the big newspapers or those of them who want to directly import newsprint, because, the foreign exchange outgo is less. Then can put conditions and say that the licence granted will not exceed so much per tonne, which is the price at which the STC is importing. Do they dare do it? They will not because they will stand exposed. It is one sordid tale of woe which has been perpetrated by the STC over a period of 20 years and it is rather strange that despite successive changes both in the office of the Commerce and Information and Broadcasting Minister, the Government of India has not woken up to the realities of the situation.

The facts and statistics are very much available with the Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices. But every time when the newspaper industry or the publishing industry comes forward with a plea about the newsprint crisis the Government solves the problem by appointing a committee. Because, as you know, the best way to avoid a problem is to appoint a committee which will go into the same figures again and again without any solution, to the crying child. Time and again the Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society, the representative organisation of newspapers in the country, the Indian language Newspapers Associations and the Medium and small Newspapers Association have been urging the Government to see the writing on the wall, but unfortunately, just like, Mr. Bhagat who is wearing dark glasses, the Government of India is living dark glasses and they do not see what is happening.

Sir, the Minister has attributed a major portion of the crisis to the dock workers strike. It is no doubt a major factor but if there had been proper planning over a period of time there would never have been this bungling.

The requirements of newsprint are known well in advance and it is very strange that on page 2 of the statement the Minister should say, in para (e) that the Finance Ministry has already released foreign exchange for 1,08,000 tonnes and approached for the release of foreign exchange for a balance import of 77,000 tonnes. This is clearly a state of poor coordination. The newsprint policy is announced taking into account the views of the Finance Ministry, the exchange reserve position, the Commerce Ministry, the availability of newsprint, the long-term contracts pending and all these matters. At this stage for the Finance Ministry to sort of force an impediment is rather strange and is clearly a case for very poor coordination between various Ministries. This only shows that the Government of India is feeble, it is going strong in its attempts to proclaim that it is for the freedom of the press, but in actual fact it is not so.

Sir, coming to the pricing formula for the newspapers, even assuming that the Government of India policy does not want to decanalise the newsprint, what prevents the Government of India from coming forward and disclosing the pricing formula to the newspapers? Whether they are the large or the medium or the small newspapers, the pricing formula is not disclosed. Even recently when the Commerce Minister was urged to release the formula, he said that it will be given a sympathetic thought. What is the secret behind this?

Coming to the indigenous production of newsprint, despite the claims of the NEPA mills of having increased the production by 15 per cent this year, to 58,000 tonnes, it is far below

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the expectations. I would only like all of you, the hon. Members, to realise what the NEPA mills' claim is. After a period of 20 years, after appointment of several committees, after even putting the representatives of the newspaper on it, look at the quality of the newspaper newsprint. The quality of the NEPA newsprint is very poor. Pardon me for saying that it is not even fit for toilet paper. This is the type of newsprint they make. I will just give you a few statistics. Though the inflation in this country is great, I do not think any other commodity in this country has gone up like newsprint, whether it is imported newsprint or indigenous newsprint. In 1978 the price of imported newsprint was Rs. 3700 and today it is nearly Rs. 7000. The price of NEPA newsprint has gone up successively from 1979 when it was Rs. 3200. In 1973-74 it was only Rs. 1600, mind you, and today a decade later, it is something like Rs. 7,600. Added to this, you look to the quality of the grammage and the poor quality of the newsprint mill. Today fortunately there are two other mills, one is Mysore and the other is Mayoor in Kerala. Recently the Kerala mill had been on strike, but it has started production. Its quality is somewhat better, but all this will not make up for the requirements of this country. And it is rather strange that the Government is still following this policy. I would like to ask the Minister whether he has seen the recent recommendations of the Commonwealth Press Union, which has unanimously passed a resolution urging all countries, who believe in democracy and freedom of the press, to remove the import tariff for the newsprint which hinders development and progress of the newspaper industry and the freedom of the press. I would like to know whether he has brought it to the notice of the Government of India, to the highest authorities, including the Prime Minister, to see that this is done. I would also like to know whether he

will consider at least bigger allocations for newspapers. He has launched the crash programme. The Minister himself has committed that the STC will have a minimum of 30,000 tonnes of newsprint in buffer-stock, but this is never done. Let bygones be bygones, let the Government of India have clear thinking and come to the rescue of the newspaper industry.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shrimati Kanak Mukherjee.

SHRI T. CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): I would like to put some important problems which this Ministry is facing.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: please take you seat. You know the procedure (*Interruptions*). Everyone is the user. (*Interruptions*). You wait.

SHRI K. L. N. PRASAD (Andhra Pradesh): At least after the other Members have spoken I may be given a chance.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let us see. Yes, Shrimati Mukherjee.

SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, I beg to remind you that in this very House we have discussed the newsprint crisis twice. I myself have participated in it, a year before and last year, and then there was no dock strike. This is what I want to remind you. This is a long-standing crisis. The difficulty about the newsprint is mainly about its supply. The STC has failed to do its duty. Secondly, there is the failure of the indigenous industries. That is the thing. Taking advantage of the failure of the public sector, now the private sector is trying to raise its rate. People are demanding supplies through import of newsprint. Here is the crisis. Because the public sector has failed. So you must think deeply about it what to do. You are encouraging the private sector, letting the public sector deteriorate and ignoring indigenous production. The main crisis arises because you have reduced the import of newsprint as you thought that our indigenous newsprint industry would develop. All the three indigenous mills—

of Kerala, Mysore and Madhya Pradesh—are losing concerns. It is an admitted fact. If you take the price and quality, the price is higher of the indigenous newsprint and the quality is much worse. I want to show that the STC sale price is much higher than the imported newsprint's price. When the imprinted price is Rs. 5000, it does not sell below Rs. 5,300 and now it is Rs. 5,600. The STC's sale price, as it is, is high, but the price of indigenous newsprint is very much higher. STC's sale price of imported newsprint for the quota of July—September, 1983, was Rs. 5,690 at high seas rate basis, excluding the custom duty and Rs. 5740 from buffer stocks. But the ex-mill sale price of Kerala mill was Rs. 7000, of Mysore Paper Mills Rs. 7200 and the Nepa newsprint Rs. 5600. And the quality is much worse why? Especially when the labour is much cheaper in India than in any other foreign country from which you import the newsprint. But why is the price high after so many years development? That is my question. And why is the quality so worse

