

booking. The bookings are given to journalists whenever we come across them.

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, प्वाइंट ऑफ़ ऑर्डर ।

MR. CHAIRMAN: No point of order, please.

श्री राजनारायण : जरा सुन लें ।
इस बात की जरूर सफाई होनी चाहिये कि कौन लेफ्टिस्ट है और कौन राइटिस्ट है । देखिये, मंत्री को इस बात की सफाई करनी पड़ेगी कि कौन लेफ्टिस्ट है और कौन राइटिस्ट है क्योंकि माननीय सदस्य कह रहे हैं कि लेफ्टिस्ट अखबार जो है । लेफ्टिस्ट भी बहुत रिप्लेक्सनरी कहे जा सकते हैं इसलिये लेफ्ट और राइट का जो डिस्टिंक्शन है वह गलत है ।

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, to clarify Mr. Rajnarain's doubts about leftist or rightist, although I do not have personal views as to who is a rightist and who is a leftist—I am not supposed to decide it—the natural thing that I can say in respect of Mr. Rajnarain after listening him from time to time is that I think him to be a leftist.

SHRI RAJNARAIN: Shrimati Indira Gandhi is also a leftist.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Coming back to the question, Sir, I want to repeat one thing. (*Interruption by Shri Rajnarain.*) He does not let me speak, Sir. Let Mr. Rajnarain keep quiet. The point basically is that We do not give bookings to any journals. We give bookings only to journalists or other competent persons. The main point is that we decide on an issue which comes up during the day or the previous day as to what should be discussed on that day on the Radio and then we book a person who is readily available and who can have a point of view on that.

*609. [*The questioner (Sardar Ram Singh) was absent. For answer vide col. 5157 infra.*]

MONOPOLY OVER PRESS

*610. SHRI ARJUN ARORA: SHRI GULAM NABI UNTOO:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the question of growing hold of monopoly over the press in the country was referred to the Press Council of India;

(b) if so, whether the Council has made any recommendation in regard thereto; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government on those recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI I. K. GUJRAL): (a) Under section 12(2) (j) of the Press Council Act, 1965, one of the functions which the Press Council may perform is to study developments which may tend towards monopoly or concentration of ownership of newspapers, including a study of the ownership or financial structure of newspapers, and if necessary, to suggest remedies therefor. They have undertaken such a study.

(b) No, Sir, not yet.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: The Minister has only referred to a section of the Press Council Act which was passed by this House also, and we are aware of it. I wanted him to tell us what are the steps that the Press Council has taken to study the growing hold of monopoly over the press in India. If it has done anything whatsoever, the Minister may please give us the

The question was actually asked on ' the floor of the House by Shri Arjun Arora.

details. If it has not done anything, please enlighten the House about the inactivity of the Press Council as far as this vital aspect of its work is concerned.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: So far as I am aware, under this section of the Act, the Council took action and appointed a sub-committee. That sub-committee issued a very exhaustive questionnaire and, if I am right in my recollection, they sent it to about 10,000 people. But the replies received were only from 100 or so. When the Press Council met they came to the conclusion that the replies received to the questionnaire were not very satisfactory nor very comprehensive and on that basis the study could not proceed. I understand another sub-committee has been appointed to look further into this. But so far as any conclusions are concerned, so far as I am aware, no conclusions have yet been arrived at.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: May I know, Sir, who were the hundred people who replied to the questionnaire? And when hundred people replied to the questionnaire, why did the Press Council come to the conclusion that the response was inadequate? Hundred people are quite a large number and a big force and, maybe, these hundred people were the cream of the intelligentsia in the country. Could he give some names and could he give reasons why the Press Council felt that these hundred people were inadequate? Does he suggest that we should organise a mass demonstration in front of the office of the Press Council so that press-council problem and their approach, a study?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I would like to clarify that in the Act the Press Council is not supposed to give details to the Government. Therefore, our information cannot be very exhaustive nor can we go to the Press Council to ask them for their views on any particular problem and their approach. Therefore, if the Press Council or its committee in its wisdom comes to a

certain conclusion it is not for the Government to question them or to tell them as to what they should do.

So far as the opinions received were concerned, according to the information that I have, the Committee thought, and the Council also agreed with it, that the information made available to them was not sufficient on which to base conclusions. For instance, the Federation of Working Journalists did not respond to the questionnaire. I understand that they asked their members not to respond. If the working journalists in the industry do not respond, obviously to me it will be difficult for any Council or Committee to come to any conclusion.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: It appears the Press Council gives the Federation of Working Journalists the right of veto . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have already put two questions. We shall have to give time to others too. Mr. Banka Behary Das.

