

THE WORKING JOURNALIST

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IMPLEMENT JOURNALISTS ACT "GRACEFULLY"

Lal Bahadur's Appeal

● From Our Special Correspondent

Banaras May 19

The Union Railway Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur, said here today that the Working Journalists Act should be implemented gracefully by all concerned so that harmony may prevail in the newspaper industry.

Shri Lal Bahadur was inaugurating the Eleventh Annual Conference of the U.P. Working Journalists Union.

Shri P. D. Tandon presided over the conference.

In his presidential address, Shri Tandon said: "We are willing to cooperate with them (newspaper managements) and be reasonable in our demands. We invite them to clasp our hand of friendship and request them not to spurn it, but if they think that they can exploit us as usual then they are spoiling for a fight and a bitter fight they will have for the asking. If another struggle is calling we will respond to that call."

Shri Tandon appealed to working journalists not to fight amongst themselves over petty matters but work for improving professional standards, efficiency and integrity.

Shri Lal Bahadur said that journalists had a heavy responsibility as moulders of public opinion. Their service conditions should be in consonance with their onerous duties. Whatever difficulties might arise in the implementation of the

Working Journalists Act, they should be resolved peacefully and the employer-employee relationship should not be embittered. The success of democracy depended to a large extent on journalists. They were the moulders of public opinion. They should work impartially and honestly and should ensure that their reporting was objective and unbiased while their criticism was constructive.

The Press Commission Report, the Minister continued, was a commendable document. The Working Journalists Act, Shri Lal Bahadur added, should be implemented gracefully by all concerned so that peace and harmony might prevail in the industry.

Messages wishing the conference success were received from the Union Home Minister, Mr. Govind Ballabh Pant, the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister, Dr. B. V. Keskar, Governor of Bihar, Mr. R. R. Diwakar, and the U. P. Information Minister, Mr. Kamalapati Tripathi.

(please see page 11 also)

Wage Board to meet on May 26

New Delhi, May 21.

The preliminary meeting of the Wage Board to fix rates of wages for working journalists will be held in Bombay on May 26, it is learnt here.

The Board was constituted early this month by the Government of India in accordance with the provisions of the Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1956.

Mr. H. V. Divetia, retired judge of the Bombay High Court is the Chairman of the Board which has its headquarters at Bombay.

The Board consists of three representatives each of employers and of the working journalists.

The employers' representatives are: Mr. G. Narasimhan, Manager, the *Hindu*, Madras and President of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society, Mr. A. R. Bhatt, MLC, President Indian Language Newspapers Association and Mr. K. P. Kesava Menon, Editor, *Mathrubhumi*, Calicut.

The representatives of the working journalists, are: Mr. R. Venkataraman MP, Mr. C. Raghavan, Secretary-General, Indian Federation of Working Journalists and Mr. G. N. Acharya of the *Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay.

NOTICE

Last date for filing nominations for presidentship June 6
Scrutiny .. June 6
Last Date for withdrawal June 14

Shri V. P. Ramachandran, Delhi will be the Returning Officer for the presidential elections. General Secretaries of units or any person authorised by them in writing under advice to the undersigned, will be returning officers for election of delegates and FEC members.

C. Raghavan
Secretary-General

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Proof-Reading : "Tail-End of Journalism"

Taking shelter under the dual phraseology of legalistic verbiage for misinterpretation and evasion of the provisions of law, the newspaper proprietors have singled out proof-readers, the tail-end of journalism, to vent their spleen on. The conditions of news-proof-readers—as against job-proof-readers—have always been dreadful. Inky drudgery, over-work—night and day—premature blindness and all the attendant miseries of a starvation wage have been their lot for years.

By the nature of his work in collaboration with the editorial staff, the news-proof-reader is an essential part of journalistic activity in the production of the daily paper. He is required to be well read and to possess a profound general knowledge unmatched in its range of subjects required in any other profession—practically of everything under the sun. An instance of how a news-proof-reader's general knowledge avoided embarrassment to the highest authority in the land will amply justify my claim that the news-proof-reader is something more than a mechanical factory worker. Just a year after her launching, "Queen Mary," the giant oceanliner was to go to Southampton dry docks. The papers were full of "Queen Mary" in print and in pictures. One paper however was about to go to the Press with a double-column caption: "....going into Southampton dry docks for *scrapping*." It was luckily left to the news-proof-reader to scrap the caption and make "Queen Mary" go for "*scrapping*." The Press baron who now twists his tongue over the definition of a working journalist might argue that it was after all

on additional 'p', but it would have made all the difference between a responsible Press and a gutter-snipe. Instances like this are a legion and any editor in India knows how a news-proof-reader has come to his rescue to get him out of what would otherwise have been a "silly situation."

Parliament included news-proof-readers among working journalists. For long have the news-proof-readers been made the butt end of administrative jokes. At the time of granting increments to the editorial staff, the proof-readers were classified as factory workers and while it was the turn of the factory workers to get their due increments, the proof-readers were discovered as being attached to the editorial staff. Now the Law Ministry of the Government of India has tried to take away what the Parliament in its wisdom conceded—grouping the news proof-readers with their natural companions, the other working journalists.

"Searchlight"

Madras, May 1, '56.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

In the columns, sometime back there was mention of Public Relations Officers and in that context, I thought the following passage from an old issue of the *Journalist* London, would be of interest to your readers.

"Guest speaker at a 'special interest' session following Whitehall's November meeting, Trevor Evans (Daily Express) referred with engaging candour to his own inventory of Press types in Government departments. Here is his list :

1. **THE CLAM** : The man who regards it as his mission to say nothing to the newspaperman because newspapers are no good anyway.

2. **MR. PUNCTILIOUS** : He's the man who stands by Official hand-outs. He won't deviate from them, but sometimes his natural friendliness compels him to exercise considerable ingenuity in repeating them in similes which add nothing to them.

3. **HOT AND COLD** : He's the unpredictable one, sometimes he's helpful, sometimes he's aloof, but so charitable are newspapermen that they remember the good turns long enough to forgive the spurns.

4. **THE CRUSADER** : He's the man with a mission—a mission on behalf of his department—to see that it is always in the public eye. Curiously enough he can be a bit of a nuisance sometimes—when his zeal smothers his sense of news values.

5. **THE INTERPRETER** : Almost the ideal for he is the man who not only expects reporters to ask "why?" but is ready with the answers.

6. **THE UNDEFINABLE** : He is the ideal. There is no mould, no coaching for him. He is the reflection of his own temperament and of his judgment.

Sometimes he recognises that the interests of his department and of the newspapers coincide, and often he realises that they may clash. But when they clash, there need not be silence or evasion."

Incidentally, a Delhi journalist may find the similarities of the above six types in the Information Officers in the capital.

—Yaduvir.

**GLYCODIN-TERP-VASAKA**
FOR DRY IRRITATING COUGHS

* YOU CAN PUT YOUR CONFIDENCE IN ALEMBIC

Board of Editors

Benarsi Das Chaturvedi
S. A. Sastri
Rana Jang Bahadur Singh
Feroz Chand
J. P. Chaturvedi

All communications meant for publication should be addressed to the Editor, **The Working Journalist**, 15, Windsor Place, New Delhi.

Manuscripts should preferably be typewritten.



THE WAGE BOARD

The Wage Board to fix scales of salaries and other emoluments of working journalists has at last been set up. The Board is due to meet in Bombay towards the end of May and working journalists all over the country will no doubt be glad that the Board is settling down to work, undeterred by murmurs and protests from various quarters.

