

[Mr. Deputy Chairman.]

The question is:

That the Rajya Sabha recommends to the Lok Sabha that the following amendment be made in the Income-tax Bill, 1961, as passed by the Lok Sabha, namely:—

28. 'That at page 177—

(a) after line 31, the following be inserted, namely:—

"(v) any person who has passed any accountancy examination recognised in this behalf by the Board; or

(vi) any person who has acquired such educational qualifications as the Board may prescribe for this purpose; or;

(b) in line 33, for the brackets and letter "(v)", the brackets and letters "(vii)" be substituted'.

The motion was adopted.

PANDIT HRIDAY NATH KUNZRU: Sir, I beg leave to withdraw amendment number 29.

**Amendment No. 29 was, by leave, withdrawn.*

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That clause 288, as amended, stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 288, as amended, was added to the Bill.

Clauses 289 to 298 were added to the Bill.

The Schedules, First to Fifth, were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI: Sir, I move:

**For text of amendment, vide col 2962 supra.*

"That the Bill, with the amendments recommended by the House, be returned."

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before we come to the next item, I have to inform Members that a discussion on the Finance Minister's Statement on the United Kingdom's decision to enter the European Economic Community will be taken up tomorrow at 3 P.M.

THE NEWSPAPER (PRICE AND PAGE) CONTINUANCE BILL, 1961

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (DR. B. V. KESKAR): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to continue the Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1956, as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFISUL HASAN) in the Chair.]

I do not want, at this stage, to say anything regarding the Newspaper (Price and Page) Act which was passed by this House after due consideration. The pros and cons of that legislation were considered fully by this House and the other House and it was passed on the 7th September, 1956. After due consideration, Government promulgated, according to the Act, the Price and Page Order, for the consideration of newspapers in 1957. In the meantime, the Supreme Court gave a verdict regarding the Wage Board, and in the course of its observations regarding that decision, it was felt that certain principles enunciated by the Supreme Court at that time were such that it might be better for us to wait and see how the Wage Board decisions are finally passed and implemented before proceeding to implement this Act. The Supreme Court had made certain observations regarding the economic consequences of Acts and decisions and their effect on the newspapers.

We felt that if the Price-Page Schedule was to work effectively, it would be better to wait and see how these things functioned before taking up the Price and Page Order. The recommendations of the Wage Committee took some time and that naturally also delayed the promulgation of any draft order. In 1958, the recommendations were published, and after studying the decisions of this Committee, the draft Price and Page Order was published in April, 1960. The comments of the newspapers were received regarding this draft order, and after carefully considering them and the objections raised thereon, the draft was revised and a second draft was published in August, 1960. This was also again discussed with the newspapers and after taking into consideration all the suggestions made, a final order was published on the 24th October, 1960. This order was to come into force in December, 1960, 12th December, in fact, but before the order could come into effect, a newspaper filed a writ petition against the Act and the order and the Supreme Court granted a stay in respect of the order on the 5th December. It was expected by us that discussions in the Supreme Court regarding this case would take place fairly early and it was our intention to take further steps after the decision of the Supreme Court had been announced because we felt that if, by any chance, any modification of the Act or the order is to take place, then it would be better for us to carry out both the continuance of the Act and any modifications thereon at the same time thereby saving the trouble of having to have two different legislations regarding this matter. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court's decision has yet to come and, as hon. Members are aware, the Act expires the day after tomorrow at midnight, and it has become essential at this stage to continue the Act so that the Supreme Court can pass a valid decision regarding this question. So, Sir, the problem or rather the question that we have put before the House is simply the continuance of this Act. The Act has to

be made alive after this date; otherwise, all the important questions that have been raised before the Court will become infructuous.

I might mention here that we give great importance to the principles underlying the Price and Page Act. We feel that the working of the Act will be beneficial to the newspapers but the extent of the benefit and the way in which it can function etc., can only be known after some experience of the working of the Act. That is not possible until the order is promulgated and works for some time. That stage is yet far off. We have now to keep this Act alive and await the decision of the Supreme Court before taking further steps. My problem is quite simple, and I therefore propose that the House might pass this Bill which will extend the life of the Act beyond the expiry date which is the day after tomorrow. I am not here trying to raise other questions connected with this problem because this is not the time but they can, if necessary, be taken up later on at some other occasion. For the moment, it is essential to see that the life of the Act is extended.

The question was proposed.

