

# COMMON CAUSE

VOICE OF "COMMON CAUSE"

## POLITICIANS HAVE DEFILED OUR POLITICS

Politicians, with well identifiable exceptions, have in general brought a bad name to our politics and the functioning of democracy in the country. Politicians of the earlier era of our freedom had undoubtedly made a distinct contribution and set standards, but during the last three decades democratic processes have been defiled and in fact mutilated. There is hardly any facet of life of the people, in any corner of the country, which has not been vitiated by their antics and stratagems.

Recounting their depredations and resultant ailments needs volumes. But it is worthwhile to briefly take stock of what damage politicians have done and what further harm they are doing. Let us start with the functioning

★ Everybody is eligible to take membership of COMMON CAUSE. No form is required. Merely send your name and complete address, preferably written in CAPITAL LETTERS. Send it to our new address: COMMON CAUSE, Common Cause House, 5, Institutional Area, Nelson Mandela Road, Vasant Kunj, NEW DELHI 110070. We are ever so grateful to Mr. Vikram Lal, of Eicher Tractors for having enabled construction of COMMON CAUSE HOUSE.

★ Membership fee for individuals is Rs.100 for one year; Rs.500 for life membership for individuals; Rs. 200 for annual membership of organisations and associations. Send by crossed cheque in favour of COMMON CAUSE.

★ We receive numerous letters. Replies are invariably sent. On the average our receipt is about 20/30 letters every day. Kindly, therefore, write only when you must; letters received in local language present us difficulties in deciphering.

★ Donations to COMMON CAUSE are eligible for exemption available under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act. Your donations, and those of your friends, will be most welcome indeed.

and operations of political parties. These have multiplied and proliferated beyond measure. There are now more than 550 registered political parties. Any persons or groups of persons, smitten with the urge of seizing and wielding power, not by any zeal to serve the people, opt for forming a political party and getting it registered. They start collecting funds, adopting all possible stratagems and means. Most contributors to their funds are those who evade taxes for making the contributions. Parties themselves mostly evade the requirement of maintaining accounts and payment of taxes.

On the subject of non-maintenance of accounts by political parties a writ petition had been filed in the Supreme Court from the platform of COMMON CAUSE. The court gave strict orders to Income Tax authorities and called for their explanations for failure to check such accounts. Excepting only three or four political parties none has confirmed, in a recent enquiry from COMMON CAUSE, that they are maintaining accounts.

The scenario of multiplications of parties, each itching to wield power has during the last couple of decades generated an unholy spectacle of formation of coalitions and inter-connected manipulations; coalescing, merging and breaking off, creating the general impression of their unprincipled operations. Coalitions actually have increasingly become the general pattern of functioning of democracy in the country; often dozen and more parties coming together for stimulating the creation of majority in the legislature; and thereby claiming eligibility for forming the government and exercising power. The functioning of coalitions includes also the unsavoury spectacle of defection, episodes of Aya-Ram Gaya-Ram, cross-voting and many behaviours of these types.

The combinations and coalitions, often of splinter groups, and consequential attainment of the objective of forming government, have inevitably necessitated the creation of jumbo cabinets. Look at the present political

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scene in the country. Each one of the 22 members of a political party, which coalesced with the larger party in Bihar, had to be given portfolios as ministers. This State in fact has presented the unique episode of a Chief Minister, who had to be sent to Jail in connection with a scam, installing his wife as Chief Minister, disregarding that she had no background of administration. It was never envisaged that these types of manipulations will ever come about on the political scene of the country; this naturally causes disgust and concern. Size of the Cabinet, of this poorest State of the country consists of as many as 84 ministers, vying with the other jumbo Cabinet of 91 ministers of U.P., the largest State of the country. Look at another state, Manipur, which is a small one and total number of members of this assembly is 60, out of these 34 have had to be made ministers.

Politicians coming into such cabinets obviously seek the berths as Ministers for exercise of power and not motivated by any urge for public service. As ministers, without any administrative background or experience, they get all the paraphernalia of office, high status, Minister's office, personal staff, security staff, government car with unlimited mileage utilisation, travel arrangements, besides salary and allowances. Problem inevitably arises of splitting up Departments for giving each minister some semblance of a charge leading to further expansion of red-tape and muddled-up files. Those who cannot be provided berths in cabinets are often gifted the alternative of wielding power and influence on various public sector enterprises; they can satisfy their whims and desires in these.

Bureaucrats, seasoned and well-experienced in their tasks, who have spent decades and long experience in administration, kow-tow to the whims and fancies and requirements of these Ministers, who are totally new to the specialised requirements of their portfolios. Very unfortunate development has increasingly been in evidence in recent years, of bureaucrats being seriously handicapped in their effectiveness in administration and of being unceremoniously shunted from one post to another, merely because of their proposals and submissions based on long experience of administration not being palatable to politician Ministers who are interested primarily in building up their vote banks and political acumen. Impasses have often been in evidence, and officers consequently get transferred which unfortunately have become too frequent and extremely detrimental to the interests of governance. In the State of U.P. 535 IAS officers and 417 IPS officers are stated to have been transferred within a period of six months. Normally the stay of a District Magistrate in this state is now less than eight months. This pattern obtains in quite a few other states, causing extreme dissatisfaction to the morale of services. This is the stage where administration has reached in our country as compared to the normal administrative procedure whereunder an officer was always expected to complete a term of minimum three years before being shifted to another post.