The setting up of the Wage Board is an important event not only for working journalists but for labour as a whole. As the second five year plan points out: "Statistics of industrial disputes show that wages and allied matters are the major source of friction between employers and workers. The existing machinery for the settlement of disputes, mainly the Industrial Tribunals, has not given full satisfaction to the parties concerned". The Planning Commission has hence recommended that "an authority like a Tripartite Wage Board consisting of equal representatives of employers and workers with an independent chairman will probably ensure more acceptable decisions". To a limited extent Wage Boards have been functioning in Bombay in respect of two or three industries. They have been set up under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act. But this is the first time an all-India Wage Board has been set up with very comprehensive terms of

enquiry.

The Federation's demand for a Wage Board to go into and fix fair wages is not a new one. It put forward before the Press Commission the plea for a National Wage Board to decide scales of salaries and grades. The Federation suggested that legislation for dealing with working conditions of journalist should provide for the setting up of a Wage Board to decide disputes relating to salaries, wages, dearness allowance, bonus etc. When the Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill was before Parliament, and the Information and Broadcasting Minister agreed to the setting up of a Wage Board he was only agreeing to a long standing demand of the Federation and merely anticipating similar action by the government in respect of other industries in due course.

A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Working Journalists therefore have a great responsibility to see that the Wage Board is able to bring some order out of the present chaotic conditions in which in the same establishment among the same category of workers salaries often range from Rs. 100 to Rs. 3000.

Working journalists have a responsibility not only to themselves but to labour as a class. This is the first Wage Board. What it decides, how it proceeds with its work, and the success it attains will all become precedents for other Wage Boards. Labour, Capital and Government will therefore watch its efforts with a great deal of interest.

BLUFF AND BLUSTER

It is therefore all the more regrettable that the Wage Board has even at the very inception become the target of attack of a section of employers. The Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society has criticised the Government in respect of nomination of representatives of employers and has threatened to disassociate itself from the work of the Board. Prima Facie it appears to be an attempt to defeat and delay the work of the Board. We are not concerned here with the merits of the arguments put forward by the I.E.N.S. But it is interesting that they raised this issue, not when its representative conveyed his will-

ingness to serve on the Board, but after the Board was constituted and its personnel announced. It would be interesting to know whether the President of the IENS has conveyed a "qualified" or "unqualified" acceptance. Apart from this, the IENS claims the right to represent employers on the basis that its members represent 90 per cent of the circulation. There can be no more unashamed demand for monopolistic or oligopolistic control.

Apart from this, it should have been clear to the IENS when it made this demand, that once the Board has been constituted, no one can interfere with its composition or work. Government cannot oblige the IENS, even if it wants to do so. Obviously too, in view of the precedent that will be set up, government cannot allow itself to be bullied by these threats.

WAR OF NERVES

The IENS action now is part of the "war of nerves" that employers, particularly of the big papers, have resorted to in order to cow down working journalists. The request of the IFWJ in June 1953 for negotiations to reach a collective agreement is yet to be replied to by the IENS. Even after Parliament enacted a law providing for certain minimum conditions of service, the members of the IENS have been making all out efforts to defeat its purpose. They have threatened and even embarked upon retrenchments and other measures. Their present stand vis-a-vis the Wage Board is only a continuation of their avowed policy that none shall question the feudal right of the newspaper proprietor to deal with the working journalist as he likes.

It is not our intention here to suggest what the Wage Board should do. It may be however stated that it is not a minimum wage board but a board to fix what is called fair wages. The concept of a fair wage is too well known to need reiteration here.

Working journalists should now apply themselves completely to this major task of preparation and presentation of our claims. To the employers we have a word. Newspaper employers cannot hope to go against the current. At a time when other employers are reconciled even to the concept of joint management

of industries by workers and employers, newspaper employers cannot behave as if they possess the 18th century rights of the employers. The earlier they realise it the better for them.

It is to be hoped that the proposed meeting of employers and working journalists which the Labour Minister intends calling will enable employers to realise this. It is also to be hoped that this conference will mark the beginning for the setting up of a joint industrial council of workers and employers in the Newspaper Industry, as demanded by the Federation before the Press Commission, leading ere long to partnership in management of the industry.

J. P. Chaturvedi.

FOURTH E TATE ON TRIAL

Mr. Feroze Gandhi's Bill has been so obscured by the efforts of interpreters and annotators during and since its passage through Parliament that a simple analysis of its provisions seems necessary for the guidance of practising journalists who cover the proceedings of Parliament. An enthusiastic phrase-maker has called the Bill the Reporter's Charter. This description is justified in a limited sense. It is a limited charter. It confers no new right on the Press. Its effect is mainly to legalise a right which the Press has exercised in reporting the proceedings of Parliament. That right has been and will continue to be a restricted right. Three or four of the restrictions are specifically set out in the Bill.

Firstly, what is published should be "a substantially true" report of the proceedings.

Secondly, what is published should be without malice. The intention here is to prevent deliberate selection, suppression, overstressing, and other lapses from accepted standards of newspaper reporting. These, it must be remembered, are offences against the ethics of journalism. They are now offences against the law of the land. This represents an

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The Secretary-General Writes :

A LAME EXPERTISE

It gives one no pleasure to differ from experts on their expertise, and certainly not for the second month in succession. It is therefore with some trepidation that I venture to question the correctness of the stand taken by the Minister for Legal Affairs, Mr. H. V. Pataskar about Parliament's powers to pass a law protecting newspaper from civil or criminal action for publishing proceedings of State Legislatures.

In the Lok Sabha, the Legal Affairs Minister expressed some doubts about the powers of Parliament and got away with it. When he was subjected to a searching examination in the Rajya Sabha, he attempted to explain himself thrice but found himself getting more and more into a tight corner. He said he would not like to be "dogmatic" or to venture an opinion one way or the other, nor did he think it was in the interests of the sponsors of the measure to get a categorical reply from him. In fact he left the impression on those who heard him, that the constitutional issues raised were just red herrings across the trail, and the real reason for not extending this privilege to proceedings of State Legislatures was something different which the government was unwilling to disclose.

STATES' POWERS

Mr. Pataskar took the stand that article 194 (3) conferred certain powers, privileges and immunities on State Legislatures and equated them to those of the House of Commons in the U.K. Item 39 in the State lists of subjects in the seventh schedule also referred to the subject and so the States alone had jurisdiction to pass such laws in respect of the proceedings of their legislatures. This was the essence of his argument and he suggested that it would be best not to interfere with the States' right to regulate publication of proceedings of their legislatures.

The logical consequence of his stand would be that the law passed by the two Houses of Parliament protecting publication of Parliamentary proceedings really fell within item

74 of the Union list, namely, powers privileges and immunities of both Houses of Parliament and members of Parliament.

Mr. Feroze Gandhi's bill, even Mr. Pataskar will have to concede, does not confer any privilege on Members of Parliament. It is a privilege being conferred on the Press to publish proceedings without fear of criminal or civil action by third parties for libel or other actionable wrongs. It has nothing to do with the powers of Legislatures, including Parliament, to prohibit or regulate publication by the Press of proceedings in exercise of their powers and privileges. It may even be questioned whether Legislative bodies in India do at all have that power, even though the House of Commons in U.K. still technically claims that prerogative. In India, unlike in the UK, we have a written constitution, and every provision must be read with other provisions to eliminate any apparent contradictions. The citizen in India has been granted the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression and the state has power only to impose "reasonable restrictions" on the exercise of this right "in the interests of the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence". Now "reasonable restriction" does not mean prohibition. That the powers and privileges of legislatures are subject to the citizen's own fundamental rights was affirmed by the Supreme Court when it set at liberty the then acting editor of the *Blitz* who had been arrested in Bombay on a warrant issued by the U.P. Assembly Speaker for an alleged breach of privilege of the U.P. Assembly. The "accused" was not produced before a magistrate within 24 hours as required under Article 22 (2). It was then contended before the Supreme Court on behalf of the U.P. Legislature that it was not necessary to do so, as it was exercising its privileges under Article 194 (3) and the fundamental rights

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Goenka Threatens To Axe

MADRAS

It has now become clear beyond doubt that managements of newspapers in Madras State have decided to implement the decisions they took in March last with the aim of defeating the purpose of the Working Journalists Act and nullifying any award of the Wage Board. It will be remembered that the most important decision taken by the Madras members of the I.E.N.S. was to effect heavy retrenchment of staff, particularly in respect of reporters and correspondents.