Now especially after cutting the 20 per cent in advertising, the middle and the small newspapers are suffering much. It is really the middle and the small newspapers which are really becoming victims of this crisis of newsprint supply. The import was cut down. There is deterioration of the public sector and ignoring of the indigenous industry and indirectly encouraging the private sector. This is the main problem. I am connected with a small newspaper. It is a monthly cultural magazine for women. I have a long experience of this. If we apply for STC quota we have to go through so much paraphernalia and even then we have to depend on some local agents. They charge us so much for stacking it and for cutting it into pieces and all sorts of things. We want it by ships. So it becomes the same price at which we can buy it from the open market. That is the crisis. So we suffer the most. We have been appeal-

ing to the Government to open some control shops for newsprint paper so that the small and medium newspapers can buy the newsprint from these shops as and when they require it.

So my questions are: all these three indigenous industries are suffering losses. What is the policy and plan of the Government to develop this indigenous industry. For so many years they have just been saying that they are planning. But nothing is happening.

Secondly, a Government agency is surely preferable to a private agency. We want the public sector to improve and supply this to us.

Thirdly, small and medium newspapers are facing difficulties in getting newsprint. Will the Government consider opening control price shops for the small and medium papers and whether the Government will ignore the 20 per cent cut in advertising and help the small and medium newspapers?

These are my questions.

श्री शंकर मिह बाघेला (गुजरात) : डिप्टी चैयरमैन साहब, मैं कुछ बातों का पुनरावर्तन नहीं करूंगा। हमारे मिनिस्टर साहब ने जो जवाब दिया है कि पोर्टस की हड़ताल हो गई, मिनिस्ट्री का को-ऑर्डिनेशन नहीं रहा लेकिन यह इसके कारण नहीं हैं। पोर्टस की हड़ताल अभी हुई और खुल गई। लेकिन गर्वमेंट की एक आदत है जो कई सालों से चली आ रही है। 1975-76 में इमरजेंसी के दौरान प्रेस का गला घोटने की कोशिश की और उसका परिणाम भुगता है। इस परिणाम के बाद भी कैसे प्रेस को प्रेस किया जाय इसके नये तरीके ढूँढ़े हैं। नया तरीका यह है कि जैसे कस्टम लेबी

15 प्रतिशत, now the imposition of a flat rate of Rs. 825 per tonne of newsprint and items which account for as much as

[श्री शंकर सिंह बाघेला]

50 per cent of our newspaper cost. Third, 20 per cent disallowance on advertisement expenditure introduced by the Budget of 1983.

एक तरीके से प्रेस का जो न्यूज प्रिंट कोटा है उसको कैसे कम किया जाय, प्रेस का सर्कुलेशन कैसे कम किया जाय इसकी कोशिश की है। इसको मैं कुछ आंकड़े देकर प्रवृत्त करने की कोशिश करूंगा।

1977-से 80 तक न्यूज पेपर सर्कुलेशन इन थाउजेंट्स, 1977 में 37427, 1978 में 40850, 1979 में 46449 और जब से यह गवर्नमेंट आई, इन्होंने गवर्नमेंट पर अपना कब्जा किया, प्रेस को प्रेस करने का जो प्रयत्न किया वह यह है कि 1980 में सर्कुलर स्टेबल लाइफ दिया, 1980 से 50921, 1981 में 51102, 1982 में 50094। यह क्या दिखाता है? अगर प्रेस का सर्कुलेशन बढ़ता है तो वह 1977-80 में बढ़ता है, इस अवधि में बढ़ा है। क्योंकि उस समय न्यूज प्रिंट के कोटे की सहूलियत दी गई और अब वह सहूलियत नहीं दी जाती है। जानबूझकर प्रेस को नहीं दे रहे हैं, प्रेस को प्रेस कर रहे हैं, दूसरे तरीके से। मैंने बताया कि इस तरीके से प्रेस को प्रेस करने की कोशिश करते हैं। अब हिन्दुस्तान में जो न्यूज पेपर्स का सर्कुलेशन है 13 पर थाउजेंट्स। दूसरे देशों में, हिन्दुस्तान के बाहर जो एडवांस कंट्रीज हैं 100 कापीज पर थाउजेंट्स है। हमारा जो लोकल प्रोडक्शन है पेपर्स का वह भी बढ़ा है लेकिन उसके भाव बेहूदा रखे हैं। जो हम आउट साइड इण्डिया से इम्पोर्ट करते हैं वह 4000 पर टन है लेकिन हिन्दुस्तान में जो परचेज करते हैं वह 8440 पर टन है मोर देन डबल। डबल होने के साथ-साथ एक तो यह जो लोकल प्रोडक्शन है यह अच्छा नहीं

