

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN): No; tomorrow is Thursday; because according to the List of Business we have to take up the Report of the Registrar of Newspapers on a motion to be moved by Mr. Bhargava and Mr. Arjun Arora.

3 P.M.

MOTION RE REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR OF NEWSPAPERS FOR INDIA

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA (Uttar Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Ninth Annual Report (April, 1965), of the Registrar of Newspapers for India—Part I, laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha on the 14th September, 1965, be taken into consideration."

At the outset I want to congratulate the Ministry for bringing out this very good and informative Report. If I read para. 2 of the Preface the scope of the Report will be clear to the Members. It says:

"A number of changes have been made in the content of the report this year. A quinquennial study of the growth of the Press in India, between 1959 and 1964 has been introduced for the first time in this report and statistics and observations regarding the growth have been given in all relevant chapters. A study has been made for the first time also of the circulation pattern of newspapers and periodicals as well as the distribution of newspaper circulation according to centres of publication. Prominence has also been given to the study of revised circulation figures for 1963 and 1962 in this report."

After going through the Report the impression I got was that the efficiency touch of the Minister and the

Deputy Minister is clearly shown in the Report and I am inclined to agree with the last sentence in the Preface where it says:

"On the whole an attempt has been made to present a new report this year in content as well as in appearance."

Now, let us first study the growth of newspapers. We find from page 1 that the number of papers in India during the period 1959 to 1964 rose by 33.9 per cent from 6,096 to 8,161 and the number of dailies by 22.4 per cent from 420 to 514. The number of tri- and biweeklies rose by 84.0 per cent from 25 to 46 and of weeklies by 32.7 per cent from 1,741 to 2,361. The circulation of all papers rose by 39.0 per cent from 169 lakhs in 1959 to 235 lakhs in 1963 (the latest year for which revised circulation data were available) and the circulation of dailies by 28.7 per cent from 44.53 lakhs to 57.32 lakhs. The circulation of weeklies rose by 40.0 per cent during this period from 47.78 lakhs to 66.92 lakhs. This, if I may say so, is not an achievement which we cannot be proud of but still we have to cover a long distance as far as this is concerned.

Now in 1964 there were newspapers in India in 44 different languages and dailies in 19 languages. Daily newspapers were published, besides the 14 principal languages in Sindhi, Manipuri, Portuguese, Chinese and Konkani. Periodicals were published in the following further languages: Angami Naga, Arabic, Bhojpuri, Burmese, French, Garo, Hmar, Hindustani, Indonesian, Khasi, Kom, Rhem, Lushai, Magahi Maithili, Nepali, Rajasthani, Sourashtra, Santali, Swahili, Pushoto, Persian, Paite, Tibetan, Tangkhul Naga and Thadon Kuki. That again shows what progress is being made as far as language newspapers are concerned.

Now, the next question we come to is about ownership of the papers. Here

[Shri M. P. Bhargava.]

again I would like to read out from the Report:

"More than half, of all papers as well as of all dailies in 1964 were owned by 'Individuals'. 'Societies and associations' owned about a fifth of the total number of papers, mainly monthlies, 'Joint stock companies' owned about a fourth of the dailies. 'Firms and partnerships' and 'Central and State Governments' were the other important categories of owners. 'Joint stock companies' and 'Individuals' accounted for the largest share of circulation of all papers in 1964 (preliminary), 38.1 per cent and 31.2 per cent respectively. In 1963 'Individuals' accounted for 34.9 per cent of the total circulation, closely followed by 'Joint stock companies'.

In 1964 there were 63 common ownership units owning 195 papers with a combined circulation of 51.98 lakhs compared to 66 such units owning 205 papers with a combined circulation of 50.37 lakhs in 1963. The number of common ownership units and the total number of papers owned by them thus decreased during the year, though their combined circulation slightly increased. The percentage share of the circulation of commonly owned papers to total circulation, however, remained almost stationary. The policy of the Government to withhold newsprint quota from new papers brought out by common ownership units has arrested the expansion of their collective share in the total newspaper circulation. Had it not been for this restrictive rationing of newsprint, the newspaper combines would have grown much more."

I might tell the House that we have been quite agitated about the monopoly trends in the newspaper industry and this paragraph is a sort of assurance that at least this trend has been arrested if not altogether done away with. And when this policy grows strong in the years to come—

it cannot be done away with in a year or two; it is bound to take a long time—we hope we will be able to completely control these monopolistic tendencies. Now that the process of arrest of this tendency has been started we can safely look forward that this tendency will go down year by year and there will be a time when the Press in India will be absolutely free from all the vested interest. The monopolistic trends have been kept in check by the restrictive policy, as already mentioned, in the sanction of newsprint by the Registrar to the combines and chains in the newspaper industry. The encouragement and assistance given to small newspapers have also enabled them to acquire gradually competitive strength and thus keep in check further expansion of monopolies. The Press Registrar, I understand, has been taking some steps some of which are as follows.

No new publications belonging to chains, groups and multiple units are granted newsprint quota. This should be heartening news to the House. Nearly 30 to 35 per cent of the total entitlement of big newspapers like the "Indian Express" and the "Times of India" are allocated in white printing paper, which cost Rs. 1,550 per metric tonne, as against Rs. 800 per metric tonne of imported newsprint. District and State level newspapers in the circulation range of less than 50,000 copies were given 20 per cent increase in 1963-64. This increase continues this year also. Metropolitan papers generally owned by chains or groups are in the higher circulation range and are thus denied this advantage. Newspapers with circulation below 10,000 are given 25 per cent increase. Small newspapers are also given several concessions by exempting them from payment of licence fee, production of income-tax verification number and Chartered Accountants' certificates. Newspapers with entitlement less than 100 m. tonnes are given their entire quota in imported newsprint. Those with entitlement above 100 but below 500 m. tonne get 70 to 80

per cent. of their total entitlement in imported newsprint and 20 to 30 per cent in Nepa—which is our indigenous newsprint. The price of Nepa is Rs. 1,200 per m. tonne. I should think these are all very welcome steps and we must thank the Ministry for this.

Now, coming to the question of supply of newsprint, if we turn to page 17, we will get an idea of the problem of imported newsprint. During 1957-58 indigenous production was 14,371 m. tonnes and we imported 63,501 m. tonnes. In the next year the production was 22,187 m. tonnes and we imported 58,072 m. tonnes. The following year the figures are 22,770 and 75,501 m. tonnes respectively. The figure has been going on increasing both in respect of indigenous production and the quantity imported. The figures for 1962-63 show that 28,515 m. tonnes were produced in India and 97,425 m. tonnes were imported. During 1963-64, 30,078 m. tonnes were produced and 95,520 m. tonnes were imported. The latest figures for 1964-65 show that the estimated production will be 30,000 m. tonnes and we will have to import as much as 97,500 m. tonnes.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN): You have two minutes more.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: The Mover has half an hour, if I am right.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN): According to the allotment of time, they have decided 15 minutes for the Mover and ten minutes each for other speakers.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: I should have been told in the beginning that I would get only 15 minutes. I have prepared my speech for half an hour.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN (Andhra Pradesh): There are two Movers.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: It does not mean that the time is to be distributed between the two. If there are

thirty Movers, as there are in some cases, then probably each one will get one minute only, if it is half an hour. Is that the proposition?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN): Generally for such motions we do not allow half an hour, but I would request you to finish soon.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: I will take another ten minutes and I shall try to finish as early as possible.

I shall deal with the problem of the import of newsprint. I am sorry to say here that all the efforts which should have been made for the manufacture of newsprint in India have not been made and that is the reason why we have to import more and more newsprint every year. If successful efforts were made to produce more newsprint in the country, probably we would not have been faced with the situation which we are facing today. Nobody can grudge if there is an increase in circulation of newspapers. If there is an increase in the circulation of newspapers, it means that more and more newsprint has to be consumed. If it is agreed that circulation has to go up, consumption of newsprint has also to go up. What are the alternatives before us? Either go on importing more and more quantities of newsprint from abroad or go on producing more and more in the country. As the House would have seen from the figures, indigenous production has not gone up consistent with our consumption. And that is my grouse with the Government of India. I do hope that the Ministries concerned—it is not, of course, a matter for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting—will look into this problem and try to see that the foreign exchange spent on the import of newsprint is reduced to the minimum.

Now, the country is passing through an emergency and all the foreign exchange has to be conserved and in

[Shri M. P. Bhargava.]

that context we have to cut down our imports of newsprint. Now, how is the situation to be met? It can only be met if we compel newspapers to use more and more of paper produced in the country. I understand that there is a surplus of white printing paper in the country and there are stocks with the dealers and in the mills. On the other hand, we have to import newsprint. What I would suggest is that steps should be taken to see that the use of white printing paper is increased by these papers. There can be two ways of doing it. Many of the papers bring out Sunday magazines, supplements and other extra issues. It should be made compulsory that all these supplements, all these Sunday magazines and other extra issues will not be printed on newsprint. They should be only printed on the white printing paper available in the country. The newspaper industry may say that their expenses will go up, but that is no argument. When the country is faced with the serious problem of foreign exchange, they should be prepared to part with some of their profits and use printing paper which is available in the country and cut down their supplements being printed on newsprint.

Another thing which the newspapers can do is this. They can progressively reduce their pages so long as the emergency lasts in the country.

SHRI P. N. SAPRU (Uttar Pradesh): The emergency will last for hundreds of years.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: Well there are certain items in the papers, Mr. Sapru, which can very easily be curtailed without doing any damage to the readers of newspapers. So, I would appeal to the newspaper industry to consider this question first of cutting down pages in their daily editions and then to strictly keep to white printing paper as far as printing of supplements and Sunday magazines is concerned.