The first shot has been fired by Sri Ramnath Goenka, Managing Director of Express Newspapers, who has informed the Madras Union of Journalists that he has "certain retrenchment proposals in view". Sri Goenka who was replying to the Union's letter forwarding a list of demands on behalf of the working journalists in his employ, charged the Union with having "engineered" the presentation of the demands in order to thwart his retrenchment plans. Sri Goenka's letter and the Union's reply thereto are reproduced below :

From the Managing Director, Express Newspapers, to the General Secretary, Madras Union of Journalists, dated May 3, 1956 :

"I have received your letter dated 3-5-56 along with the list of demands. I have reasons to believe that this has been engineered as a sequence to certain retrenchment proposals that I have in view. You have in sending the list of demands done what is usually being done by the workers to bring some imaginary demands before the Conciliation Officer, so that the retrenchment may be delayed.

"You know that as early as 26th April 1956 I had written to the Chief Reporter regarding the question of retrenchment in that department. Although we are perfectly within our rights to carry out the retrenchment with immediate effect

as the conciliation will only start from the time we receive the notice to that effect from the Conciliation Officer, still as our case for retrenchment is very strong, we do not want to take any action at the present moment, least it be said that our action was consequent upon your letter and as a measure of victimisation.

"As you have already referred the matter to the Conciliation Officer, I have nothing to say regarding the claims at the present moment. Whatever submission we have to make, we shall make it before the Conciliation Officer."

From the General Secretary, Madras Union of Journalists, to the Managing Director, Express Newspapers, Madras 2, dated May 6, 1956 :

"We are considerably surprised at the contents of your letter dated May 3, 1956, in reply to our letter of even date. We have been credited with knowledge of your so-called retrenchment proposals, of which we may assure you we have been totally ignorant. To attribute to us an attempt to "engineer" a situation to forestall your proposals is a tribute which we do not deserve.

"We hasten to assure you that the demands forwarded under our letter dated May 3, 1956 are not only not imaginary but are really substantial and have been at one time or the other subject matter of discussions, we are told, between your workers and your management. We only regret to find that reply to those demands is assured to us only before the Conciliation Officer, and in the circumstances we have no alternative but to await your reply at the said forum.

"As regards some scheme of retrenchment which is referred to in your letter under reply we can only say that such a threat is unwarranted and will not bear scrutiny or adjudication. However, we shall not anticipate."

Thus it will be seen that working journalists in Madras are facing a grave crisis. Sri Goenka has chosen to lead the campaign and the others are evidently waiting to join hands with him. Once the ball is set rolling it will undoubtedly develop a chain reaction and if such a catastrophe takes place journalism in India will become a dreadful profession.

The Executive Committee of the MUJ met on May 6 to consider this serious development and adopted the following resolution : "The Committee is shocked to learn from the Managing Director of Express Newspapers that he has plans for retrenchment of staff in the newspapers owned by him. The committee feels that any such proposal is unwarranted since the newspapers in question have always been understaffed, the members of the staff being also under-paid, and urges the management of the Express Newspapers to abandon the proposals.

"The Committee has reason to feel that the retrenchment proposals constitute an attempt to forestall the award of the Wage Board and a challenge to the Central and State Governments who are trying to do justice to working journalists.

"The Committee appeals to the Government of India to take steps immediately to prevent retrenchment in newspaper establishments".

WAGE BOARD

The Committee also discussed the resolution passed by the Executive Committee of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society *vis-a-vis* the Wage Board and adopted the following resolution :

"The Executive Committee of the MUJ welcomes the appointment of the Wage Board and expresses the hope that all parties concerned will give it the fullest co-operation in order that the Board may establish a fair and just wage structure for working journalists without avoidable delay.

"The Committee has carefully studied the demand of the Society for the reconstitution of the Board. The reasons advanced by the Society in support of its demand are

MAHARASHTRA DEMANDS INTERIM WAGES

mischievous and unconvincing. The Committee sees in the opposition of the Society a deliberate move to prevent the Wage Board from functioning and feels that this may be the forerunner of many such attempts to sabotage government's and Parliament's considered plan to render justice to working journalists.

"The Committee urges the government to permit the Wage Board to go ahead with its enquiry notwithstanding the threat of dissociation held out by the Society. The announcement of the personnel of the Board was itself long delayed and the government should not now yield to the employers' pressure-tactics.

"The Committee feels that this reactionary attitude of the Society highlights the urgency of giving interim relief to working journalists and appeals to the Government of India and the Wage Board to provide to provide such relief without further loss of time."

* * *

On a complaint lodged by the Union against the management of the *Hindu* in respect of non-implementation of the provisions of the Working Journalists Act in the case of proof-readers and against the management of Express Newspapers for having rescinded their order fixing the hours of work for proof-readers in accordance with the Act, the Labour Officer concerned held conciliation proceedings on April 20. The representatives of both managements cited the Law Ministry's clarification in support of their stand. The Union representatives pointed out that Section 2(f) of the Act was unambiguous and specifically included proof-readers, and that, therefore, all proof-readers employed in, or in relation to, a newspaper establishment were covered by the Act. Finding that he could not reconcile these two standpoints, the Labour Officer has reported failure of the conciliation proceedings, and it is expected that the government will refer the dispute to adjudication at an early date.

An interesting demonstration of

the import of the Freedom of the Press, as practised by Press Barons, was given when the statement issued by the President of the IFWJ regarding proof-readers was completely suppressed by all Madras newspapers except one. Not only that. On a comparison of the report of the proceedings in the Rajya Sabha when the question of proof-readers was discussed with the alleged text published by the *Hindu*, it was found that Sri Banarsidas Chaturvedi's only question had been mutilated. The *Hindu* had blue-pencilled the second part of the question as to why Dr. Keskar had resiled from the position he had taken in his Madras speech. In this context, does it not seem an irony that newspaper proprietors should support the Bill to confer privilege on the Press in respect of proceedings of Parliament?

The M.U.J. has secured retrenchment compensation for a working journalist under Section 4 of the W. J. Act. Sri D. Vamana Row, sub-editor, *Andhra Patrika*, whose services were terminated in November, 1954, with six months pay in lieu of notice, was denied the full compensation of 14 months salary due to him under the law. The management contended that the notice pay should be treated as part of the compensation due to him, and that he was entitled only to an amount equivalent to eight months salary. The Union challenged this contention. The Conciliation Officer brought about a compromise by which Sri Vamana Row was paid twelve months salary, that is, Rs. 2,610.

The Industrial Tribunal, Madras, held a preliminary enquiry on May 4 regarding the dismissal of Sri M. S. Sarma, of *Andhra Patrika*, and the case has been posted to June 2 for further hearing.

GUJERAT

Shri Khandubhai Desai, the Union Labour Minister assured a ten-man deputation of the Gujarat Working Journalists Union in Ahmedabad early this month that the Wage Board, constituted for the purpose of fixing scales of pay for

the working journalists, would "adopt a constructive approach to the whole problem of wages in the profession."

The Board, Mr. Desai said, was expected to submit its findings to the government in about four months' time.

The deputationists apprised the Minister of the situation in the newspaper industry following the passage of the Working Journalists Act and brought to his notice that none of the newspapers in Gujarat had so far shown any sign of implementing the Act.

Shri Desai assured the deputationists that the government would take all necessary steps to implement the Act. He hoped that the State governments who were to administer the law would take prompt steps in this connection.