System of elections is another important area of the functioning of our democracy; it demonstrates quite a few unwholesome aspects. Expenditure on elections is major cause which inevitably leads to various problems. Political parties utilise all sorts of stratagems for raising funds; as has been already observed, non-maintenance of accounts of income and expenditure is their normal procedure. Individuals standing for elections are expected to maintain accounts and to remain within the limits prescribed under the law, but a convenient amendment was got made in the relevant law that the expenditure incurred by a political party on the election of a candidate will not be considered as expenditure incurred by him; this provision is often misused for overcoming the prescription of expenditure limit. One very unhappy feature of our election system is that politicians with criminal history do not get debarred from standing for elections, with the result that political scene is dotted in many places with politicians who have had criminal record of charges having been framed against them.

A very convenient provision in the law is that only a person actually convicted of specified types of offences can be debarred from standing for election. It is time that this lacuna in the law should get removed, for giving a cleaner image to politicians and political scene.

Actual behaviour of politicians in the halls of Parliament at the Centre, and the Legislative Assemblies of the States, is another unhappy feature of the present functioning of our democracy. TV now enables the people to actually see how their representatives behave in these august Houses. Very often, in fact disgustingly often, oppositions in these Houses are seen shouting and gesticulating from their seats and collectively barging out into the "well" of the House, creating huge bedlam, disabling further progress of work and forcing resort to



adjournments. These scenes are positive disgrace from the viewpoint of functioning of our democracy and is apparently a unique feature of what happens in our legislatures.

Politicians need to be made aware that their antics and theatricals are costing the country heavy. One day's expenditure on the Parliament runs into many crores of rupees; and the enormous size of expenditure on the running of Legislative Assemblies of 30 odd states, likewise, can be guessed. Each MP at the centre is costing a heavy amount to the country for a day's participation in the work of Parliament; this includes salary, allowances, entitlement of pension, travelling allowance for coming to attend the session of Parliament, housing and telephone facilities, medical facilities, advances for purchases of conveyance and allowance for office expenses. Aggregates of expenditure on politicians of States are mind-boggling. Number of states having multiplied and the total number of legislators being over 7000. One has necessarily to consider how this large expenditure can prove really advantageous to the country. Let the politicians ask themselves this question, particularly those who care for welfare of the country and are not lost only in the power game of their own.

In writing all this we are not belittling any particular politician; as citizens we feel very much concerned as to where our politicians and politics are leading the country and whether our democracy will be able to survive the pranks of politicians who are unscrupulous and who are interested only in money-power, muscle-power and their vote banks.

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### **APEX COURT SEEKS A.G's VIEWS ON OUR RAILWAY DISASTERS WRIT PETITION**

A bench headed by Chief Justice A.S. Anand has sought the views of Attorney General Soli J. Sorabjee on the Petition filed by COMMON CAUSE seeking a direction to the Government for urgent modernisation of traffic management of railways citing a spate of serious accidents every year costing many lives. The Petition said that in the last five years there were 175 serious accidents, including one at Gaisal and another at Khanna, which claimed over 1000 lives; most of them were due to human or equipment failure. The matter is obviously very serious as over 13000 trains run every day carrying 13 million passengers and over 1.2 million tonnes of goods. Though the railways set up various inquiry commissions, their reports were never made public.

The Petition has also alleged that the railway system has not kept pace with the essential requirements of modernisation and technological upgradation. Another important cause for the system failure and accidents was attributable to political pressures of populist expansion and alterations which might not normally be feasible nor necessary. In the past few years over 900 new trains have been introduced, large number of them on political demands because the political masters of the railways consider this agency as patronage facilitators; lot of capital gets diverted to populist and unproductive projects for creation of Zones and Divisions and also on laying of lines for the sole objective of expanding the vote banks. It cited a report to say that the railways spend nearly Rs.14,000 crores annually on salaries but allocates only Rs.250 crores on signalling and communications which were vital for safety.

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### **H.C. RULES ON OUR WRIT PETITION ON N.T.P.C. EXECUTIVES STRIKE**

The Division Bench of Justice Dalveer Bhandari and Justice RS Sodhi while hearing a Writ Petition filed by COMMON CAUSE, lambasted the 8000 executives of National Thermal Power Corporation and termed their strike call from 23rd June "illegal" as it amounted to blackmailing the whole nation. The bench directed the Executives to defer their strike for four months period during which the Govt. should consider their demand of revision of pay scales.

The Petition said that the strike would adversely affect the whole country as 25 percent electricity supplied in the country is being generated by NTPC. It argued that the officers cannot be allowed to hold the nation to ransom by their strike call; the strike would bring all industrial activity in the country to a halt and cause great deal of hardships to the populace at large.

The National Executive Federation of India of NTPC is demanding parity in pay scales with executives of Oil & Natural Gas Commission; the Govt. has raised the pay scales of the Public Sector Undertakings under the Ministry of Petroleum in March 2000.

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## CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES OF OUR ELECTORAL REFORMS

There has for long been intensive talk about raising the representation of women in the legislatures of the country. Demands have been voiced by practically all political parties that women's representation should be increased to 33 percent, in the Parliament as well as in the legislative Assemblies of the States. Every party appeared to swear by the need of doing this. This demand was expected to be concretised by bringing a Bill before the Parliament in the session which has recently concluded. The Bill was formulated in the shape of a Constitutional Amendment; it was circulated, but failed to be even introduced for discussion in this session.

It will be worthwhile to examine the ramifications of this proposal, which gives semblance of receiving support from all political parties, but when it comes to give practical shape to it, they do not appear to regret postponing its consideration. Along with this subject there are certain other matters in the arena of electoral reforms; these have been featuring in the agenda of political parties from time to time, and these were taken up in a recent meeting of the Election Commission with political parties, though the discussions failed to yield any positive results. These are matters of importance and of obvious consequence to politics of the country. Let us have a look at these.