Another point which I would like to touch is about the circulation probe. Circulation probe is very necessary. We find that out of 8,161 papers in the country, circulation figures of only 418 papers could be verified last year. That means that roughly less than 5 per cent of the papers could be verified. If this rate is continued, verification of the present newspapers will take twenty years, leave aside the increasing number of newspapers. This in my personal opinion is a very unhappy position. When we are faced with such a crisis, I would suggest that the teams for circulation probes must be increased, and we should be in a position to know as early as possible what the actual requirement of the newsprint is without depending solely on the figures being given to us by the newspaper industry. I have no time, otherwise I would have given the figures to show the probe has revealed that in several cases where circulation figures were fantastically high figures, in fact when the probe was made they came to very low figures; and in 40 cases out of 418—mind you, it is roughly 10 per cent—the papers had closed down, yet the newsprint quota was being drawn. If out of 418 papers 40 papers were not in circulation, you can imagine what the problem is if circulation probe of all the 8161 papers is made. (Interruption) I gather from the report that till 1964 there were only two teams of investigation for probe work, and it was only in 1965 that a third team was appointed. Now to expect three teams to go round the country and do the circulation probe, it is not possible, and therefore I would plead with the Minister to at least appoint ten investigating teams for this purpose. Ten is such a number which cannot be taken to be too great compared to the newspapers they will have to deal. And what is the investigating team? It is only one investigating officer and one accountant. Certainly to check the colossal waste of newsprint twenty persons can be appointed to deal with this problem, and I am sure he re-

sults of the circulation probes by these teams will amply justify the appointment of twenty people.

I was just going through the reports of 1962-63 and 1963-64. While I have welcomed the steps taken by the Registrar of Newspapers, I could not follow one case in particular which I will cite now. In 1962 there was one paper in West Bengal called "Basu-mati". The circulation figure of that paper was 16,419 according to the report of that year. In 1963 I find the circulation figures of that paper going up to 36,052, and I understand that a quota for 20,000 copies was given as a special case for this paper. There may have been reasons for giving a special quota, but what do I find in the subsequent years? In 1964 the circulation figures of this paper go up to 45,652. So the House will see that in two years the circulation of this paper has been trebled in spite of all the restrictions imposed by the Registrar of Newspapers.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA (Madhya Pradesh): Was there any charge in the ownership?

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: I do not know. I have put the proposition before the Minister and I would expect the Minister to have an enquiry made under what circumstances this paper was treated in a separate manner from all the other papers.

Another point is about Government publications. There is a lot of waste as far as Government publications are concerned and the Members of Parliament are well acquainted with that. In many cases a lot of newsprint is being wasted on Government publications. I was happy when the hon. Minister announced in this House the other day that a Committee of Secretaries of the Government of India was appointed to go into this question of Government publications, periodicals, magazines and other things and come to a decision on what were

necessary and what were not necessary. I do hope that before long the Committee's report would be available to us and that this wastage of newsprint on Government publications will be stopped. I am not one of those who will for a moment say that such of the Government publications which are serving a useful purpose should be stopped. What I want you to do is that those periodicals, those magazines printed by the Government which are not serving any useful purpose should be stopped forthwith.

Before I sit down I would like to touch on one other point, and that is about the news service given by the Press Trust of India. The Press Trust of India has its own network in India but as far as I understand it has very few people representing them abroad. Now what have we seen during this emergency? We cannot rely on the news coming to us from abroad as sent by correspondents of those countries. Therefore, it is necessary that we have a network of our own to get news from various countries abroad, and that can only be done when the Press Trust of India has its own representatives in the important countries of the world so that we can get direct news through our representatives rather than depending on others.

The last sentence is about the service conditions in the Press Trust of India. I do hope this question is before the Minister and that she is corresponding with the Press Trust of India people to see that good service conditions are given to them.

Thank you.

*The question was proposed.*

SHRI A. D. MANI (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, there are certain interesting features of this report to which I think it will be useful if I drew the attention of the House. The circulation of newspapers in the country was 181.36 lakhs in 1963 and it rose to 192.59 lakhs in 1964. What does this mean? It has

[Shri A. D. Mani.]

been said that an Indian newspaper is read by four persons because very few can afford the luxury of purchasing their own paper. If that estimate is correct, and there has been no readership survey to show that this estimate is not correct, we can take it that the number of persons who read newspapers in this country is 481 lakhs. It is a very disturbing thought when we consider that the population of the country is 439 million and we are the biggest democracy of the world. Now steps have got to be taken to increase the readership of newspapers, which means that literacy must spread at a much faster rate than it has done in the States. This is a work which cannot be undertaken only by newspapers but by the State Governments.

My hon. friend, Mr. Bhargava, spoke about asking newspapers to use indigenous printing paper. My hon. friend is a very earnest student of public questions, but I am afraid Mr. Bhargava with his very wide knowledge of public questions does not know much about newspapers and I can say this with a certain amount of confidence because I have been a newspaper editor for the past thirty years in this country. Sir, the newspapers in the country, particularly the small newspapers, would be killed if they are compelled to use indigenous printing paper. It is no reflection on the Swadeshi spirit behind the suggestion. The indigenous printing paper, on account of various factors like the increase in labour costs, the interference by the labour tribunals, the Payment of Bonus Act and a number of other factors, is selling at a very high price. The newspaper is the only industry which cannot charge its cost of production to the consumer. The consumer expects a copy of the paper to be sold to him for 10 paise or 12 paise, as the case may be. It is therefore necessary for us to bear this in mind that if newspapers are to grow in this country, there must be a greater availability of newsprint. I

would suggest to the hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting and also to this House that Government should set aside all considerations of prestige and try to negotiate with the United States on American aid agreement for newsprint. If we can get foodgrains from the United States under PL-480 for assisting a very big democracy like India, we can get newsprint at favourable rates from the United States. That does not mean that we attach ourselves to the Washington band-wagon.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN): Why don't you suggest that we should produce more?

SHRI A. D. MANI: Mr. Vice-Chairman, I am very glad that you have raised that point. I know that my hon. friend, Shri Gujral, is getting restive over this suggestion. As Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Small Newspapers, we went into the matter in great detail. We examined the officials of the NEPA Mills, and I have also put many questions to the Minister of Industries on the floor of this House regarding the development of the newsprint industry in the country. There are so many factors, particularly the non-availability of the kind of raw material which is necessary for newsprint. (Interruptions) No, you may say so. But then we have taken expert evidence; they would not be able to control the cost of production, as the foreign producers are in a position to do, on account of the advantage that they have due to a larger turnover.

The second point that I would like to make is that this Report has shown that the party newspapers have not built up substantial circulations in the country. The country may vote a party to power, not in one election but in another election; it may be in 1972 also. But when it comes to a newspaper, they do not want the news to be disseminated by any party sources . . .

SHRI ARJUN ARORA (Uttar Pradesh) The party in power . .

SHRI A D MANI I am coming to it

It is interesting to note that the Communist Party has 22 newspapers. The combined circulation of all the Communist Party newspapers is 60 000. The combined circulation of the Congress newspapers which are about 31 in number, is about 20,000. The PSP has got a circulation of 6,231. What does this show?

SHRI P K KUMARAN But all the monopoly

SHRI A D MANI My time is limited, I have got so many points to make

It only shows that while the people are prepared to accept a political party as being competent to govern the country, they are not willing to extend to it the same measure of credence in the matter of dissemination of news. This is a point which the Minister of Information and Broadcasting may bear in mind if she wants the All India Radio to be more reliable from the public point of view: the time has come for Government—the All India Radio is also another form of mass communication—to alter the official set up of the All India Radio and for the All India Radio to be run by a public corporation.

Sir my hon friend Shri Bhargava made a reference to the concentrated trend towards monopoly. I have gone through the Report with great care. There is one newspaper in this country which has got a 100 per cent monopoly—a 100 per cent monopoly for one newspaper. And what is that newspaper? 'The Hindustan' published in Sindhi in Maharashtra has got a circulation of 7127 copies. There are no other Sindhi newspapers in Maharashtra and therefore it has got an overwhelming 100 per cent monopoly. 'The Andhra Prabha' of Madras—it is surprising. (Interruptions)

SHRI I K GUJRAL (Delhi) The hon Member himself knows—there is one paper with a circulation of 300 copies in Manipur. It is also a monopoly.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C R PATTABHI RAMAN) The hon Member who was himself a member of the Press Commission has taken pains to describe or define what a monopolistic tendency is, what a monopoly is.

SHRI A D MANI The other paper is 'The Andhra Prabha' of Madras with a circulation of 14,066—86.9 per cent capital—because this is the only Telugu newspaper published from Madras. 'The Tribune' of Punjab.

SHRI P K KUMARAN Mr Mani does not understand what monopoly is.

SHRI A D MANI The Tribune' has a circulation of 50 109—70.9 per cent of capital. What do these facts show? They show clearly that though there is a trend towards monopoly in certain areas there is no established monopoly in readership. The Press Commission went into the question of monopoly and said if you have 51 per cent a monopoly is established.

AN HON MEMBER Mr Mani should get into this.

SHRI A D MANI It has also been found.

SHRIMATI TARA RAMCHANDRA SATHE (Maharashtra) Does the hon Member mean that in those parts which he has described the other papers are not allowed to be circulated?

SHRI A D MANI That is not the point. Monopoly in terms of the Press Commission's recommendations is 51 per cent of the readership. The Report itself refers to this fact. I am not having that in mind.