है, जो वहां टक्कीकल मशीनरी होनी चाहिए वह नहीं है, वह पुरानी और घिसी-पिटी है। इस हिसाब से जो माल पैदा होना चाहिए वह अच्छा नहीं होता और उसका मोर देन डबल भाव देना पड़ता है।

दूसरी बात, डिप्टी चैयरमैन साहब यह है कि 1 लाख 80 हजार टन हमने इम्पोर्ट किया है। लेकिन अक्चुअली इसकी जो डिमाण्ड है वह 2,20 लाख है। अब जो बीच में 40 लाख टन बचता है, एस० टी० सी० के पास 30 हजार टन का कोटा बफर होना चाहिए। लेकिन एस० टी० सी० में घपला है। उसने अपने व्यापार का सिस्टम बदल दिया है। हमारे हिन्दुस्तान के चैन आफ पेपर्स ने आउट साइड इण्डिया टेंडर इनवाइट किये हैं, न्यूज प्रिंट के कोटे के लिये। उस टेंडर और एस० टी० सी० के जो भाव हैं दोनों में जो डिफरेंस है वह 13 करोड़ रुपये का है, डिफरेंस आफ दि प्रोफिट 13 करोड़ कि वह अपने व्यापार के हिसाब से प्रोफिट ले रहे हैं। लेकिन सर, प्राबलम प्रेस के कोटा की नहीं है, दि इण्टेशन आफ दिस गवर्नमेंट इज दिस कि हमारी प्राइम-मिनिस्टर और इनके जो लोग हैं वह चाहते हैं कि टी० वी० रेडियो पर इनकी फोटो और आवाज आये ताकि जो अनपढ़ लोग हैं उनको सुनें, टी० वी० को उनको देखें। (व्यवधान)

श्री विश्वजित पृथ्वीजित सिंह (महाराष्ट्र) : टी० वी० रेडियो से इस का कोई मतलब नहीं है (व्यवधान) इसका न्यूजप्रिंट से कोई मतलब नहीं है। (व्यवधान)

श्री शंकर सिंह बाघेला : न्यूजप्रिंट से मतलब है। (व्यवधान)

That is the real intention of the Government, to suppress the press (Interruptions)

श्री विश्वजित पृथ्वी जित सिंह : यह कोई खास खुफिया मेम्बर आए हैं जो खास खुफिया इनफार्मेशन इनको पता लग जाती है ।

SHRI SHANKAR SINH VAGHELA: That is the real intention of the Government.

आप क्यों चिन्ता रहे हैं । अगर कोई कन्सर्न नहीं करता है तो कोय क्वाइट, अगर कन्सर्न करता है तो आप गुस्से होते हैं । इसका मतलब यह है कि समर्थित इन्फार्मेशन । माई लास्ट क्वेश्चन इज 30 हजार वर्कर स्टॉक रहता है वह रहेंगे और 40 हजार बचता है इस तरह से टोटल 70 हजार कोटा इम्पोर्ट होगा ।

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I do not know which Ministry is to be blamed, whether the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting or the Ministry of Commerce responsible for import and export or the Ministry of Industry. For some years to come it looks as if our indigenous production will only be a little over 50 per cent of our actual requirements. First I want to know when the Government expects to reach self-sufficiency without relying on import with regard to this very important item which forms part of the popular media. No. 1. No. 2: How do they propose to reorganize or restructure the import policy and the distribution? My hon. colleague Mr. Ramakrishna blamed the STC and wanted de-canalisation. I am not sure whether that will be a correct solution. Whatever may be the faults and failures of the STC, they should be taken to task and it should be streamlined and proper distribution must be done. For the proper distribution the real enemies are the big giant press barons. What is the quota allotted to them? If you take the whole newsprint

available, both through indigenous production and through import, more than 80 per cent of it is consumed by these press barons. A small quantity alone is available for the small papers, language papers or papers belonging to political parties like mine. Our trade unions have got to rely on propaganda, and for that we have our journal. Our kisan sabha has its own journal. Our youth federation has its own journal. Every party in every language has either a weekly or a daily. Do you know what amount of difficulty we are having with regard to this distribution? The Registrar of Newspapers office is very careful with regard to calling for accounts and details for allotting a little more than 2 tonnes per year. They are very careful for a working class or a trade union journal. But do they call reports from the big press and find out whether the entire quantity allotted to them is utilized properly, only for the purpose of printing the newspaper, or they sell in the black market? My experience is that we are suffering not for want of newsprint. If I pay more I can get any quantity in the black market. There is no scarcity. The scarcity and crisis are artificial, due to the wrong policies of import and distribution. Why should these papers be allowed to have nearly 16 pages out of 18 or 20 only for advertisements? And what type of advertisements? Do the common people get any benefit out of these advertisements? These advertisements relate only to multi-nationals and big monopoly industries who finance these papers so that they can further their class interests. The advertisement portion of the newspapers must be curtailed and curbed and restricted.

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: What about matrimonial columns? You do not understand that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is too late for him.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: Do not forget—I am sorry—you are vulgarising it. That is a reflection on our society. I am not referring to that,

(Shri M. Kalyanasundaram)

but other advertisements, full-page advertisements, half-page advertisements, naked advertisements. In advertisements vulgarity is introduced. Is this the method of advertisement? Why such a huge volume of newsprint be wasted, demoralising the society, through such vulgar advertisements. I want to ask, Is the Government thinking of any method by which they will restrict the pages or the quantity for advertisements in the big dailies? (Time bell rings) I am putting some useful questions, sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You put questions.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: If you put your finger on the bell, I get nervous.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No. A person like you cannot do that.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: My friend said that the news print price was Rs. 7,000 a tonne.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: Yes, before the dock strike.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: Do you know how much we spent per tonne? More than Rs. 10,000 before it reaches our press. And if you add cutting charges and other things, it goes beyond that. So, what steps are they going to take to reduce the price. This price is far above the reach of common people. The price of newsprint is going up. The small newspapers are unable to compete with the giants. What steps is the Government contemplating to take for protecting the interests of small newspapers, language newspapers, especially those connected with the working class and trade union movement. That is number one.

