

WARNING TO NEWSPAPERS UNDER D.I.R.

SHRI A. D. MANI: †

*103 { SHRI A. B. VAJPAYEE;
 { SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that four newspapers were recently warned by Government under the Defence of India Rules; and

(b) if so, what are the names of those newspapers and the circumstances in which warning was administered to them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI R. M. HAJARNAVIS): (a) and (b) Three dailies, "Pratap", "Veer Arjun" and "Indian Express" and a weekly "Blitz", were administered warnings on the 30th September, 1963|1st October, 1963 by Government for having published in these papers prejudicial reports as defined in the Defence of India Rules 1962, but as it was subsequently decided by Government to re-consider the matter, these warnings were withdrawn on the 8th October, 1963.

SHRI A. D. MANI: I would like to know what procedure the Government adopts before administering the warning to a newspaper. Is the editor of the newspaper asked to come here and tender his explanation, if any, for what he has published, or is the matter judged on what the newspaper publishes and the man concerned is not given an opportunity of stating his case?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: The procedure has now been altered, and in accordance with the new procedure

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri A. D. Mani.

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a show-cause notice is issued and the party concerned or the editor of the newspaper concerned is given an opportunity to come and explain, and after that it is decided as to what further action should be taken. Before this new procedure has been evolved, the Committee, the Emergency Press Advisory Committee, took the view that it was not necessary in all cases to call the persons concerned, that it was left to their discretion.

SHRI B. D. KHOBARAGADE: May I know whether the hon. Minister is aware that some editors of newspapers—"Maratha" of Bombay and "Nav Bharat" of Nagpur—have been prosecuted under the Defence of India Rules? The "Nav Bharat" Editor was prosecuted because he published a story in the newspaper about the harassment of one police officer. If so, does it not mean that this is an infringement of the rights of the press and it curtails the freedom of the press? If so, may I know from the hon. Minister whether any instructions would be issued to the State Governments to see that the freedom of opinion, the freedom of the press is not curtailed under the pretext of the Defence of India Rules?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: This is a matter where the administration of the State Government is concerned, and general advice was given that the State Governments also should have similar Press Advisory Committees. Some of the State Governments have set up such Committees. These matters are dealt with by them.

SHRI A. B. VAJPAYEE: Is it a fact that the warnings to these papers have been withdrawn on legal advice as no opportunity was given to these papers to state their position before the warning was issued, and if so may I know whether similar warnings to other papers also will be withdrawn

and they will be given an opportunity to state their stand?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Sir, the question arose because the newspapers made a protest. Hitherto no such thing had happened and it was an informal arrangement, and as long as it was adhered to on a voluntary basis, it was well and good. But the moment the question arose we looked into it, and we felt, apart from the legal advice, that questions of this kind might arise, and we thought it was better that we gave a show cause notice. Now, as to the second question, about what is going to be done about the papers which had received warnings before, two of them have approached us and—after all warning is warning—if there is any purpose served in withdrawing it, we have no objection, but in the cases of these three papers in respect of which warnings were withdrawn, I may inform the hon. Members that action has again been started, that is, the next day they were called upon to show cause; on the same material, the same count, they are being called upon to explain. Therefore the matter is now being dealt with in a more formal way. Regarding these others I do not know whether they will prefer to have the warnings withdrawn and again a show cause notice issued.

SHRI A. B. VAJPAYEE: Is it not a fact that warning amounts to punishment and advertisements are also withdrawn?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Sir, it is not a part of this process. Independently anything may happen.

SHRI A. B. VAJPAYEE: My question has not been replied to. Is it not a fact that warning is also a sort of punishment and that from these papers, which are administered a warning the advertisements are also withdrawn?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Will Sir, it is; in fact it does happen.

SHRI A. D. MANI: I should like to ask more questions on the procedure, Sir. Is it a fact that after the warnings are administered, the fact is published in the newspapers, and has it occurred to the Home Minister that it is thoroughly unfair to the newspapers to publish the warnings without their explanations also? It is more or less a court judgement pronounced in the form of a press note that the Home Ministry has warned this paper. The paper does not have the chance to state its position. Does that procedure still obtain or has it been varied?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: I gave ample explanation to that, that now, in the first place . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The procedure has been changed.

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Yes, the procedure has been changed, and it is an elaborate procedure. A number of officers sit down and first have a view of the material, and if they reach the conclusion that there is something objectionable, then a show cause notice is issued. Then those people are called upon to explain. Then another set of officers sit and look into the explanation. After that the matter goes to the Press Advisory Committee. Therefore it is . . .

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: What does the withdrawal of the warning mean? Does it mean that the Government approve of what the papers have published, or does it only mean that the papers can resume the privilege of receiving Government advertisements on a liberal scale?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Warning is issued where a thing is not approved; otherwise, they would have issued a show cause notice the next day. Therefore it is not to be construed that way; it is only to set right any legal deficiency that might have existed.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: May I know, Sir, whether it is not a fact that the weekly journal in Tripura called

'Tripurar Katha' has been suppressed, not by dealing with the editor but by asking for a deposit of three thousand rupees from a co-operative printing press which was set up mainly to print this paper? May I know, Sir, whether it is also a fact that this was done because that paper published a letter to the editor in which a Congress leader was criticised? If so, is the Government going to modify this method of suppressing a paper by asking for such a heavy deposit from a small printing press as that?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: I have no information at the moment.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: He has not known of that case. Now may I know, Sir, whether it is not a fact that the matter was brought to the notice of the Home Ministry the Prime Minister and others concerned who were dealing with Tripura affairs at that time directly?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gupta, then you should have put a question separately. This is about four papers to which warnings were given and were subsequently withdrawn.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Personally I brought it to the notice of all concerned. Of course at that time this hon. Minister was not there—I concede that point—but the Ministry was there.

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: We can find out the facts if the hon. Member wants.

SHRI G. MURAHARI: Will the hon. Minister inform the House whether any instructions have been given to the State Governments regarding the misuse of this Defence of India Rule, while dealing with press and newspapers, in venting out political bias, because I have one concrete instance? There is a weekly 'Chaukhamba', which is a Socialist weekly

published from Indore, and the Madhya Pradesh Government is seeking to prosecute the editor, not because anything has been said which is prejudicial to the defence of India . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought your question was complete.

SHRI G. MURAHARI: May I know, Sir, whether any directions have been given to the State Governments not to use the Defence of India Rules for political purposes?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is whether directions have been given to the State Governments not to use the Defence of India Act for political purposes against the newspapers.

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: There is a set of principles laid down in the matter of newspaper material and there is certainly no question of any bias against any paper.

SHRI G. MURAHARI: I have cited a concrete case.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.

COMMON CURRICULUM FOR ALL UNIVERSITIES

*104. SHRIMATI DEVAKI GOPI-DAS: Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the Universities which have introduced Three Year Degree Course; and

(b) whether there is any accepted common curriculum and syllabus for all these Universities?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS (SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR): (a) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(b) No, Sir.