[Shri A. D. Mani]

The other point is this. I think there is no established monopoly in the country. There has been concentration of ownership.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN): In order to establish . . .

SHRI A. D. MANI: There is a concentration of ownership which is an unfortunate feature (*Interruptions*) of the present position of the Press. But the concentration is largely in the metropolitan towns. Unfortunately, the production of a newspaper in a metropolitan city is such a difficult matter and requires such a heavy capital investment that only those who can have capital in the form of bank credit or liquid capital can start a newspaper. That is how the concentration of ownership has arisen in the big towns of India. The Report also points out—and this is a very interesting fact—that the papers published in the metropolitan towns have declined as far as the readership in the mofussil is concerned. The readership is largely in the cities. It is a very welcome feature because we do not want the concentration of ownership to have such a complete command over the mofussil readership of the kind that we see in the United Kingdom at the present time. It is also an interesting fact that papers below 10,000 commanded a circulation of 98.59 lakhs, which accounted for 42 per cent of the total circulation. These are the small newspapers of India. The number of newspapers rose from 6,096 to 8,161. The Committee went round a number of centres, from one place to another, taking evidence. A number of small newspapers have done astonishingly well and I would like to mention one case in Poona about a weekly which has specialised in arranging marriages among desirable people on both sides. It has also been responsible for getting the deaf and dumb youth married to somebody, and both of them have been living very happily. It is a form of social

service which is no parallel in any part of the world. Some of the papers have done well. But quite a number of newspapers, I am afraid, have not set up a creditable standard of performance. It does not mean that a small newspaper means a good newspaper or that a big newspaper necessarily means a bad newspaper. We should not go on that line that capital is somehow connected with quality and lack of capital affects the quality or performance of a newspaper.

Sir, I feel that in regard to the small newspapers, the one advantage that they can get from Governmental assistance is that they should be allowed to get newsprint without any duty. The duty was about 10 per cent; and the recent increase in duty has made the paper to work it at about 20 per cent of what it was before. Now they can be given newsprint free of duty and they should be given also assistance to get machinery from abroad through some kind of investment corporation which would be in a position to advance loans on the security of capital equipment to deserving newspapers. If this is done, we would be strengthening those sources which are now fighting concentration trends—I am not using the word “monopoly”.

Then I go on to refer to limitation of the number of pages to which my hon. friend, Mr. Bhargava, the mover of the Motion, made a reference. I was a Member of the Press Commission which recommended a price-page schedule. I was of the opinion that the price-page schedule was in conformity with the articles of the Constitution. When this matter was discussed, I remember, I raised this question with Mr. Rajadhyaksha, who was the Chairman of the Commission, that this might be challenged in the courts of law. We had the legal opinion. Mr. Rajadhyaksha and the distinguished father of the Deputy Minister, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, held the view that the price-page schedule was not inconsistent with the



articles of the Constitution. On this we made a recommendation. That has been struck down as illegal by the Supreme Court of India. Now should we try to circumvent the decision of the Supreme Court of India by amending the articles of the Constitution. I feel, Sir, that in this matter we should respect the Supreme Courts decision. Once we start trying to get round the Supreme Court decision by an amendment of the Constitution, the process will not stop. This is the stand which I took also when there was a Presidential reference regarding the rights of legislators and the privileges of Legislatures which was referred to the Full Bench of the High Court.

Sir, I feel that the price-page Schedule should come by voluntary agreement. But there is one direction in which the Minister of Information can exert pressure on the big newspapers to accept some kind of limitation on the number of pages which they print. Here is a suggestion that I would like to make. She has got the right to recommend to the Ministry of Finance for the allocation of foreign exchange for the purchase of newsprint. She can tell the big newspapers that if they do not agree to some kind of a voluntary limitation of pages in the question of prices, she would be forced to recommend that only the small newspapers of India, that is, papers with a circulation below 10,000 or 20,000, as the case may be, would get imported newsprint and that the big newspapers would have to print the newspaper on the indigenous paper. What we can achieve by statutory price-page schedule, the Minister of Information and her Deputy can, by skilful negotiation and diplomacy, try to secure the same effect and have some kind of price limitation which would be a sort of protection to the small newspapers of the country.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: Mr. Vice-chairman, Sir, the institution of the Press Registrar of India is the result of one of the recommendations of the Press Commission of which Mr A. D.

Mani—I am glad he remembers—was a member. The Press Commission said:

“We feel that the regulation of this industry should be brought within the purview of the Central Government in terms of the Industries Development and Regulation Act of 1951. The authority responsible for the collection of statistics would, therefore, be a central authority. There should be Press Registrars for each State . . .” etc. etc.

They also gave the type of statistics which the Press Registrar should collect and said:

“All newspapers should be called upon to file periodic returns regarding employees, consumption of raw material, changes in ownership and control, and changes in management so that the public can get, from one source, authentic Statistics about the industry.”

So the institution of Press Registrar and the collection of statistics was not without purpose. It was with a view to enabling the public to know who were the owners, who were managing and why.

The Press Commission was also conscious of what the world calls monopoly and Mr. A. D. Mani calls concentration. They said:—

“The bias on the part of the owners is communicated to the editorial staff to be reflected in the views content of a newspaper.”

and they were frank enough to point out:

“Instances have been reported to us of the news policy of a paper having been dictated by the proprietors to suit their personal interests.”

SHRI A. D. MANI: That does not mean . . .

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: That means what it says. It means what the words mean in the King's English or the Queen's English and not Mr. A. D. Mani's English.

SHRI A. D. MANI: If Mr. Arora will yield . . .

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: I will yield but I should get more time.

SHRI A. D. MANI: I entirely agree with the observation made by the Press Commission in regard to concentration but I have got to go by the report presented by the Press Registrar.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: No. You cannot make a second speech. You can seek a valid clarification.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN): You go on, Mr. Arora.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: Sir, in this case monopoly is bought at a very small price. The Press Commission itself went into the finances of the press industry and had pointed out that the monopoly in the case of newspapers was bought at a very small price. They say:

"The net circulation revenue for the daily Press is estimated at Rs. 6 crores and the advertisement revenue at about Rs. 5 crores for 1951. The estimated amount of total salaries and wages paid in this industry is over Rs. 4 crores of which the estimated salaries paid to the editorial staff for the year are Rs. 85 lakhs."

Now, with an investment of Rs. 4 crores the whole daily Press of the country can be bought. So the monopoly is bought in this case at a very small price. Mr. Vice-Chairman, I need not remind this House that the cost of a medium size cotton mill today is about Rs. 4 crores. In this case those who own the daily Press industry—the figures cited by the Press

Registrar frankly point out that they own what they got at a very small price—got it at very small price.

Mr. A. D. Mani, I am sorry, has advocated the import of newsprint from the U.S.A. Two years back he was advocating the import of a transmitter from the U.S.A.

SHRI A. D. MANI: I never did that.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: I am glad you did one thing wise. I congratulate you for that act of wisdom. I hope you will repeat the performance.

Some people were advocating the import of a radio transmitter. We found that there were too many strings attached it and while Pakistan has been converted into a military base of America, the VOA deal wanted to convert India into a propaganda base of the U.S. and Mr. Mani should keep that in mind when he advocates the import of newsprint. We do not know what price, in terms of sovereignty and freedom, we may have to pay. The correct thing is to import plants for newsprint, manufacture it here. Mr. Mani does not find the raw material in the country very suitable. May be for some time

[THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

the get-up of the newspapers will not be as bright as the get-up of the journal which my learned friend edits, but we should be prepared to do with 'Khadi' newspaper till the quality of our own newsprint improves.

There is, in the Press Registrar's report, at page 3, a reference to ownership and reporting on that is one of the functions or obligations of the Press Registrar. The Press Registrar points out:

"The number of common ownership units and the total number of papers owned by them thus decreased during the year, though their combined circulation slightly increased."

I feel the correct inference from this has not been drawn by the Press Registrar. If fewer owners and fewer papers control greater circulation, it is obvious that the monopolistic trends are increasing in the press. The Press Registrar himself in that very page, gives certain figures which are very interesting. He says:

"The circulation of common ownership papers rose by 46.7 per cent. between 1960 and 1964. The circulation of dailies under common ownership in 1964, however, formed 67.8 per cent. of the total daily circulation in that year compared to 67.6 per cent. in the previous year."

Thus it is obvious that the monopolistic trends continue to increase and the Press Registrar and the Government have not achieved much in this direction.

Some of the glaring facts, well known to the country, may be mentioned here. There is, for example, a big monopoly group called the Indian Express Group. It has recently added editions from Bangalore, Madras and Madurai. Some time back when it brought the new Madras edition, the then Minister for Information and Broadcasting was pleased to say: 'We have granted them no newsprint'. We were promised a 'freak of nature'. A daily newspaper from Madras was to come out without any newsprint but those who read the newspaper—and I also sometimes glance at the Madras edition when I am in the South—will find that the Indian Express, published from Madras, which the hon. Minister, Shri Satyanarayan Sinha, said, was coming out without any newsprint quota, is printed on imported newsprint. How do they get it? Where do they manage to get it from? Obviously somewhere they are getting more newsprint than they deserve. Somewhere they are bungling, they are deceiving and getting newsprint which they are using for the Madras edition. Then

of course there are the Bangalore and Madurai editions about which we do not know where the newsprint comes from. Encouraged by this attitude of the Government, the same group has started publication of Andhraprabha from Madras and Vijayawada.

There is so much monopoly or so much concentration of ownership and so much profit on so small an investment that the newspaper wealth in the case of the Indian Express Group has been used to buy jute mills at Calcutta. That is very interesting.