The subject of representation of women in the legislatures has been on the political scene for a number of years. It got specifically highlighted in 1996 when a Constitution Bill embodying this requirement was introduced in the Lok Sabha. It was the 81st time that the Constitution, the sacred base of governance of the country, was being amended. Incidentally, it is worth mentioning that the American Constitution has been amended only 27 times in 211 years. We have the distinction of having amended our Constitution over 80 times in 50 years.

The 81st amendment sought to incorporate the provision that "not less than one-third" of the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and equal number in the Legislative Assemblies of the States, will be filled by women by direct election. The Bill was referred to the Joint Committee of Parliament which reported on it. It, however, lapsed. It was revived in 1998, in the shape of 84th Constitution Amendment Bill. This too was allowed to lapse, and since then it has remained undecided. To all appearances it appeared to be a stalemate. This proposal has now again been revived and the Bill circulated, but had failed to be even introduced.

All political parties want to project the image of supporting this measure, obviously for garnering the huge lot of votes, practically half of the total, which the Reservation Bill will yield to them. It needs to be, however, kept in view that the average of the representation of women in the Lok Sabha during the last 50 years has been only the measly figure ranging from 19 to 33 in the total average of 528. In 1999 the figure was 49 which was more than in any previous year, but it amounted at most to 1/10th of the total, far more one-third that is being aimed at.

One cannot conceive how the problem of such reservation can be resolved by ensuring that only women should be the candidates in a particular constituency, for enabling a woman candidate to be eventually elected. Rotation of constituencies will also not solve this problem. The only solution to this problem, as has been indicated by the Election Commission in their recent discussion with political parties, is for the parties to agree to select their candidates in such manner that a percentage, not less than one-third of their candidates, are women. This will provide opportunity to the women candidates of the party to exert to win from their constituencies, it will be a fair election in which men and women have equal chances of winning over their electorates. The parties will take care that such success rate is enough to ensure sizeable increase of presence of women in the legislatures. This procedure will necessitate only a minor amendment in the Representation of People Act. This type of arrangement for increasing representation of women in the legislatures is stated to have been successful in North European countries.

Delimitation of constituencies is another dilemma for which it has not been hitherto possible to find a satisfactory solution. This task is normally to be performed by the Delimitation Commission set up under the relevant provisions of the Constitution. In 1975, however, an embargo was placed on any readjustments in the constituencies for 25 years, till 2001. The result of this embargo is that there are unsavoury differences in



population of respective constituencies in the same territory. In Maharashtra, for instance, one constituency in the city of Mumbai has as many as 28 lakhs electorates whereas in the same city another constituency has only 7 lakhs electorates. In Tamil Nadu the number of voters in Madras South primary constituency has 20 lakhs electorates whereas in another part of the same city the number is 10 lakhs in the other constituency. In Delhi one constituency has 31 lakhs voters whereas another has only 3.7 lakhs. These incongruities are naturally irksome. Election Commission has for long been expressing that the task of delimitation of constituencies should be entrusted to it for enabling the commission to correct the imbalances wherever they have arisen. It is unfortunate that this advice of the Election Commission has not so far been acceptable to the political parties.

One other matter which the discussions between Election Commission and the political parties has failed to resolve is that of the inevitable ambiguity existing in the constitution wherein it is mandatory that a candidate standing for election to the Rajya Sabha must be an elector registered in the particular Parliamentary constituency of the State from which he is seeking election, for registration in which it is provided that he must be "ordinarily resident" in the constituency. This provision exists in the Representation of People Act. It is evident, and certain instances of such ambiguities have got highlighted in recent years, that manipulations have to be resorted to for securing certification of being "ordinarily resident" in the constituency from which the candidate chooses to stand for election. Rajya Sabha is the council of States; significantly, the House of Elders; there is obviously no justification for imposing this type of restriction on candidates who wish to stand for election to this house. There is need of making corresponding amendment in the Representation of People Act., enabling any person, registered as elector anywhere in India, to stand for election to the Rajya Sabha from any state, irrespective of whether he is ordinarily resident there or not. This is already permissible for the Lok Sabha; there is no reason why the same principle should not be applicable for election to the Rajya Sabha.

Criminalisation of politics is another important matter which has hitherto defied any solution. Repeated discussions between the Election Commission and the political parties, as well as expressions of views in the media and elsewhere, have not borne fruit. Everybody feels seriously concerned about criminal and anti-social elements entering the electoral arena and about the nexus that has obviously grown between political parties and the unscrupulous and anti-social elements. It is a matter of very serious concern for the country that some persons with criminal record have been elected to our legislatures, thereby becoming law makers, and they even adorn ministerial berths. Our jurisprudence has been responsible for this, because under the law a person is presumed to be innocent unless proved otherwise, and the criteria for the latter is that he must have been convicted by court of law. Till there is conviction, there may be any number of complaints and police reports, and even framing of charges in a criminal court; hardened criminal, history-sheeter, with criminal record, of even murder, dacoity or rape, cannot be debarred from standing for election to our legislatures. On the political scene in the country some persons with such criminal records are unfortunately and conspicuously visible.

Election Commission has been taking the stand that every candidate standing for election to a legislature in the country should file an affidavit about any convictions which under the Representation of People Act, disqualify him from contesting, and that conviction by a trial court should itself be sufficient to attract disqualification, including also cases where the person may be on bail pending decision on appeal against the conviction. This will undoubtedly be a small step forward for cleansing up the elections. It is important that the law in this regard should be rehashed, to impose disqualification on a person who is charged in a court of law with an offence punishable with five years or more, irrespective of whether he has yet been convicted or not.