SHRI P. RAMAMURTI (Madras): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I have been listening to the speech of the hon. Minister introducing this particular Bill and the story that he has been reeling out unfortunately has been a very sad one. So many years have passed by since the Press Commission made its recommendations. One of the most important recommendations that the Press Commission had made was in connection with, and was aimed at, curbing the activities and the sphere of operations of the monopoly press in this country. We know, Sir, that the press has now become more or less a sort of industry and certain groups of industrialists are controlling the bulk of the newspapers in this country. They have got chain newspapers. The 'Indian Express', for example, is one. Then there is the Dalmia Jain group of newspapers—

[Shri P. Ramamurti]
 the 'Times of India' and the allied concerns—and there is the Birla group of newspapers. Now, we also know that if we allow this monopoly growth in the medium of public opinion, in the particular instrument which moulds public opinion, then woe unto our country. Not only do they mould public opinion but we also know the reasons for which these monopolists want to own these chains of newspapers. Obviously, it is not with any altruistic motive that these people are owning these chains of newspapers; they are owning these newspapers precisely for the purpose of seeing that their interests, that the interests of their classes, the interests of the monopoly sections of the industry are served. Because once they are able to mould public opinion, they will be able to influence the Government decisions, they will be able to influence the legislatures, they will be able to influence everything in our country. That is why we were happy when the Press Commission made certain recommendations although those recommendations did not go far enough in the sense that we could put an end to this growth of monopoly interests in newspapers. Nonetheless, they made certain very meagre recommendations, certain feeble recommendations and one of those recommendations was the price-page schedule. The Commission having made that recommendation, we expected that the Government would be very anxious to immediately bring forward some measure in order to see that that recommendation was translated into action but unfortunately the Government took its own time and afterwards in 1956 a measure was passed. That measure had so many other things in it; not only this price-page schedule but the pay and wage structure of the employees was also a part of that measure. Looking back now, I do not know if it was wise to mix up all these things together. The price-page schedule was particularly aimed at curbing the activities of the monopoly press. And if the Government had at that time brought in a separate mea-

sure, probably much of the trouble which the Government had to undergo might have been avoided. Anyway, then they went to the Supreme Court, challenging a particular section and the Government could not do anything. They had to wait. Afterwards the price-page schedule was sought to be implemented by means of a Government order and so far as that order is concerned, the less said about it the better because we know what that order has done. I do not want to go now into the merits of the whole question because I know that the matter is in subjudice. I am not going into the legality or illegality of that particular thing. But if you look at the order, what does it seek to do? It seeks to freeze the existing position as it is. If a newspaper today sells at two and a half annas and publishes ten pages, that is sought to be legalised. The present position is sought to be legalised. There is no wonder when the draft order came out it was particularly attacked by the smaller newspapers. Anyway, the Government brushed aside all these things. There was certainly an attempt to consult the opinion of these people but nonetheless, ultimately the opinion of the bigger interests prevailed. As a matter of fact if that order is implemented as it is, it would only mean that the existing position will continue and no inroad whatsoever will be made into the operations of the monopoly press. The smaller papers will not be protected in any way whatsoever. Anyway even that has today gone to the Supreme Court. And therefore the Government today is seeking to give a fresh lease of life to the Act so that the Supreme Court can give its own judgment. Whatever might be the judgment that the Supreme Court might ultimately choose to pronounce on the legality of the Act, I would urge upon the Government, even if it is an adverse judgment, that it is absolutely essential for the Government to take some steps—even if it means a weakened step—in order to see that the interests of the small papers in this country are protected because if these small newspapers are

not allowed to function, no public opinion can really be moulded in this country. Therefore, Sir, while we have no other go today except to give the Government the opportunity to see that this Act is continued, after the Supreme Court pronounces its judgment, I would once again urge upon the Minister not to think in terms of seeing how this particular order works and then coming forward with an amendment, but to go into the whole question again because if the present order means a freezing of the existing situation, then something has got to be done in order to revise the order. So, I would urge upon the Government to once again call a conference of the interests affected. There is no use calling the bigger newspapers also. Then no reconciliation is possible because their interests are conflicting. The interests of the monopolists, the interests of the Birlas, the interests of the Dalmias, the interests of the Goenkas certainly conflict with the interests of the small newspapers. There is no use calling a conference of all these people. We know how these conferences function and what takes place in them. We know that there is such a thing as pressure, such a thing as influence and we know the people who are able to bring to bear that influence. It is not the small newspapermen who can bring to bear that influence upon the officials concerned. Therefore, if the Government is determined to see that the smaller newspapers are protected, then I would urge upon the Government to call a conference of the smaller newspapers, listen to their views, and on the basis of their recommendations make their interests supreme because it is not a question of the interests of the smaller newspapers alone. It is necessary to help these smaller newspapers to function in the country without being swallowed by the bigger monopolists in the interests of creating stable and proper public opinion in our country. With these words, Sir, I support the motion of the Minister to take this Bill into consideration.