There is the Bennett Coleman Group with which the Company Law Administration has been trying to deal and it appears not very successfully. Though the management has been under a cloud, and proceedings have been pending before the Company Law Tribunal, yet, that group also goes on adding more and more journals to its list of publications. Then there is the Hindustan Times group of the famous Birlas. Till 1947 this group comprised of one English daily and one Hindi daily. Now it has blossomed into a very big group of newspapers and circulation of this group of newspapers has risen at the cost of small newspapers in the whole of North India.

The monopolists in the daily press industry in India are in a way peculiar. In Britain also they have monopolists in spite of their laws but in Britain the monopolists of the news media are not people who own jute mills or cotton mills. The press there is not jute press, it is not cotton press. Take the Beaverbrook Group or take the Roy Thompson Group or take any group. They are monopolists of the press line. Here in this country what has happened is that the wealth earned in the stock market, or out of hessian speculation has been invested in the newspaper industry and press monopolies are built. These are built by these industrialists because newspapers are a source of political power and the Hindustan Times Group,

[Shri Arjun Arora.]

particularly, has been using its monopolistic control over the news media to blackmail the Government and many a time, I find the Government succumbs to that blackmail. That is a peculiar feature of the press monopolies in this country.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Your fifteen minutes are over.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: I will not take more time. I will take only five minutes more.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There are so many others to speak and the motion must be over by five.

4 P.M.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: The intervention of Mr. Mani cost me five minutes. The advertising policy of the Government, I am sorry to say, is such that it does not curb monopolies. One group of newspapers, for example, owned by the jute barons and the cement barons gets Government advertisements of the order of Rs. 2500 per day. Why is the Government subsidising the monopolistic press which yields so much profit, out of which, in the case of the Express group, jute mills are bought? The Government some times publishes figures of Government advertising. This report also mentions them. There is no time to go into details. But, Madam, they mention space in groups, chains and individually owned newspapers. Space, I am afraid, is no criterion, because the bigger the monopoly, the bigger the chain, the bigger the group, the bigger the concentration, and the higher the rates of advertisement. So the Government pays these monopolists, this jute press, more for the same space than it does to respectable papers owned by individuals, societies, trusts, etc. The advertisement rates of big papers are abnormally high, and the Government should do something about it.

Madam, there is so much growth in the circulation of obscene literature in the country that I am compelled to say that something drastic should be done immediately. I do not know why the Government, in spite of so much support from both Houses of Parliament, shirks this responsibility of action against the obscene press. Obscene literature, obscene weeklies are sold at railway stations. Why can't the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting ask the Ministry of Railways to keep them out of their book-stalls, and why can't a law be passed against circulation of obscene weeklies? There is so much obscene literature available in the country that it is thrust even on unwilling readers, M.Ps. for example and they, many of us will confirm, get such things, particularly the rag published in Delhi without asking for it. In my house, along with my mail, at least once or twice a week . . .

SHRI A. D. MANI: How do you know that it is rag? You read it then.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: I read good, bad and indifferent publications. It is thrust upon people, and something should be done about it.

Then, Madam . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please wind up now.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: Yes, Madam. There are one or two things about the Press Registrar's institution. The Press Registrar has become so powerful that the press never criticises him though, at times, the Press Registrar behaves in the manner of an autocrat. Even technical offences by small newspapers are magnified, and all prosecutions by the Press Registrar are launched at Delhi alone. If a small newspaperman, from Kerala or Kashmir or Assam, commits a technical offence, even if he fails to send a particular copy to the Press Library at Simla, or even if the newspaper

publisher sends the copy but the Press Library fails to receive it, the poor small newspaper is prosecuted, and he has to come to Delhi to stand his trial. The mere coming from Kerala to Delhi, I hope the House will agree, is itself imposing a big fine on him.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: May I know from the hon. Member if there is any such case from Kerala?

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: Yes, there is at least one case from Kanpur which, I know, . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Kanpur is not Kerala.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: Yes, Kanpur is not Kerala, but if a Kerala journal is prosecuted at Delhi, he will not go to Rewa or Bhopal; he will have to come to Delhi.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That will do. Mr. Khandekar.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: Much of what I wanted to say has remained unsaid. I will say next year.

SHRI R. S. KHANDEKAR (Madhya Pradesh): Madam Deputy Chairman, before I offer my comments on the Report I would like to say a word about the office of the Press Registrar. The working of the Press Registrar's office is far from satisfactory because I know of a case where one of our comrades applied for starting a newspaper and for months together he was going from the district office to the Press Registrar's office, but there was no reply to his application. Ultimately I had to approach the hon. Minister for Information and Broadcasting, who very kindly intervened, and he was allowed the permission. So, if things happen to be at this stage, if every now and then the Minister has to interfere to get such permissions, I wonder whether an ordinary man who wants to start a newspaper can get any justice at the hands of the Press Registrar. So my first submission is that there is

need to improve the working of the Press Registrar's office.

Now coming to the Report itself, Madam, I find that the Report is comparatively satisfactory. It is also revealing—it has brought out many things which demand the attention of this House and also the attention of the Government. The Report mainly deals with two things. It deals with the trends in circulation and with common ownership. There are other chapters also, but they are not so important. Now the Report says that the circulation of newspapers has increased during the last year or during the last two years. It is quite so, but we cannot get satisfaction from this increased circulation. Looking to our population, looking to the vastness of our country, it is really a very unsatisfactory state that the entire circulation of these papers should be at this level. If I am not wrong, the entire circulation of these newspapers is equal to one or two newspapers in foreign countries, either in America or Japan or other countries. Now the main reason for the low circulation is of course our illiteracy. Literacy, after seventeen years of independence, has not increased to any commendable extent, and that is one of the reasons why there is not more circulation of newspapers. Along with illiteracy there is abject poverty also in this country, and there are the people who cannot afford to buy newspapers and read them. One of the hon. speakers previous to me said that one Indian newspaper was read, on an average, by five persons. It may be so, but even then it does not give satisfaction, because the people are so poor that they cannot afford to purchase, leave aside magazines or weeklies, even daily newspapers of the most ordinary variety available at the most ordinary price. Then there is also the tendency in this country, an apathy towards our reading habit. That has also to be improved. Even those who can afford to pay for the newspaper, they usually do not pay and get it. They depend on the libraries or on their neighbours. This tendency also should be deprecated.

[Shri R. S. Khandekar]

Then about the ownership the Report says that individual ownership is more than fifty per cent even today. Although they say that it is decreasing, at the same time they say that there is increase in the common ownership. Now what is happening? Individual ownership is being decreased, but the common ownership, that is, the chains, or cartels, as they are called, are increasing, and this is a sort of monopoly, which has been referred to just now, and this sort of monopoly or concentration of power is taking place in the newspaper industry. This is really important and something should be done to check such concentration. It has been mentioned in this Report that in order to curb this tendency, the Government is applying certain things, that is to say, control the distribution of newsprint, etc. But in spite of these curbs we find that the monopoly and the concentration of power in the newspaper industry are growing. The Report itself reveals that very good papers are controlled by a few people and they have got the largest circulation in this country. It is also mentioned that the metropolitan cities of this country alone have more than 50 per cent of the total circulation. So this is the source of their strength or income. We all know that newspapers play a very important part in the life of the country. There are no two opinions about that. It is a powerful medium which moulds public opinion and the educated people are so much accustomed to reading the newspaper that if they do not get a paper they become very uncomfortable. They cannot do without their newspaper. When the place of newspapers is so high in our daily life, the Government should be more careful about this concentration, about the reading habits of the people and about the contents of these newspapers.

The Report gives us many statistics. But I wonder whether these figures of statistics are correct, because I find so many newspapers are mentioned and their circulation is not

so much as is mentioned in the Report. These figures of circulations are only given in order to get advertisements from the commercial establishments or from the Government. The circulation is also exaggerated in order to get more newsprint quotas from the Government. So I would like to know what is the method adopted by the Government to ascertain the correctness of the circulation figures given by these newspapers. It is mentioned that they had employed some investigating teams and that these teams had done some work. But as my hon. friend pointed out here, this is only the fringe of the problem and not even 5 per cent of the newspapers that are being published in this country have been covered. If the Government were to investigate the entire newspaper world it may take years and years. So I would like the Government to state what is their method of ascertaining the correctness of these statistics.

Something has been said about newsprint consumption. The Report says that some 23.9 per cent of newsprint is produced in this country and utilised whereas more than 76 per cent of newsprint has to be imported. In the changed circumstances of today, I doubt whether we can import so much newsprint from other countries easily and whether we can afford to spend so much foreign exchange on this account. This is not a satisfactory position indeed. We have asked so many questions on the floor of this House regarding increased production of indigenous newsprint in this country. But I am very sorry to say that the Government is yet reluctant about it. There was a question about expanding the existing newsprint mills. For long, one of the mills which is in Madhya Pradesh which is my State was running at a loss. Only recently has it started giving some profit. There is great need now to install more such mills to produce more and more newsprint in our country. It was mentioned by my hon. friend Mr. Mani, that there is no raw materials in this country.

There I beg to differ from him. There is ample raw material in this country. But that has not been used by the industry or by the Government. (Time bell rings) I will take only two more minutes. I had asked a question the other day. In Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, licence was granted to the Birlas for the manufacture of pulp. But they did not start the factory for newsprint, but they are selling the bamboo and not producing newsprint there.

With regard to the rates of advertisement, the Report says that 25 per cent of the space only is being utilised by the newspapers. But I have seen some newspapers that have hardly any news in them—only one or two columns of news—and the entire newspaper is full of advertisements. In this respect also the Government should try to see that such newspapers do not waste their newsprint just to get money out of these advertisements.