SHRI BANKA BEHARY DAS: When the Press Council is considering this matter and the Minister is telling us for the last two years that the monopoly in the press is growing, I know within these two or three years some of the people have extended their sphere of influence and have started chain newspapers in other places and also some of the presses had been purchased by the present newspapers. In view of this, may I know whether whenever any newspaper wants to purchase another newspaper or start a chain of newspapers or wants to have a subsidiary newspaper from another centre, then before the Government gives them permission, they will consult the Press Council on all these matters and the Press Council's opinion will be accepted by the Government on these matters?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, two things I think, my hon. friend might keep in mind. First, when a Committee of

Members of Parliament sat to review the working of the Press Council—I have laid their report on the Table of the House also—they also came to the conclusion that the Press Council should continue its study of the monopolistic trend and nobody else should look into it. Secondly, even the Press Commission when it sat some years ago and made two recommendations regarding price page schedule and other things, even those two recommendations could not be upheld because they were turned down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

Our difficulty, Sir, is that whatever steps have to be taken, they have to be taken in a spirit that the freedom of the press does not get into jeopardy under any circumstances. I am absolutely in the hands of this House and the other House as to what line of action they would like us to take. I feel concerned that the monopoly is growing. I feel concerned that some newspapers are bought. But things as they stand, let us know what the Members of Parliament wish us to do.

SHRI G. RAMACHANDRAN: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether this matter is one entirely for the Press Council to deal with and whether a democratic Government has no duty in the matter, particularly after the hon. Minister has stated that he feels concerned with the growing menace.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, in a democratic set-up, as the hon. Member would agree, I have to be governed by what this House and the other House decide. Parliament passed an Act assigning this job to the Press Council and since the Press Council is studying it, naturally I would await the Press Council's advice on this. Secondly, Sir, regarding finance, etc., there also it was decided that the method should be decided by the Press Council . . . If I am wrong, as it looks from Mr. Dharia's point of view, I would correct myself and re-state my position. My position basically is this that the study

of the growth of monopoly or concentration of ownership has been assigned to the Press Council under the Press Council Act. That is number one. Number two, the Monopolies Bill is also before the House and it might influence the working of these spheres) also. But the Members of the Parliamentary Committee felt that they will not be able to go far enough. Surely my position is, if Parliament wants to take any other step, we are on the Parliament side.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: Sir, the reply of the hon. Minister is rather misleading or misleading this House. The Press Council Act gives the power to the Press Council to go into the functioning of monopolies in press, but nowhere does it prohibit the Government from appointing a Monopolies Commission to go into the functioning of the press. It is not an obligatory duty on the Press Council and the Government has every right to go into it and have its own ways and means for remedies, because what the Press Council can do is only to suggest ways and means. It cannot go further. Under these circumstances, when the Government is not prohibited from going into this matter, as was rightly 'point 2d by Shri Ramachandran, will the Government take up this job and see that monopolies are not allowed to grow further in the press?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, I would only draw the attention of my hon. friend to the conclusions of the M.Ps. Committee of which, I think, he was a member himself. The Committee felt that the study of monopolies in newspapers is important for maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers in the country and for achieving a wider diversification of ownership which will ensure the preservation of the freedom of the Press.

The Committee was further of the view that the proposed Monopolies Commission will be primarily concerned with the economic concentration of a different type in a different sphere I and may not be able to pay particular

attention to monopolies in newspapers. But the Committee felt that the Press Council may study monopolies in newspapers and the Government may in the light of the recommendations of the Press Council consider what remedial steps have to be taken and whether reference to the proposed Monopolies Commission is necessary on any particular aspect.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I would like to know from the Government . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Try not to mention point of order. Mention clarification.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: On a matter of information, Sir. May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has accepted the Committee's report? 10 the report is accepted, then I will have nothing to say. But if the report is not accepted, then the Government cannot make use of this report.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Government has not yet made up its mind on the report; it is under examination. I am only putting before this House the various opinions so that the House is in a position to examine all points of view and then come to a conclusion. But I might inform my hon. friend, Mr. Dharia, that I am absolutely at one with him in my concern for the growing monopoly.

SHRI G. RAMACHANDRAN: Sir, I asked a question and an answer was given but the answer is not to the point that I raised. Does the Minister say precisely that it is not possible for the Government to do anything in this matter because this is a matter entirely in the hands of the Press Council?

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: That was my point also.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I will make it clear. Sir, it will not be good for me or in the interest of the cause that we are trying to serve that I categorically say "Yes" or "No."

