

NEWSPAPER (PRICE AND PAGE) ACT, 1956

45 of 1956

[7th September, 1956]

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"The regulation of the prices of newspapers in relation to their sizes appeared to be a necessity to the Press Commission mainly in order to provide the circumstances in which freedom of opinion could be very much more real than it is today by eliminating unfair competition and equalising opportunities for newspapers especially with smaller resources. Accordingly, one of the major recommendations of the Press Commission was that legislation be enacted empowering Government to issue from time to time a price page schedule fixing a minimum price at which papers of a particular size can be sold. The Commission also recommended that in order to ensure that the reader gets an adequate proportion of news and views and that the advertisements are not reduced in effectiveness because there are too many of them, the total space allotted to advertisements in newspapers should be restricted to a specified proportion. The consensus of opinion in the Press industry is in favour of these recommendations and there has been a general demand for their implementation. In the course of the debate on the Press Commission's Report general approval was expressed by Parliament to the principles underlying these

recommendations. The Bill seeks to implement the recommendations by conferring powers suitably for the purpose. The scope of the Bill is restricted to newspapers which appear at intervals of not more than a week. Clause 3 of the Bill empowers Government to issue a price-page schedule from time to time by making an order providing for the regulation of the prices charged for newspapers in relation to their maximum or minimum number of pages, sizes or areas and for the space to be allotted for advertising matter in relation to other matters. It is enjoined that such order shall be made with due regard to the need for reasonable flexibility with reference to the fall of news, the flow of advertisements and other matters - connected with the normal working of newspapers. Similarly, provision has been made for the schedule to be drawn up in consultation with the interests concerned. The other provisions of the Bill mainly relate to procedure." - Gaz. of India, 1956, Extra Pt. II, Sec. 2, page 648.

1. Short title, extent and duration :-

(1) This Act may be called The Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1956.

2. Definitions :-

In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,

(a) "daily newspaper" means a newspaper which is published on not less than six days in a week, and includes any supplement or special edition of such newspaper;

(b) "newspaper" means any printed periodical work containing public news or comments on public news appearing at intervals of not more than a week.

3. Power to regulate prices and pages of newspapers, etc :-

(3) An order under this section shall be made with due regard to the need for reasonable flexibility with reference to the fall of news. the flow of advertisements and other matters connected with the normal working of newspapers.

(4) Before making any order under this section, the Central Government shall consult associations of publishers, and such publishers likely to be affected by the order as it may think fit with respect to the action proposed to be taken.

4. Prohibition of publication and sale of newspapers in

contravention of order under section 3 :-

No newspaper shall be published or sold in the territories to which this Act extends in contravention of any of the provisions of an order made under section 3 .

5. Returns to be furnished by newspapers :-

For the purpose of verifying whether an order made under section 3 is being complied with or not, the Press Registrar appointed under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, may, from time to time, direct the publisher of any newspaper to which such an order applies to furnish to him such weekly returns and statistics with respect to any of the particulars referred to in section 3 as the Press Registrar may, from time to time, require and the publisher of every newspaper shall comply with such direction.

6. Penalties :-

he shall be punishable with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees.

7. Cognizance of offences :-

No court shall take cognizance of any offence punishable under this Act except upon a complaint in writing by the Press Registrar appointed under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, or by any officer authorised by him in writing in this behalf.