There is one very dangerous thing that has been mentioned in the Report, and that is that even today, after so many years, the English language papers are the best organised in this country. This is a very sad thing for the language papers. I wish the Government would give more attention to the language papers. This industry should be organised on a proper footing and language papers must be increased. There should be more circulation of these language papers.

It is mentioned in this Report that Government had filed cases against certain newspapers. But it is surprising that in 13 cases that they had filed only Rs 415 are recovered as fines from such newspapers. If the courts have given the decision, the Government should try and see that these arraigned newspapers are punished heavily. They should not be let off on payment of this paltry amount.

Lastly about the condition of the working journalists, I find that nothing has been mentioned in this Report. But I know the condition of the working journalists, particularly those in the news agencies and their condition is far from satisfactory.

Government should look to their condition. There is a Press Council and there are organisations of working journalists and I am sure the Government should take steps to see to the welfare of the working journalists.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN. Mr Gujral. Please take only ten minutes.

SHRI I K GUJRAL. Madam, I am glad this Report has afforded us an opportunity to have a very close look at the working of this very important instrument of mass communication. But before I apply myself to the main subject, I have to say that I have noted that this Act mentioned in this Report does not apply to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. I do hope that the hon. Minister will take early steps to see that it applies to Jammu and Kashmir also.

AN HON. MEMBER. It does apply even now.

SHRI I K GUJRAL. I am glad that it does apply and so I hope the next Report will give us details about Jammu and Kashmir also.

I would have gone in a different order in my talk today, but after hearing the hon. Member Shri A. D. Mani's plea about our going to the USA for newsprint, I am tempted to address myself to the newsprint problem first. Mr. Mani wants us to go to the United States of America and plead with them in the name of democracy, that it should be saved through the supply of newsprint to us, although they have already done enough for democracy through their Patton tanks. He also wishes to have this 10,000 tonnes of newsprint which was to come under the treaty which was to be signed. But that treaty is not yet signed and for no other reason than that we had gone in defence of democracy and against Pakistan. He should not forget, Madam, that the Canadian supply of six thousand tons has not come, in addition to the five hundred and fifty tons seized by Pakistan from various ships. So, at the instance of the biggest saviour of democracy we are short by sixteen thou-

[Shri I K Gujral]

sand tonnes of newsprint While he asks us to go and plead to them, and ask them to save democracy he also should not forget that we are not poor by this amount only Compared to this, the Soviet Union supplies to this country approximately forty-one thousand tonnes of newsprint He is a very wise man and let him not forget that whether it is the United States of America or the USSR or the United Kingdom and whether it is a matter of the supply of Patton Tanks or the supply of newsprint, all these are done on the basis of a very broad policy which those Governments follow Mr Mani has been one of those leaders of this country who have been talking to some representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States of America who have visited this country I had the opportunity of hearing him speak in one such meeting and telling them bluntly how hurt we were about the attitude taken up by those Government when we were aggressed against but all this has made no difference to those Governments and the representatives of those Governments whether travelling here or speaking elsewhere, tried to pose as if they were very innocent and said that they did not know, that it was the failure of communication which made them misunderstand India's position *vis-a-vis* Pakistan I think this is one such subject on which much could be said but I will not use this occasion for this purpose I will only ask Mr Mani to keep himself clear about the intentions of these saviours of democracy

Madam, since I am talking about newsprint which has been short and which is going to be short for some time more I would like to say that the time has come when some voluntary measures should be taken by the newspaperwallas They should see to it that the advertisement space which in some cases comes to about sixty per cent is reduced Apart from this, they issue supplements on the inauguration of this or that hotel, this or that shop, this trade and that all

of which are of no interest to the reader but which consume newsprint Sometimes we get what are called week-end supplements publishing what the stars foretell, what the birthday forecasts are I hope conscientious newspaper editor like Mr Mani will use their good offices to see that in the national interest some restriction is put on the use of newsprint in this way

(Interruption)

SHRI A D MANI The politicians read that column not the general public The politicians are anxious to know what the stars foretell

SHRI I K GUJRAL I am glad that Mr Mani's paper caters to the politicians here and he in Parliament caters to the politicians elsewhere I would like these papers to cater to the public also

I want to draw attention to another matter which is very important The Industry Ministry should pay more attention to the production of paper in this country, whether it is ordinary printing paper or newsprint It is high time that this industry received a higher priority than what it is getting today I know, Madam, that you have given me little time and so I will not repeat what Mr Khandekar has said The readership in this country is very small We understand from the Report that it is about twelve per thousand compared to five hundred and six in the United Kingdom I know that literacy is low but I hope Mr Khandekar remembers that even in respect of literacy which is twentysix per cent, compared to that the readership is little The type of education that is given perhaps does not arouse enough curiosity and urge for general knowledge in the people to make people read newspapers whatever they are, good, bad or indifferent I am glad as Mr Mani pointed out, that the smaller newspapers are doing good Ninetytwo per cent are those which have a circulation figure below five thousand and seventytwo per cent have a circulation below ten thousand This is the



group which should be encouraged and Mr. Mani will agree with me that if this group is encouraged there will be different trend among the thinking public. My friend sitting next to me, Mr. Gurudev, who is interested in these newspapers, has been asking me as to what the Government should do. The thing is—here it is easier said than done—that if we could make the supply of newsprint easier, it would help. And, all these smaller newspapers could be recognised as small-scale industry in respect of finance and loans. This will help in a considerable way.

I feel that the role of the P.I.B. in respect of the smaller newspapers should be reorientated. The P.I.B. today passes on some write ups and some background data but I think the P.I.B. could have a special wing specialising in smaller newspapers and materials for them. This will be a very good and a unique service to the smaller newspapers and this could be very well utilised because you must keep in mind the fact that a very big percentage of the smaller newspapers are not in a position to subscribe to the usual newsagencies and if the P.I.B. becomes a different and more attractive organ, it will be very useful not only for the furtherance of the cause of smaller newspapers but also for helping the growth of healthier journalism in this nation.

I also feel that the Director of Audio-Visual Publicity should reorientate his policies so far as giving advertisements to smaller newspapers is concerned. Mr. Arjun Arora was right in pleading for something more vital and something more intense to be done so that all the money does not get spent this way.

I now come to what the Report calls monopolistic newspapers. My friend, Mr. Mani, feels that it should be called concentration of newspapers and I shall prefer to use that word. I think something should be done about these. Madam, I am glad there has been some fall in the readership of the

metropolitan newspapers outside the metropolitan area. This is a safeguard, I think, against the monopoly readership and concentration. A point was made by my friend, Mr. Bhargava, that there has been a fall in the monopolistic trends in the last two years. I am sorry I am unable to accept the contention. Even if the number has fallen by two, this does not mean a reversal of the trend and let us not come to this conclusion that there is a fall in the monopolistic trend in ownership of the newspapers. I am also unhappy that another type of concentration has come, that of the Communist Party. This Report does not tell us in detail as to how many papers are owned by the Left Communist Party of India and this analysis would be very useful to know how the thinking is being influenced. We must keep in mind the very big danger that is, on the one side the monopolistic control of the newspapers combined with the control of the newsagencies and on the other side Communist ownership of newspapers. This is such a serious polarisation that this nation will have to think about it . . .

SHRI A. D. MANI: They do not have much circulation, whatever be the number of papers they may have.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: I would like to have this exchange with Mr. Mani but my time is short now.

I am quite keen, Madam, that this monopolistic trend should be curbed and I do not know if it is advisable for us to refer it to the Monopolies Commission but I think it should be because it needs a very detailed study and all the remedies that have been suggested so far have failed. I feel that not only the question of monopoly ownership of organs of public opinion by the owning of newspapers but also the controlling of newsagencies should be looked into because it is in the ownership of the newsagencies, I feel, that the big mischief is being committed. It is high time that we did something about it. I also feel Madam, that we should said bet-

[Shri I. K. Gujral]

ween these two specific trends which this Report has indicated. We can find a via media only by encouraging the working journalists about whom a Bill is pending before this House. I had suggested certain changes in the service conditions of the working journalists. I had suggested the increase of the age limit to sixty-five. I do not know when that Bill will come for discussion here but I hope the Government will accept this and take more effective steps to improve the working conditions of the working journalists, strengthen the smaller newspapers and—I would like to end by saying this—by spreading radio and television more. These are mass media which I think have a wider coverage and I think radio can become more effective if a concentrated attempt is made on the production of cheaper radios.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mariswamy, I have called on Mr. Mariswamy. That will do. Mr. Mariswamy, if you keep to five minutes you will have a chance to say something.

SHRI S. S. MARISWAMY (Madras): After having heard the heavy firing, of course verbal, of Mr. Arjun Arora, I do not think I have very many points to dwell upon. I rise to speak for the small and language newspapers which are the worst sufferers today. Madam, many of the previous speakers have dealt with more graphically about their difficulties in getting newsprint quota. It looks as if it is easier for us to summon the God before us than to get a reply from the Registrar of Newspapers especially on matters pertaining to newsprint quota. I know many instances where my colleagues in Madras have written and written a number of letters, even registered letters, applying for quotas but they have not even had the ordinary acknowledgement. That is point No. 1.

Secondly, in regard to advertisements I must say that the policy followed by the I & B Ministry is not above criticism. They give advertise-

ments to small newspapers, especially Opposition papers and

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: May I ask the hon. Member to give one instance?

SHRI S. S. MARISWAMY: I can give you a number of instances, I can give you volumes. Madam, as I said, it is not above criticism. They give once in a while a few inches of advertisements to the Opposition papers and at the same time they load the ruling party papers with full-page advertisements. This is a policy—I do not blame any particular Minister for it—which has found a permanent place in the Ministry and the Ministry must come forward to change it, especially now at this time of emergency when they call for unity, national integration and all that.

