

[Shri Arjun Arora].

The motion was adopted.

pay and many of these are imported from out of the so-called American aid. American aid is given to this country and the drums of generosity are beaten all over this country and all over the United States and all over the world. We pay back the same money by purchasing things from the principals of many of the drug manufacturers in India at about 25 per cent more of the cost of the same drugs in the United States. Such is the scandal that is going on in the field of drugs.

Recently, another effort has been made by Dr. Triguna Sen to control the prices or rather to bring down the prices of drugs. As far as controlling the prices is concerned, the effort was begun in 1962 when the prices of drugs were frozen. But every time that the drug manufacturers wanted to increase the prices, they came forward with new formulations and raised the prices of new formulations every time. Recently, during May, June, July and August, the Government has made another effort and I congratulate Dr. Triguna Sen for at least making an effort to control the prices and to bring them down.

AN. HON. MEMBER : He had the courage to do that...

SHRI ARJUN ARORA : I congratulate him for his courage. I want the Members of this House to know that nothing can be achieved without showing some amount of courage.

5 P.M.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Arora, we have got an Half-an-hour Discussion at 5 o'clock.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA : All right, Sir, I will continue next time. Sir, I have just begun. It seems I am the only speaker on this Bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS : No, no, there are other Members.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Tomorrow you can continue for five minutes.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA : I will continue tomorrow or the day after.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Now, the Half-an-hour Discussion. Shri Banka Behary Das.

HALF-AN-HOUR-DISCUSSION ON POINTS ARISING OUT OF THE ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTION NO. 139 GIVEN ON THE 31ST JULY, 1970, REGARDING ATTACK ON THE PRESS BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF HARYANA AND UTTAR PRADESH

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS (Orissa) : Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, while raising this Half-an-hour Discussion on the attack on the Press by the Governments of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, I want to draw the attention of this House and the Minister to the recent developments.

With the political instability, it seems the Chief Ministers and other Ministers of the different States have started attacking the freedom of the Press and virtually they have resorted to naked hostility towards the free Press of this country. I am not going to say that the Press in this country is completely free, because it depends on the objective conditions in which the Press is working here. The monopolist Press may not be completely free. I am aware of this.

My concern is that for the last few months particularly, the different Chief Ministers and their Governments have started their onslaught against the freedom of the Press and in most cases, for doing it, the medium has been advertisements. The Minister, immediately in the course of his reply, will say here—it is usual on his part—that the Press cannot have a right, the newspapers cannot have a right for getting advertisements. I am not going to contradict that fact. But, I am going to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Chief Ministers and the politicians in this country are utilising this money, the State exchequer money, through the medium of advertisements, to coerce and intimidate the Press to toe their line and, instead of this Government engaging themselves with the journalists and the Press, for serving the cause of democracy, they have started to coerce all of them, the

managements of newspapers and the newspaper agencies and other patronages, and are prepared to let down the *bona fide* journalists. I am more concerned with this because these advertisements are being utilised to force some newspapers either to dismiss their correspondents or to transfer them or, to a certain extent, influence the Press in their favour. So, I am giving a few instances though I have referred to Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Only a few months back, when Shri Charan Singh became the Chief Minister of that State, just after two days, he wanted to coerce the "Times of India" and the "Nava Bharat Times" so that these two papers did not criticise the Government of Charan Singh though Shri Charan Singh had so many political somersaults a few days before. That was why they stopped the advertisements to that paper. I have no sympathy for the "Times of India" and the "Nava Bharat Times" as far as the advertisement is concerned, because they may have different sources for advertisement. But, they utilised this medium of advertisement to force the "Times of India" and the "Nava Bharat Times" either to transfer the correspondent in Lucknow or to toe the line of Charan Singh's Government.

Similarly, a few days after, the Haryana Government also started its onslaught on the "Tribune" which is not a monopolist paper. It is a trust and in the North-Western India, it has the largest circulation and I am not going into the details now. But, on the plea that the advertisement rate of that is very high, they stopped giving advertisements to the "Tribune". But I have here the figures to show that the advertisement rate of the "Tribune" is Rs. 8.50, whereas the advertisement rates of the "National Herald", the "Indian Express", the "Hindustan Times" and other papers are much higher, but the advertisements of those papers were not stopped.

SHRI DEV DATT PURI (Haryana) : No, it is much lower. For the "National Herald", it is Rs. 4.00, for the "Patriot", it is Rs. 4.00.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS : When you speak you can speak on that. But I have the figure to show that it is Rs. 8.50 plus 10% for the "National

Herald". I am not going into that because that is not so much relevant. That might be disputes but all those facts are with me and I can prove with details. The 'Tribune' got advertisements at this high rate for six months before it was stopped. I could understand if they had stopped after it raised its rates. The Minister must be aware that his own Department, the DAVP, has approved these rates and on the basis of these rates the State Governments generally conform to the rates that those papers charge. I am not going into that. These are small matters before me here and because the rate was high, under that pretext, they wanted to a certain extent, to coerce the 'Tribune' to follow their line so that it does not criticise that Government. They went to the heinous method of utilising the traffic rules to stop their vehicles so that their circulation was hampered to a great extent and the Chief Minister went out of his way to issue a circular to the local bodies not to subscribe to that paper. Nowhere in India till now this had happened. Even the British Government did not resort to issuing such nasty letters or writing letters to the local bodies not to subscribe to that paper but I am not going into that. Tell me of any place where they discriminate like this. I know that they told other organisations also not to subscribe to that paper. The Himachal Pradesh Government withdrew the accreditation of the correspondent of the 'Tribune'. You will be astonished to know that even the Andhra Pradesh Government and the Chief Minister and other Ministers wanted that Mr. Haider who is the correspondent of the ITI in Hyderabad should be transferred because he is faithfully reporting the developments of Telangana. The PTI succumbed to it because they were interested in subscriptions and they issued order transferring their own correspondent but till now that subscription has not been renewed because the correspondent has not been transferred though the order has been issued. Even an important news agency liked the PTI, out of financial or self-interest are not protecting the interest of their own correspondents who are faithfully reporting the developments of the Telangana movement there. You will be astonished to know that recently the Chief Minister and other Ministers of the Andhra Pradesh Government influenced the Indian Express to terminate the services of Mr. A.

[Shri Banka Behary Das.]

Misra who is their correspondent at Hyderabad. Just to get money from the Andhra Government through advertisements they let down their own correspondent and Mr. Misra's services have been terminated recently.