These are some of the important issues relating to electoral reforms which have repeatedly come up in the arena of politics of the country and for which it has not hitherto been possible to find any satisfactory solutions. The discussions which have taken place recently between Election Commission and the political parties for resolving these issues have not been able to achieve anything concrete. It is unfortunate that political parties appear to be looking at these issues only from their own individual viewpoints and that they have not been able to decide on the basics of these important matters in the interest of the country. One can only hope that some day the political parties will awaken themselves to the need of looking at such issues from the viewpoint of what the country needs.

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## AN INITIATIVE

*I as an elderly, who had long association with Lahore and Rawalpindi before the creation of Pakistan, and as a concerned citizen of India, have taken initiative of addressing AN OPEN LETTER to General Pervez Musharraf, Chief Executive of Pakistan. It has appeared in the widely read newspaper INDIAN EXPRESS, I share it with readers of this periodical.*

H.D.Shourie

## AN OPEN LETTER TO PAKISTAN CHIEF

Janaab Pervez Musharraf Sahib,

I am writing this as an Open Letter. I am addressing it to you, the Chief Executive of Pakistan. My credentials for writing it are : I am near 90 years, I am a concerned citizen of India, I have great love and regard for Pakistan.

I yearn to see India and Pakistan to come together, to decorate this part of the world, to live as loving neighbours.

I was brought up in Lahore. I took my schooling there; my name was on the Honours Board of the Central Model School of Lahore, because in the Matriculation I had stood first, I often cherish the fond hope that the Honours Board is still there, I was for six years in the glorious Government College of Lahore, and was acquainted with each pillar of its building and of its science laboratories where I took my M.Sc. in Physics.

We had a big house in Lahore. It was called Shourie Building, outside Quila Gujjar Singh. On its front top my father had got inscribed the words "FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND BROTHERHOOD OF MAN". I was told that this inscription is still there. My guiding light in life has been this edict.

I had the pleasure of being the City Magistrate of Lahore for three years, from 1944 till the eve of partition in 1947. I earlier had the privilege of being the City Magistrate of Rawalpindi for two years. I was also posted to Mianwali; my father had earlier a posting in Peshawar in Military Accounts Department, my uncle was professor in Sialkot. I carry some sweet memories of my life in Lahore and of my service in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Mianwali. I have friends in Lahore; their friendship I cherish. I can perhaps claim uniqueness of carrying always in my pocket a small notebook, with compilation of about 800 selected Urdu couplets of known poets, which over the years I have written in it; these provide me great delight and solace.

These memories, my advanced years and my yearning to help causes of the people, are the motivation for my writing this letter. Since retirement from various senior appointments in India I had the privilege of working in the United Nations. I was in Turkey for three years, and loved every day of my stay there. Later I was appointed to Geneva and was in various countries. Since my eventual retirement I have been, in my own small sphere, the Chief Executive of COMMON CAUSE, the public interest organisation which was set up by me 20 years ago for taking up causes of the people for redressal. For these two decades I have been rendering this service and it is widely recognised in India.

I have considered it necessary to mention this background because it has relevance to my approaching you, with folded hands, in all humility, to beg you, in the interest of bringing about love and affection between our two countries and the people. In the interest of bringing two countries near each other, in amity and affection, I am prepared to go to any length to pray to you. I have faith that the people of India, including those at the top, are equally desirous and willing to cultivate friendship and neighbourliness with Pakistan. It is with this faith that I have taken this step of sending you the Open Letter so that all may know about the appeal I am conveying to you. I am sure that very large number of people in India, many millions of them, will endorse what I am writing; they want peace and friendship between India and Pakistan.



You are a graceful man. You have fine family, lovely wife, handsome elders and the young; we saw you and the family on TV sometime ago. You are as much moved by humanitarian considerations as any other person. You may have many internal problems of your country, but your smile is a very pleasant one; it shows the existence of basic human values in you. These persuade me to approach you with what I wish to convey.

I am acutely aware that it is not an easy task to forget all the five decades of tension between our countries, and the unfortunate incidents of eruption of fights, but on both sides there is need of application of healing balm, and of forgetting the past. I have been always inspired by the Motto: "IT CAN BE DONE." Hurdles can be overcome, differences can be talked out, hands can again be extended for being grasped in friendship. Leadership of both countries, from all accounts and to the knowledge of everybody, will be ready and desirous of demonstrating their friendship. This became evident last year when leaders from India went to Lahore, which event caused such welcome approval in the country and showed what can be achieved.

There is obvious need of getting down to brass-tacks, nitty gritty of the problems. One cannot rest content with mere exhortations, and expression of requirements and hope. There have been and are serious differences. These have erupted in battles, losses and anguish to both. Tension and the battles have soured the relations. brought about need of seeking international intervention and assistance of allies. Estrangements unfortunately continue to be further fanned by certain actions, including sponsorship of and support to terrorism, creating disturbances which lead to loss of lives and extreme agony to the affected families, these are highlighted by and through the media, particularly TV. There are continuous attempts to inculcate antagonism against "Bharat" in every generation, including children in schools; you will surely be aware that Pakistan TV almost invariably starts its news programme with the recount of depredations by "Bharat". You may have noticed that this type of poison is luckily not being poured out in any of the TV channels of India.

Major problem between the two countries is that of Kashmir. Both sides are fully aware of its history since the partition. This problem continues to simmer. Pakistan is surely aware of the vast Muslim population in India; their number here is perhaps equal to that of large proportion of population of Pakistan. India cannot, in any circumstances whatsoever, afford to alienate the feelings of its minorities by ceding any demand that the main-majority territory of Kashmir be detached from this country and become either a part of Pakistan or be even created an autonomous unit. This resolve is evident; in no circumstances will India cede the territory of Kashmir. No war, or any international intervention, will alter this resolve. This basic reality must be faced by Pakistan. Any acts of the nature of fostering terrorism, regarding which allegations have been voiced for long years and recognised even at the international level, will not yield any useful results and will, on the contrary, create only further alienation.