The third point—I am cutting down my speech to the bare minimum, Madam,—is about the application of the DIR over newspapers. This is the time when the Government should think twice, if not a hundred and one times, before they apply the DIR on newspapers. I come from a State, Madras, where this DIR is used most indiscriminately. There are a number of papers that are being persecuted now. I would only give the names of those papers and their history. *Murasoli* is a Tamil daily paper edited by no less a person than the Deputy Leader of the DMK Party. He is a very prominent person and that paper is now under DIR.

SHRI A. D. MANI: What did he publish?

SHRI S. S. MARISWAMY: That was over a small item of news. Madam, I am also a journalist, if not like Mr. Mani of 30 years' standing, of 25 years standing. I have worked as Sub-Editor during the worst days when the British were ruling the country and I know how they applied the DIR but now, Madam, I should say with shame that this Government's application of the DIR is much worse than it was before.

Madam, you must have heard of *Swadesamitran* which is one of the oldest papers of India and I am sure the hon Deputy Minister Mr Pattabhi Raman would know about it much more than me. That paper is older than the Congress organisation itself and it has stood as a sentinel at the time when we were waging a bitter fight with the British. That paper is also subjected to DIR. Then there are two papers, they are non-political and they do not belong to any particular party. Simply because they published a news item which was unsavoury to the Minister concerned they are persecuted. They are *Dina Thanthi* and *Malai Murasu*. Then there is another paper *Nava Mani*. That is a paper that was started by the working journalists on a co-operative basis. The shares were subscribed to by the working journalists and they started it on their own. It is a very good paper. As a journalist I can say it is an impartial paper and it is above these small prejudices. But today this is also subjected to persecution. The last paper is *Malai Mani*, a weekly paper. I do not know much about its stand on certain matters but I know it is a well-edited illustrated weekly, a largely circulated DMK weekly of Madras. That is also under DIR. So I would request the Government at this critical time don't use this DIR on newspaper editors whose co-operation is as essential as that of any of your Congress leaders. It is most important. These papers go to every nook and corner of the country. You might get very good publicity in big papers like *The Times of India*, the *Hindustan Times* or the *Indian Express* but I tell you they don't reach the mofussil places. Even the Report of the Registrar says that the circulation of the metropolitan papers has fallen so far as mofussil places are concerned. It also gives the figure, it says that it has fallen nearly by two per cent. What does it indicate? It indicates, according to me, that the present economic policy of the Government lays more emphasis on urban areas than on rural areas. There is an exodus of population from

rural areas to urban areas and the Pandits of Bhubaneswar Democratic Socialism should ponder over this. Gandhiji said that the heart of India lies not in metropolitan areas but in the rural areas. These protagonists who are styling themselves as great Democratic Socialists should ponder over this fact. I tell you if this trend continues, after some time the villages would look completely depleted and desolate. Every man has to come over here, as every newspaper editor has to come over here, Delhi, all the way covering 1,000 to 1,200 miles to get a reply from this great Registrar. He appears to me—what shall I say—as the God deciding the fate and destiny of the working journalists.

SHRI A D MANI For newspapers he is

SHRI S S MARISWAMY Yes, he is unfortunately

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN Your time is over

SHRI S S MARISWAMY I am finishing, Madam. I would request our hon Minister in whose judgment and fair mindedness I have got full confidence to see that she does something to remove these handicaps that I have pointed out.

Thank you Madam

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN Mr Kumaran be brief please

SHRI P K KUMARAN Madam Deputy Chairman. I agree with Mr Bhargava that this year's Report is slightly different from the usual thing that we used to get. There is more flesh in this year's Report and more information relevant to the newspaper industry. But regarding the monopoly ownership of newspapers for years we have been hearing criticism and this year the Report contents itself by saying that we have arrested the growth of circulation of such newspapers. I think that is not enough because the growth of circulation number alone is not the criterion for

[Shri P. K. Kumaran.]  
such newspapers may have started new newspapers also. Incidentally there is a lot of confusion and controversy over what is monopoly ownership of newspapers? Mr. Mani has given us a rather simple but misleading interpretation of monopoly ownership.

SHRI A. D. MANI: I said about monopoly readership. Concentration is there.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Any-way you take it the way you want.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: The Press Registrar also has referred to one paper *Sot* in Konkani language with a circulation of 1900 and a monopoly of 100 per cent. This is not real monopoly. Monopoly in ownership of newspaper is there when there is intertwining of the industrial capital with the newspaper capital. If you analyse the major shareholders of the Bennett Coleman, the Hindustan Times and other combines you will find that the United Commercial Bank is one shareholder, Mr. G. D. Birla is one shareholder and again the Birla Jute Mills is another shareholder and so on. The industrial capitalists also hold a major share in the newspapers and that is called monopoly ownership of newspapers; not when you find a paper in a language which has not even a script with, as my hon. friend suggested, a circulation of 300. That is not monopoly ownership; it is a complete misunderstanding of the situation. Monopoly ownership helps them through these means to control the opinion of the people or rather restrict free opinion. They have got ample freedom to express their opinion but they restrict the democratic freedom by limiting the scope available to the people for expressing their opinions. It is not surprising to find sometimes one Manager of a rural sugar mill coming and becoming the Manager of a modern newspaper in the city and bringing with him all the crude rural understandings of management.

Regarding the small newspapers, it is the duty of the Government to see that the small newspapers which are owned by small trusts or small organisations are developed, but in such cases the paper quota itself has become a problem. Many hon. Members have referred to it. It is very difficult for them to get newsprint quota. Such papers have got to be given subsidies. They have got to be helped by other means also. Advertisement is a problem. If you see the balance-sheets of some of the big papers, you will find that Rs. 41 lakhs is the income from circulation and Rs. 48 lakhs is the income from advertisement. In the case of the small papers you will find that Rs. 10,000 is the income from circulation and Rs. 500 is the income from advertisement. Even the Government do not take kindly to such small papers. They do not give their own advertisements to the small papers which reach the common masses. So, if the Government takes a positive policy towards smaller papers, they can encourage such smaller papers which reach the villages, the poor masses, papers which are sold at a small price. Papers like the "Statesman", the "Times of India" or "The Hindu" can buy the whole country. "The Hindu" can buy an aeroplane to deliver their newspapers.

SHRI A. D. MANI: They have bought it.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: They have.

SHRI A. D. MANI: Oh, 'Yes'.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: So, such papers do not require help. Yet Government advertisements, in large numbers, go only to such papers on the plea that they have got a larger reading public. It is not a question of a larger reading public. Suppose a small paper goes to a village. Hundreds of people read it. In the Panchayat Board office if a paper comes, many people read it. One man will be reading it, while ten or fifteen persons will be listening to it. So, it is

such papers which have got to be encouraged by the Government and it is quite exactly there the Government is lacking.

Regarding newsprint Mr. Mani has given a wonderful suggestion, that we must import it from America.

SHRI A. D. MANI: They are prepared to give it.

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN: He has withdrawn it.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: Here I am against importing anything from America, leave alone newsprint. One factor is there. Newsprint is in short supply. Newsprint has got to be treated as an essential commodity. Unless these small papers are given ample quota, the readers of small papers, that means, the people at large will not be in a position to understand things, express their opinion, write their opinion on all these things. So, the newspaper quota available . . .

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Newsprint available.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: Thank you. Newsprint is a very essential thing. One or two years back, I think one year back, there was a case in Calcutta where a big newspaper was caught selling newsprint in the black market.

SHRI A. D. MANI: Which paper was that?

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: I think the "Hindustan Standard" . . .

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN: Do not mention names.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: Whatever it is, one paper was caught. Now, it continues. I know for certain that small newspapers go to the big newspapers for purchasing the newsprint which they have got. This is how by buying in the black market from the big papers the smaller papers are now living. This tendency has got to

be stopped and the Government will have to take special care to see that newsprint is treated as an emergency item, as an essential item. Either you produce it here or you bring it from rupee payment countries or from whatever source it is available. (Interruption) It may be from any country, but it should be made available. It should be treated on a par with food.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Your time is up. The Minister must have time to reply.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: I had occasion to criticise and point out certain irregularities in the hand-outs put out by the PIB while speaking on foreign publicity. Recently I have seen a news item where the hon. Minister has given a clean chit to a large number of foreign correspondents who have come to this country during the India Pakistan conflict. I have also heard complaints mainly voiced, and perhaps inspired, by the American or British representatives in India where it was complained that the PIB had not treated them well. They gave them only cocktail parties, but no dinner parties where these things or information could be exchanged in a heart to heart manner. There were also complaints that they were not taken to the front or they were not told about things. But I know an instance where some foreign correspondents, twenty of them, were taken to Amritsar and shown where Pakistan had bombed the civilian areas, but none of the correspondents had reported that incident in any of the foreign newspapers.

SHRI A. D. MANI: That is true.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: I have also heard complaints from Indian correspondents that they were given a cold shoulder and they were not treated properly. When a question is put, it is the foreign correspondent who is given preference in giving replies and not the Indian correspondent.