Again you will be astonished to know about the Daily News of Hyderabad. To instal a lackey of the Chief Minister there as the Editor of that paper, the paper is being harassed and all nefarious efforts are made so that the editor of this paper is changed. That is also continuing even now. Again, when the Prime Minister visited Gujarat, about 8 months back, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel who was then the correspondent of Gujarat Samachar, because he asked some questions regarding the misutilisation of the relief money in Gujarat, was also punished. These are few facts. I am drawing the attention of the Minister that this subscription and this advertisement of the Government is being utilised by the monopolist press and also to some extent the Governments of the various States so that the correspondents in the various places are transferred or punished or their services terminated. I am not saying that the monopolist press should get the advertisements. I am pleading here that a norm for giving advertisements by the States should be settled and the Central Government should look into this because the Press Commission and the Press Council have recommended that this is being utilised by the Governments in various spheres to intimidate the press in this country. I am also concerned at the fact that the business world of this country is sometimes utilising this.

Therefore I would want that certain agencies should be created whose advice as regards norms of distribution of advertisements should be adhered to by the Government of India and the various State Governments, and some forum should be there for this purpose. So I want to ask Minister now how these norms should be developed. It is not a question of giving some advantages to certain press, either monopolist press or other press, but what is much more important is to see that this money will not be utilised to punish the free lance correspondents who, without any fear or favour, are disseminating news and serving the cause of democracy, because I am very sure that the monopoly press will never stand

by their correspondents when the question of money comes, when the question of advertisement comes, because they are more for advertisements than for protecting the interests of the working journalists in this country. And you will be astonished to know what is happening to a correspondent in Hyderabad. He is a correspondent, he is the editor of the 'Daily News' of Hyderabad. He is not only an eminent editor of the local area, but he is also one of the prominent working journalists and is President of the Andhra Pradesh Working Journalists Federation. He is being harassed so that he leaves that job and some stooge of Shri Brahmananda Reddy is implanted there as editor of that paper. So I want to know from the Minister. He may say, "I have not this power." But he is in charge of protecting the freedom of the Press. Is he prepared now to utilise all the Services that India Government has to see that all State Governments come out openly and agree that this is their advertising policy also and that this advertising policy will be adhered to by all the State Governments. Then only to a certain extent you can protect the working journalists who are working in the monopoly press or in the news agencies. And will he take care to see what our late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, did. Whenever even a slightest attack was made on the free press of this country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, whether he had been in power legally or not, was going to the rescue of these working journalists. I know of a case in Orissa, where the PTI to get a subvention from the Government of Orissa, let down its correspondent and forced its correspondent to resign. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Congress at that time, went to the rescue of that correspondent and saw to it that the Orissa Government backed out from the position it took in respect of that case, and that happened in spite of the fact that the PTI succumbed and surrendered before the Government of Orissa. Secondly, I want to know from the Minister about certain other cases. He can say about the Haryana and U.P. cases that are before the Press Council of India. But other cases do not go before the Press Council, because the management is not interested to go to the Press Council because they are more interested in advertisements, they are more interested in getting subscription from the Government for their news agencies. So they are not going

to the Press Council at all, and they are punishing their working journalists. So may I ask the Minister, if in a certain cases the Press Council recommends that some State Governments are at fault, what he is going to do to see that those State Governments are brought to book and also to ask them to protect, at least to a certain extent, the interests of the press in their States. Because, after all, you know the Press Council is a recommendatory body. It has no legal status attached to their recommendations. So what will happen? In the 'Tribune' case, for example, if the Press Council, after two or three days, finds that the Haryana Government is at fault, how is he going to force the Haryana Government to resume the advantages that it was giving to the 'Tribune'? Also for example, take the case of the 'Times of India' and the 'Nav Bharat Times'. Suppose the Press Council also finds that the U.P. Government, the Charan Singh Government there, is at fault, what protection will those papers get or those journalists get in those cases? I want to know from the Minister also about this. Now the monopoly press, they don't go to the Press Council often. What will happen to the working journalists in this country, who want to serve the cause of democracy, when they will be punished by the State Governments, because the management of the press are more concerned about the advertisements. Next I want to know from the Minister also what will happen to the patronage that this Government are giving to the news agencies and the press in this country. We have to evolve some norms for all types of patronage that they are giving. If a certain type of norm is not there, I am sure the State Governments will utilise those agencies to browbeat the press, intimidate the press and coerce them to toe a line which is only palatable to them. I hope the Minister will not plead his helplessness by saying that it is the affair of the State Governments and therefore he is helpless, and also the Press Council is seized of the matter in one or two cases. He should come out definitely with a policy and should try to influence the State Governments to evolve the norms so that the interests of the press and the freedom of the press are protected and at least the freedom of the working journalists is also protected.

With these words I want to know from the hon. Minister definitely what

he is going to do about this thing.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL) : Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I have heard with a great deal of attention what my hon. friend has said and sometimes it happens that although we keep on discussing a subject it is difficult to arrive at very specific conclusions. Unfortunately it seems the cases which my hon. friend has highlighted today are such about which I may not be able to say much and he will kindly appreciate that.

Sir, a few days ago there was a question in this House, I think a short notice question probably, when we discussed at length about the Tribune case. I had said at that time and I repeat now that so far as Tribune as a paper is concerned it is one paper which has a very responsible place in the national life. It is one of the few newspapers in the country which are managed by Trusts. It is one such newspaper—perhaps like few others—which does not have an ownership pattern which we are trying to struggle with. Whether it is today or whether it is yesterday, in our national struggle Tribune has played a role which is significant in our national life. Therefore if a responsible paper like Tribune makes a complaint Government does not ignore it. Even when a complaint was made this time the Government did not ignore it in the sense that although a formal report was not made to us, when we came to know of a certain situation which was reported in the newspapers, on our own initiative we tried to check up with the Haryana Government as to what their version was and I feel that the Haryana Government had another version of the event. It will be unfair on my part. Mr. Deputy Chairman, if I try to give a judgment as to who is right and who is wrong.

SHRI S. D. MISRA (Uttar Pradesh): Did they send a reply to you?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: They did. The point I was trying to make was since there were two versions of a situation it would be difficult for me to come to any conclusion and decide what are the merits of the case and what are the demerits of the case. The forum for this purpose has been created by this House itself, the Press Council, and fortunately

[Shri I. K. Gujral]

in this case particularly the Press Council is seized of the matter. I am told that the Press Council is going to come to some conclusion soon and I think it will be premature for me to discuss it here before seeing the conclusions of the Press Council. Since all these points which my hon. friend has referred to, that is, the point regarding advertisement rates, the point regarding stoppage of vehicles, the point about the alleged circular having been sent by the Chief Minister, have all been referred to the Press Council; let us wait and let us see what the Press Council has to say about them. It will be easier for us to discuss this once the Press Council Report is available on the subject.

