

प्रस्तुत किया है, इसके लिये बेधन्यवाद के पात्र हैं।

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member may continue his speech tomorrow. Now we shall take up the Half-an-hour Discussion.

17.30 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION
DIFFUSION OF OWNERSHIP OF NEWS-
papers

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN (Telli-cherry): At the very outset, I would like to make a request to the hon. Minister that he should not give a very formal and an evasive reply to this. Why I am saying this is because I have been going through the records and perhaps he will remember that this is the 20th year after the Press Commission had recommended that there should be certain basic reforms in the field of Press.

It was in 1954 that people like Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Dr. Zakir Husain, Shri Chalapati Rau and others—they were the members of the Press Commission—made their recommendations. Nobody will say that they were big revolutionaries or even left-minded people. But even they could not believe what was happening in the field of newspapers, in the world of newspapers.

One of them, Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, after the enquiry stated:

“I went in as a great friend of newspapers. I came out thoroughly disillusioned.”

That was the kind of picture a person like Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer depicted before the country.

The Press Commission recommended that there should be diffusion of ownership and control of the newspapers should be with the journalists and with the employees and the shares should be distributed in such a manner. A price-page scheme should be introduced to avoid unfair competition between big and small newspapers. Only 40 per cent of the space should be allowed for advertis-

ments, but, as you know, today we are being made to buy the bundle of advertisements printed and not the news in the newspapers. That is the situation today. They also said that News Agencies like PTI UNI should be made a corporation. These are some of the important recommendations made by the Press Commission. They also said that a watchful eye should be kept to see how the monopoly is bringing the Press under their grip. These were the main features of their recommendations.

After that, so many statements were made and particularly, after the 1971 Elections in which we all came here, the Prime Minister assured that the diffusion of ownership and the delinking of the press from the industrial houses will be made. The Law Minister, Shri Gokhale, said that the Press in India should forthwith cease to be the mouth-piece of a few and should reflect the cross-currents of the public opinion of this country. Shri Raghunatha Reddy, the Minister, who was in charge of Company Affairs at that time, said that having delinked the commercial banks from the industrial houses, it is time to free newspapers also from their grip and that the ending of the monopolistic hold over all walks of life should begin at the newspapers' end.

I am saying all these to impress upon the House that this was the declared policy. This had the general approval from the ruling party side, from the journalists, the Federation of Working Journalists and the newspaper employees and every one in the country wanted the diffusion of ownership and the delinking of the press from the industrial houses to be made. But what happened is more interesting. I have some old figures. New figures are not available. If possible, I hope the Minister will give us these figures. In 1952 the monopoly press controlled 50 per cent of the journals. After 18 years, in 1970 it became 70 per cent control and in big cities it is 80 per cent they were controlling. And this is the kind of picture which we see, Sir. When

[Shri C. K. Chandrappan]

we speak of the freedom of the press, generally, a big hue and cry is being made by the monopoly press in this country. When Nandini Satpathi first declared that who would bring forward a Bill for the diffusion of ownership of the newspapers all the big papers in the country—the Hindustan Times, the Times of India, the Statesman, etc.—all made a hue and cry saying freedom of opinion is in trouble. Some of these journals even said that freedom is in peril, take arms and fight. They all thought that it is an attempt on the part of the Government to intervene and to dictate what the Press should write or what the Press should not write. What we mean is this. When we speak of diffusion of ownership and delinking of the Press from the industrial houses, what we mean is that there should be a free press in the country and free press does not mean a press which is owned by just two or three per cent of the people, the big business people, because they are, in the name of public opinion, in the name of freedom of opinion, etc. voice their interests only and they are really emitting their old outmoded 18th century ideas in the name of the freedom of the Press. We don't want this to happen. When we say diffusion of ownership and delinking of the Press from the grip of the industrial houses what we mean is that the journalists should have a say. The workers in the Press must have their say. The readership in the country must have their say. This is the kind of formula which was what the Government had promised which should be evolved. And a Bill must be immediately brought forward in this regard and there is no point in just saying: 'We will bring, we will bring'. We have been hearing this for the last so many years. We have been hearing this for the last four years continuously. For the last 20 years this has been a kind of slogan. We had to wait for 22 years after the congress having adopted the Resolution for the Nationalisation of Banks and only after 22 years they introduced a Bill in the House to nationalise the big banks in this country. That is the way things are moving!

Sir, certain matters have got to be taken into account when we look at the situation of the Press in India today. What is the view of the Editor? What is the real editorial freedom? What is the freedom of the journalists in assessing a situation and writing a story? They have been saying this very recently. If you had gone through the monopoly presses in the country, you would have seen that the monopoly presses had written: Congress party had been wiped out in UP, in Orissa and everywhere. Editorials were written, what will happen to the country after this. I am sure the journalists who went there would not have liked to write like that. But it was the dictates of the Tatas and Birlas and the big industrial houses who are asking the newspapers what they should write.

