

RAMIFICATION OF LAW 2

(TECHNICAL NOTE, 19)

1 Introduction

In a class at the DRTC, on Law 2 of library science, the question of the preservation of newspapers for the users of the future generations came up for discussion. This discussion brought out the ramifications of Law 2 into different departments of life. A newspaper is normally of momentary interest. Copies of it are wanted simultaneously on the very day of its publication by thousands of readers. The cost of the newspaper is brought down within the reach of every body by the very largeness of its edition. It is also reduced by advertisements. It is further reduced by the use of cheap paper with strength and durability at their minimum. These two qualities of the newsprint make it unfit for preservation for future readers.

2 Strong Paper Copy

It is therefore necessary to have the newspaper printed on strong paper for preservation for future generations. Let us look at the cost of it. For definiteness, let us take a newspaper to consist of 10 sheets making 20 pages. If printed on leaves of the size common in books—demy octavo—it will come to 160 pages. The cost of such a book on strong paper may be taken to be Rs 5.

The commercial proprietor of a newspaper has no interest in the future generations of readers. He will not therefore produce a copy of this costly edition.

3 Interest through Sociology

But the State is interested in such an edition to fulfil the demands of Law 2. This interest of the State is due to the pressure of Law 2 on sociology.

4 Incompatibility with Public Finance

The State should therefore agree to pay the cost. To get a definite picture of the affair, let us assume that there are 1,000 newspapers in the country. The cost of one day's edition will be Rs 5,000. The cost per year will therefore be Rs 2,000,000. This cost should be met from public funds. In other words, this cost should be collected from the taxpayers every year. Let us assume that the number of taxpayers in the country is 10,00,000. This would imply that two naye paise are to be collected from each tax-payer. The cost of machinery for collecting this trivial sum from each tax-payer will be out of proportion. This is the verdict of public finance.

5 Call on Legislature

Politico-economic organisation suggests an alternative method. Here we start with the sovereignty surrendered by each citizen through the ballot box and his representative returned to the Parliament. The Parliament is empowered by constitution to make reasonable laws for social benefit. The Parliament listens to the appeal of Law 2. It passes the Delivery of Newspapers Act. This Act compels the proprietor of each newspaper to print one copy of each edition on strong paper and deposit it in the National Central Library.

6 Negligible Burden on Newspapers

An implication of this is that the cost of the deposit copies on strong paper is shifted apparently from the tax-paying citizens to the proprietors of newspapers. The newspapers are not empowered to mint money. Therefore they will naturally pass the burden on to the subscribers. Let us calculate the extra amount to be added to the cost of a copy of the daily edition of a newspaper. Let us assume that the circulation of a newspaper is 100,000. The five rupees of extra cost should be distributed over the hundred thousand subscribers. This would add to the cost of the copy only 0.005 naya paise. This trivial extra amount will be easily absorbed in the expenditure of the newspaper enterprise without any additional burden on the subscriber.

7 Library Policy

We have so far discussed the implications of the demand for a copy on strong paper, made by Law 2. But durability is different from strength. Even the strongest paper cannot stand being handled more than a few hundred times. Therefore, Law 2 asks the National Central Library to seal the depository copy of the newspaper against use until such time as the demand for it subsides. The sealing is usually done for a period of five years. We know that the demand

for a copy of a newspaper dies out to being a negligible within a month. Therefore five years is a long enough period for sealing.

8 No Violence to Contemporary Users

In recommending this policy of sealing, Law 2 means no violation to the contemporary users. For, the thousands of service-libraries in the country distributed within easy reach of one and all will be providing a copy of the newspaper to the members of the contemporary users.

9 Conclusion

Thus in its relation to newspapers, Law 2 has ramifications not only into library organisation demanding many service-libraries, not only into the policy of the National Central Library, but also into the region of Sociology, Public Finance, Management Finance, and Legislative Functions of the State.

S R RANGANATHAN