SHRI N. M. ANWAR (Madras): It is done as a matter of courtesy.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: Whether it is courtesy or not, it is done. These gentlemen did not do justice and they do not serve the purpose for which they were taken there. On their return they did not report it. This time our Embassies and Missions have done very efficient work. Usually they are not noted for such distinction, but this time without any discrimination, they have been good. A number of people landed here. I do not know exactly for what purpose they were here. I understand they managed to take photos, but they were given back, without being inspected. Anyway, I would like to know from the hon. Minister what exactly is the position, while they had treated them properly, our own correspondents had been neglected. These things I would like to know. She has given them a clean chit. That is what I read some days ago.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I am afraid, Mr. Kumaran, you will have to wind up. You may use less points because there is one more Member to speak.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: Lastly, in the Laccadives, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, NEFA, Himachal Pradesh, etc., territories administered by the Central Government they have no newspapers. So, I consider that it is the duty of the Government to see that newspapers are started. Financial assistance should be given. The Government should encourage the starting of co-operative societies or some such thing, so that newspapers are started. I hope the Minister will take all these things into consideration.

Thank you.

SHRI D. THENGARI (Uttar Pradesh): Madam, I welcome the changes that have been introduced in the Report this year. I, however, feel that there is still some scope for improve-

ment in the next edition. To cite just one example this Report informs us that the combined circulation of the foreign mission publications was 9.35 lakhs. The total number of such publications is 74. The country-wise break-up of the circulation would be necessary, as well as helpful, particularly because there is great disparity in the numbers of publications in different countries. The country-wise break-up of circulation would help us in ascertaining, though roughly, their respective spheres of influence.

Yet another change that I should like to suggest is this. In the next report we should be furnished with a separate break-up of publications of the Left Communists, the SSP, etc. Now, the pattern of ownership is very important and it has been rightly said that ownership influences the presentation of news and views. The circulation of the common ownership papers has increased and the trend towards monopoly is obvious. The big business houses that run newspapers are as strong, if not stronger, today as they ever had been. While I cannot suggest that article 19 of the Constitution should be scrapped, I do suggest that we must encourage through all possible measures the trust form of ownership of newspapers. Newspapers and news agencies started by co-operative societies should also be given greater facilities and financial aid.

Regarding newsprint, I am constrained to say that, apart from the import difficulties, we have not yet been able to evolve a rational basis for the allocation of newsprint to different papers. It is well known that very often bloated figures of circulation as furnished by the papers from the basis of allocation of newsprint. Recently in the name of crisis 5,000 tonnes of newsprint had been distributed by the Government to papers. It was a good gesture because our press played a very important role during this emergency. Their performance was splendid, but the

distribution of newsprint was made in an arbitrary fashion with no reference to the comparative figures of actual circulation. The quota of newsprint is based on the circulation figures of 1962. What would be the fate of papers that have increased their circulation during the intervening period? Should they be strangled on account of the rigidity of this rule? While we cannot rely too much upon the imported newsprint, it is necessary that we must increase our indigenous production. It would be advisable that for this purpose we should impose restrictions upon the profits of our paper mill owners. In the name of emergency they are making huge profits. The quantum of paper produced in India justifies relief to consumers through the reduction in the prices of papers. This can be done only by limiting the profits of the proprietors. This will help us considerably in bridging over or overcoming the difficulties of newsprint.

Banning obscene publications is yet another measure that can be helpful in this direction. Personally I feel that these obscene publications create moral confusion in the public even as Chinese Communists create political confusion.

Today there is a great emphasis on self-sufficiency. I think that there should be self-sufficiency in the matter of printing machinery and printing equipment also. Appropriate measures should be adopted in this direction.

It had been assured times without number that there would be no discrimination on political grounds in the matter of disbursement of advertisement and that the standing and the position of the papers would be the sole criterion of disbursement. But this has not been followed, and it is necessary that we strictly adhere to our advertisement policy.

Language papers and language news agencies should be given greater

support. Though the Supreme Court has given a verdict adverse to the introduction of the Price Page Schedule . .

**THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** You will have to wind up now. Only salient points you can give now.

**SHRI D. THENGARI:** I must say that small papers must be given adequate protection.

It is also necessary that we must have our own correspondents abroad. Today the P.T.I. and the U.N.I. have arrangement with certain foreign news agencies, but this makes us look at the events abroad through foreign eyes. I think some arrangement has to be made so that the bigger news agencies are facilitated to appoint correspondents in distant countries and the smaller news agencies in the neighbouring countries particularly in South East Asia, and for this purpose appropriate aid should come forward from the Government.

The working journalists have been totally neglected in this report. Also the non-working journalists deserve special attention. The Press Trust of India which is by far the biggest news agency of the land is not doing justice to its employees. Their pay scales and working conditions are far from being satisfactory and it is necessary that the Government must come forward so as to transform the P.T.I. into a public corporation and give representation to the employees of the P.T.I. on the managing body or Board of Directors. It is also necessary to give further interim relief to the working journalists and non-working journalist employees because after the last interim relief there has been an increase in the cost of living index number. Thank you.

**THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI-MATI INDIRA GANDHI):** Madam Deputy Chairman, I wish to express my thanks for the appreciation which the hon. Members have shown for this

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report. I am fully aware that the report is not perfect and that we have still to improve in many directions and specially in the two matters that seem to be of the deepest concern to the Members: one is control of concentration of ownership and the second is with regard to the amount of newsprint available.

If we take the term "monopolies" in its legal sense, we are told that monopolies do not exist in the newspaper industry. But I fully realise that we have to look at this matter from a much wider point of view. In fact I should like to quote Mr. Felix Frankfurter, a Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States—which is quoted in the Press Commission Report—when he remarks, "the fact that the shrinkage in the number of newspaper owners is not the product of evil design but largely attributable to economic and technological influences does not lessen the implications of the trend." "Concentration of press ownership", he says, "is a world-wide trend, which attests the complexity of the problem and the obduracy of its solution". This matter was referred to the Monopolies Commission but they have refused to deal with it saying that it does not come within their purview. Now within the restrictions of the Constitution we are trying to do whatever we can and, as had been stated on the floor of the House on an earlier occasion, we hope that the proposed Press Council will be able to deal with this matter more successfully than we have been able to do.

Many questions have been raised by hon. Members. One was about the allotment of newsprint to some of these bigger newspapers. We have with considerable difficulty been trying at least to see that they do not expand any further. It would of course have been better if we had curbed them more, but I think this by itself is a step in the right direction. For instance, I am told that the Chittor Edition of the "Indian

Express" was transferred partly to Madras and partly to Bangalore. We did not give any additional quota of newsprint for either of these editions.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Can they do so?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: So it seems. We have no power to stop a person changing his place of business.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: You could check the bifurcation, one paper becoming two papers by shifting to two places.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: Was any check made of the circulation of both editions? Did the circulation of both these editions remain equivalent to the circulation of one edition or was it more? So far as my information goes the circulation was much more. That shows that they have not only transferred the quota of their edition to the other edition but they have pooled from other sources. That goes to justify the version of Mr. Arora that the circulation in their other edition was less and that they have transferred this quota to that.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: They are obviously playing with newsprint. About the same newspaper I am told that they failed to bring out eight more dailies in 1962 owing to our refusal to sanction extra newsprint.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: Their attitude seems to be, let the Government of India do what they like. That is an open challenge.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Let us hope that the Press Council will be able to go into these matters in greater detail.

SHRI A. D. MANI: Madam, I would like to ask the Minister what is the total entitlements of newspaper for both the editions in terms of tonnes? Could she give us some information?



SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: We will let you know later.

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN: It is not the question hour.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: We do not prosecute any paper for failure to supply copies to us, as one Member, Shri Arjun Arora, I think, mentioned. But we do not make a reduction in the entitlement of newsprint if the paper fails to satisfy us with the information that is wanted in regard to its regularity of publication. Prosecution takes place only if the paper fails to supply the annual statement in regard to ownership, circulation, etc. This is a statutory obligation under the PRB Act. Even here, the papers are dealt with very leniently and after a show-cause notice is given.

Another Member—I think Shri Bhargava, but I am not sure—made a point about Government journals being printed on newsprint. Now, it is only one journal in 15 languages—which is a journal of the All India Radio; 'Akash Vani' it is called—which is printed in newsprint. All the rest of our publications are on white paper. Even in regard to these journals, we have now been told that newsprint will not be available, which will, of course, make it more expensive for their publication.

Now, the other points made are mainly about the small newspaper. This matter has been under consideration for a fairly long time and the Ministry is deeply concerned and wishes to do whatever it can to encourage the smaller newspapers, realising that these are the newspapers which will serve the common people and which should ultimately have the largest circulation. It is true that their circulation is not large at present and certainly we want to help any way we can. The House is aware that a Committee was formed of which Shri Mani is a distinguished member, and their Report has come in. But it is still being considered. And we shall certainly look into it in great detail and

see what could be done because we realise that the small newspaper is not merely an industry, but it is essential to the effective functioning of our democracy. We also feel that it will help to encourage opinions and it can play a very user part in forming public opinion in the rural areas especially, to which all of you have given so much importance.

I would like just to say a few words about newsprint. I know that there is great criticism about newsprint but due to the foreign exchange shortage. I am afraid we can not do very much about this except to try to cut out and have as fair a distribution as possible in the circumstances. The import has to be kept strictly within the ceiling sanctioned every year and this year particularly the situation is very grave indeed. Newspaper with an annual entitlement of 40 metric tonnes or less are exempted from the payment of licence fee, production of income-tax verification number. Those with a circulation of less than 2,000 copies are also exempted from the production of Chartered Accountant's Certificate in regard to their circulation. We were given a ceiling for the import of 99,450 metric tonnes of newsprint which is 2,000 metric tonnes more than the last year. Out of this, 41,000 metric tonnes are to come from the rupee area the balance from Canada, Finland and the Scandinavian countries. About 15,000 metric tonnes are expected from the NEPA Mills. The Ministry of Industry has made available to us 31,000 metric tonnes including 5,000 metric tonnes specially sanctioned to meet the increased demand of newspapers during the time of Pakistani aggression and I am glad to mention—and the House will appreciate—the very good work which the newspapers did during this period.

