

8

* The Paper Control Order

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Labour Member): I am indeed very glad that the Honourable Mr. Bajoria brought forward this adjournment motion which enables Government to place before the House the facts with regard to the paper situation in this country. Sir, in the speeches that have been delivered in this House, some very harsh things have been said about Government. The Government is accused of being callous, of being selfish, of being hard-hearted, of having no consideration for the educational institutions of this country. I merely propose to place before the House the facts as they are, the reasons which led the Government to issue this order, the steps that the Government has taken in order to ease the situation immediately and for the future.

Sir, I would like to begin by pointing out to the House that there appears to be a certain misunderstanding about the nature of the order which has been issued by the Government. Member after member has risen in this House to suggest that the order passed by the Government in fact means that the Government claims 90 per cent of the paper production for itself. I would like to tell the House that that is a complete misunderstanding. The order passed by the Controller of Paper is not a requisition order. It is an order which in turn says that the manufacturers of paper shall be bound to hand over to Government 90 per cent of the paper that they produce. The order is what I may call a freezing order, and I want to tell the House that that difference that I am making is a real difference. It is not a difference without distinction, because the order, as it stands, all that it tells the

* Legislative Assembly Debates (Central), Vol. I, 11th February 1943, pp. 128-31.

paper-makers is that they shall not sell more than 10 per cent of their production to the public. It does not in turn say that they shall deliver 90 per cent of the paper to Government. That I think is a very fundamental and a very real distinction which the House should bear in mind.

Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra (Presidency Division: Non-Muhammadan Rural): What is the difference in effect ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : The Government may release more than 10 per cent.

Bapur Baijnath Bajoria : How ?

Dr. P. N. Banerjea : When wisdom dawned on Government ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : It is the order as it stands. I am not giving the interpretation of the order. I am explaining the terms in the nature of the Order.

(There was an interruption, several Members speaking.)

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim) : Order, order.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : The second point which I want the House to bear in mind is that the order is served on the paper mills. It is not served on the stockists, who have a large number of stocks of paper already in their godowns. Secondly, it is still possible for the public to satisfy its requirements by getting such paper as is still available in the stocks which have been stored and hoarded by stockists before the order was passed. The third thing which I wish to remind the House about this order is this : that it is possible under the order, as it is framed, for the Controller of Paper to permit the mills to sell more than 10 per cent. There is no bar, there is no impediment, no obstacle placed if the Controller of Paper, notwithstanding the order that has been passed on the 5th November, finds that it is possible for him to release for public consumption more than 10 per cent of the paper. It is still open to him to do so. Having explained to the House what is actually involved in the order issued by the Government, I would like to take the House and acquaint it with the immediate circumstances which compelled Government to pass this order.

Briefly, the facts are these. In the first six months, viz., from April to September, our demand for paper, which is put forth by the Central Stationery Office, amounted to 34,000 tons. It was found that the mills had already delivered about 16,000 tons of paper to Government on

behalf of the Central Stationery Office. The House will bear in mind that we had entered into a contract with the paper mills for supplying us 25,900 tons. If the House will enter into a little arithmetic, it will be found that as a result of our calculations for the first six months it was found that we had only 9,000 tons to get under our contract from the paper mills and had to run six months yet. Consequently, what the Government did was this. The Government revised its estimate in the light of the circumstances that had been disclosed during the previous six months. The second thing that the Government did was to consolidate the method of requisitioning paper, and here I would like to tell the House that before the order was passed there were two methods by which demands for paper on behalf of Government were put forth. One way was the Central Stationery Office demand, which was a demand on behalf of the Central Government, and the provinces of Bengal, Orissa, Assam, and the North-West Frontier Province and the Central Provinces. The other was the non-Central Stationery office demand, made on behalf of what are technically called the Non-C.S.O. provinces, i.e. the provinces, who presented their demands independently of the Central Stationery Office, plus Indian States, Security Printing, Supply Department, and non-State Railways. It was found that these two independent methods of requisitioning paper for Government created a great deal of difficulty in arriving at an accurate estimate of the total demand for paper, and consequently the first step that was taken was to consolidate these two channels of demand into one single channel, and the whole matter is now concentrated in the hands of the Central Stationery Office.