Framing of the rules under the law, had proved to be a complicated affair and the government of India had to refer to similar rules in foreign countries, like Australia, Shri Desai added.

The deputation was led by Shri Ashok Harsha, President of the Gujarat Working Journalists' Union.

MAHARASHTRA

The Maharashtra Union of Working Journalists has demanded of government immediate fixation of interim wages for working journalists in view of the delay in the constitution of the Wage Board envisaged in the Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act.

The Union, in a resolution passed at its annual meeting held in Poona early this month said the issue of interim wages has gained urgency as the Wage Board is likely to take considerable time to conclude its deliberations and formulate its recommendations.

The meeting reelected Mr. P.D. Abhyankar as the President of the Union and Mr. A. D. Kale as General Secretary.

Mr. M. V. Sane was reelected the Union's representative on the Federal Executive Council of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists.

CALCUTTA

"Proof-readers employed in newspaper establishments are working journalists and are covered by the working journalists Act", the Indian Journalists Association affirmed at its annual general meeting on May 6.

The Association said that neither the interpretation of the Law Ministry could supersede the clear provisions of the law nor anything that might be put in the rules. It called upon its executive to take all possible steps open to a trade union to resist all attempts of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society and other bodies to exclude proof-readers.

Among other resolutions the following resolution on the status of the proof-readers as working journalists was unanimously passed at the meeting:

"The General Body of the Indian Journalists Association, assembled at the Annual General Meeting, learns with dismay that attempts are being made by the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society to secure exclusion of the proof-readers from the benefits of the Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955 and, to that end, has obtained from the Ministry of Law, Government of India an interpretation of section 2(f) of the aforesaid Act.

"The Indian Journalists Association is of opinion that under the provisions of the Act aforesaid proof-readers employed in newspaper establishments are working journalists and as such, are entitled to all the benefits conferred by the Act on that class of workmen.

"The I.J.A. is further of opinion that no interpretation given by the Union Ministry of Law can supersede the substantive provisions of the Act and also that the rule-making powers of the Central Govt. under Section 20 of the Act cannot be utilised to modify the contents of Section 2(f) of the Act to the prejudice of any category of working journalists.

"The General Body of the I.J.A. therefore directs the Executive Council to resist every attempt by the

WILL THE PRESS BARONS EXERCISE THE FREEDOM ?

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important gain for those interested in fair reporting. A certain amount of selection is inevitable in reporting anything, including the proceedings of legislatures. The reporter may err in exercising his right of selection. In the vast majority of cases his selection is free from malicious intent; he is guided entirely by his instinctive judgement of public interest and news value and by a healthy respect for the law of defamation. But big business interests which control newspapers are guided by other instincts. In more than one recent instance these instincts have dictated the blacking out of important parts of the proceedings of Parliament. Mr. Feroze Gandhi's own revelation about the dubious transactions of wellknown industrial and commercial magnates have been so dealt with by the bigger newspapers and by the news agencies they control. They have tried to take shelter under the excuse that it is not certain whether Mr. Gandhi's allegations, for instance, are protected or privileged in the sense that they could be published without offending against the law of defamation. Any such doubt can no longer be genuinely entertained.

The most serious restriction, and one against which opinion in both houses was practically unanimous,

Newspaper Society or any other body to exclude the proof-readers from the benefits of the Act and to fight any and all moves in that direction by all legitimate means and in accordance with the usual methods and procedures of trade unionism.

In the election of the President, the Secretary News and the Executive Council, which was a keenly contested one, the following were elected to the different offices for 1956-57:—

President :—Sri Dhirendranath Das Gupta.

Secretary :—Sri Krishna Dhar.

arises from the government's insistence on the exclusion of states legislatures from the provisions of the Bill. The government spokesman got away with the plea in the Lok Sabha that the right of the Union Parliament to legislate on the subject and make that legislation applicable to the States was not free from doubt, and that in order to avoid disputes, it was better that the State legislatures be left free to regulate the publication of their proceedings in their own way.

The weakness of this stand was demonstrated as the debate progressed both in the Lok Sabha and later in the Rajya Sabha. It was pointed out that if the matter were left to the State legislatures, there is the risk of each legislature enacting its own law without reference to what a neighbouring legislature does or worse still, one state legislature may undertake legislation and another decide not to do so, with the result that newspapers which enjoy the right of reporting the proceedings of the legislature in one state might get into trouble when they circulate in a neighbouring state in which the right of reporting the proceedings is not given. The government obviously realised that anomalies of this kind would arise, but nevertheless showed unreasoning and inopportune firmness in sticking to their interpretation of the constitutional provision governing the right of each state legislature to regulate the publication of its proceedings. Ultimately the Minister agreed that as soon as the present Bill was passed, the government would communicate with the governments of the States and, with their consent, undertake legislation in Parliament to be made applicable to the States. This was a real triumph for the opposition in the Rajya Sabha. It is also a triumph for the reporter. He is promised a fuller charter than the present Bill represents.

—S. A. Sastri

WHY THIS VOLTE-FACE ON PROOF-READERS ?

IFWJ Chief's Poser

The statements made by the Information and Broadcasting Minister and the Labour Minister during the half-hour debate in the Lok Sabha on April 20 have caused confusion and misunderstanding about the position of proof-readers, that should be cleared up.

The Union Law Ministry's interpretation of the definition of working journalist in its application to proof readers was the starting point of the difficulty. As the Deputy Speaker remarked, it is not the province of a Ministry to interpret law. The Labour Minister as good as accepted this view, when he observed that it was for the courts to determine the meaning of the clause. The obvious question I would ask is: Why did the Law Ministry undertake to do what should be left to the courts to do?

The Information and Broadcasting Minister made references to discussions with the Indian Federation of Working Journalists. The Federation's position has been clear and consistent from the very beginning. We have always maintained that proof-reading is an essential part of journalism and proof readers are covered by the definition of working journalist. When it was found that the Press Commission's report had left the proof readers in an ambiguous position, the Federation demurred, and its stand was reaffirmed in a representation made in November 1954. In the same month, the definition of "working journalist" was discussed between the Secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and the then Secretary General of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists. The points stressed during that discussion were confirmed by the Secretary General in a letter written by him the same day, that is, November 19, 1954, saying, *inter alia*: "As I told you today I

am in general agreement with the description of the categories mentioned in the proposed definition. But, I would suggest that proof readers, working in editorial departments, may be included. Similarly, specific reference to news editors and chief sub-editors may also make it more explicit."

The Federation's view, as set forth above, was accepted, and accordingly proof-readers and news editors were included in the categories mentioned in the Working Journalists (Industrial Disputes) Bill, 1955 which became law on March 12, 1955.

When the Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill was brought forward, the definition in the earlier enactment was adopted. Never was any doubt raised about its applicability to proof-readers, even though the Bill was subjected to detailed scrutiny in the Rajya Sabha, and a number of amendments were accepted.

Speaking at a reception held in Madras on January 11, soon after the law was placed on the statute book, and when his attention was drawn to the refusal of some newspaper managements to apply the law to proof readers, Dr. Keskar stated that proof readers in newspapers came within the definition of working journalists. "As far as legal advice is concerned," he added, "it is the correct definition, and, of course, we do not know whether it will stand any challenge in a court of law. If it does not, it will have to be changed." The meaning of this statement is quite clear. Dr. Keskar seems to have had no doubt at that stage that proof-readers were included in the definition and that if a court of law should interpret the definition differently, then the definition would have to be changed so as

A Reporter's Charter

The Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Bill, 1956 as passed by Parliament.

A Bill to protect the publication of reports of proceedings of Parliament.

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Seventh Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, 1956.

(2) It extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

2. In this Act, "newspaper" means any printed periodical work containing public news or comments on public news, and includes a news-agency supplying material for publication in a newspaper.