Number two, another explanation given is very ridiculous. I want to bring this to the notice of the hon. Minister. Who prepared it, I do not know. One of the reasons for the present crisis is attributed to the 20-day

old port and dock workers' strike. What is the quantity detained due to the strike? Fifteen thousand tonnes.

SHRI T. CHANDRASEKHARA REDDY: Four thousand tonnes were available with the STC that day, before the strike started.

SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM: You may be right. Much more quantities are available with the individual barons. If 15,000 tonnes are held up on the vessels, am I to understand from you that this is a cause for the crisis? Fifteen thousand tonnes is hardly 7 per cent of the total import in a year. That reason, you cannot give. It is ridiculous. Let me have a clear answer from the Minister. What steps is he going to take for a proper distribution of the newsprint that is available and also to control the prices and to see that the black-market is not there and that the advertisement portion is restricted?

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I do not want to make any speech. I would like to put five straight questions to the hon. Minister:

One is, in para 4 of his statement, the hon. Minister referred to "higher monthly liftings". I do not know what he meant by that. How did this happen? Monthly liftings can only be related to the overall annual requirements anticipated and provided for? Does it mean that some special quotas were allotted during the first quarter of 1984; if so, to what extent?

My second question is, in para 5(a) the Minister referred to coal supplies and availability of power to newsprint mills. Is it a fact that production in the mills is affected due to irregular supply of electricity and coal?

The third is, in para 5(f) the hon. Minister mentioned about the proposal for allocation of cream-wove white printing paper in lieu of newsprint. Since the cost of this paper is higher than that of newsprint, does he expect the newspapers to accept this proposal or does he envisage subsidising the newspapers for the higher price, since

the crisis has arisen due to the failure of the Government to ensure regular supply of newsprint? The steps announced by the Minister are like fire fighting operation. The real solution is increased production. There is crisis in newsprint supply and applications for licences, for new mills are pending with the Government and applications of some for financial accommodation are also pending. How many such applications for new mills are pending with the Government?

When the Government proposes to clear them?

My last question is while there is a crisis—and this crisis often erupts—, there is still availability of enough newsprint in the market. There is also black marketing of the commodity. Some small and big newspapers have inflated their circulation figures and are thereby drawing more newsprint quotas and selling them in the black-market. ABC figures of circulation are not checked up properly by the Registrar of Newspapers. Similarly, there are a number of yellow journals and small newspapers which inflate their circulation figures and sell the newsprint in the black market. The Registrar of Newspapers has no machinery to check these circulation figures periodically. Does the Minister propose to start taking up such checks in due course?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, Shri Dhabe. Please finish your speech within allotted time.

SHRI SHRIDHAR WASUDEO DHABE (Maharashtra): I know your way of conducting the House. I will try to finish within the allotted time.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, my friend and colleague has spoken about the freedom of the press and democracy. But I don't think the Government is very keen for the freedom of the press. As regards the freedom of the press, as we have seen, if they are keen the most important think with our public sector which is neglected today is to give a cheap product. On the other hand, it has been stated now that the public sector means more price everywhere and cost price escalation. We

have 25 per cent coal price rise. Therefore, if at all the necessity of small newspapers which the public has to read then it is very essential that the policy must be reoriented. We should have cheap newsprint. On the other hand, the Government is increasing the price every time like the "Baniya shop" taking into account increased price of raw material every year for the newsprint production. With the result that, Sir, the small people and the working class people who have limited means cannot even purchase the newspaper priced at Re. 0.75 or Re. 0.80 or Re. 1 per copy by the national newspapers or the State newspapers. Therefore, as a very essential policy which the Ministry must spell out—may I know from the Ministry whether it has got any policy to give cheap newsprint and also adequate quantity to the newspapers.

Secondly, Sir, we talk of the Five Year Plan and the Sixth Plan. Even the Sixth Plan targets for the newsprint production have not been reached. Only 40 per cent we have reached. Now, one more year is to go may I know from the Minister what is the programme for the last year of the Sixth Five Year Plan? How much target has been achieved? How much they are going to do in the remaining period? Sir, the most important question in this matter is, I am really sorry to point out, that the STC is given a role of only money making and also creating artificial crisis in the industry which must be clearly spelt out. The role of public sector should be to help the industry and not to be an obstacle to it. The Minister has made a statement in desperation to blame the port and Dock Workers for 15 days' strike that has caused the newsprint shortage is really ridiculous. He should not have made a statement like that. Sir, whole coal and electricity shortage is everywhere may I know from the Minister actually what was the shortage of the newsprint—is it

[Shridhar Wasudeo Dhabse]

due to failure of power and shortage of coal. If so, please give us the figures. He will say I will collect it and that it is not available. I am certain that it is very negligible.

Last thing I would like the Minister that he should not act in desperation and switch over to the policy of giving these white-printing paper (cream-wove), as stated in the last part, instead of newsprint. It will be killing of small newspapers and also run by working classes for their Unions. Therefore, may I know whether the hon. Minister will give an assurance to this House that this white printing paper will not be made use of by newspapers and that newsprint will be made available in adequate quantity at a cheap price to the journals and newspapers in the country?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mitra, what is your question?