There is an interesting thing about these editors and this was said by Mr. G. N. Acharya, a Journalist. About editorial freedom, when he was speaking of the editors, he said: Most of the editors particularly those of the big papers are in the position of the character in the Elizabethan play who said, 'you cannot ravish me; I am so willing'. That kind of attitude has been created by these very industrial houses on the editor's activity and initiative and free thinking and their free assessments have been killed by these monopoly houses. There are various examples if you take the Congress split, the Presidential election, the Bank Nationalisation, the legislation regarding the Privy Purses, and very recently, regarding the recent elections. If you take all these things you can see very clearly that the monopoly press in the country had presented the most vulgar and distorted type of picture about the whole developments. That was not the objective situation as they were trying to depict. These big industrial houses were only making the press the mouth-piece of reaction, of obscurantist ideas and they are taking them to the lap of imperialism. This is what is happening in the world of press in the name of press freedom. A few industrial houses who are owning it are controlling even the

thinking of the people now and the thinking of the people to come.

Regarding the PTI and the UNI, I would like to know specifically from the hon. Minister whether he has made up his mind to make these two news agencies corporations which could then be brought under the scrutiny of this Parliament so that to that extent the people will have a say about the functioning of these bodies.

Regarding the diffusion of ownership and the delinking of the newspapers from the industrial houses, I would like to ask a specific question of the hon. Minister. If he has not made up his mind to bring forward a comprehensive Bill, an all-pervasive Bill, I would like to know whether he will take the intermediary step of delinking the press from the industrial houses. That is an important step forward to reach the desired goal.

So, I would like the hon. Minister to give specific answers to the following points which I have raised, firstly, immediate delinking of the press from the industrial houses, secondly, taking steps to make the PTI and the UNI into corporations, and lastly the bringing forward of a Bill. For Heaven's sake, the hon. Minister should not say that he is discussing and seriously thinking and he will come forward with a Bill. We have been hearing this for the last five years, and in this House itself at least 20 times this answer has been repeated. We do not want to hear it for the twenty-first time....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then, what does he want him to say?

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPA: He should say that he would come forward with the Bill during this session itself.

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय (मुरैली),
सभापति ज: प्रैस और रेडियो, यह दो ही समाचार देने के बहुत ही महत्व के साधन हैं। सरकार की शायद मोनोपोली प्रैस पर नहीं हो, उन्हें अपने हाथ में लेना चाहती है। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि प्रैस में मोनोपोली है या नहीं इसकी जांच कौन करेगा? और इसी के साथ साथ क्या प्रैस काउन्सिल ने इस सम्बन्ध में कोई अध्ययन किया है? यदि हाँ तो, तो क्या रिपोर्ट दी है? मोनोपोली कमीशन ने कोई रिपोर्ट दी है तो उसके तथ्य हमारे सामने रखने चाहिये। क्या सरकार कोई नया प्रैस कमीशन बनाना चाहती है? या समाचार पत्रों को अपने हाथ में लेने की नीति पर विचार कर रही है? मैं सहमत हूँ कि मोनोपोली नहीं होनी चाहिये। परन्तु समाचार-पत्र ही नहीं रेडियो भी। और सरकार की मोनोपोली किसी पर नहीं होनी चाहिये। जितने बड़े-बड़े समाचार-पत्र हैं इनकी सारी व्यवस्था प्रैस में काम करने वाले वर्कर्स और पत्रकारों के सुपुर्द करनी चाहिये, इस पर हमें कोई आपत्ति नहीं होगी। परन्तु सरकार उन पत्रों को हाथ में लेना चाहती है जो उसके खिलाफ लिखते हैं। सरकार के खिलाफ कोई समाचार छपे नहीं, यह सरकार की नीति है जो ठीक नहीं है।

जो समाचार-पत्र सरकार का सामर्थन करते हैं उनको अच्छे विज्ञापन मिलते हैं और अन्य समाचार-पत्रों को नहीं मिलते। "जनयुग" के पहले ही अंक में ही काफ़ी विज्ञापन दिये गये। लेकिन "मदरलैण्ड" अखबार को नहीं मिलते हैं। और मिलते भी हैं तो नाममात्र को मिलते हैं।

सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्री (श्री आई० के० गुजराल): वह अखबार तो हमारे साथ ही है।

श्री हुकम चन्द कछवाय: तब तो उसे विज्ञापन अधिक मिलने चाहिये। लेकिन ऐसा होता नहीं। रेडियो भी समाचार का एक अच्छा साधन है। चन्दा कमेटी ने अपनी