SHRI A. D. MANI: May I ask the Minister whether the Press Registrar who conducts a detailed enquiry into the press year after year has reported to the Government with statistics that conditions of monopoly are growing in this country? The Government cannot say that the Press Registrar does not have the staff at his disposal. The second point that I would like to ask the Minister is whether the fact that chains are growing in this country and are spreading from State to State has affected public opinion in a tendentious manner in favour of any particular party or any particular cause? His Ministry must be having a large number of press cuttings at its disposal and it must have placed them before him.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: So far as the first part of the question is concerned, the Registrar of Newspapers does carry out a study. The Report of the Registrar of Newspapers. I think, has already been laid on the Table of the House, and if the hon. Member would peruse the Report, he will see that the Registrar has come to the conclusion that the trend is growing. So far as the second part of the question is concerned, i.e., its impact, Sir, the impact does not have to be studied. When in a country like ours, 10 common ownerships control 50 per cent of the circulation and 62 common ownerships control 74.3 per cent of the circulation, the impact on public opinion can be imagined; it does not have to be studied.

SHRI K. CHANDRASEKHARAN: In view of the fact that there is so much importance attached to public opinion, and in view of the further fact that the hon. Minister himself has expressed his anxiety over the matter and stated that he would be guided by the House in regard to this matter, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the Government would consider the suggestion of appointing, immediately a parliamentary committee to go into this matter so that

legislation, if necessary, may be initiated on the basis of the recommendations of that parliamentary committee?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, a Committee of Members of Parliament has already sat and given this report which has been laid on the Table of the House. When we come to discussing this, then you can make suggestions.

SHRI KRISHAN KANT: I hope the hon. Minister has also read the evidence tendered before the Committee which must be with him. In that it was made clear that this Press Council has no power to go into the financial structure of the different monopoly newspapers. It has no power to go into all that thing. The Committee had kept it there so that something should remain there. The Committee was very much conscious that the Press Council is not competent and authorised to go in detail into the monopolies as at present functioning in this country. Also we know the limitations of the Monopolies Commission. In view of that, the earlier Minister of Information and Broadcasting had said that a further probe by a committee, perhaps a parliamentary committee, is required to go into this and suggest further action. In view of these things, what does the Government propose to do?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, based on the assessment of the functioning of the Press Council for the last more than three years and also based on the opinions expressed by the Members of Parliament in the Committee, when we come to the conclusion that an amendment of this Act is necessary, we will keep all these points in view.

श्री राजनारायण : क्या सरकार को इस बात की जानकारी है कि इस प्रेस सलाहकार समिति के संबंध में इस सदन में पहले भी काफी चर्चा हुई थी है जिसमें गंगा बाबू ने उसकी गतिविधि से रुष्ट होकर इस्तीफा दे दिया

और अब मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि प्रेस कमेटी की जो रिपोर्ट आई है उस रपट को तैयार करने के वक्त कौन-कौन उस समिति के मेम्बर थे और उनके सुझावों की क्या-क्या मुख्य बातें हैं ?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Sir, it is already placed on the Table of the House. यह सदन की टेबल पर रखी जा चुकी है और आप उसको पढ़ लीजिये ।

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, रिपोर्टों के संबंध में जितने सवाल आते हैं उनके संबंध में मंत्री जी ने यह अच्छा तरीका व्यवहार कर रखा है कि फलों किताब को पढ़ लीजिये । क्या यह कोई पार्लियामेंटरी प्रोसेस है कि जितनी भी कमेटीयों की रिपोर्ट आये उनको हम सब पढ़ें और जब कोई सवाल इनके संबंध में आये तो मंत्री जी कह दें कि रिपोर्ट देख लो ? क्या यह उत्तर देने का तरीका है ? मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि जिस समय प्रेस समिति ने अपनी रिपोर्ट दी उस समय उसके कौन-कौन से मेम्बर विद्यमान थे ?

श्री आई० के० गुज्राल : आप प्रेस कमेटी के मेम्बर के नाम चाहते हैं या और किसी के ?

श्री राजनारायण : वही जिसे प्रेस कौंसिल कहते हैं ।

श्री आई० के० गुज्राल : प्रेस कौंसिल के चेयरमैन के अलावा ये मेम्बर हैं सब कमेटी के—
Shri A. K. Jain of "Nav Bharat Times" Shri Ratan Lai Joshi of "Hindustan", Dr. N. B. Parulekar of Poona, Shri S. K. Sambandhan, M.P., Shri G. Narasimhan of the "Hindu" and Shri Durga Das.

*611. [The questioner (Shri J. P. Yadav) was absent. For answer, vide col. 20-21 infra.]