My hon. friend is one of those hon. Members of this House who is deeply interested and is vigilant about the freedom of the press and from time to time he has brought to this House many important instances which have a bearing on the subject. Today also in his usual capacity and capability he has brought to our notice some other facts. I do not know which of these cases have already been sent to the Press Council. Whichever have been sent, naturally the Press Council would come to some conclusions; whichever have not been referred to the Council, I do not know how the Government could interfere. You will kindly understand that Government interference in such cases is a double-edged sword; it can cut on the wrong side also. Therefore, I do not think the Government should be given powers or the Government should be expected to interfere in these matters. My friend has mentioned about the criteria for advertisements. Before I come to the criteria I think in a debate like this we should one day make up our mind as to what is the relationship between freedom of the press and advertisement. Unfortunately it seems advertisements have come to play a big role in the running of newspapers and sometimes it happens unfortunately that commercialisation travels from the manager's table to the editor's table, which is a very unfortunate situation. Whenever this happens . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal): Via the Government's table.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Not necessarily. Commercialisation has its own links. Therefore, the main point I was trying

to mention is that advertisement, as time has passed, has come to play a big role in mass media the world over. We have seen in various other parts of the world that not only the printed media, but also the electronic media have been invaded by commercial considerations. Freedom of the press, to my mind, today is endangered by these commercial interests and the instances, which my hon. friend has quoted—I cannot vouch for their authenticity, but if they are—cause us concern and that is exactly my case. My case is that if we want really the press to be free, then the press has to be liberated from commercial considerations. The press may be free in the sense of the Government. The press may be free in the sense of the Constitution. The press may be free in the sense of executive authority, but whether it is free from commercial and other monetary considerations is something for us to look into. As you know, the Press Commission at length had examined this. The Press Commission had expressed concern also, but very unfortunately we have not been able to go much ahead since then. It is quite valid for any hon. friend here to get up and accuse me and the Government of not having done much in this regard. But I think it is such an issue in which neither the Government, nor a single party, nor an individual can do much. It is an issue in which the collective will of the people will have to assert itself. After all, freedom of the press has not been given to a few people who have commercial interests. Freedom of press has been given to ourselves as a part of freedom of expression. The Constitution has guaranteed freedom of expression for the Indian people and freedom of expression also includes the freedom of the press. Now, freedom of the press should be preserved as a very sanctified institution. Therefore, I feel that the time has come perhaps when this House and the other House must come to some conclusion as to how the newspapers in this country should be run. At the moment, we all know that even certain steps which were taken could not be held. You will kindly recall the history of the price-page schedule. The Press Commission had recommended that a price-page schedule law should be made. This House and the other House made a law, but it was struck down by the Supreme Court because the Supreme Court in its wisdom thought that perhaps it was an inroad into the freedom of the press. Now, whether it does or it does not, I think parliament should

take cognisance of it. So, I have not been able to bring forward a revised Bill for reasons known to the House. The reasons are that a school of thought, as also I think one of the judgments of the Supreme Court has held whether there could be any enactment on Fundamental Rights. In a way, if you ask me, the matter is confined to Parliament itself. It is for Parliament to decide whether to enact on those aspects of the Constitution or not. So far as I am personally concerned, I will be very glad to come forward with a Bill about the price-page schedule and other things, provided the Constitution permits me to do so. Besides this, the world over about advertisements another debate is going on, what should be the attitude of the mass media towards advertisement. It is a known fact that the mass media, particularly printed mass media today runs primarily and its economics is on the basis of advertisement budget. The advertisement budget in this country, particularly today is very limited. So far as the Government is concerned, I had on one occasion said that the Government of India's advertisement budget is of the order of approximately 1,70,00,000. Talking of the public sector industries, roughly speaking their budget is also of the order of about 1½ crores. The third sector which remains is the States. I do not have the exact figures, but my rough assessment is that it does not exceed a crore of rupees. I am talking of all the States put together. Therefore, all the public institutions put together, even if we take a very liberal attitude, do not exceed Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 crores. Compared to that, the advertisement budget of the private sector is Rs. 30 crores and is now increasing perhaps, and I think with the increased industrial activity perhaps this year it may go up by way of Rs. 2 to 3 crores. Therefore, you would kindly see that the real influence of the press is now cornered by the other part of the advertisement budget, that is the private sector budget, not by the Government budget, and out of this budget you perhaps will be surprised to know that 70 to 80 per cent is utilised by 8 or 10 newspapers; 20 per cent only of the private sector budget is given to the small and medium-sized newspapers outside those chains. Therefore, if the economy of the small and medium newspapers does not improve, it is not because the Government is not doing anything; it is because the money has gone elsewhere.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS: With the vast money at the disposal of the Government, the Chief Ministers and others are intimidating the journalists. For instance, the Andhra Pradesh Government.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: So far as the Government of India is concerned, I have said and I repeat it that our advertisement budget is oblivious of political considerations. We have, and I repeat it here, always given our advertisements according to the criteria enunciated by the Committee on Small Newspapers, and those criteria have been laid here also. They have also been circulated to the States. The criteria are very comprehensive.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS: Have the State Governments accepted them?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I am not holding any brief for the State Governments. I am only narrating facts.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS: Can you force them?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: If I had the power, if the House gives me the power, I should have no objection to force them.

SHRI KRISHAN KANT (Haryana): At that time he will oppose it.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS: There are your powers of advice and so many other things. It has been done in many cases.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: The power of advice in this case has been used. For instance, the criteria for selecting of the advertisement media by the Central and State Governments laid down by the Small Newspapers Enquiry Committee in 1965 have already been circulated by us to the State Governments. This is something more than which I cannot do, because I think this issue has to be agitated more and more in the State Legislatures themselves, because it is that forum which should really be able to take charge whether the executive is acting within its power or not. So far as I am concerned, the only thing that Parliament wished me to do

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was to set up a Press Council. You will also recall that even after two years of the setting up of the Press Council when the Members of the Parliamentary Committee decided that the Act needed amendment, the Government came forward with a revised enactment. That revised law is going to be enforced from the next month on. Therefore, the new Press Council will be set up. I can only say this thing that the working journalists are acting under great difficulty, and I have great sympathy for them. Unfortunately sometimes they are pressurised by unethical methods, sometimes by their owners, sometimes by the executive authority. But the only avenue which is open to a democratic society is to refer it to the Press Council. Otherwise, if you leave it to the Government to decide, I do not think it will help in furthering the cause of the freedom of the press. I may have sounded very helpless, but I do not mean I am helpless in that sense because this country today is very conscious of its fundamental rights. This country is today very conscious about the freedom of the press the democratic institutions that it likes to preserve. In this country there is a very big and enlightened public opinion which is very much aware that the freedom of the press must never be compromised, and I am sure if anyone has the audacity of trying to interfere with the freedom of the press, he will have to pay very heavily for this. If a politician does it, the result might come quicker. If an owner does it, it may take time but the result is bound to come. Thank you very much.