I beseech you to kindly recognise these facts; these are realities; these cannot be disregarded. India will not be willing, on any account, to give up its rights in relation to the territory of Kashmir. No useful purpose at all will be served by continuance of this problems, by sowing any seeds of secessionism, by generating atmosphere of unrest in the Kashmir Valley or its surrounds. A stage has now arrived when Pakistan, and you as its Chief Executive, realise the utter futility of continuing unrest and alienation between the two countries. A Line of Control ( LOC ) got delineated by circumstances which took place decades ago. Both countries in the interest of bringing about an era of friendship, amity and progress, need to recognise these facts; forget the past of hatred and disaffection, convince their people and set them on the path of coming together and improving the future. Our two countries need to pull together, raise the standards of living of their people, seek the blessings that nature has endowed to them; join hands and, as I have said above, decorate this part of the globe. IT CAN BE DONE.

I submit to you, the Chief Executive of Pakistan, which I wish to call my beloved neighbouring country, to kindly look at this totality which I, an aged person, have tried to present in this Open Letter. I am sure that many millions of my countrymen will be fully supportive of the views I have sought to communicate to you. I hope you will respond to this appeal.

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## CRIME AND VIOLENCE ON TV

Following full page advertisement runs periodically in important newspapers of USA. It begins:

*"Parents... Grandparents...Families... This is for YOU", it begins in typography as cluttered and haphazard as a victorian circus poster's:*

*"TV is leading children down a moral sewer. How you and I can stop it.*

*Are you as disgusted as I am at the filth, vulgarity, sex and violence TV is sending into our homes?*

*Are you fed up with steamy unmarried sex situations, filthy jokes, perversion, vulgarity, foul language, violence, killing etc.?*

*Are you as outraged as I am at how TV is undermining the morals of children .. encouraging them to have premarital sex ... encouraging lack of respect for authority and crime ... and shaping our country down to the lowest standards of decency?"*

Crime, violence and obscenity have unfortunately started being projected quite extensively on the TV screen in India. TV has become a very important instrument for entertainment, and the entire family, including children, get hooked up on the programmes and serials that get telecast on TV. Increasingly there has been a tendency in the producers to depict scenes of violence and sexual abuse because they feel that these are attractive for the viewers, and producers find it easy to get advertisements for such programmes and serials. This has become a cause of serious concern, because of the unfortunate impact that these create in the minds of viewers and the very adverse effect these have on the children and young persons.

It is unfortunate development that is being considered with great concern in practically all the countries. Great lot on this subject is appearing in various newspapers and magazines.

COMMON CAUSE has taken up this subject for seeking intervention of the Supreme Court to issue directions to the Government of India, in the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, to initiate action, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs where necessary, to prescribe specific norms and guidelines for the TV channels and for also bringing about measure of self-regulation by the producers as well as TV channels. A Writ Petition has been prepared on the subject and submitted to the Supreme Court in the hope that something concrete will emanate from its submission. We will continue pursuing this matter for securing some satisfactory solution to this emerging problem. The Writ Petition is reproduced hereunder for general information.

### IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA CIVIL EXTRAORDINARY JURISDICTION WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) No. OF 2000.

In the matter of:

COMMON CAUSE (A Registered Society),  
A - 31, West End, New Delhi - 110021.  
through its Director Shri H.D. Shourie

...Petitioner.

Versus

(1) Union of India  
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,  
Shastri Bhawan, Dr. Rajender Prasad Road,  
New Delhi - 110001.  
through its Secretary

(2) Union of India; Ministry of Home Affairs,  
North Block, Central Sectt. New Delhi - 110001.  
through its Secretary.

... Respondents



PETITION UNDER ARTICLE 32 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA FOR ISSUANCE OF A WRIT OR IN THE NATURE OF CERTIORARI AND/OR MANDAMUS AND/OR ANY OTHER DIRECTION DIRECTING THE UNION OF INDIA IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING AND THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS TO PRESCRIBE SPECIFIC NORMS AND GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVANCE BY TV CHANNELS, AS WELL AS PRODUCERS OF PROGRAMMES AND SERIALS FOR BEING TELECAST THROUGH THEIR TV CHANNELS, ADOPT SELF-REGULATORY MEASURES WHICH WOULD MINIMISE AND SEEK TO OBIVATE THE PRESENTATION OF SCENES OF VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ABUSE, AS THE PRESENTATION OF THESE IS HAVING DELETERIOUS EFFECTS ON THE VIEWERS INCLUDING CHILDREN, THEREBY CREATING AN UNDESIRABLE IMPACT ON THE MINDS OF THE VIEWERS AND ADVERSELY INFLUENCING THEIR LIVES, AFFECTING THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA.

To  
Hon'ble The Chief Justice of India and His Lordships Companion Justices of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

The Humble Petition of the Petitioner abovenamed, MOST RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH :

1. That TV has now become a very important instrument for entertainment and dissemination of information. It is estimated that there are now not less than about 70 million TVs in households, which are catering to an audience of 300-350 million people. Ten years ago India had access only to one channel, Territeriestal Doordarshan- I. During these ten years the number of channels has increased to more than 50 besides the foreign satellite and cable channels which are being received in about 20 million homes with viewership of over 100 million. Some of these are 24-hour channels.
2. That TV viewing in our country in reality is a family affair. TV programmes and serials are produced by Producers for viewing for the entire family. Children often watch these alongside the elders. These programmes and serials on working days are largely viewed from about 7.00 p.m. to late at night , till 11.00 p.m. and often beyond; on holidays these are viewed also during day time.
3. That TV serials and programmes generally put across scenes of violence. The violence depicted on TV screen includes crime, thrillers, horrors, vulgarity, obscenity etc. The usual assessment of viewership rating, by the Producers and channel operators, in the interest of securing advertisement revenue, which is the prime target for earning profits, is the incidence of crime and thrills. It is now an established fact that success of programmes on TV is the amount of revenue, and the advertisements are dependent on thrills including crimes, sexual assaults and obscenity that is contained in a programme for impressing the viewers.
4. Crime unfortunately being an inescapable part of the life in every society, it has been internationally recognised that there may have to be presentation at most five to six scenes of physical violence in half-hour viewing episode. This norm is flagrantly violated in our country. In a number of our serials the scenes of violence aggregate upto 25, and often include extreme acts such as murder, bombing and burning. In addition there are excessive scenes of verbal abuse and bizarre sound-effects including loud disturbing music, and also scenes of psychological violence. Occasional eerie sound-tracks, scenes of hallucinations and nightmare, help to build up an atmosphere of terror. There are also scenes of hair-raising chases with cars crashing into one another, exploding, turning turtle, somersaulting in the air, flinging down cliffs etc. Awe-inspiring fights often include slashing, clopping, pumping bullets, plunging knives, spilling blood, splitting heads. To these are added computerised special effects, blood-curdling sounds of pain and spine-chilling music, adding to the frightening dimensions of presentation of violence on the small screen. There is an obvious tendency to glorify violence; violence is often used to settle conflicts between good and evil; in the name of rendering justice there are no holds to the degree of brutality shown.
5. That there is a very serious growing concern in the country about the effect of TV presentation of such violence and sexual abuse, particularly on the children who view the programme. It is generally recognised that



children view the TV programmes and serials on the average of about three to four hours every day. Parental efforts to keep them away from TV are obviously not fruitful. The cartoon programmes which are prepared primarily for children, are also replete with scenes of glorified violence. Indian television is for family viewing; most households have only one TV; members of the family, children and adults see the programmes together. It is also worth being noted that children under the age of seven years have difficulty distinguishing reality from fantasy.

6. That it has been estimated that five channels alone (DD I, DD II, ZEE, SONY, STAR PLUS) offer 50 to 60 serials every day. All these channels present more or less the same kind of fare, consisting of drama serials and comedies, which carry considerable lot of violence, sexual abuse; comparatively less in DD programmes than in others. It is also a noteworthy fact that all the serials and programmes, including even the news, are loaded with advertisements, to the extent that in every serial and programme there is invariably a break every ten to fifteen minutes, in which there is presentation of advertisements. Serials drag on for months, each day's presentation being interrupted by a number of advertisements, often carrying glazy and flickering shots, and loud, jarring presentation which the viewers have invariably to tone down. The advertisements are often repeated ad nauseam, throughout the day, in various programmes and serials. Of course, it is understandable that revenue from advertisements is the main incentive for producers of TV programmes and serials, and this has been the chief reason for multiplication of channels, but the fact cannot be ignored that ultimately the burden of expenditure on advertisements falls on the consumers who pay for the products thus advertised extensively.

7. That the above circumstances of existence of a number of channels, abnormal expansion of TV viewership in the country, and unfortunately impact of presentation of scenes of violence and sexual abuse in the programmes and serials on the minds of viewers including the children, necessitate that the matter, which is of great importance for the entire country and future development of its people, should be seriously examined by the concerned authorities, the Respondents, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and Ministry of Home Affairs, for determining as to what measures can be devised and adopted for eliminating the chances of worsening of the general situation of crime and violence in the country, how the channels and producers can be persuaded to adopt appropriate self-regulatory measures, how the system of imbibing in the producers norms and guidelines can be evolved and enforced, and how the defaulters can be suitably dealt with. For meeting these requirements following suggestions are offered for issue of directions by the Hon'ble Court to the two Respondents, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and Ministry of Home Affairs :

- (i) All TV channels should be directed to adopt self-regulatory measures which should ensure that the scenes and presentation of all forms of violence and sexual abuse should be minimised in their programmes and serials so that presentation of these to the viewers does not have likelihood of creating undesirable impact, particularly taking into consideration the problems relating to their viewing by children. They should be directed to communicate within two months, to the Respondent, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, what self-regulatory measures they would be adopting towards this objective.
- (ii) The TV channels should fix time, not earlier than 10.00 p.m. in which any serials and programmes which have inescapable scenes of sex or violence can be telecast, avoiding their being telecast, as originals or repeats during hours earlier than 10.00 p.m. which are generally the family viewing hours.
- (iii) Practice should be adopted of putting across a written or verbal warning before the beginning of any serial or programme which has likelihood of depiction of sex and violence.
- (iv) As a measure of self-regulation the TV channels should adopt a written Code of Practices concerning sex and violence, keeping also particularly in view the problems relating to children.
- (v) The Respondent, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, should enforce adoption of self-regulatory measures by each of the TV channels, and should also make appropriate arrangements for monitoring the levels of violence and sex in the programmes and serials telecast by the respective channels.
- (vi) The modern developments of installation of V-chip on TV sets, decoders or cable transmitters for blocking out violence should be examined for enforcement.
- (vii) Child specific programmes should be encouraged for being telecast by all channels. This should include mandatory telecast of children programmes in the afternoon and on week-ends.



- (viii) Programmes and serials should aim at showing that violence is punished and not rewarded, that violence has negative impact, that alternatives to violence should be always explored for solving problems, add strong anti-violence messages in the story, and avoid violent and abusive language in the presentation of programmes.
8. The present petition is being preferred bonafide, in the interests of justice and in public interest.
9. No other writ petition or other proceeding has been initiated by the Petitioner before any other High Court or before this Hon'ble Court in regard to the subject matter of the present petition.
10. The Petitioner has no alternative equally efficacious remedy in law for the cause of action being agitated herein.