SHRI H. P. SAKSENA (Uttar Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I endorse each and every word, in the speech that he made, in support of the appeal to the hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting not to wait for the order of the Supreme Court, provided it is adverse, and then to move. He should move straightway and see that the smaller newspapers are protected against the monopolists. This is all that I have to say. Sir, I belong to the class which is being overlooked by its own fraternity because unfortunately they recognise only those persons as belonging to the fraternity of newspapermen who are working editors now.

SHRI A. D. MANI (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, I support the Bill and I agree with the Government that in view of the matter being *sub judice* before the Supreme Court, Parliament has got to give its sanction to the continuance of the Act on the Statute Book. I am taking part in this debate, as I was a member of the Press Commission which recommended a price-page schedule to be adopted by the Government and by the newspapers. It is a pity that the circumstances which existed at the time the Press Commission reported have changed considerably. I may draw the attention of the House to the fact that one of the reasons for the Press Commission recommending a price-page schedule was the following. I am quoting from para 205 of the Press Commission's Report:—

"The earlier discussion of the economics of a newspaper has brought out the fact that as matters stand at present a paper with a large circulation because of its lower cost of production per copy enjoys certain advantages over other papers with smaller circulation."

I would like to draw the attention of the House particularly to the phrase "because of its lower cost of production". Since the Press Commission reported there has been a phenomenal rise in the cost of newsprint and

[Shri A. D. Mani.]

newspapers are, under force of circumstances, being compelled to use newsprint manufactured by the NEPA Mills. It is well known that the NEPA Mill's product is much higher in value, by many times, than the imported newsprint. On account of this fact, the lower cost of production, which was one of the main considerations mentioned by the Press Commission, is no longer there and that contention is no longer valid. I see that the smaller newspapers have got to be given protection against unfair competition. At present the smaller regional newspapers are unable to compete with the big chain newspapers published from Bombay and Delhi, because they are in a position to bring out ten or twelve pages per issue. And surprisingly it is my experience as an old-time newspaperman in the country that despite whatever the Government might say on the floor of this House and the other House, Ministers are partial to big newspapers. For example, when the Prime Minister went to Moscow for the first time, the invitations which were issued to journalists were in consultation with the concerned section in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. At that time only big newspapers were invited. Whenever any question of press representatives is concerned, it is only the big newspapers of Delhi and their representatives who are taken into account. And I quite agree that getting photographs and speeches published in a big newspaper is certainly more advantageous from the point of view of publicity than photographs and material published in smaller regional newspapers.

SHRI SHEEL BHADRA YAJEE (Bihar): But these newspapers are dead against our policy.

SHRI A. D. MANI: The big newspapers are the people from the point of view of the Government who deliver the goods. We also notice that while the Government wants to curtail monopolistic tendencies in the

newspaper profession by bringing forward Bills of this kind, they are indirectly encouraging the monopolists in this country. I mentioned in this House during the budget session that Government is giving encouragement to a private news agency which is allied to a newspaper. The Government has given teleprinter connections to that news agency and that news agency functions as a part of one newspaper in this country. There is no question of the Government asking

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal): Why don't you name it?

SHRI A. D. MANI: *The Indian Express* practically and the *Times of India* own the INS and the INS functions as a part of the 'Indian Express' groups of newspapers. And I believe that though the Government of India is not giving any encouragement, the State Governments are being persuaded to encourage this news agency. So, what is being done by one Bill is being undone by the special privileges and favours which the big newspapers get from the Government. I would like to say this. While we look forward to the Supreme Court's judgment and we hope that the Supreme Court's judgment would be in favour of the price-page schedule, I would like to suggest to the Government that at least till the general elections are over, they may not try to enforce the price-page schedule. At the present time I am talking as a functioning newspaper editor, because there is so much of pressure on space that if we have got to do justice to political parties, we would not like the restrictions to come into force before the 1st of March. After the results are announced we would naturally like to accept any price-page schedule which is suitably framed to be enforced by the Government and accepted by the newspaper profession. And before that I would like the hon. Minister to take into consultation not only newspaper proprietors and the interests affected,

but also journalists and readers. It is on the readership of a newspaper that a newspaper lives.

I was sorry to find that the hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting said this in the Lok Sabha on the 28th August, 1956, when the Bill came up for consideration. He said as follows:—

"I regret to say that I am unable to accept the view that because a journalist, however good a journalist he may be, is working there, he has a right to advise what the price should be because the price of a paper concerns the management. We are bound to consult those who are dealing with it, who are managing it. We are getting the opinion from all; but we do not accept all the opinion. Out of that we will take what we consider best in the general interest of the press as a whole. I do not agree that in this matter the editors and journalists should obligatorily be consulted."