SHRI DEV DATT PURI: Are Government aware of the fact that Chandigarh to which place the Tribune has shifted is much farther from six out of the seven districts of Haryana than Delhi? Are Government aware of the advertising charges of the Tribune which I gather are Rs. 8.50 per sq. cm. as compared to Rs. 4 of the National Herald, Rs. 4 of the Patriot, Rs. 5.50 of the Times of India, Rs. 5.75 of the Statesman and Rs. 7.20 of the Indian Express? Sir, is it the view of the Government that having regard to the rates involved and also the geographical unsuitability of the location of Chandigarh, the advertiser has no freedom at all to choose the newspaper in which he will or will not advertise and that the freedom of the press can be main-

tained only by taking the freedom away from the advertiser?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, again, I will not like to be drawn into giving my views on this issue as such. The distance from Chandigarh to a particular place is known to us. The Tribune is being published from Chandigarh. It was being published from Ambala previously. It has moved only thirty miles. But the main point that I am trying to make is it is not for me to decide what advertisement media should or should not be used by the Haryana Government. So far as the rates are concerned, I am unable to say straightway whether the figures quoted by my friend are correct or not. But possibly there may be difference because in the D.A.V.P. here, I think, we had approved the rates, and while approving the rates, perhaps there may be some sort of confusion regarding the rates of classified advertisements and display advertisements...

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS: The Haryana Government was giving it for the last six months.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I am not in a position to verify it straightway and I am not in a position to say whether your figures are correct or whether his figures are correct. But this issue as well may be sent to the Press Council.

So far as the third question which my friend has raised is concerned whether the client has the right to decide which media of advertisement he should use, naturally, that is a right which has not been taken away by any law.

SHRI S. D. MISRA: Sir, it is true that the private sector exercises monopoly control over the press. Besides that, it is also true from the statements that have just been given by the Minister that the Government sector has also exercised control, in the sense that the Government is working as a political party. My friend gave the instance of Andhra and also of Haryana. He also mentioned—but I will elaborate about Uttar Pradesh...

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Also Haryana.

SHRI S. D. MISRA: But I am giving of Uttar Pradesh. Probably he forgot it. Let me tell about Mr. Charan Singh. One Mr. Kala of Times of India,

stationed in Uttar Pradesh, was recommended by him to be transferred from the Times of India as correspondent only because he did not agree with the views of Shri Charan Singh on nationalisation of sugar factories and some other issues. Therefore, Shri Charan Singh wrote a letter to the Times of India people here that he should be transferred. Of course, I must congratulate the Times of India that they did not transfer him for that reason. I will give you other instances. Is it not a fact that Mr. Frank Moraes, an eminent writer and a big journalist here in the Indian Express...

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Why do you call him an eminent writer?

SHRI S. D. MISRA: I appreciate his writings. It is for you not to appreciate him. But I appreciate his writings and the country likes what he says. He has his differences with the public sector, and probably the ruling party does not like his articles. But is it not a fact that there is pressure on the owners of the Indian Express that he should either quit or he should be removed, or he should be transferred at least somewhere else and he should not work in the Indian Express? These are instances of the Central Government and not of the State Governments. Is it not a fact that the Editor of the Statesman is also under the same pressure that either he should mend or he should end, and the ending is that he should be relieved of his services the way he is writing editorials? Now, it is very evident that more than any sector, this Government sector, through its politicians, is exercising such a control on the press that their freedoms are in jeopardy.

It is not only this advertisement, the Government has also the power, besides advertisement, about giving newsprint to the extent of several crores. He gives Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 crores for the Government sector and Rs. 30 crores for the private sector advertisements. I should like to know the power of the Central Government in terms of value allotting newsprint which, according to some, is also done discriminately.

Then, Sir, he did not refer to PTI and other news agencies. This question was also put by Mr. Banka Behary Das. Is it not a fact that the PTI and some other agencies are being offered

Government equity capital? As soon as the Government participates in the equity capital, the danger of domination will be there. Is it not a fact that one of the senior Government of India officers from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was sent to Europe recently to organise an international news agency on the pattern of what Russia has, so that they can monitor and filter news to this country? Does he not think that these are dangers to the freedom of the press? What has he to say to all these things?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, my hon. friend is a very experienced person.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR (Uttar Pradesh): Experienced in what?

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE: Is it flattery?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: My hon. friend also used to hold responsible positions. I would have been very happy if in fitness with his stature in public life, he had made responsible statements also. Unfortunately, he has chosen to bring out generalised situations which leaves no option to me, much as I may like him, except to say categorically that all the examples quoted are false and incorrect.

SHRI S. D. MISHRA: About Charan Singh?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: No, I am talking of the Government of India first. I shall come to Charan Singh later on. I shall deal with your questions point by point. But because you made generalised statements, I also started with a generalised statement. Sir, my friend mentioned about pressure on the Indian Express and Frank Moraes. This is totally wrong, false and, if I may use the word, malicious.

SHRI S. D. MISRA: I will be glad if it is wrong. But it is in the air.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Frank Moraes is one of the leading Editors of this country.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: A highly reactionary one.

SHRI T. K. GUJRAL: He has his views. He is welcome to have his views.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI S. N. MISHRA) : Sir, we have been observing a practice that we do not attribute any motive to any one. To say that anything has been done maliciously is very wrong. We never accuse the other side of anything malicious. That is never done.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR : Mr. Deputy Chairman, in everything to bring in the Soviet Union and to say that the whole Government of India is pressurising a particular monopoly press is a very generous statement and there is nothing malicious in it. The hon. Leader of the Opposition should know his limits.

(Interruptions)

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : About the Soviet Union—we will come to that tomorrow. But please do not say about any statement of my hon. friend that it is malicious.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR : They should not be so touchy.

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : I am not touchy. I want you to conform to certain standards.

SHRI S. D. MISRA : Sir, I would request my leader to allow the Minister to go on. I do not object to it. Why should I object to it?