### PRAYER

In the above premises, it is prayed that this Hon'ble Court be pleased :

- (i) to issue a writ or in the nature of certiorari and/ or mandamus and/or any other appropriate writ, order or direction directing the Respondent No. 1, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in consultation with the Respondent No.2, Ministry of Home Affairs where necessary, to prescribe definite norms and guidelines for minimisation of presentation of scenes of violence and sexual abuse in the serials and programmes which are telecast by TV channels, for avoidance of undesirable mental impact on the viewers including particularly children, and to ensure that the TV channels and producers of programmes and serials adopt self-regulatory measures to that end, including the laying of emphasis on following among others connected necessary requirements:
- (a) Fix time, not earlier than 10.00 p.m. for telecasting any serials and programmes in which there are any scenes depicting violence or sex, and avoiding their being telecast as repeats during hours earlier than 10.00 p.m.;
  - (b) Adopt the practice of putting across written or verbal warning before the beginning of any serials or programmes which have presentation of violence or sexual abuse in any form;
  - (c) The Respondent No.1, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs where necessary, should lay down procedure for monitoring the programmes and serials telecast by the channels and for initiating appropriate and effective action against defaulter in relation to the prescribed norms and guidelines;
  - (d) Efforts should be made to persuade advertisers not to give advertisements in any such programmes and serials telecast by foreign channels wherein there are scenes of violence and sexual abuse;
  - (e) Adopt the modern measures of installation of V-chip in TV sets, decoders or cable transmitters for blocking out violence;
  - (f) Where presentation of any scene of some violence may be considered indispensable for depiction of a story, serial or programme, the approach adopted by TV channels should be to demonstrate in their programme that violence is punished and not rewarded, to include alternatives to violence in solving problems, to put across strong anti-violence messages in the story depicted in the programme, and to avoid use of violent and abusive language to the maximum extent possible.
- (ii) to pass such other and further orders as may be deemed necessary and proper on the facts and in the circumstances of the case.

FOR WHICH ACT OF KINDNESS, THE PETITIONER SHALL, AS IN DUTY BOUND, EVER PRAY.

Place : New Delhi  
Date :

Petitioner  
through  
( H.D.Shourie )  
Director, COMMON CAUSE

Judge : So you have appeared again in my court? I am fed up seeing your face again and again. I give you 3 months sentence and hope not to see you again.

Convict: "Why sir? What's wrong? Are you going to retire?"



## GAME OF FREEBIES AND LARGESSE

Media have extensively covered the decision reported to have been taken in the Ministry of Communications, ostensibly on the initiative at the political level to provide free telephone connections to its 3.2 lakh employees. There has been considerable criticism in the newspapers, and also on TV about the extension of this largesse, which is stated to be populist measure. For the installation of these telephones it has been decreed that there will be no installation charges and no rental, besides extension of concession of free calls.

We feel that this type of munificence on the part of the Government can lead to emergence of similar demands from other Departments, Ministries and Organisations of the Central Government as well as State Governments. Accordingly, a Writ Petition was immediately prepared and submitted to the Supreme Court.

Reproduced below is the Writ Petition for information of our readers. We are desirous that matters of such public importance arising in any part of the country should be taken up by the people; they should devise ways and means through the various Organisations in their areas to explore the possibility of securing redressal through intermediacy of judiciary where executive fails to provide redressal.

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### IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA CIVIL EXTRAORDINARY JURISDICTION WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) No. OF 2000.

In the matter of :

COMMON CAUSE (A Registered Society)  
A-31, West End,  
New Delhi -110021  
through its Director  
Shri H.D. Shourie

... Petitioner

versus

1) Union of India  
Ministry of Communications  
Department of Telecommunications,  
Sanchar Bhawan, New Delhi- 110001  
Through its Secretary.

2) Union of India,  
Ministry of Finance,  
North Block, Central Sectt.  
New Delhi - 110001  
Through its Secretary

...Respondents

PETITION UNDER ARTICLE 32 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA FOR ISSUANCE OF A WRIT OR ORDER IN THE NATURE OF A CERTIORARI AND /OR MANDAMUS AND/OR ANY OTHER DIRECTION DIRECTING THE UNION OF INDIA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS TO URGENTLY EXAMINE THE DESIRABILITY AND APPROPRIATENESS OF ANNOUNCING THE BOUNTEOUSNESS AND LARGESSE OF THE NATURE WHICH HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED BY THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF THE RESPONDENT, DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATION OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND WHICH IS LIKELY TO HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS IN THE FUNCTIONING OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTRIES OF THE UNION OF INDIA, BECAUSE SIMILAR DEMANDS FOR THE GRANT OF BOUNTY ARE



LIKELY TO EMERGE AND WHICH ALSO INVOLVE A HEAVY BURDEN ON THE PUBLIC EXCHEQUER IN THE FORM OF NON-RECURRING EXPENDITURE AS WELL AS RECURRING EXPENDITURE, LEADING INEVITABLY TO FURTHER INCREASE OF DEFICIT, THESE DEVELOPMENTS BEING DETRIMENTAL TO THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE AND AFFECTING THEIR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS PRESCRIBED UNDER ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA.