SHRI SANKAR PRASAD MITRA (West Bengal): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I concede for the sake of argument that the immediate crisis is due to the port strike. But it is no use denying in fact that this is a unique example of mismanagement of and corruption in the STC leading ultimately to affecting the image of the public sector. I beg to put a few questions to the hon. Minister. Question No. 1: What is the capacity for expansion you are providing for, in the Seventh Five-Year Plan? Question No. 2: What is the anticipated demand in the Seventh Five-Year Plan period? Question No. 3: What is the quantum of foreign exchange that is now being spent to meet the basic needs of democracy? The other proposition that I want to introduce is that the hon. Minister's statement is palpably uncertain or rather vague with regard to two matters. At page 2, clause (f), he says: "A proposal is under consideration for allocation of white-printing paper to newspapers, etc." My question is, when, according to him, this proposal is likely to materialise.

In the last paragraph he says that once the situation created by the port strike is overcome, things would improve. But he does not say, and I want to ask him, what is his estimate of the time that is required to overcome the situation arising out of the port strike?

SHRI T. CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY: Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of the Minister that before the port strike, they had 4,000 tonnes. The STC has bungled it. They have not imported 10,000 tonnes in 1984-85 and they have taken away 23,000 tonnes from the buffer stock and so it came to 4,000 tonnes. Because of this, when the dock strike started, the problem of newsprint buffer stock came. I would like to request the Minister to instruct the STC so that instead of transporting all the reals to the godown—it will take a week's time and in Madras there is not even one real—they can deliver from the jetties, so that they can get over one week's delay immediately. I would request the Minister to see to it. The price of indigenous newsprint, Mysore Paper Mills, has increased by Rs. 600 and that of the Kerala Mills' newsprint has increased by Rs. 900. It is Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 8,250.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That has been put already.

SHRI T. CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY: Mrs. Kanak Mukherjee mentioned only about the increase before. But it has increased from the 19th of this month.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That covers the whole question.

SHRI T. CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY: This month they have increased it, from the 19th of this month, from Rs. 7,752 to Rs. 8,240. I would like to request the Minister to see that all the small and medium newspapers are given all the imported newsprint. There is no customs duty for the small and medium newspapers. But in the case of indigenous newsprint,

the cost is the same, whether it is a big paper or a small paper. He should see that the imported newsprint is given to the small and medium newspapers.

SHRI K. L. N. PRASAD: Sir, I can understand if this crisis has come all of a sudden. The reason given is that because of the port strike, all 5 P.M. this dislocation has taken place. I can understand and accept

the view to some extent. But what about the bufferstock? It was said only 4000 tonnes of bufferstock was there when the strike began. At any one time, there should be a stock of at least three to six months requirement in the country stored by the STC which they have not maintained. Secondly, if the crisis is one which has arisen just now, it is one thing. But this is happening almost every alternate year, if not every year, for the last several years. And what were the reasons then and what are the reasons now? Therefore, these kind of excuses and reasons are no good. Press is very important and newspaper are the only medium that can reach the remotest villages and without them news cannot be carried to the people. Bufferstock has to be maintained and if it is not it is bungling done by the STC. STC managed to see that everytime there is a crisis I do not know for whose benefit but I can say to the benefit of some of those who sell newsprint in the black-market. As some of our friends have said, in the black market if you pay Rs. 1000 or Rs. 1500 per tonne more, newsprint is still available though with some difficulty. If that is the situation, it is not a happy situation. I can understand if this is happening for the first time. But it is happening continuously. There is something wrong somewhere in the system. Therefore, serious thought has to be given, serious notice has to be taken of this, and it should be rectified.

I would like to bring to your notice another aspect. Certain concessions were given in the duty applicable for small, medium and large newspapers.

What is a small newspaper? What is a medium newspaper? And what is large newspaper? These classifications were made about three decades ago when the literacy rate was poor, when readership was limited only to urban areas, when the requirements of newspapers were very low; at that time they fixed upto 15000 circulation for a small newspaper; from 15000 to 50000 was considered a medium newspaper; and above 50,000 was considered a large newspaper. But today the situation is quite different. Any newspaper that started with 50, 60, 70 circulation can still continue to be a small newspaper and get the facilities. After all, this classification was made 30 years ago and still today it holds good! It means we are sleeping over the matter which is very important for the public.

Then I come to the distribution system. The idea of Mr. Chandrasekhar Reddy that it should be delivered at the jetty is good. At the same time, I say there are authorisations given by STC, Madras. Seven thousand tonnes are pending. The ship that has come to Madras is carrying about 1400 tonnes. How are they going to distribute 7000 tonnes? There is a big rush, large queues are forming everyday. Some newspapers are on the verge of closing down. In fact, I have been publishing a newspaper for the last 25 years and we have reduced our pages; we are not able to print fully and we are facing a big crisis. And if it continue for some more days like this, we will have to lay off the labour and staff and the working journalists; they all will be without jobs. So, this situation should be taken into consideration.

Lastly there is one point which has not been covered by other speakers. The disallowance of 20 per cent on advertisement expenditure by companies is hitting the newspaper industry to a great extent. This should be taken into consideration. As it was pointed out rightly, if the Commerce Minister had been here, he would have been able to enlighten us better. I request that all these points should be taken note of. Thank you.

SHRI T. CHANDRASEKHARA REDDY: I would like to suggest instead of the STC importing it, let the I&B have control over the newsprint corporation.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: I am very grateful to the honourable Members for having raised this matter which, I think, deserves serious consideration. I share the anxiety of the Hon'ble Members over this issue. A number of suggestions have also come. They will receive due consideration. Some of the suggestions will get prompt attention. The debate has been quite fruitful. I have no intention whatsoever to minimise the importance of the situation. I had no intention either to give an adhoc treatment to the subject. When I referred to the port workers' strike, I had no intention whatsoever to blame the port workers for creating this crisis. I have absolutely no intention to say that nothing remains to be done or nothing more remains to be considered.