I hope that the Minister of Information and Broadcasting would revise his opinion, because in the matter of selection of material which should go in a newspaper, the editor has certainly a *locus standi* to advise Government. It is not purely a matter of bread and butter." It is a question of public education and I think the editors and journalists ought to be called into consultation and I would like also to repeat it that distinguished representatives of the reading public ought to be taken into consultation, because it is not only that the newspapers are going to benefit, but there is the public which reads the newspaper. I trust that the Government would call a fresh conference, another conference, to reconsider the whole matter and include both the journalists and distinguished representatives of the public. I do not agree that this is a matter for the management alone.

I should like to mention that while this Bill is welcome, it is not going to help the smaller newspapers at all because of the rise in the price of

newsprint. There is one other consideration that has got to be borne in mind and that is many of the recommendations of the Press Commission in respect of distribution of advertisements have not been accepted by the Government. There are many other recommendations too which have not been accepted and which have not been rejected either. The Government is considering all these matters. If the smaller newspapers are to be helped, it should be as a result of a co-ordinated and comprehensive endeavour to see that the regional newspapers get the support from the Government that they require. I would like to mention that at present if the price-page schedule comes into operation, what is going to happen is this. The *Times of India*, the *Statesman*, the *Indian Express*, the *Hindus*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, all these papers will take away the cream of advertisements. On account of their position and on account of the status that they enjoy in the eyes of the Ministers, they are able to get a substantial part of the Government's advertisement revenue. I know that the hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting would produce figures to show that in respect of percentage of newspapers chosen, the smaller newspapers occupy a very high position and the bigger newspapers occupy a lower position. But these statistics certainly do not help at all. They, in fact, mislead one, because the bigger newspapers have very heavy advertisement rates and they are in a position to enforce the advertisement rates on the Government and other advertisers. If the Government is solicitous about helping the smaller newspapers, I would like to make a suggestion for the consideration of the Minister and that is the smaller newspaper does not have those advantages of finance capital which a bigger newspaper has. This has been adequately described in para 205 of the Press Commission's Report. In view of the fact that the smaller regional newspaper sells for readership in a smaller area, its advertising rates can-

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not be put on the same par as the advertising rates of the bigger newspaper. In the case of the bigger newspaper the advertising rate is determined by a certain rate for one thousand of circulation. We went into all this matter in the Press Commission. In the case of the smaller newspapers there should be a certain weightage given. Now we take circulations below ten thousand as belonging to smaller newspapers, and for them the advertising rate per thousand copies should be higher than the advertising rate for a bigger newspaper. That is what I call weightage. Unless such steps are taken to increase the advertising revenue of smaller newspapers, what will happen is that when the price-page schedule comes into operation, the bigger newspapers are going to get more revenue, and the smaller newspapers are not going to benefit as we expected in the Press Commission, because, as they mentioned, the circumstances have changed considerably. The rise in the price of newsprint is a very important factor.

I would like to mention one other factor for the consideration of the Minister, and that is in respect of newsprint. The time has come for Government to prove its professions of anxiety for the welfare of the smaller newspapers. At present the newsprint situation is so bad that the bigger newspapers on account of the huge financial resources that they have are in a position to bear the high cost of newsprint and yet produce a very handsome rate of profit. I think the House will be surprised when I mention that one newspaper alone has got a revenue of Rs. 2.75 crores, and most of the newspapers in Delhi have a turnover of more than Rs. 1 crore. These newspapers on account of economy in operation and on account of the fact that they have sister newspaper concerns of a financial kind or a non-financial kind are in a position to finance all their operations. The

smaller newspapers do not have the same advantage, and for them I would like to suggest for the consideration of the Minister that Government at this stage should consider giving to the smaller newspapers below ten thousand newsprint at cost price from the State Trading Corporation. This will not mean subsidy. The principle of subsidy comes in where a newspaper is singled out for a preferential treatment. But if they take the yardstick that below ten thousand we regard a newspaper as a small newspaper and agree to give newsprint at cost price, that is to say, if the State Trading Corporation does not make a profit out of it, then the smaller newspapers will be in a position to receive financial benefits to face the 'present crisis. Sir, while I support the Bill and while we hope that the Supreme Court will expedite the judgment on the price page schedule case which has been pending for nearly six months, I would request the hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting to regard the judgment of the Supreme Court as a fresh starting point. We do not want to go back to that schedule which was drawn up one year ago. We would like that to be recast, and let the price-page schedule come into operation after the general elections are over.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sir, I did not want to say anything on this, but since there is time I would like to make one or two observations. The first point I would like to make is the manner in which the Government is setting about in the matter of the recommendations of the Press Commission. The other day we had some questions regarding the resolution of the Working Journalists Association or Federation. They made a whole list of constructive suggestions with regard to the various aspects of control and management of the press and so on. We find that Government pay no heed whatsoever to the suggestions that have come in from the working journalists. This is an entirely wrong

attitude. Even in a matter like this I think the Government should always consult the working journalists and the small newspaper owners and then come to the formulation of their policies in the light of their suggestions. That again is not being done.