As I told the House previously, when the situation was found to have grown somewhat perilous on account of the excessive use of paper, and practically overdrawing over the contract amount, we revised the estimates and centralised the demands, and the position at the end of October worked out to these figures :

			Tons
The Central Stationery Office demand for the next six months, i.e. from			
October 10 March 1943 was fixed at	...	...	32,000
The Non-Central Stationery Office demand was fixed at ...	...		9,500
Together the total came to ...			<u>41,500</u>

On the basis of the production of the mills during that year, it was calculated that the mills would produce 47,575 tons during October and March. It will be found that the Government demand of 41,500 tons represented 87 per cent of the mills production during the six months. Roughly it was 90 per cent, and that is the reason why the order maintained 90 per cent as the figure. Now, the House will understand why it became necessary in November to issue this order. I want to tell the House the measures that the Government has taken in order to increase production of paper.

Of course, as the House will realise, it is not possible for Government to help the paper mills in the importation of additional machinery in order to enable them to increase their production. The difficulty of shipping is quite well known and it is quite beyond the powers of the Government to do anything in the matter. Consequently we have to work out whatever we can to increase the production of paper within the means which are available to us; and I would like to draw the attention of the House to three things which the Government has done and which could be usefully referred to as measures taken to increase production. The Government has appointed a paper production officer, whose duty it is to find out ways and means by which production of paper could be increased

An Honourable Member : Who is this gentleman ?

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : Mr. Bhargava. Secondly, the Government has cut out non-essential luxury varieties of paper and has restricted Government requirements to only a few easily manufactured standard qualities. Thirdly, the Government has been dealing with each mill separately to find out what sort of paper each particular mill, having regard to its machinery and its equipment, can produce to the largest extent. It is estimated at present that as a result of the measures taken to increase production, the increase would be about 12,000 tons.

The next thing that the Government has done in order to ease the situation is to impose cuts, arbitrary cuts, on the demands of the various departments made for paper. These cuts are as follows : provincial and state requirements have been cut down arbitrarily by 10 per cent, which gives a saving of 950 tons. Secondly, so far as the Central Government is concerned, the budgets for paper presented by the various departments which spend paper—their original estimates have been

revised and cut down to an appreciable extent. To illustrate what the Government has done in the matter of revising these estimates, I would place before the House the following figures. The original estimate of the civil departments was 11,400 tons and it has been cut down to 4,600 tons during the six months. The original estimate of the Defence Department was 15,000 tons and it has been cut down to 10,000 tons. The Eastern Group Supply Council's original estimate was 9,400 tons and that has been cut down to 7,900 tons. The Supply Department's requirement of 3,100 tons has been increased to 4,500 tons—that is commercial paper used for industry. As the House will notice, the original estimates of the departments to which I have referred came to 39,100 tons, while the revised estimates come to 27,600 tons. The House will be pleased to notice that, as I have already indicated, by the cut imposed on the provincial and Indian State requirements a saving has been effected of 950 tons. And to that 11,900 tons obtained by revising the estimates of the different departments and the total comes to 12,850 tons. Now, compare this in the light of the paper that is consumed in India. There are no exact figures nor is it possible to obtain any exact figures ; but such figures as Government have shown that the annual consumption of paper in India was about one lakh of tons ; for six months it comes to 50,000 tons and as the House will remember, ten per cent of that is already left to the public under the orders issued by the Controller of Printing. That gives the public 5,000 tons. Add to that the 12,850 tons which have been saved now or will be saved by the reduction I have referred to, the total paper which can be released is 17,850 tons which as the House will see comes to nearly 33 per cent of what the public consume during peace time

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Abdur Rahim) : The Honourable Member's time is up; there is no option.

The Honourable Dr. B. R. Ambedkar : I was going to refer next to the measures that we have taken in order to avoid waste. As my time is up I do not wish to go into those details. I can send them to the press, if that is the view of the House.

The next thing that I would refer the Honourable House to is what we propose to do for the next year. For the next year the estimate is about 70,000 tons ; in that what we have done is this ; we have fixed the quota of every department which needs paper. For instance, the

Controller of Broadcasting is told he will not get more than 260 tons ; the Counter-Propaganda Directorate will have only 100 tons ; National War-Front 350 tons and Public Information 300 tons. There is a lot of other matter which, if I had time, I might have presented to the House. All that I want to say to the House is that it is not fair to suggest that the Government is callous. I do not deny that there is probably still enough room for economy, and I am very much obliged to the members who have made various suggestions as to how economy could be effected, and I will certainly convey those suggestions to the proper quarters, so that action may be taken. I hope that the Honourable Members will be satisfied that the Government is taking such steps as it can in the matter.

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