I am dealing with the question of shortage of newsprint in the present situation. There are certain long-ranging questions. There are other questions which I would not call irrelevant because they also will have to be answered by the Ministry concerned. To the best of my ability I will try to answer some important questions.

It is true that as compared to the allocation of newsprint to the various newspapers, the actual liftings have been less. On an average the actual lifting from April, 1983 to March, 1984 has been between 30,000 to 33,000 tonnes. About 15,000 tonnes what I said was that we expect that quantity by way of indigenous production. We expect this to be cleared from the ports. Next month may be marginally difficult so far as actual lifting in the previous month is concerned. Now with the programme we have given to the STC we expect the position to improve and stabilise as it existed during the last year from May-June onwards. It was in that context I referred to 15,000 tonnes. I do realise

that the STC should have a larger buffer stock. I have no intention to blame any other Ministry. When I deal with it, I take all the blame on myself. We had said that the STC should have 30,000 tonnes as buffer stock. That has not been done. I mentioned this matter to the Minister for Commerce. He himself was very much with me. It is not that there is no coordination because we have been in touch with each other. We have solved a number of problems. I do propose to discuss this matter with the Ministers of Finance, Commerce and Industries. An inter-ministerial meeting should be held so that a situation like this does not arise again and to ensure that we have enough buffer stock. But it is not correct to say that there has been no co-ordination. I think but for this port and dock workers' strike, the position would have continued as it has continued during the last one year. I might say that some of my honourable friends have said that this has hit the newspapers and so on. May be. Somewhere it may have happened. But, to our knowledge and according to our information so far, not one newspaper—this is according to our knowledge and our information; nobody has reported to us; some might have and some might not have and I have not got anything—is closed down; not one paper has closed down and not one paper has reduced its pages and not one paper has done it, to our knowledge, so far. It is true that larger allocations were made in the past while the liftings were actually less and the imports were less than what we were wanting them to be. That is true. But there has been this gap and the gap existed between 1982-83 and 1983-84, and the gap in these two years was 48,000 tonnes. Now, the argument of the industry has been this: "Well, these allocations were made and this is what we have carried over and that should be given." But the Ministry which deals with the conservation of foreign exchange and other things says, "You have pulled on with this so far. There is no limitation whatsoever to increase the

pages. There is no ban on it. A number of newspapers have also, increased their pages and there is no ban on starting new magazines and new newspapers. There is no ban on it and, under the rules, new papers and new magazines have been there and a number of papers have increased their pages also." So, their argument is that they have been pulling on. They say, "You have been pulling on with this and this much is not needed and the foreign exchange should be saved." In any case, this is a matter which should be considered. In the newsprint allocation and the actual imports, there has been a gap and there have been two arguments about it. Now, this 48,000 tonnes were imported less than what was allocated. Recently, we have asked the Ministry of Finance for giving clearance of foreign exchange for 28,000 tonnes. But, as I said, I do propose to discuss with the three honourable Ministers the various issues which arise out of this so that we do not live just from hand to mouth and we have enough buffer stocks in order that such difficulties do not arise in the future.

Now, Sir, with great respect to some of the honourable Members, I wish to say that it is totally unfair on the part of some of the honourable Members here—particularly I would like to mention the honourable Member, Shri Shankar Sinh Vaghela—to say that the Government wants to close down the newspapers. Shri Vaghela said that the Government wants to close down the newspaper industry, wants to discourage their circulation, wants to finish the freedom of the Press and so on. That, I would say, is utter political partisanship and not true. The number of newspapers has gone up since we took over in 1980 and the circulation has gone up since we took over and the pages have increased. We are interested in the freedom of the Press; we are interested in the growth of the Press; and we are interested in the growth of the small and medium newspapers. Therefore, I do not wish, at this stage, to

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indulge in any comparison with what was done when others were in power. I do not wish to deal with this situation and this problem in a spirit of recrimination. We stand for the freedom of the Press and we wish to help the Press as honestly and as effectively as we can and as best as we can. So, this is our attitude and, therefore, to say that the Government wants to finish the newspapers so that the Prime Minister's face is shown on the TV and her name is mentioned on the radio is all wrong and, with great respect to him, I say this and I do not wish to enter into any controversy or any debate at length here. But this matter was raised when the demands pertaining to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting were discussed in the Lok Sabha and I had answered this question. I had given facts and figures to show that in the Doordarshan, in the news bulletins, in the national bulletins, for January, February and March, the Prime Minister's time was 5. something, it was 6, something and so on and the average was 5 per cent or 6 per cent only. That is all. I had given facts and figures to show that, taking the bulletins and even taking her special programmes into account, and keeping in view the total transmission time, the average was this much.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I am on a point of order.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: I am not yielding.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Sir, I am on a point of order.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: I am not yielding.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SYED RAHMAT ALI): He says he has a point of order.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Sir, the honourable Minister is referring to issues not related to the subject matter under discussion today. What the honourable Members said about the Prime Minister's face appearing on the TV, etc. is irrelevant to today's

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discussion. I would, therefore, request the honourable Minister to confine his reply to the points raised by us and answer straightaway the questions that we had put.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to Shri Upendra, the honourable new Member in this House, because he has very rightly described what Mr. Shankar Sinh Vaghela has said as totally irrelevant. I would only add that it is incorrect and baseless. Sir, I will answer all the points which have been raised by the hon. Members. I will not leave anything unanswered. If I cannot answer, I will admit frankly that I cannot answer. I was saying that it is wrong to say that we have any motives of this kind. We are for the freedom of the press.