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI (Maharashtra) : Your leader is touchy.

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : No, no, this is wrong. You must observe certain standards.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Sir, I was saying that Frank Moraes is one of the leading Editors of this country and he has a very respected place in the journalistic world. Whatever his views may be, whether I agree with him or differ from him, he has a right to express himself and he does express himself as he chooses. Our attitude towards Frank Moraes continues to be one of utmost consideration. I shall give you an example. I and Frank Moraes have debated publicly on the issue of the freedom of the press. Frank Moraes, while speaking at the Press Club of India last year, expressed his own views about freedom of the ownership. As I

understood him at that time, his view is that the owner has the right to decide the policy. I strongly differed from him. I did not agree that the owner has the right to decide. I always believe that it is the editor, that it is the journalist, who has got the right to decide because I feel that freedom of the press means freedom of the editor. I believe in the supremacy of the editor, of the journalist. Frank Moraes has every right to differ from the Government and from us. But that would be a great day when Frank Moraes comes and tells us that it is his policy. Then I would like to say that so far as the Statesman is concerned, again my friend has unfortunately chosen to make a statement which Mr. S. N. Mishra does not like. I would say "malicious" because I have got no other word to use. If I had any other stronger word, I would have used that as well. The main point is this. He says that the Government has told the editor, mend or end. Can you imagine any Minister of the Government of India telling the editor of the Statesman like this? I do not even know his face. I would not even recognise who the editor of the Statesman is even if I happen to meet him anywhere . . .

SHRI S. D. MISRA : The Minister need not speak to the editor. Still the work is done. So he should not say that I did not say that.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : So the point that I am trying to make is whether it is the editor of the Statesman or the editor of any other newspaper in the country, an editor should assert himself. The editor should say that he is the policy-maker of the newspaper. The editor should say that he is a preserver of the freedom of the press. He should not leave it to the vagaries of the ownership. After all what happens when a particular economic measure is taken by Parliament in its wisdom is that the press reacts because the interests of the ownership get hurt. But I would say that the owner's interests should be completely segregated from the freedom of the press. This is what I have been saying and I would only like to repeat that no such attempt has ever been made, no such attempt shall ever be made by the Government of India, to contain either directly or indirectly, the freedom of the press. I

would also like to mention in this context that for more than a year now there has been a serious controversy going on about the freedom of the press. And I have challenged in the past and I challenge again that there has not been a single instance—I repeat the word “single”—where the Government of India has directly or indirectly tried to reduce the advertisement budget of any newspaper, whatever its policy, whatever its views, whoever its owners. My friend has talked about the newsprint allotment. For newsprint allotment policy there is a Newsprint Advisory Committee which primarily comprises the owners and managers of the various newspapers . . .

AN. HON. MEMBER : It is concerned with the nonopoly press also ?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Yes, monopoly press also. That committee always meets before a policy is announced on the newsprint, and almost in entirety we accept the recommendations of the Newsprint Advisory Committee. Therefore, the newsprint allocation policy is being framed taking into account the advice of the Newsprint Advisory Committee. It is not a question of how much newsprint is allotted. Today we are importing about Rs. 16 to Rs. 18 crore worth newsprint; in addition to that we manufacture about 40,000 tons of newsprint through the NEPA. In addition to that, we are allotting another 20,000 to 30,000 tons of white printing paper. This is the total allotment. My regret is that it is too little. I wish I could double it. I wish I could treble it. I wish I could multiply it as many times as possible so that the circulation of the newspapers could be built up. It is unfortunate that in spite of the fact that newspapers as an institution have expanded considerably since independence, if you take the circulation per thousand, it is 13 in our country as compared to 30 in Ceylon, 469 in Japan. I would like a bigger circulation to be built up. But the misfortune remains that our internal resources of newsprint are limited. What we can import from outside depends on various factors which are beyond the control of this Ministry. So far as the PTI and UNI participation in the equity is concerned, I do not know from where my friend gets his facts because there is no anxiety at all to participate in the equity of the UNI and PTI. We

have never asked them to participate nor has there ever been a proposition before us. A proposition has been recommended by the Press Commission. It has said that the news agencies should be converted into public trusts or public corporations.

This is the proposition that has been before us. The idea that the Government should participate in equity is far from us. My friend also referred to the international news agency. I am glad that he has done it. Whatever may be his other views, he is a patriot and it is India's interests that come to him first. What is happening today is that whatever India's picture goes abroad. It is primarily and predominantly through foreign news agencies. I need not name them. They are well known names. All these news agencies—my friend will be surprised to know—have directly or indirectly their own Government's interests at their hearts. Therefore, whatever image of India goes out, goes out from that very angle. Our anxiety, not today, but for a long time, has been that we should be able to build a channel of news agency here from where we can get to other countries, particularly developing areas and give them a true picture of India. Is it wrong ?

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : Under the aegis of Government ?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Is it wrong ?

SHRI S. D. MISRA : If it is independent, it is not wrong.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : My friend will be surprised to know this. I did not come prepared with the figures because I never thought that he would raise this matter. But if my memory holds good, it is my recollection that on an average in India we get about 50,000 words a day from outside and we send out about 25,000 words a month. This is the image of India that is projected outside. Therefore, if my friends agree, the need for an international news agency is there. Shri S. N. Mishra, I concede, is a very enlightened man. . . (Interruptions). He knows that whenever he speaks, he address the nation as a whole. . .

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : Not through half-an-hour discussions.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : And therefore, he would like the nation to know what the facts are.

If my friends agree, the need for an international agency is there. But it is not our intention—I repeat not—that it should be a Government sponsored agency. It should not be a Government sponsored agency. Then its credibility will suffer—if it is a Government agency. But naturally the Government has to assist and Government does assist. Whatever assistance can be given should be given. But I think it is in our national interest that an international news agency should be set up. I hope I have met all the points except one...

SHRI S. D. MISRA : Shri Charan Singh.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : That is about the friend of my friend Shri S. N. Mishra.

SHRI S. D. MISRA : He is your friend, your ally because on your support, he is continuing.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Well, I do not feel upset if Shri Charan Singh is my friend. I respect him as a senior politician. The main thing I was trying to say was that I am not aware whether Shri Charan Singh has written to the Times of India about the transfer of a journalist. This was not brought to our notice either by the journalist or by the Times of India.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : First of all, let us start with Shri Charan Singh himself. This gentleman has no regard for the press. In fact he is nihilist in such matters. Only the other day, the Chairman of the Communist Party of India, comrade Dange was holding a press conference on the 14th in the office of the Communist Party of India at Lucknow. Shri Charan Singh sent his policemen to surround the press conference, and arrest comrade Dange from the press conference.