Then, Sir, with regard to the price-page schedule—you were not here but many of us were here in this House when we discussed the recommendations of the Press Commission—we were given to understand that a whole comprehensive scheme of legislation would be worked out with a view to implementing the recommendations of the Press Commission, recommendations of a Commission appointed by the Government itself. These recommendations were supported by all in this House and in the other House. There was considerable unanimity over that matter. Now, Sir, up to the present day they have not come out with legislation on many matters. There was only one small item, and we know how things are tinkered with. But several years have passed since we debated this subject here and the hon. Minister has not brought measures to implement them. Therefore, we have our grave doubts when Government speaks good things about the subject because we know that there were very good, constructive and useful recommendations given by a body of men competent to give opinion on the subject, and the recommendations were welcomed by the entire country and the Parliament. Even so the Government did not act. Why was it so? I ask the hon. Minister who came in the way except the multimillionaire press owners, press barons of the Indian press. A handful of people are holding the freedom of the Indian press and its future to ransom. This is what I say, and the hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting is yielding to the continued browbeating and pressure of the multi-millionaires of the press. This is no good. Here in this House we were discussing about advertisements,

and so on. The newsprint goes to the black market. The very papers against whom there are investigations and allegations and about whose black-marketing activities in newsprint a report is there with the Government, the same newspapers are given handsome patronage by way of advertisement and otherwise. I do not mind if the Minister goes and visits them sometimes and if they publish photographs of that. It is a matter of choice and taste. But why should Government give advertisements to the newspapers who have been held up for blackmarketing in newsprint? Charges are pending against the 'Ananda Bazar Patrika'. This morning you heard that the report was under consideration. The hon. Minister said that it was *sub judice*. Who said it is *sub judice*? Because the case has not yet been started. Those things which are under investigation by Government are never *sub judice* according to law or in point of fact. When such things are under investigation, certainly Government can take certain steps to deal with such papers, at least they can stop giving them patronage. It is a scandal that this kind of news agency, the Eastern Express, the Goenka group, got additional favour. In regard to the P.T.I. the recommendation was this that the P.T.I. should be made a public corporation, the shares devolving on a larger number of people, and so on. The Government was committed to that position, to break the monopoly of the news service. Instead of that we saw how the Government gave additional facilities, teleprint and so on, to the Goenka group who control a chain of newspapers. This is what they are doing. Therefore when the Government say that they are going to attack monopolist concentration in the newspaper industry or deal with them, it should be taken not with a pinch of salt but it should be taken with a ton of salt, if I may say so. I question the *bona fides*, I repeat I question the *bona fides* and sincerity of the Government in this matter. It is a scandalous thing, I tell you. It is a scandalous thing. It is no u

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talking about the public sector and the 'Hindusthan Standard' writing article after article everyday attacking, defaming the public sector. We also criticise the public sector but from a constructive point of view. The same 'Hindusthan Standard' is being patronised by the Government. These papers criticise the progressive foreign policies of the Government, ridicule the Prime Minister, and so on. They criticise Prime Minister Nehru's policy of peace and non-alignment. The same papers are being patronised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. At the same time papers of the democratic opposition and small papers are ignored, disregarded in the matter of advertisement, although in this very House standing there the Prime Minister one day gave the assurance that it would be the policy of the Government to help the smaller papers to come up irrespective of their political colouration or political views. Now, Sir, such is the position of this Government and I would ask Dr. Keskar how long he must sit on the fence and how long (Interruption.) I am not asking you, you cannot give the answer. I would ask him how long he must sit on the fence. He has public opinion in his favour the working journalists in his favour. the recommendations of Parliament in his favour and the Press Commission's recommendations in his favour. Everything that a Minister needs for acting is, in a sense, given abundantly by this Parliament and the country. and yet, he is proceeding in this matter with faltering steps, with reservation, with equivocation, by giving concessions to the monopolistic elements and helping them. This is most unfortunate. We support this measure; everything that brings good we shall support. But at the same time, we owe it to the nation, to the newspapermen of the country and to Parliament, to remind them of this breach of faith on the part of the Government. The public and the working journalists, all demand of the Government a clearer

policy formulation with regard to the entire things that were recommended by the Press Commission.