Shri Gujral pointed out that at least nine of the newspapers had lost newsprint which has been ordered from various parts of the world and which has been kept back by Pakistan. Now,

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this seizure of newsprint is going to cause considerable difficulty to the newspapers. And towards the beginning of the next financial year, I am afraid that unless steps are taken for the conservation of newsprint to the greatest extent possible, the situation will be an extremely difficult one. This indicates the need for some immediate voluntary cuts in the consumption by newspapers and periodicals. As the Minister mentioned at the time of the Press Council Bill, many of these things cannot be imposed by Government; it is a question of the Press people themselves getting together and seeing what is in their own larger interests and in the interests of the country. We are allotting additional quantities of white printing paper to fill in the gap. But, as you all know, this is very much more expensive than newsprint and therefore we try to give more newsprint to the smaller newspapers and allot the white printing paper to the larger newspapers.

Some complaints have been made about the allotment of white printing paper and also about the delay or rather the complete absence of replies. I am sorry, but the person concerned in our Ministry says that applications for quota are often incomplete and unaccompanied by the necessary documents. This contributes to the delay in sanctioning the quotas. So, I hope, if you know of any cases where a reply has not gone, you would check up; and we will also look into them and see what can be done.

With regard to the probe, as hon. Members have pointed out, this is again a difficult problem because of the lack of information which is willingly given. It is quite true, as Shri Bhargava said, that having only two teams is a disadvantage, and we should certainly do whatever we can to try and increase this number. And as the Deputy Minister points out to me during the recent circulation probe we have been able to save Rs. 12 lakhs in foreign exchange by cutting down the quota of newsprint given to certain newspapers. But there

is a need for further tightening up of this work and procedure.

Much was said as to whether the word 'monopoly' should be used or the word 'concentration' should be used. This morning a friend who belongs to the newspaper world has suggested a new word—I am not quite sure whether it exists in the dictionary—it is 'oligopoly' which means a few people or a group having the same interests. I mean, they are the people who hold the . . .

SHRI A. D. MANI: 'Heavy concentration' is better.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: It does not matter; by whatever name you call it, we should not have that disease.

Some hon. Members made points about advertisements and so on. This does not really come within the purview of the Registrar of Newspapers, it is quite another Department of the Ministry.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: That Department does not submit a Report. So, we cannot discuss the activities of that Department.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Well, we can go into this on some other occasion.

Also, we have really nothing to do with the DIR, which hon. Members appreciate. While I am fully in favour of granting freedom of expression, I think that everybody should appreciate that in times of war or national emergency, one should not try to create a point of view which might create confusion in the public mind or which would weaken the unity of the people about which the hon. Member was speaking, I am told that certain newspapers adopted a line which created disturbance in the public. I know that I myself have received many letters from the South complaining about some of the view points expressed in these newspapers.

One very good point made by Mr. Thengari is about the encouragement

co-operatives and trusts of newspapers. Members will perhaps remember that this form of ownership was suggested by the Press Commission also, and certainly the Ministry will encourage this. I think this is the best way of avoiding concentration because it is extremely difficult in the present circumstances for an individual to bring out a successful paper because such large funds are required. The same applies to party newspapers.

Somebody made a comment about the large number of Congress Party newspapers. They mostly suffer from lack of funds and lack of organisation which today the newspaper industry seems to find necessary.

The percentage of the form of ownership by individuals is 57.3 and of societies and associations 20.2.

SHRI P. K. KUMARAN: Mr. Mani wanted information regarding the quota of Indian Express.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: We are trying to get it for you. If it does not come now, we can let Mr. Mani have it later on.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA (Maharashtra): May I know, Madam, if the hon. Minister is aware of the difficulties faced by newspapers. We shall be glad to know the views of the hon. Minister regarding Government advertisements which could be given to the small newspapers. It is equally important. We shall be happy to know the views of the hon. Minister regarding Government advertisements to be given to small newspapers.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: There are certain rules with regard to advertisements and the Government have been following those rules. It may be that those rules are not satisfactory and we need to go into them again. I mentioned earlier that the Diwakar Enquiry Committee went into the question of small newspapers. A report has come. But we have

not yet had time to fully study it. It is under consideration of the Government. As soon as we go into it, I think we will have better answers to some of these questions that have been asked with regard to small newspapers. It would not be fair on my part to mention it now.

With regard to the quota of the Indian Express group, it is roughly between 800 and 1,000 tonnes. But the matter is still *sub judice*.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL: Madam, Will the Diwakar Committee report be discussed here?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: At some later stage perhaps.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: As I could not get my time in the discussion, may I ask one question of the hon. Minister? How does she feel about introducing the price-page schedule which was in use some time back by bringing a Bill in Parliament as it is sure to solve this problem? Secondly, how does she feel that the big papers, whose circulation is, so to say, above 50,000 copies, and whose annual profits run into lakhs, may be asked to utilise cent per cent. white printing paper instead of newsprint in order to save foreign exchange?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Unfortunately, the white printing paper is also not available in unlimited quantities. As far as any kind of paper is concerned, we are in a difficult situation.

With regard to the price-page schedule I have expressed my views on the floor of this House on an earlier occasion.

As you know, this was struck down by the Supreme Court, I believe, the Diwakar Committee has suggested this again. I would make a suggestion. It was struck down on the ground that it was introduced by the Government. But if it is taken up as a voluntary measure or on the advice

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of the Press Council, perhaps it would be possible for this to go thorough. But many of the bigger newspapers are very much against it as I am sure Mr. Mani is aware.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: They are interested in cut-throat competition. It is a question of survival of the fittest, survival of the bigger fish in the waters. They want to devour the smaller fish.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Actually the newspapers have themselves supported the move during the last war. But for some reason afterwards they went back on this. However, as I said, I hope these matters can be taken up by the Press Council when it is formed.

(Shri Gurudev Gupta rose in his seat)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gupta, you cannot now make a speech every half a minute

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: I doubt if I have made a speech.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But what is your point that you want to make every now and then? You are interrupting the Minister. Whatever question you want to put, please put.

SHRI GURUDEV GUPTA: I wanted to ask of the hon Minister one thing. She said earlier that the newspaper owners did not co-operate with the Government by accepting the price-page schedule. Now this is our national Government and we are living in a democratic set-up now. What is the difficulty for the newspapers in not co-operating at this critical juncture when we are faced with double aggression by China and Pakistan? If the newspapers are not ready to co-operate, then what is the difficulty in bringing forward a Bill? The sense of the House may be taken.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Government will have to appoint another Commission

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: The difficulty is the question of fundamental rights. As I said earlier, it was the Supreme Court which struck down this introduction of the price-page schedule by the Government. Now these changed circumstances, we can perhaps approach all the newspapers and try to persuade them. But as we have seen in many other directions persuasion has not got us far. In this matter I think it is best to leave it to the Press Council and if they can get something done, probably it can come again in some form to the House.

(Interruptions)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think the Minister should now uninterruptedly be allowed to finish her comments.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Madam Deputy Chairman, I have really met all the points which hon. Members have raised except one point which, again, was a little irrelevant to the issue here. It was about my remarks regarding foreign correspondents. As usual, I was not quoted quite correctly in the newspapers. I did not absolve every foreign correspondent from this. But I did say that it was not fair to blame every one either. Some have tried to send objective reports, some have not. Also it was a question of taking action against them. I said that this matter had to be watched and considered now from the long-term interest of the country. Does it help us to throw somebody out? Will that give us better propaganda coverage in this country, or will it not? We have to look at it from a much wider point of view. This was the remark which I had made. Naturally individual cases are taken up and if somebody's behaviour is considered objectionable enough for him to be sent out of the country or penalised in any other manner, certainly that matter should be looked into.

I think I have made most of the points made by hon. Members. I can see everybody getting very impatient

So I will close now. I once again thank Members for the interest which they have taken in this matter and indeed in matters concerned with the Ministry I want also to assure them that the suggestions which they have given or are likely to give in the future will always be welcomed and given the coldest consideration. Thank you

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA: Madam Deputy Chairman, I am very grateful to the hon Members who have taken part in today's discussion. I am also grateful to the hon. Minister for removing some of the doubts. She said about the circulation probe. Well, I feel that the powers given to the investigating officers are very inadequate and something has to be done if you want to control the distribution of newsprint. What I would suggest is that the Ministry may consider the question of bringing a Bill for giving powers on the lines of the powers given to the Income-tax Officers in regard to the probe about the circulation figures. Unless that is done, we have to be at the mercy of the newspapers to give such figures as are available with them and that too willingly, as was rightly remarked by the hon Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

I would like to give a caution also and that is that we should not be

complacent as far as the working of the office of the Press Registrar is concerned. There can be no complaints because, the powers given to the Press Registrar are too many and if they are not judiciously used, it can end in a chaos. Besides the powers used by him under the Press Registrar's Act, he has also the power of distributing newsprint quota. He has the power of giving authorisation for the NEPA newsprint. He has the power of giving release of paper from the State Trading Corporation. He has also the power of recommending the quotas for the machinery and other goods and he has also the powers for giving permission for the use of white printing paper.

The House will see that all these powers are too great to be concentrated in one man. Therefore, it is very necessary that these powers are used very very judiciously and discreetly.

Thank you

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned till 11 A.M. tomorrow.

The House then adjourned at twenty-two minutes past five of the clock till eleven of the clock on Thursday, the 18th November 1965