Mrs. Kanak Mukherjee said that the public sector should be encouraged, the private mills are being allowed to function, so on and so forth. I wish to inform her that out of three mills producing indigenously, two are in the public sector and one is in the joint sector. There was another question about raising the price of indigenous paper recently. It is true. But this has been done in consultation with the Bureau of Industrial Costs which is an expert organisation. The Ministry of Industry has done it. It is said that the price of indigenous paper is more and the quality is bad. I cannot pass any judgment on it. But in our country we are placed in a situation in which we have to encourage indigenous production. It may be difficult at times. May be in other countries the prices are less and the newsprint is of better quality. Everyone has its preference for the imported newsprint because it is cheaper. They don't want to take the newsprint produced indigenously because it is costly. But the Government's policy is to encourage indigenous production.

Quite a lot has been said about the S.T.C. The S.T.C. has been described as a sinner in very strong language. Some Members used very strong language. They are entitled to it. I won't go in for a blind defence of the S.T.C. I would say that so far as the price fixation is concerned, it is true that previously the formula was not known to the industry and the press was not associated with the Prime Fixation Advisory Committee. Now the formula is known to them and this change has taken place recently. The Commerce Minister, Shri V. P. Singh, has very kindly agreed to our suggestion. We have already taken two of their representatives. Therefore, if anything is being done by the S.T.C. which should not be done, it would be known to them. They can discuss, argue and bring their point of view to the notice of the Government.

Now, I come to the question of canalising. Of course, I don't say that all these questions are unconnected or irrelevant. They are connected one way or the other. There is the question of emphasis. The question is to be viewed from the point of view of current situation. Calling Attention is a matter of urgent importance. The present situation requires a long range policy. In this context, the question of canalisation has been raised and discussed a number of times in this House. With all respect I would like to say that the Government has considered the question. Primarily, it is a matter for the Commerce Ministry to deal with when we talk in terms of cost, disadvantages and advantages to the small and medium newspapers. It would not be proper to accept that point of view. The hon. Lady Member, I think, had also said that there should be some arrangement or depots where the small and medium newspapers can get it. For that purpose, the S.T.C. has certain depots at some places. If more depots are required at any other place, I am prepared to take up that matter with the S.T.C.

The questions have been asked about the Sixth Plan targets and provisions

and so, on. These are long range questions primarily concerned with the Ministry of Industry. Obviously they can answer these questions. I am not in a position to give any details.

Then there was a question about power failure. I am not directly concerned with that. I was told that the indigenous paper mills are facing this problem of cut in supply. I wrote to the Chief Ministers asking them to take care of their coal supplies because the mills have a feeling that they have this problem. And these problems are there in many cases. Now, an hon. Member has said, you give me the calculations by how much per cent this has gone down and this and that, with respect I would say that perhaps he is much wiser than me and knows much more than me and I can confess that it is not possible to go into that calculation. But I think I did not sin by inviting the Chief Ministers. I also took up the matter with the Ministry of Coal. I also took up the matter with the Ministry of Industry. In fact, I talked to the Ministers concerned. I telephoned to them. I spoke to them. I also wrote to them. I did all this so that we could do whatever we should do.

So, far as the White Paper is concerned, we are not going to impose it on anybody. As a matter of abundant caution we thought that if the situation becomes very grave or very serious, we would not like the newspaper industry to shut and we should do our best so that those who wish to take it can take it and those who do not wish to take it may not take it. Now there was an idea that 20 thousand tonnes should be reserved. It seems to me that neither the newspaper people are inclined to take it, most of them do not want to take it; nor the mills seemed inclined to give it. Therefore, I said, it is at the stage of examination and if necessary we shall work it out.

Now, Sir, a number of other things regarding advertisements and other matters were raised. Obviously I can-

not reply to all those things at this stage. One thing that was raised was about the definition of small newspapers and medium newspapers and big newspapers. Certain circulation figures are there and on that basis there are a number of recommendations made by the Press Commission, the Second Press Commission, which are at present under the consideration of a Cabinet Sub-Committee, which is looking into them and then the matter will be settled. This matter is also under the consideration of the Government.

Now, Sir, the other things said are a 20 per cent cut in expenditure and excise duty on the papers. A reference has also been made to the recommendations of the Commonwealth Press Union etc., that the industry does not want this. It is a fact which is known to everybody. It is known to the Finance Minister, it is known to me it is known to everybody. Their point of view is known to everybody. The matter has been discussed times without number. I think it is not for me to go into this question at this stage.

Now, one of my friends has said, and I think I should not have taken any notice of it, that because I wear dark glasses and, therefore, I cannot see the light, I can only tell him that people who—I think it was Mr. Ramakrishnan—have got very good eyesight but cannot see the truth and they see only darkness around them but I can see the truth through my dark glasses. These people who have got good eyesight they do not see any progress or any brightness around the country . . .

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: It is only figuratively.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: I am also saying figuratively in humour and pay you back in the same coin.

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: You are welcome.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: Now, it was said that the production of indigenous industry should be constantly

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reviewed. It is being reviewed by the Ministry of Industry and it has somewhat improved as is cleared from my statement.