Another election, the third general election, will soon take place. Obviously, they would not take it up before the third general election. I would like him to do so, but I have my doubts. But what is the position then? Which Government will decide it? Now, it is a major question. Today, social objectives cannot be furthered, democratic institutions cannot be served, and certain better objectives in our economic life cannot be promoted and upheld until and unless this monstrous concentration of power in the hands of certain newspaper owners who control the banks and the industry—the newspaper industry—who try to scuttle the public life of the country, debase and degrade it, is attacked from all sides. Unless they are disbanded from their insidious hold over the newspaper circulation of the country and are made to behave in our society, nothing can happen. This I make it clear. It is a part of democracy. I do not make it a political point here that it is in a sense Communists versus the Congress. I know of many democratic-minded Congressmen inside the Congress Party and their followers also who are insulted, humiliated, run down and frowned upon by the big forces of the monopolistic press because they want to bolster up the wrong type of people in the ruling party, utter reactionaries. I know what they feel about this matter. I know what Mr. Feroze Gandhi felt about it. Such is the position. Today, therefore, the Congress here is not acting. The Government here is also a party to this, in the narrow, selfish interests of a handful of profiteers and newspaper kings. Mr. Keskar, I charge him—he is hesitating and vacillating over this matter. I tell him that it is not right. You did not appoint the Press Commission to bluff the country. But if you did so, you should have told the country that it was meant to be

so. Having appointed a Commission and made honourable men of the Press Commission work day in and day out and produce such a magnificent and large Report which the country accepted, you set upon this Report, trample its good recommendations under the feet. That is not a straightforward policy; that is not an honourable course. This is not a good way of the Government's dealing with a public Commission of this kind. I know. I have embarked on a very controversial subject, but I know that whenever I get a chance, we have nothing else except to expose the Government. I know you will not do it because you are afraid of doing it here, but in the lobby you support everything that I am saying here. I know it. Now that is the position. Let him tell me what his policy is, whether he at all intends to do anything with regard to the Press Commission's recommendations. Why does he appoint a Press Council, an Advisory Council, and various other things as recommended by them? When is he going to have a policy which will lead to the devolution of the share; to the working journalists breaking the concentration? When will he break the monopolistic news agency in the country and see that a better system of democratised news agency comes up? When will he adopt a proper policy in the matter of support, advertising and so on with regard to the younger, smaller papers so that they can come up and stimulate the democratic life of the country? When will he see that this newsprint which is concentrated in the hands of the monopolistic elements who sell it as waste in order to make money when the smaller papers starve,—which is a scandal in our public life and in the newspaper field—stops? I would like to know it from him.

These are, Sir, some of the points I would like to make and I know that there will be the usual answer of callousness and of cynicism. But I hope that I have expressed the views

of the country in this matter including those of my friends opposite. I think that it is their duty as much as ours, to put the necessary pressure upon the Government so that the Press Commission's recommendations, at least those over which national agreement has been arrived at, are implemented as soon as possible.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFISUL HASAN): Mr. Santhanam. Please take only three or four minutes. We have got to finish this by three of the clock.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM (Madras): Sir, in fact, I had no intention of speaking, but my friend's eloquence...

SHRI SHEEL BHADRA YAJEE: And his style to speak

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: induced me to stand up for a few minutes. Also the other justification is that I have had the honour of being a journalist myself and have served newspapers which were not so very big newspapers in those days but which have become great newspapers today.

Sir, I do not think that Government should interfere with the newspapers. The freedom of the newspaper...

AN HON. MEMBER: Even the...

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: After all, the capitalist cannot conduct his newspaper unless he appeals to the people, unless he has the support of the people. I know, when I took charge of the *Indian Express* it had no circulation at all, and today it has got a circulation of one hundred thousand. It grows. When a newspaper remains small, it means that it has nothing to give to the people and, therefore, it remains small. I think that if Communism appeals to the people, his newspaper will be selling in millions. Why does it not sell? It is because it has no supporters. I do not believe in this capitalism in newspapers.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You are supporting Goenka. That is what you want to say.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: I know the difficulties of Goenka much more than my hon. friend does. His paper has to meet competition from bigger people than himself. And all the while, the so-called big newspapers are undergoing, are facing, very keen and tremendous competition. And still, if they are surviving, it is because they are taking all the steps to give news from all parts of the world. Sir, the other alternative is that the Government should take over newspapers just as the Government favoured by our hon. friend does. Today, where is an independent newspaper in Russia? Is there any independent newspaper there? None. But if the Government takes over a newspaper, it will be a Government organ. If there is to be any corrective on the Governments, it can come only from well-established, large newspapers having circulations of lakhs and perhaps, of millions. Unless such newspapers come into existence, there will be no freedom of opinion. What is the use of Mr. Mani publishing a paper with a circulation of five thousand, which few read?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Sir, did you get any letter from the hon. Member saying that he has changed from the Congress Party to the Swatantra Party?

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: I want the completest freedom for the newspaper and I want completely free import of the newsprint, and I am sure that many small newspapers of today will become big newspapers of tomorrow. We have to keep the field open. Unless we do it, we will undermine the democracy for which we stand.