3. (1) Save as otherwise provided in sub-section (2), no person shall be liable to any proceedings, civil or criminal, in any court in respect of the publication in a newspaper of a substantially true report of any proceedings of either House of Parliament, unless the publication is proved to have made with malice.

(2) Nothing in sub-section (1) shall be construed as protecting the publication of any matter, the publication of which is not for the public good.

4. This Act shall apply in relation to reports or matters broadcast by means of wireless telegraphy as part of any programme or service provided by means of a broadcasting station situate within the territories to which this Act extends as it applies in relation to reports or matters published in a newspaper.

to make it inclusive of proof readers.

I would urge that this is the correct stand. It is obvious that the Law Ministry not only gave a wrong interpretation of Government's intention but it acted beyond its competence in undertaking to give any interpretation at all. The right course now is to withdraw that interpretation and restore the position in which anyone who disagrees with the meaning of the definition clause and thinks that proof-readers are excluded might, if he chooses, get a ruling from a court of law.

—Banarsidas Chaturvedi.

WHEN EDITORS WERE EDITORS

By Mrinal Kanti Bose

Moti Babu asked me to see him as often as I could and suggested that I might write articles suitable for publication as editorials. I followed his advice and took my writings to him. This practice continued, so far as I remember, for about a month till one day when I visited him he offered me a job as senior sub-editor of his paper. He said that the person who occupied that post drew a salary of Rs. 40/- a month, but since I was an M.A. B.L., he would offer me Rs. 10/- more i.e. Rs. 50/-. He knew, he added, that this was hardly sufficient for me with a family consisting of a wife and four children to maintain. He advised me not to discontinue my practice at the bar. It would be enough, he said, if I came to office at about 3 P.M. and continued my work till 9 P.M.

June 2, 1918 was a memorable day for me—I joined the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on that day. I did not seek the advice of friends or relatives in the matter as I knew they would all ridicule the idea of my accepting a job on a miserably poor salary and that also without any prospects whatever.

THE COST OF JOURNALISM

I do not know even now what prompted me to embrace lifelong poverty. It is possible that a fanatical love for journalism must have compelled me. The year 1918 will ever live fresh in my memory. This period was one of *tapasya* for me. I cannot conceive how I managed to maintain my family on such a poor income of Rs. 50/- a month. I had to pay a house rent of Rs. 23/- a month, and the balance was hardly sufficient for the family. My wife entirely took upon herself the management of the affairs of the family including education of my children. She worked hard, doing all the work from cooking and cleaning of utensils to sewing of cloth etc. to make them last indefinitely, making one seer of milk two seers by mixing with water while starving herself. Her health

was breaking down but I was so immersed in my work on the paper that I scarcely noticed it though warned by relatives. She died two years later (20th April, 1920), just when I was on the threshold of comparative prosperity. I was then aged 30 and she was just five years younger than me.

ALL IN ONE

I did the sub-editorial work, editing of news, arranging and re-writing of correspondence, going through the proofs and supervising the printing in the press. I had even to do reporting work frequently at the request of Moti Babu. World War-I was then on its last lap but was raging more furiously than in previous years. War news from almost every part of the world was published in the papers in a disconnected way. After careful thought I arranged the news in such a manner that the reader could have an easy grasp of what was happening by simply going through the head-lines. The arrangement I made was immediately followed by other papers.

While doing this sub-editorial work for eight to ten hours a day I worked at home writing editorial articles and paras for the paper. Before taking my seat in the office I would see Moti Babu and hand over to him what I had written at home. I revised ordinary articles written by other leader-writers. Thus I combined in myself the functions of the editor, leader-writer and subeditor. This continued for about six months. The volume of my editorial writing was increasing as Moti Babu had become extremely weak due to old age and could not write and Bipin Babu had taken leave for political work. One fine morning Moti Babu sent for me and to quote his words said that "he would not have the cart of dust and mud drawn by an elephant". He told me that he had appointed a sub-editor in my place and I would be in sole charge of the editorial columns. My salary

he further informed me, would be raised from Rs. 50/- to Rs. 70/- a month. I was delighted, not because of the increase in my pay, but for the responsibility that I was called upon to shoulder by a person who was then recognised as one of the foremost journalists in India.

How did I qualify myself for the responsibility? By doing work which had absolutely no reference to the poor pay I received. I read papers and books, and what was of particular benefit to me, I went through the back files of the *Patrika* as suggested by Moti Babu. In 1919 the paper was more than half a century old (52 years). The files were kept in bound volumes from the start. I went through them, particularly the writings of Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the founder of the paper and the elder brother of Moti Babu. There were anonymous contributors whose writings were also brilliant. Moti Babu named some of them to me. Those files were a store-house of knowledge of past events. The flood-gates of thought were opened to me. During the four years that I was associated with my guru (he died on the 5th September, 1922) I learnt a great deal at his feet.

"BENGALI ENGLISH"

The *Patrika* started as a Bengali paper but after some years when the Vernacular Press Act was passed (1878) specially to suppress that paper, it became overnight an English paper. Moti Babu's style of writing (similar to that of Sisir Kumar) was peculiar. It was not only very simple and remarkable for its short sentences, but the language itself was, as Moti Babu described it, "Bengali-English" or "English-Bengali". To him originality of thought was the main thing and not the flourish of words and the display of scholarship. He always impressed upon me that if I had anything original to say I should touch a subject, but I must on no account reproduce what other papers and other people were

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NO SHIFT IN FEDERATION'S STAND ON PROOF-READERS

A Forgotten Aide-Memoire

Dr. B. V. Keskar, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, has been such a good friend of the working journalists that it becomes difficult to differ from him when it concerns journalists. But a recent statement of his on the floor of the Lok Sabha, if left uncorrected, will remain a serious indictment of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists in regard to its role on the inclusion of proof-readers among working journalists. Dr. Keskar told the Sabha, explaining how proof-readers happened to be 'included' in the definition of "working journalist" in the Working Journalists (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, that a delegation of the Federation had suggested to him that only those journalists who were forced to work as proof-readers by the employees should be governed by the Act.

As one intimately connected with the talks between the government and the Federation in this regard, I have to emphatically assert that no delegation of the Federation which waited on the Minister or anybody else in the government had made any such suggestion. In reality there had been no talk on the status of proof-readers as such at the time the legislation was being discussed. The present definition of "working journalist" is not a new one, but the same as was laid down in the Working Journalists (Industrial disputes) Act, 1955. As early as in November 1954, I had discussions with Mr. P. M. Lad, the Secretary to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, on the definition of "working journalist". I had then suggested that news editors, chief sub-editors and proof-readers should be specifically mentioned and that was all that the Federation did in regard to the definition. An aide-memoire of the discussions I had with Mr. Lad was presented to him on November 19, 1954, which reads:

"Dear Mr. Lad,

I am thankful to you for having given me an opportunity to express

my opinion on the proposed definition of the term 'working journalist', to be introduced in the Bill to amend the Industrial Disputes Act.

As I told you today I am in general agreement with the description of the categories mentioned in this proposed definition. But I would suggest that proof-readers working in editorial departments may be included. Similarly, specific reference of news editors and chief sub-editors may also make it more explicit. Thus it will read:

'Working Journalist' means a person (including an editor, a leader writer, feature writer, news-editor, chief sub-editor, proof-reader, sub-editor, reporter, correspondent, cartoonist and news photographer) employed as a journalist in any newspaper industry or in any news agency or syndicate supplying material for publication in any newspaper.

As regards the proviso to the definition, as I have already submitted to you, these are not necessary and all the conditions and restrictions applying to the main Act will be attracted here also.