Now, Sir, I come to what my friend, Mr. Vishwa Bandhu Gupta has said in his long maiden speech. I am quite happy about the sentiments that he expressed. I must give him the credit for one thing. I give credit to everybody. It was he who came to me and said that because of the strike some newsprint might be locked up and, therefore some steps have to be taken. He warned me in writing as well as rally. After that and before that also we took some steps. He has given some suggestions. Now he has said that there are instances of reduced pages, suspended publication. But he has not pointed out to us even one instance. He is a good friend of mine; he is the President of the Editors' Conference. He and I meet regularly. He wrote to me but not even once about reducing the pages or suspending any publication it has been pointed out to the Government.

I am now summing up. The basic question has been the gap; the gap between allocations and actual receipts. Some hon. Members have said that lot of newsprint is available in black market. I do not know; in a general way what they have heard, I have also heard. When we get any complaint, we do make enquiries. In a general way, on the one hand the feeling is that lot of newsprint is available in the market; no paper is closed down; the number of pages has not been cut down; new papers are coming out; even some newspapers have increased their pages, and so on. As a Minister I can go and cut only on record; I cannot go by things which are otherwise.

SHRI K. L. N. PRASAD: The number of pages has been cut down and I am one of those who cut down the pages. I have said it with my own experience.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: If you have cut it down, I am sorry for it. But as I said, even you did not bring it to our notice. It is only now you are saying it. This instance has been brought out here in the House, and when was it and how much of it was cut down is a question to be seen.

It was said that circulation figures of the newspapers are not effectively checked. I would agree with it. I think hon. Member Shri Kalyanasundaram was correct when he said this. There is no effective machinery for checking the circulation figures and therefore, if one is to call it as very authentic, I would say, there is no effective machinery for checking the figures. It requires lot of organisation and that is not there. And on this matter, let me say, the newspaper industry has been very very sensitive. They even do not want the figures of circulation to be printed on the papers. They have been against it. They said: "Trust us; believe us". They say: "Go by what we say; we are truthful people; we are not hiding anything." That has been their stand.

Our desire has been not to curb the press; our desire has been not to weaken the press. We have not done anything since we took over in 1980. We have not done anything. Not one newspaper, for any reason, was denied advertisements by the Central Government, or was censored. Our whole idea has been that we should have a cordial and a friendly relationship. Press should be free, and we are proud that it is free in the country, though I have certain reservations with certain sections. But this is not the occasion to go into it. They have their own philosophy. But I have suggested to them not to give primacy to political events. I have said that they should not put up things which may create communal tension. Some of them do. Apart from that, I think, we are in a state of relaxed relationship

with the press. The press has a number of problems. The press organisations have been asking for it. We have sympathy with some of those problems. But we have our own difficulties and constraints. I can assure you that on a long range basis—I have said from the very beginning—I will speak to all the Ministers; we will meet together to go into the question so that we do not have this problem of shortage of newsprint.

With these words, I thank all the hon. Members for having positively contributed to the debate.

SHRI VISHVAJIT PRITHVIJIT SINGH: One point was raised by Mr. Vishwa Bandhu Gupta that you can have a saving of one million dollars by importing 45,000 GSM.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: Now that you are raising it, I would say, in 1983-84, STC enquired of the papers about their requirements in this regard that is about 45,000 GSM newsprint but there was no worthwhile response from the newspapers. STC can be again asked to take up this matter and if the newspapers want, this can be used. It is a technical matter and it can be gone into. If there can be a saving and yet the newsprint can be used, this is a matter, I would ask the Commerce Ministry to go into

(Interruptions).

SHRI R. RAMAKRISHNAN: The hon. Minister has given very elaborate reply. I admire him for that. As you know, the newspapers are carrying on under very difficult circumstances. They are carrying on because they do not want to give up their self-respect. It is not as if they have no problems. But anyway, the hon. Minister has tried to answer to the best of his ability. I thank him for that.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: I do not say, they have no problems. I know, they have problems. I have my sympathies with them. We will do our best

to help them, as much as we can. You can have that assurance. We are alive to it.

(Interruptions).

SHRI T. CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY: Sir, the hon. Minister has not answered about by question in regard to a jetty at the Madras Port.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT: As far as this question of a jetty at the Madras Port is concerned, which the hon. Member has raised, I will look into it and see what we can do about it.

THE APPROPRIATION. (NO. 3) BILL, 1984—contd.

श्री चन्द्रिका प्रसाद त्रिपाठी (मध्य प्रदेश):

माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, मैं इस विनियोग विधेयक का समर्थन करने के लिये खड़ा हुआ हूँ। अभी हमारे मित्रों ने यह बताने की कोशिश की कि विगत 30-35 सालों में इस देश में जो प्रगति होनी चाहिये थी वह नहीं हुई, विकास के चरण नहीं रहे। उन्होंने यह भी साबित करने की कोशिश की कि हमारे देश में तना-शाही चल रही है। हिटलर और मुसोलिनी का उदाहरण देकर यहाँ इस शासन को उसकी बराबरी में लाने की कोशिश की गयी। मैं आपके माध्यम से कहना चाहता हूँ कि अगर इस देश में हिटलर मुसोलिनी का शासन होता तो शायद हमारे मित्र की जुबान में यह ताकत न होती कि वे यह आकर इस तरह के विचार रख सकते। मैं आपसे निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि गरीबी हटाओ के संबंध में बात की गयी है। गरीबों की कम से कम आवश्यकता क्या है? रहने के लिये मकान, पाने के लिये पानी और दो रोटी का सहारा। हमारे शासन के पूर्व जब इस देश में जनता शासन कायम हुआ तो उन्होंने सारे प्लान को तहस नहस कर के एक रोलिंग प्लान बनाया और योजना बद्ध जो कार्यक्रम चल