DR. B. V. KESKAR: Sir, first of all, let me assure hon. Members that notwithstanding the eloquent speech made here, I do not propose to enter into the recommendations of the Press Commission. The reason is that not once but nearly a dozen times, the question has been discussed here—and all the items of the main recommendations of the Commission have been

discussed here—and I have expressed on behalf of the Government the reasons why we have been able to implement some, why we have not been able to implement others. An opportunity might come again, and I shall certainly be glad to take up the subject at length. But here we are dealing with a very simple Bill, and I do not propose to detract myself from the Bill and take up other matters which might be connected with the press.

Only one thing I will say and that is, Shri Ramamurti in his speech was saying about the schedule itself—it concerns the Bill—and I might say that I not only do not agree but I think his observation is unfair. He says that the schedule is heavily weighted in favour of the big papers. In fact, the big papers are against it; they do not want any schedule whatsoever. But we tried with them, and that is the reason why there had to be two or three drafts; it is because we consulted all papers, and I might say that—with few exceptions—most papers—before we finalised the schedule—were in favour of having a schedule. Naturally, those who are very big, well, they can stand on their own feet. They do not want a price-page schedule, and they are not in favour of it. So I think his observations are not founded on facts. . . .

SHRI A. D. MANI: May I ask the Minister, may I seek a clarification from the hon. Minister?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFTUL HASAN): Let him finish.

DR. B. V. KESKAR: Let me finish first. He can ask questions afterwards. Now, there are other observations by Mr. Mani. Now, he has made many points, very practical ones. He is an experienced and practising journalist, and is an editor and connected with a newspaper office for a long time. I will certainly note all that he has said, but I do not propose to take up the question as to what we will be doing when the Supreme Court passes its judgment; I am not going to anticipate that thing here. Let the judgment come first. Afterwards we will

decide as to what is to be done. He made one or two observations which, I think, were not factually correct. For example, he raised the question of the price of newsprint. Now, I think it is not correct. For the last so many years, if there has been one commodity whose price has been constant, or nearly constant, it is newsprint. I regret I disagree with him notwithstanding the fact that he deals with newspapers—I have also to deal with newsprint, and for the last three or four years at least the price has not fluctuated very much. Yes, it did fluctuate before. In fact, I might say this that during the last few years, and in comparison with the period of five years that went before it, the question of making available newsprint to the smaller newspapers has been very much better today, because we have tried to devise a system by which smaller papers will be able to get newsprint much more conveniently. I do not say I am very much satisfied with the situation as it is, but it is very much better than what it was before; it is relatively better.

Now, the present matter before the House is that we have to pass this Bill and pass it quickly so that it remains valid, and I am not prepared here to be provoked into a discussion, as my friend here wants; a discussion can be heard with pleasure at some other time.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: When can I have that pleasure?

DR. B. V. KESKAR: Any time you like and subject to the Chairman agreeing to it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I like any time you like.

DR. B. V. KESKAR: It is not a question of my liking; it is for the Chairman . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Therefore, kindly note it, Sir, that he is agreeable to a discussion.

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DR. B. V. KESKAR: I have never said that I am not agreeable.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFT-SUL HASAN): Why are you imaging that he is not agreeable?

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Therefore, Sir, I would like to have it one day.

DR. B. V. KESKAR: I think the hon. Member has made enough speeches. If he wants, he can make it again. But he need not interrupt me again and again. (*Interruption.*) I moved that the Bill be taken into consideration.

SHRI A. D. MANI: The Minister said that he would like to answer questions after his speech is concluded. My friend here wants to ask a question.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA (Orissa): I would like to ask a question. Mr. Mani made the suggestion that till after the next general elections are over, the price-page schedule should not be brought into being in any case. Yet the Minister did not say anything about it. Would he make that point clear?

DR. B. V. KESKAR: I am afraid the hon. Member was not listening I said it; I have refused to anticipate what will be done before the judgment of the Supreme Court comes.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFT-SUL HASAN): The question is:

"That the Bill to continue the Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1956, as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFT-SUL HASAN): We shall now take up the clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

DR. B. V. KESKAR: Sir, I move:

"That the Bill be passed."

The question was proposed.