The gentleman, Shri Charan Singh, did not have the decency even to wait till the Press conference was over. I do not think that Shri Dange would have fled. He could have allowed the Press conference to go on. Actually Shri Dange was arrested in the midst of holding the conference and wrested away from the Press conference itself.

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : You said you wanted to start an agitation on that. What have you done?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Therefore, Sir, let us not talk about Shri Charan Singh. He is a thoroughly illiterate man... (*Interruptions*). And, this gentleman says that women are not fit to be administrative officers. He says it publicly. No civilized man in the latter half of the twentieth century would make a fantastic utterance like the one Shri Charan Singh has made. He says that women are not fit for becoming administrative officers and so on. But he is fit for becoming the Chief Minister. Then again, he gags the University Unions by passing his ordinance. This Charan Singh cannot be talked about here in the context of the freedom of the Press. Sir, Charan Singh is the abomination.

Now, Sir, we have heard much about the freedom of the Press. Shri Gujral was speaking. But I am surprised that he was apologetic. Why should the Government be apologetic with regard to Shri Frank Moraes, an utterly imperialistic, reactionary, rightist journalist of the worst variety, whose freedom is the freedom for reaction, to preach malicious lies and slanders against all that is decent in our public life and that is Frank Moraes, "Frank Moraes, the great journalist", the tribute paid by him. My friends suffer from inferiority complex and that is the trouble with most of our Ministers. You must realise that Frank Moraes belongs to the camp of the extreme reactionaries and if you understand his writing, indeed, he would sell himself to the Fascist gang and the Fascist dictators.

Then, Mr. Kuldip Nayar, another great esteemable journalist, I understand, of the great "Statesman". Well, he belongs to the same category and writes fantastic pieces divulging the secrets of the Government, telling utter lies and prostituting his talent before the Tatas. He professes himself to be champion of the freedom of the Press. Well, Sir,...

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : Sir, is this proper? Is it proper to discuss individual journalists here? I do not really think it is proper my friend, Shri Bhupesh Gupta, must realise that we

would be doing a great injustice by this. Why should you criticise individual journalists? ...

(Interruptions)

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Well, while I am criticising them, you are criticising me. ... *(Interruptions)*. Sir, when I get up I become controversial and that is my fate. I was criticising the Minister for paying tributes to such journalists. They should not be praised in this manner. In fact, if these journalists at the top, the two I have mentioned, had not gone and sold themselves to the big money and the jute Press owners, the freedom of the Press could have been much better than what it is today. That is what I say. That is why I say, "Do not bring these people in".

Now, I should like to know this : What about implementing some of the unimplemented recommendations of the Press Commission? For example, on the question of diffusion of ownership ; the Government could take some steps in this matter and this is a very important recommendation that was made and is still not being implemented after 16 years of the publication of the recommendations of the first Press Commission in this country. Then, the question of price-page scheduled is there. Well, the Government takes cover under the fact that the Supreme Court has passed a judgment. Then think of other measures as to how we can get over the difficulty and see the object is achieved and it can be done.

Then, about the PTI. Why should not the PTI be turned into a corporation of the kind envisaged in the Press Commission's Report? Why not take the news agencies from the control of the big owners? These are the points to be considered seriously by the Government.

I would also like to know why the Central Government is discriminating against the small and medium papers in the matter of advertisement rates for Government advertisements because I have with me a particular paper which shows and this is happening to other paper also that the small and medium papers are offered lower rates of advertisement compared to the bigger papers. Mr. Farnam Singh, Medium Executive in the DAVP, wrote a letter,

for example to Kalantar, a Calcutta daily.

"Reference your letter (Media particular) dated 12-2-70 offering advertising space in your paper on the minimum rate of Rs. 400 per column. It is regretted that this rate has not been found acceptable to the Directorate for Central Government advertisements".

But this rate is allowed by the same Government to bigger papers and the Bengal Government allows this rate. The Calcutta Corporation allows this to other papers. Why is there this discrimination against the smaller papers? The smaller papers need greater assistance financially and why should the Ministry discriminate against the smaller papers? With regard to the starting of agency, as far as the Government is concerned, to-day the press is not being controlled by the Government. I would not like the Government to control the press, I entirely agree with you but unfortunately the press being controlled by a few monopolist houses at the top. If you take the circulation and the concentration ownership into account, then you would find that 4 or 5 big business houses are today controlling the press world and that is most objectionable. I would like to know the step the Government is going to take at least to break this ownership and that is very necessary. This is a matter wanted in the interest of the country. Besides, what are the guarantees given to the working journalists that they would not be subjected to harassment and persecution by the monopolist owners of the Press? This is also another matter. The Press Council is not an adequate organisation for it. Some other legislations are needed, some other machinery, with a view to enforcing that the freedom of the press at least becomes a minimal freedom in the interests of people and democracy. Nothing of the kind is there in the country. Since the publication of the report of the Press Commission, things have moved in the wrong direction. Concentration of ownership has grown. The power of the monopoly houses over the press has grown all over the country so much so that they are in a position to dictate to the various parties, the parties which are akin to them, and to the Government. In fact it is they that pressurise the Government rather than the Government pressurising them. So I would like

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.]

to have an assurance or some idea whether the Government is prepared to take some such step with a view to breaking the monopoly ownership and control of India's newspapers, especially those which command the biggest circulation in the country.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Before I reply point by point to Mr. Gupta I would like to correct one thing that I said in the context of international agency. My information now is, when I was giving the figure of the wordage, the wordage of one agency, for instance, Reuters, the Reuters bring in about 50,000 words a day and sends out 25,000 words a month. . . (*Interruptions*).

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : Give the break-up to how much of it are lies and how much truth.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : My point is, if I am able to give the totality of the figures, then in proximity I think we are getting in approximately 150,000 words a day and we are sending out a fraction of that but the main point is also that it is often the words sent in are also by those who like to use it with selectivity from their own point of view and the wordage sent out also is selective from that very angle. Therefore the need of international agency arises from this angle that selectivity is used in the interest of this nation and not in the interest of others. Sir, my friend has talked about Mr. Dange's arrest 6. P.M. from a press conference. I think, for him the best forum to agitate over this matter would be the Press Council again.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : But you should express your opinion. (*Interruptions*) Do you approve of such an arrest? Suppose you are in the position of Mr. Dange in a press conference and a warrant is pending against you. Should you be arrested in the midst of that press conference?