The inclusion about 'principal means of livelihood', serves no purpose in the scheme of the Industrial Disputes Act and the introduction of these words into the definition of 'working journalist' in the Industrial Disputes Act would only lead to endless and vexatious litigation and may well give a handle to employers, anxious to avoid the application of the Act, to make all their employees on part-time basis or at least contending in every case that it is not 'principal means of livelihood'. It was really because of this factor that the Industrial Disputes Act itself which excludes casual labour, makes no reference to part-time work or principal source of livelihood, but leaves it to be governed by other enactments.

As regards administrative and managerial personnel, here also the

general provision might as well apply. Any special provision and language would only lead to unnecessary hair-splitting arguments and litigation.

If you would like to discuss with me further anything in the light of the provisions that emerge from your discussions with the Labour Ministry, I shall be glad to meet you.

—J. P. Chaturvedi,
Secretary General."

The aide-memoire is self-explanatory and the Federation had no idea of any rider to be attached to proof-readers.

The Federation since its inception has been of the view that proof-readers are members of the journalistic profession if they are engaged in proof-reading work for a newspaper. It might not be out of place here to recall the stand taken by the Federation even when the issue came up before the Press Commission.

When the Commission asked for the definition of a 'working journalist' the Federation had stated, "We favour the definition adopted by us in our Federation Constitution namely: 'working journalist' means a member of the journalists profession or a free lance journalist or a correspondent who depends on journalism as his principal means of living. It includes proof-readers, cartoonists and press photographers and artists employed by newspapers as employees. It does not include proprietors, and directors or managing editors having proprietary interests.

The Chairman of the Commission, the late Justice Rajadhyaksha specifically asked the Federation's delegation that met the Commission in October 1953, "what are the reasons for which you have suggested that proof-readers should be considered as working journalists? Is not their work more of a mechanical nature than in the case of a working journalist?" Our reply was: "the proof-reader is very intimately connected with, what may be described, as processing of the copy for the Press and sometimes he is the last person who has to see how the copy goes to the Press". In replies to questions by other members

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In a Democracy

'People can change Newspapers as they change Governments'

—P. D. Tandon

Banaras, May 19

Newspaper proprietors should realise that their "queer antics" would not pay in the present era when trade unionism has come to stay, said Shri P. D. Tandon, President of the U.P. Working Journalists Union here today.

He was delivering his presidential address at the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Union which was inaugurated by Shri Lal Bahadur, Union Minister for Railways.

The following is the text of his address :

I am glad that you have kindly asked me to preside over the eleventh annual session of the U.P. Working Journalists Union. It affords me an opportunity to say a few things about ourselves and about those who have exploited us for long and seem to be reluctant even now to stop their nefarious business. Some newspaper proprietors seem to think that by dilatory and obstructionist tactics, they will be able to scotch the recommendations of the Press Commission. They are making an attempt to dodge the government and defy its decisions. Let us hope that they will not succeed. Time has come when they must implement the recommendations of the Press Commission with grace and without any further delay if they want to avoid bitterness between themselves and the working journalists. The working journalists movement has swept these proprietors off their feet and in sheer nervousness they are resorting to queer antics. They ought to know that contented labour is an asset to an industry and a contented staff is the greatest asset of a newspaper. Trade unionism amongst working journalists has now come to stay. It is the by-product of the industrial age. It is there to protect the interests of labour and society both. We believe that labour is capital and we must prepare ourselves to share adequately the profits in the newspaper industry. In days to come working journalists will not

only demand profits in the industry, but share in the ownership also. They are the real producers of the paper, and behind every headline there is a story of blood, sweat and tears. It is the working journalists who produce newspapers and not the managing editors or proprietors. The managing editor is just like that clever *khansama* who appropriates all the credit to himself for the delicious dishes prepared by the talented cook in the kitchen.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

It should be known to all newspaper proprietors that working journalists will no longer tolerate any exploitation and they must read the signs of the times. They should know that a leading industrialist in the country has wisely signed a truce with the labour. Newspaper managements should also create conditions in the industry which will be conducive to good work.

I request the public to fully realise that they have a stake in the newspapers. If they help us and co-operate with us, then alone they will be able to get purer, better and brighter papers where truth will be reflected and the will of the people faithfully expressed. If they take a more lively interest in the working journalist movement, they will be helping us and the society both. They should vigorously protest against suppression and distortion of news. A democratic country has the Press it deserves. If it has the will to have a decent and honest Press, it can destroy a bad and corrupt Press. No proprietor can venture to run a dishonest and rotten paper if the readers are unwilling to tolerate it. People can change the newspapers as they can change the governments.

Conditions in the Indian newspaper industry will now change rapidly and the Press of the future will be what the people will want it to be. They will succeed only when they are vigilant. The public and journalists should see to it that the papers are not slaves to the government. Suppression of the Press in any country is the first step towards dictatorial tyranny. If the Press is smothered by the State it will be a sad day for the nation. But in India today a number of papers seem to be almost willing slaves to the government. I can quote many instances where the government dictates to the papers and they get what they want. I am, however, quoting here only one. Some time ago a newspaper in the U.P. published a strongly worded editorial against the state's first five year plan. A powerful minister rang up the proprietor and complained against it. The proprietor offered his apologies and assured the minister that soon the 'right' thing will be done. He called for the leader-writer and told him that the minister was angry and he should immediately make up for the 'mistake'. The poor leader-writer rushed to his desk and wrote another editorial praising the state's five year plan to the skies. When the people read it they rubbed their eyes in wonder. But in the case of some newspaper proprietors we have ceased to wonder. They are capable of doing anything.

This was the case where a minister dictated, but even cinema advertisers dictate to press barons. In several newspapers no news can be published against the cinema managements unless the advertisement managers have approved of them and they seldom do. Cinema advertisers and such others can get almost anything published in several newspapers and can get anything excluded. If things continue to deteriorate at this rate, cinema advertisers will not only be entertained and honoured in newspaper offices, but their portraits will also be unveiled in editorial and managerial departments. It is a pity that some

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I Become An Editor

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saying. He did not like long quotations and insisted that the writer must think out new ideas and put them in his own way. Dullness he abhorred, and always sought to make his writings humorous. He had an inexhaustible store of stories in his memory, and in almost every one of his writings, the stories were told. These stories were largely from the folk-lore of our country. The *Patrika's* style of writing, the satires, the stories and the originality of approach earned for the paper a unique place in Indian journalism. I remember how the editorials, though often satirical reflections on British rule and administration, elicited the admiration even of Englishmen. Many eminent men from foreign countries used to visit Moti Babu. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, then leader of the Labour Opposition in Parliament was one of them. Moti Babu entertained him with a dish of Sandesh (Bengal's special sweet). Having tasted it Mr. Ramsay Macdonald said that the Sandesh was "not for mortals but for immortals". Moti Babu wrote that day an editorial in which this opinion of the British Labour leader found expression, to the immense amusement of readers. I was present at almost all these interviews as Moti Babu said I would learn a good deal from the talks he had with his distinguished visitors. I was then an unknown person, though by that time my writings were almost all taken as having emanated from Moti Babu's pen. It appears to me strange even now how I could manage to absorb in so short a time every peculiarity of his thought, ideas and style of writing.

In conformity with the ideas prevailing in those days Moti Babu attached the utmost importance to the editorial columns. He devised various ways of making editorials attractive. He insisted that an editorial article should have only one central point and all arguments should be strictly relevant to it. There was no severer critic of

British administration than he, but he always took care to avoid personal attacks. Even when he had to criticise persons, he put his case in so humorous a way that it did not excite anger. These qualities in the paper's editorials had won high prestige for it, and Moti Babu, though not a scholar or an orator or even an active participant in public life won the high esteem of all. High officials, some of whom subsequently became Governors, came to pay their respects to him.

WHEN EDITORS THOUGHT !