SHRI MOHAN LAL SAKSENA (Nominated): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I had no intention to take part in this discussion, but the observations made by my friend, Mr. Santhanam, have provoked me to say a few words. He said there is freedom of the press. I agree with him that in order to safeguard our democracy there must be a free press. But do we have a free press? Some time back the Prime Minister was reported to have said that newspapers cannot be run in the public sector. But the question remains: Why should they be in the private sector? After all, newspapers are a great power and they should be worked as trusts. We know that it is not only the capitalists and the vested interests that work behind these papers, but sometimes foreign Governments use them to serve their respective ends. As in this country we do not want to have the press in the public sector, it should be worked as a trust or co-operative, because the people should know how the newspapers are financed. We know they are mostly in the hands of capitalists, and then, whatever advertisements are given to these papers, they come from the capitalists themselves, because they are exempt from income-tax. Even when there is a transfer, it only means transferring an entry from one concern—of the same party—to another concern. Therefore, there is no chance for anybody in this country to propagate his views. Is it not said that Mahatma Gandhi's 'Harijan' had to be closed down—although we often talk of Gandhiji and profess to pay all honour to him. And do you know, Sir, what was the editorial note written in the last issue when the 'Harijan' had to be closed. It was written, Sir, that the Gandhian era had come to an end. Is it not sad comment for all of us here because we have not been

able to carry on in this country Gandhiji's paper? Not only that. Formerly, Sir, journalism was regarded as a mission. Every great leader had a paper to propagate his views. He suffered for it. But what is the position today? Newspapers do not reflect the views of the editor. Somebody dictates the views to him. It has become an industry now. I submit, in all humility and with a full sense of responsibility that democracy is in great danger. For I have no doubt that if in this country that sad day ever comes that dictatorship is clamped down on the country very few of these papers will voice any protest against that, as has happened in Pakistan. Mr. Santhanam said that these papers have grown. I know how they have grown. They own big properties; they have got land; they get lease of land from Government, and all that, and they have made use of everything to their advantage. And the newspapers today are not what they should be. Newspaper has become a business for the capitalists. So what I want is that all the newspapers should be worked as trusts. Let them be made trusts or let them be brought to the co-operative sector. I do not mind a capitalist having a paper to propagate free and private enterprise. But whatever money is brought into the coffers of that paper should not remain a private affair. The sources should be disclosed whether it is some embassy which gives money for bringing out all these special issues or whether it is some other source which contributes money to keep the paper going, or how much money has been received from some other concern in the shape of advertisements because the money so paid is deducted from the total income and is not subject to income-tax? It is said that we want everybody to have equality of opportunity. Where is equality of opportunity? By all means let every party have a newspaper, let every interest have a newspaper; but I do want that the working of these newspapers should not remain a private affair which can be used to the detriment of the people

and it is being used as such. Nobody knows what is happening in the small districts because news from districts does not find adequate place in the newspapers. Formerly, district newspapers used to give the district news and educate public.

Now, Sir, I have got a scheme for the revival of people's papers. I want people's papers to be revived with the help of their subscribers. Then alone democracy can be saved. Even a small country like Ceylon has realised that so long as the newspaper industry is in the hands of the private sector they will go on carrying on propaganda against the Government and the principles it stands for. Here also they might praise Prime Minister Nehru, this Minister or that Minister. But so far as the policy of the Government is concerned, it receives very grudging support in their columns, the Government are not being supported even by those newspapers which are regarded as Congress papers. The Congress is even blamed for supporting them. Now, they have become bigger and bigger at the cost of small newspapers. Therefore, we have to see that the smaller papers have an equality of opportunity for propagating their views. I would like to know as to what justification we can have for the closure of a paper of Gandhiji's views, 'Harijan'. It had to be closed down because it could not find subscribers.

Now, it is only for views that the people subscribe newspapers. Formerly, there used to be crossword puzzles, this, that and the other. Now, the very fact that newspapers do not give news of what is happening in small districts shows that papers do not enjoy quality of opportunity. We must give opportunity to district newspapers to give news of the district or the views of the people thereof. Then alone can we say that democracy will be safe.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: On a point of fact, Sir, 'Harijan' was never closed

down for want of subscribers. Perhaps, it was closed down after the death of Gandhiji.

SHRI MOHAN LAL SAKSENA: I am sorry, I stand corrected.

DR. B. V. KESKAR: Sir, I have listened with careful consideration to Mr. Santhanam's words. There have been different views expressed. My friend, Mr. Mohan Lal Saksena, has also expressed his views. Now, all these different opinions are very valuable and I will certainly keep them in mind.

At the moment it is not possible to discuss them.

Sir, this little Bill is a very small one. It concerns a very specific matter but there are important matters which the hon. Members have placed before the House and I am sure that at some opportune moment we shall take them up for consideration and discussion here.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFTUL HASAN): The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

ALLOTMENT OF TIME FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE APPROPRIATION (No. 4) BILL, 1961

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NAFTUL HASAN): I have to inform Members that under rule 162(2) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha the Deputy Chairman has allotted one hour for the completion of all stages involved in the consideration and return of the Appropriation (No. 4) Bill, 1961, by the Rajya Sabha including the consideration and passing of amendments, if any, to the Bill.