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : It is difficult for me to express an opinion because, I think, this opinion should be expressed

in the State Assembly itself, by the Members there. It won't be fair on my part to.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : That is the trouble. They are afraid to say things against them. The moment it comes to Mr. Charan Singh, they are afraid to say things against Mr. Charan Singh, because Mr. Charan Singh is the saviour of the Congress Party. The moment it comes to Mr. Charan Singh, the Congress leaders some of them—not Mr. Chandra Shekhar—some of the congress Ministers begin to shake in their boots. Why can't you condemn it? Why don't you, being the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, have the courage to condemn Mr. Charan Singh's behaviour in arresting Mr. Dange at that press conference? Certainly this is very serious. You say, "You can go to the State Assembly". Yes, we know it. But we are discussing this matter here where you are to reply to the question on Mr. Charan Singh. You do not ask them, you do not criticise them. Yes, this is a matter I would not discuss here, because it can be discussed in the State Assembly. Now you don't say anything. Now, Sir, I am confronted with this proposition that, where Mr. Charan Singh has to be condemned by the Government; they do not care to do anything of the sort, because there are the Congress people in U. P. on the side of Mr. Charan Singh who, somehow or other, want to maintain the shoddy show with Mr. Kamalpathi Tripathi acting as the errand boy of Mr. Charan Singh.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR : What Mr. Bhupesh Gupta says, it is not a legal question or a technical question which should go to the Press Council. It is a matter of establishing healthy conventions, and the healthy convention is that a person generally is not arrested while holding a press conference unless and until he has committed murder or some dacoity or some such thing. Though it was very wrong on the part of the U.P. Government authorities to arrest Mr. Dange from a press conference, I do not know why Mr. Gujral could not say even this much that it was against the healthy tradition that has been established in this country and that he should not have been arrested in the press conference.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : That is why I say . . .

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE : He was garlanded and photographed also.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, so far as the—as my friend has chosen to call it—unimplemented part of the Press Commission's Report is concerned....

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: What about Mr. Charan Singh?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I should like to know about it. The hon. Minister has been talking about so many things and giving beautiful sermons. He has said nice things and has also criticised them. He can criticise me. But what about Mr. Charan Singh? All right, there you criticise me. But do you, as the Minister in charge of Information and Broadcasting, approve of Mr. Charan Singh's behaviour? Are you for it?

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: If he has to say anything about Mr. Charan Singh—I am not insisting on it—he may say anything, he may not say anything. It is about the convention and the hon. Minister knows the convention that generally political leaders of stature are not arrested while addressing press conferences even during the British days. This is nothing legal, nothing technical. It has nothing to do with Mr. Charan Singh. I do not know whether Mr. Charan Singh was responsible for that or some Darogaji was responsible for that. Why should the hon. Minister take it that it is the mistake of Mr. Charan Singh? Mr. Bhupesh Gupta's opinion may be that it is the responsibility of Mr. Charan Singh.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I shall give you an instance. One Mr. Kansari Halder, elected to the Second Parliament, went underground when murder charges were brought against him. He was absconding. We decided that he should now get arrested. Otherwise he could not function. So one day we went to Nehru's house in a party. Nehru had invited some Members of Parliament in his house. There was a party of M.P.s. and we talked about this and that. Dr. B. C. Roy had issued the warrant against Mr. Kansari Halder. We told Dr. Roy, here is Mr. Kansari Halder, the man whom you have been hunting for the last several years. Dr. Roy shook hands with him and he went away. He was not arrested in the house; even though there were plenty

of security men and policemen neither Nehru nor Dr. Roy ordered his arrest there. Of course later he got arrested. He is still there now, a Member of the other House. He could have been arrested there itself; there were charges of murder and other things against him but it was not done. Now here is Mr. Dange who was arrested by an order issued by a District Magistrate of Lakhimpur. He was not even there; he was in Lucknow and it was a preventive arrest. He was addressing a press conference saying that he would go there. But they could not wait; Mr. Charan Singh sent his minions to the press conference, who insulted the press and arrested him in this manner. And here my friend, Mr. Gujral...

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: The Press Association of Lucknow has unanimously passed a resolution condemning this action of the U.P. Government and that resolution has been published in the press. This is not a question of a political party; this is a question relating to the freedom of the press. I would not have done this if it had been a political question pertaining to Mr. Dange or to the CPI as my friend Mr. Chatterjee feels, but the Press Association there has unanimously passed a resolution that this is the most condemnable action on the part of the U.P. Government. So the hon. Minister should have some reaction.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is all right; let us continue now.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I should like to know his reaction. The Minister must have courage. He can say that Mr. Charan Singh did the right thing. I can understand it. Or he should denounce it but he should not evade this thing. This technique is not good.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bhupesh Gupta, you have asked your question. Let the Minister reply now. He will reply in his own way; you cannot compel him in what manner he should reply. He will reply in his own way.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, as I was saying about the implemented part...

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: The answer to my question has not been properly implemented; first implement that part. Sir, you ask him. Has the hon. Minister noted the serious strictures passed by the press in Lucknow and the criticism made by the Lucknow journalists in a resolution? What are his reactions? He can say, I have no reaction; then of course he would be regarded as a moral eunuch. He can say, I support it; I can understand his courage and I can put him in the category of Mr. Charan Singh but nonetheless he is a man. Or he can say, I oppose it, and I will put him in the category of a decent, civilised, human being. Now, ask him, Sir, what he has to say.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: If Mr. Bhupesh Gupta will permit me, I will deal with this issue in the end; let me deal with the other parts of the question.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: But why are you so much afraid of Mr. Charan Singh? You see Mr. Chandra Shekhar; he does not fight shy of it. Any day he is more qualified to be a Cabinet Minister than most of the other Ministers here. He gets up and says clearly. . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is all right, Mr. Bhupesh Gupta. Now let the Minister reply.

SHRI S. N. MISHRA: Sir, on a point of order. Now, I do not want to go into the merits or demerits of the arrest of the hon. Member Mr. Dange here, but here is a point raised about the impropriety that was committed while arresting him. Again, I would not pronounce my views on that also but what is the relationship that exists between the hon'ble Minister and hon. Mr. Charan Singh that he is afraid of even uttering his name? We of course know of the Hindu wife not uttering the name of her husband but here is the case of an hon'ble Minister not mentioning the name of hon'ble Mr. Charan Singh. As it is, I do not doubt the sex of the hon'ble Minister but even so . . .