My Guru ever reminded me by his words and example that originality of thought was above everything else in journalism. This originality does not come easily. One has to think, think and think. Where is the time for thinking in these hectic days? If there is, where is the inclination? I belong to the old school and sigh for the days when commercialisation had not killed our power of independent thinking. To take cuttings from newspapers and pasting them in *Khatas*, the art of *Kanchification* (using of scissors) and *athification* (pasting) and to make extensive quotations with or without acknowledgement had not become the way of earning distinction as a "Veteran Journalist". To write as dictated to by proprietors and their henchmen had not become the order of the day. Freedom of the Press does not mean now what it meant in the days when journalists were free thinkers and not mere mercenaries as they are now.

In May 1922 a law was passed making it compulsory to publish the name of the editor in every issue of the paper. This law, known as the Vernacular Press Act, was motivated by the desire to suppress the *Patrika*. Several prosecutions, either for sedition or libel were launched against this paper, but on conviction it was the poor printer who went to jail. Neither Sisir Babu nor Moti Babu admitted in such prosecutions that either of

them was the editor. Moti Babu was unwilling to publish his name as editor, nor did he like that his younger brother Golapalal Ghosh (then an old man) or his nephew Pijus Kanti Ghosh should be declared as such. As a matter of fact from 1920 I was the *defacto* editor. It was my duty to go through and to revise if necessary the editorials both of Moti Babu and of Bepin Babu. If Moti Babu felt physically fit he went through the articles written by me and Bepin Babu. The supreme direction was his of course, and in this sense he was the editor. He desired that my name should appear as editor. Everybody was almost sure that the declared editor would soon be prosecuted and sent to jail.

From 25th May 1922, my name appeared as the editor on the front page. An unknown person, as I then was, suddenly emerged into the limelight. To be known as the editor of the *Patrika* in those days, though risky, was a proud privilege. Two years before my wife had died, and I had several children to maintain. Yet I was ready to suffer imprisonment in the service of the country, and the paper had a long tradition of public service. The object for which the law was passed was however completely frustrated. I knew very well that I could not probably tone down the policy of the paper and its editorials, as that would make the paper lose its popularity. At the same time, if I went on as before, there was every likelihood of a prosecution. I had to keep a balance and in this task my experience as a lawyer proved a great asset. The success that I achieved was testified to by no less a person than Sir Abdur Rahim, then a member of the Governor's Executive Council in charge of law and order. After a few months Moti Babu had an occasion to visit Sir Abdur Rahim. The account of this interview was subsequently narrated to me by Moti Babu. Sir Abdur wanted to know from him who was the new editor of the paper. He expressed his surprise, and told Moti Babu (confidentially) that on two or three

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"AMAN SABHAS" OF U.P. GOVERNMENT

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proprietors are converting newspapers into slums of servility and their columns are little better than gutters.

An unhealthy, though not very unexpected, development is taking place in the profession. Proprietors are pampering some blacklegs amongst us and they are using them against working journalists in every possible way. Managements are helping these stooges to build up clubs and associations and create disruption amongst journalists. These black-legs are allowed to use the columns of some newspapers, the way they like and day in and day out they flow all sorts of rubbish into them.

Reporters and their bosses advertise in their news columns tomato juice, guava jelly, *rasogullas* and mango *chatni* prepared by 'friendly firms', but they suppress almost all the news of those organisations which believe in maintaining their independence. We ourselves have been their victims all along. They have been suppressing even bare news about the working journalist movement. Some daily newspapers in the U.P. did not publish even one word about the last meeting of the Standing Committee of the U.P. Working Journalists Union which was recently held at Lucknow. One English daily did not publish even the names of the members of the Working Committee of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists when it was formed a few months ago. All this is being done in the name of the "Freedom of the Press". These newspapers must realise that by blacking out news about our movement they cannot suppress us in any way. By these actions they do not damage us in any particular manner, but their claims to impartiality and fair-mindedness are badly exposed. I have pointed out these instances just to show the impartiality and integrity of these pious Pandits of the Press who are never tired of preaching about the "Freedom of The Press". I am fully aware that those who expose the gangsterism of proprietors and the black-legs take the risk of being black-mailed in a most shameful

way, but truth must be told and there can be no surrender to the thugs.

PRESS COMMITTEE

I am sorry to say that the relations between the U.P. Working Journalists Union and the U.P. Government have not been particularly happy. We have not found it either necessary or desirable to associate ourselves with the Press Committee, formerly known as the Press Consultative Committee, which the U.P. Government formed some time ago. Even the Press Commission thought it inadvisable to have such committees in the states, but the U.P. Government has stubbornly refused to be guided by the Press Commission's recommendations when almost all its recommendations have been accepted in principle by the Central Government. What advice does the government expect from this committee? Instead of nominating editors and such others on the Press Committee, the government might as well nominate proprietors and that would pay them better dividends. My colleagues of the Congress struggle days must realise that "aman sabhas" in the past did not succeed against them and this "aman sabha" (the Press Committee) will not be able to do any injury to the working journalists movement. I accuse the U.P. Government of making an attempt to disrupt our unity. I accuse them of playing foul of us. I accuse them of partiality and obstinacy. Why do they fight shy in approaching the U.P. Working Journalists Union, which is the only accredited organization of working journalists in the state, if they really need any guidance or help?

It is unfortunate that some of us have agreed to serve on the Press Committee. I hope they will soon realise their responsibility to the profession and quit it and not force us to ask them either to quit the Press Committee or leave the Working Journalists Union. A time has almost come when this dualism must end. The Press Committee must disband itself or be damned.

It has been noted with regret

that the State Government mostly does not refer the cases of victimised journalists to the State Industrial Tribunal and this causes much hardship to those who have already been struck most harshly by the proprietors. The law clearly states that such cases should be referred to the Tribunal for their verdict, but it is not being done. Let us hope that the U.P. Government will soon change its attitude and do justice to the victimised journalists and make the law meaningful and real.

UNITY IN RANKS

I have talked of our privileges and responsibilities and have talked about others. Let us now turn to ourselves and see if we are proving equal to the responsibilities that the new situation has devolved upon us. We have achieved quite a lot during the last few years but the fight is not yet over. Let us not forget that the press barons will fight us to the last ditch and they will drag us to the courts of law on one issue or the other. What are we doing to meet the situation boldly and intelligently? Unity in the face of this proprietorial opposition is the prime need of the hour. If we quarrel amongst ourselves, we will undo whatever we have been able to accomplish in these years. We succeeded because we worked unitedly and devotedly and we have had the advantage of able and inspiring leadership. Let us pay our tribute to the leaders of our movement. Here, though, I feel a little embarrassed, I must mention the name of our former president of the Federation, Mr. M. Chalapathi Rau under whose leadership we battled and won. Today he holds no office in the Federation, but let none, including our opponents imagine, that he is not taking any interest in our activities. I am sure he is keeping vigil over us and watching our footsteps in our onward march. Let us not falter but have faith in the cause which we espouse. I am sure in the hour of great need or in any particular emergency, our leader, Mr. Chalapathi Rau, will always be there to guide us and help us, but let us be worthy of the cause we hold dear and the claims we make.

(Please turn over)

Ministerial Harems or Public Forums ?

There is no doubt that we are going to win in our fight against the press lords, but that is not enough. How are we going to show the world that working journalists are a capable and patriotic lot? Not by fighting over petty matters amongst ourselves but by improving standards in our profession and showing efficiency and integrity in our work. We must refuse to do what we consider to be wrong, whatever the consequences. Let none be able to accuse us of shirking responsibilities or avoiding work. We should organise seminars and study circles as they would give us opportunity to discuss our problems adequately. We should try our best not to neglect the interest of the common man and, with the co-operation of proprietors, if possible, let us reach the villager and understand his problems and difficulties. We must remember that India lives in villages and the sooner we help the villager, the better it would be for all of us.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

It has been noted that quite a few of us pay more attention to the ministers and other high officials when they visit our cities, but we pay little attention to visiting journalists. This is not proper, because by meeting these journalists we would be learning something from them and we would be telling them something about ourselves. We should pay due attention to the visiting journalists in various cities.

It has been felt that quite a few of us have not yet fully learnt to respect our seniors and encourage our juniors in the profession. We must set adequate standards in these matters. I have heard newcomers and juniors complain that they are treated with cold neglect in the newspaper offices by their seniors and in a way they start getting disillusioned the moment they enter the profession. It is neither human nor proper. We should take care of our junior colleagues and help them in every possible way. We should function fearlessly and with dignity ever ready to chasten the haughty and protect the weak; scorn the bigot and admire the progressive.

Some pressmen either due to managerial instructions or due to their own personal interests have made it their main duty to hover round ministers and high officials. They think that they can neglect any news, but must publicize the ministers' "at homes" and marriages in their homes and give elaborate list of "Among those present". These men of the Press seem more to belong to the ministerial harems than to the public forums. It is they who lower our prestige.

Some stooges of the proprietors have converted themselves into journalistic band-boys ready to beat the drum anywhere and everywhere. They are always ready to attend any press conference and do anything for the proprietors. These people should realise that for their petty, personal gains and alleged security they are bringing shame to their profession and doing most unseemly acts. They are losing caste with the working journalists and proprietors can drop them any moment when they feel that these men are no more of any use to them.

A FRIENDLY APPEAL

In the end I wish to make a most friendly and genuine appeal to newspaper managements to implement honestly the Working Journalists Act and deal with us fairly and sportingly in the interests of newspapers and in fairness to us. We are willing to co-operate with them and be reasonable in our demands. We invite them to clasp our hand of friendship and request them not to spurn it, but if they think that they can exploit us as usual, then they are spoiling for a fight and a bitter fight they will have for the asking. If another struggle is calling us, we will respond to the call.

NOTICE

With effect from June 1, the office of the Federation is being shifted to the Hindi Bhawan, 7 Theatre Communications Buildings, Connaught Circus, New Delhi. Correspondence should be addressed to the above address.

Secretary-General

Proof-Readers

And an Aide-Memoire

(continued from page 10)

of the Commission, Mr. K. Rama Rao had said: "The silly mistakes that I commit or anybody else commits would have gone into the paper if the experienced proof-readers do not draw attention to them." When we were asked if we would like to fix a qualification for proof-readers also, we had said that when we wanted qualification to be fixed for a journalist it would automatically follow that qualification would have to be fixed for proof-readers also.

After a lengthy discussion on proof-readers, the Chairman summed up: "Their (proof-readers) function is not purely mechanical. They do some intellectual work. That has been my impression." Mr. Gopalan, Secretary to the Commission remarked "that has been his (Federation representative's) answer also."

The Federation expressed similar views in a resolution passed at its Bombay session in November 1954. The resolution *inter alia* said "The Federation is particularly disappointed at the exclusion of proof-readers working exclusively on the editorial side of a newspaper from the category of working journalists."

After the Bombay session a representation was submitted to the Information and Broadcasting ministry reiterating that proof-readers working on the editorial side of the newspapers should be included in the category of working journalists.

With all these facts and background to the issue, it passes my comprehension as to how and where Dr. Keskar got the impression that the Federation had thought of imposing conditions for proof-readers to be included among working journalists. I now hope Dr. Keskar will refresh his memory, revert to his original stand and do justice by the proof-readers.

—J. P. Chaturvedi

BOON TO NAME AND FAME HUNTERS

(continued from page 12)

occasions the editorial articles of the paper had been sent to the Advocate-General for opinion whether they came within the mischief of the law of sedition. Every time the opinion was given that the writings were on the verge of sedition but it was uncertain if the prosecution would succeed. The skill I then acquired has been of great help not only to me, but also to editors of those days. Prosecutions were very few. The risk, once great, dwindled almost to nothing, but it produced a result which the authors of the law did not at all anticipate.

The editor's office became an object of envy, instead of fear, as it secured for the person a publicity which in most cases it was impossible for him to achieve. The British rulers of India therefore did a signal service to name and fame

hunters. That service has been continuing now that India is free from rule. The law, once very unpopular, has come to be very much liked, and there is no demand whatever from any quarter that the editor's name should not be published compulsorily, though the old restrictions on the Press have continued to be targets of attack.

MY RESIGNATION

Moti Babu died, as I have said, on the 5th September 1922. After his death, almost immediately afterwards, according to the direction of the proprietors (it was and still is a family paper), the name of Babu Golapal Ghosh, younger brother of Moti Babu began to appear as editor. I was asked to continue as defacto editor and principal leader-writer. I apprehended trouble as the policy of the paper would no longer be under my control. This happened

six months after (6th April, 1923) when I tendered my resignation on a difference of opinion with one of the proprietors. Sri Upendra Nath Banerjee and Sri Kesori Lal Ghosh who had joined the paper as assistant editor and leader-writer a few months before the death of Moti Babu also resigned with me. They followed me though there was no dispute between them and the editor or any of the proprietors. I asked them not to do so, particularly because they had no other means of livelihood. But they told me that they completely agreed with me on the question on which I was resigning. It was, they said, a matter that concerned their conscience and self-respect. This spirit alas, has practically disappeared, as working journalists, generally speaking, have reconciled themselves to the position of mercenaries.

RED HERRING ACROSS TRAIL ?

(continued from page 4)

would not apply. The Supreme Court did not accept this position and ordered the accused to be set at liberty and there ended the first, and it is to be hoped the last attempt, of a legislature to exercise its privileges against the freedom of speech and expression of citizens.

POWERS NOT EXCLUSIVE

Mr. Feroze Gandhi's bill really falls within the concurrent list of subjects and will come under item one relating to criminal law and item (8) and possibly item (39) relating to newspapers. Even, if it be assumed that the legislatures in India would have the power to regulate publication of their proceedings by the Press by virtue of the entry in the State list regarding powers and privileges, the question would arise whether the Parliamentary law enacted under items one and eight of the concurrent list become invalid. At best it is a question of overlapping of legislative powers and not mutually exclusive powers. A reading of article 245 would make it clear that in such a contingency the Parliamentary law would prevail and is supreme.

It is thus apparent that even if the subject matter of Mr. Feroze Gandhi's bill overlapped between the state and concurrent lists, Parliament's power is supreme and acting under the entries in the concurrent list it can even in effect abrogate the state's powers. This argument becomes all the stronger when it is realised that the state's power to regulate publication in the Press of its proceedings is not specific but at best ancillary to its power to pass a law dealing with its privileges.

ARE STATES IRRESPONSIBLE ?

It should thus be clear that the argument about lack of powers, if it had been put forward seriously, would only show that the Law Ministry's expertise can no longer be taken as expertise. If it was not seriously put forward, as seems more likely, it was a clever piece of drawing red herring across the trail.

If the subject matter of legislation really fell within the concurrent list, then the refusal to give the protection to the proceedings of State Legislatures can only be on the basis of the argument that was not put forward, namely, the state

legislatures are not so responsible as Parliament, and the right of freedom of speech given to its members are liable to be abused as against third parties and the Press should not therefore be free to publish them. To those who argued on these lines, the reply can only be that the best check on irresponsible speeches is to throw the full glare of publicity on them and allow the public to exercise their power at the time of elections—in Australia after the proceedings of Parliament began to be broadcast, many members were "discovered" by their constituents and failed to return.

Government should hence reconsider the matter afresh and extend the privilege by an amending law to proceedings of State Legislatures. If they still have doubts about Parliament's powers, it should not be difficult for them to "persuade" the states to pass necessary resolutions under article 252 and empower the Union Parliament to pass the necessary laws. It is clear that even if all the states pass laws similar to that of the Union Law, the Press will have no real immunity as each state law will have application only within its territories.

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