(Interruptions)

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN (Andhra Pradesh): A correction: not only Hindu wives. Muslim wives also do not take the name of the husband.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA (Maharashtra): Mr. Deputy Chairman, I think if

the hon. Minister is so much embarrassed he can say that he is not aware of the full facts and he does not know whether Mr. Charan Singh is responsible or somebody else is responsible. He has got the right to say this.

SHRI GODEY MURAHARI: (Uttar Pradesh): It seems that Mr. Charan Singh is the Hindu political husband of this Government. He is the political husband of this Government in a Hindu sense.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: If Mr. Charan Singh is the husband, then I should like to know to which category of wife he belongs.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You have taken the theory that Mr. Charan Singh is in the category of a Hindu husband of this Government. Since there are so many Ministers, I should like to know to which category of wives you belong. This is a simple thing.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

MR. BHUPESH GUPTA: I should like to say that even a concubine would not hesitate to say that Mr. Charan Singh was wrong, let alone a married wife.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, order. Please sit down.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Any way, I am glad that Mr. Gupta, a chronic bachelor, has now started thinking of the status of wife and I am glad that his attention is being drawn to that aspect of social life.

AN HON. MEMBER: Both of them are bachelors.

(Interruptions)

SHRI GODEY MURAHARI: We, bachelors, are more conscious of the relationship between husband and wife.

(Interruption)

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I am glad that they are paying attention to this aspect of life and I hope something will emerge out of it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Still you will not mention Mr. Charan Singh. . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let him continue.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : He gets elected from Punjab, not from U.P. So, he need not be afraid of Mr. Charan Singh. You are elected from Punjab. Why are you afraid of him? You should be afraid of the Akalis, but why should you be afraid of Mr. Charan Singh? *(Interruptions)*. That is what I say. When the Minister of the country does not have the courage even to express his disapprobation of such an act as was done by Mr. Charan Singh and it was condemned by the journalists in U.P. I fear that the freedom of the press or the administration of the press from the point of view of the country is not in safe hands.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : I would like my hon. friend to keep one thing in mind. Freedom of press is naturally a concern of ours, but the main point is when Mr. Dange is arrested or somebody else, I am not aware of the facts. I do not know whether the orders were issued or not, who arrested him and it is difficult to say it in detail...

(Interruption)

SHRI A. P. CHATTERJEE : Now, Mr. Mohan Dharia has already given you the facts.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : On a point of order...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : What is it?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : I am on a point of order. The hon. Minister said: I am not aware of the facts whether Mr. Dange was arrested or not. He said it. You have heard it. Now, it is deliberately suppressing his own knowledge before the House. When Mr. Dange was arrested it was broadcast by his own radio, the All India Radio. It was stated that he was arrested at a press conference by the Radio, which is under his Ministry. That Mr. Dange was arrested was also reported in the newspapers about which he is supposed to be aware. That Mr. Dange was arrested is a matter pending before the Supreme Court and the case has been reported also. A part of his affidavit has also been published in all the newspapers. Even after that, if the Minister says 'I am not aware', then, are we having a Minister of Information or a Minister of deliberate, calculated and cultivated ignorance? I should like to know it.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : One thing, I think, my hon. friend will concede. When I have to make a responsible statement on behalf of the Government, naturally I must have the facts besides information. Information is something different. Assertion of facts is something different, but I have suggested to my hon. friend that if he feels that something wrong has been done, even then, I think, he is well within his rights as a citizen of India to refer the case to the Press Council.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : You refer it. Why should we refer it? Mr. Dange is a leading Member of the other House. A Member of Parliament has been arrested. You have ascertained the facts. The facts are well known. You yourself on your Radio had given the facts to the nation.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA : According to the present Press Council Act, what the Press Council can do is to take cognisance of any writing or publication, but the Press Council cannot take any action against the behaviour of the Government as such, against arrest and all that. At the most the Press Council can express an opinion that it should not happen, nothing beyond that. Even according to the present Act the Press Council can at the most recommended to the Government. The new Act has yet to come into force. Under these circumstances it is all right that the Press Council can also itself take up the matter. But is it not the duty of the Central Government to have some guidelines as to when such sort of thing should be used? In this case it is really strange that when no offence whatsoever was committed by Mr. Dange he was arrested. Under these circumstances it is high time for the Central Government at least to have some guidelines as to when a person should be arrested and when he should not be arrested. It is in this context I do feel that the hon. Minister can take his time, but he certainly can say that his arrest, if it had happened in this way, should not have taken place, that it is absolutely unfair. Without getting all details he cannot condemn any person; that I can understand. But why should he say that it should go to the Press Council? The Press Council cannot take any cognisance under the present Act of the arrest by police. It is not the job of the Press Council.

SHRI DEV DATT PURI : As far as the Press Council is concerned I hope

[Shri Dev Datt Puri.]

Government are aware that the Attorney General has expressed himself in writing that it has not got the jurisdiction even to go into the complaint of Haryana. My friend is quite right. The Press Council is not the form for this kind of thing. It has no legal right.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : My hon. friend, Mr. Puri, is now adding a dimension to the problem. I wish he had not, because I wish the Press Council should give us its views whenever it does about the Haryana case before I further comment on it. Whether the Press Council has jurisdiction or not is something for the Press Council first to come out with. What advice the Attorney General has given to my friend, Mr. Puri, I do not know. I do not have any advice from the Attorney General so far as I am concerned. I do not know what advice the Attorney General has given to anybody. So far as the issue of the arrest of Mr. Dange is concerned, I would only say that in view of whatever has been discussed in this House I will look into matter. But one thing I would like to say. If there is any unlawful act—"unlawful" I am saying within quotation on the part of the State Government, the difficulty arise that the Centre State relationship has been defined in the Constitution. It is not something which is discretionary on my part so as to issue a directive. All the

same let me have a look into the whole case and then it would be easy for me to make up my mind.

There are one or two more points. One main point made by my friend is about the rates of the small newspapers. While we are keen to give support to small and medium newspapers and our budget is increasingly going in favour of small and medium newspapers and now I think if I remember my figures correctly, about 56 per cent of our budget goes in their favour the difficulty at the moment is that the rates have to be decided on the basis of circulation. It is not possible for me to give the same rate to a newspaper which may have a circulation of 1,000 as the one which may have a circulation of 50,000, because naturally the response and the reach have to be kept in mind also.

I think all the other points that my friend has made I have more or less met in my earlier reply.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : We have had enough discussion on this for one hour and twenty minutes. The House stands adjourned till 11 A.M. tomorrow.

The House then adjourned at eighteen minutes past six of the clock till eleven of the clock on Wednesday, the 26th August, 1970.