To

Hon'ble The Chief Justice of India and His Lordships Companion Justices of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

The Humble Petition of the Petitioner abovenamed, MOST RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH :

1. That the Petitioner is a society duly registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and is engaged in taking up various common problems of the people for securing redressal thereof. The Petitioner society has also brought to court various constitutional problems. The petitioner has an established locus standi in its capacity as a bonafide public interest organisation for taking up matters of general public importance. The petitioner is submitting the present public interest petition for consideration of the Hon'ble Court.
2. That during the last few days the newspapers (\* Annexures - C,D,E,F,G,H) have reported, and these reports have not been contradicted and have in fact apparently got confirmed in the newspapers, that the decision has been taken, ostensibly at the level of political leadership of the Ministry of Communications, that the Department of Telecommunications/Department of Telephone Services have extended a big bounty of provision of free telephone connections to about 3.2 lakhs of their employee.
3. That the petitioner has made immediate efforts and collected certain facts relating to this apparent largesse. Following are the facts which relate to it :
  - No Registration charges will be payable by any of the employees of the Department of Telecommunications and Department of Telecom Services (DOT/DTS) for installation of telephone connections.
  - No installation charges will be charged from them for provisions of telephone connections.
  - The employees will not have to pay any rental which is normally charged from all subscribers of telephone services.
  - The employees getting these free telephone connections will not have to pay one year's advance rental as security deposit which is the normal charges for any application for telephone connection.
  - Those employees who have already got telephone connections installed will not have to pay any rental in future, and in fact they have been made entitled to claim refund of the security deposit.
  - These concessions will be applicable also to those employees who go on deputation to any other Department/ Ministry, during the tenure of their deputation. Similarly these concessions will be applicable to employees coming on deputation to DOT/DTS.
  - These concessions have been made available also to spouses of employees who die while in service.
  - Financial implications of these concessions are stated to amount to non- recurring expenditure of Rs. 126 Crores and annual recurring expenditure of about Rs. 100 Crores, besides loss of interest on security deposits, approximating Rs.11 Crores.
  - These bounteous concessions will be applicable to about 3.2 lakhs employees of DOT/DTS of Respondent No.1. These concessions will imply that whereas even the Group 'D' employees of DoT/DTS have now become eligible to free installation of telephone connections, without obligation for payment of installation charges and security deposit, officers of the level of even Group 'A' in various Departments and Ministries of the Union of India, and senior officers of the level of Lt. Colonel and above in the Ministry of Defence are not entitled to installation of free telephone connections and provision for such concessions. It is apprehended that this type of discrimination can prove very detrimental to the cause of good governance of the country.



4. Besides causing problems of such demands of bounteousness, and of discrimination with the governmental functioning, this decision will involve sizeable loss to the revenues of the Union of India. The amount involved in implementation of this decision is stated to be non-recurring expenditure of about Rs. 126 Crores and recurring expenditure of Rs.100 Crores every year. Besides this, there will be an annual loss of interest on deposits to the extent of Rs. 11 Crores. These figures are indicative of the losses and deficit that the Union of India will face as a consequence of the implementation of this decision.
5. That the Respondent No.2, Ministry of Finance of the Union of India, should be asked to indicate whether in making these big concessions Respondent No.1, Ministry of Communications, in DoT/DTS, had secured its concurrence, and if not, whether these bounteous concessions will not adversely affect the finances as well as create problems of emanation of similar demands from other services in Departments and Ministries of the Union of India. There are indications that in announcing these concessions Respondent No.2 was not consulted nor was their concurrence secured.
6. The present petition is being preferred bonafide, in the interests of Justice and in public interest.
7. No other Writ Petition or other proceedings have been initiated by the petitioner before any other High Court or before this Hon'ble Court in regard to the subject matter of the present petition.
8. The Petitioner has no alternative equally efficacious remedy in law for the cause of action being agitated herein.

### PRAYER

In the above premises, it is prayed that this Hon'ble Court be pleased :

- (i) to issue a writ or in the nature of certiorari and/or mandamus and/ or any other appropriate writ, order or direction, directing Respondents No.1 and 2 to re-examine and reconsider, for cancellation, bounteous concessions which are reported to have been announced for the provision of free telephone connections and other attendant facilities to about 3.2 lakh employees of DoT/DTS of Respondent No.1, Ministry of Communications, which will involve substantial revenue loss to the Union of India and are likely to create demands for extension of similar and other concessions to employees of other Departments and Ministries of the Union of India, and also possible in the State Governments.
- (ii) to pass such other and further orders as may be deemed necessary and proper on the facts and in the circumstances of the case.

Petitioner

Place : New Delhi  
Dated :

through (H.D.Shourie)  
Director, COMMON CAUSE

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A farmhand goes to the doctor with a broken leg...

"Well, doc, 25 years ago...."

"Never mind the past. Tell me how you broke your leg this morning."

"Like I was saying.... 25 years ago, when I started working on the farm, that night after I had gone to bed, the farmer's beautiful daughter came into my room. She asked me if there was anything I wanted. I said no, everything was fine, "Are you sure?" she asked. "I'm sure", I said. "Isn't there anything I can do for you?" She wanted to know. "I reckon not", I replied....."

"Excuse me," said the doctor. "What does this story have to do with your leg?"

"Well this morning, "the farm-hand explained, "When it dawned on me what she meant, I fell off the roof!"

•••

A fourth son was born in the home of a minister's family. The father invited his friend to join the celebration and choose a name for the new born child.

"What names have you given to the three elder boys?"

"One is Rehmat Elahi - ( by God's kindness), the second Barkat Elahi (by God's grace) and the third Mahbubu Elahi (beloved of God), " replied the proud father.

The friend pondered over the names for a while and replied, "I suggest you name your fourth son, Bas Kar Elahi (God, that is enough)."



## POLICE INSPECTOR'S WEALTH ACCUMULATION

It is very unfortunate that in our country corruption has crept into every corner. It is widely talked about and there are no doubts that it pervades at various levels. Efforts have to be made to minimise the opportunities which lead to the possibilities of corruption.

In the June 12 issue of 'OUTLOOK' magazine we have come across a very glaring story of huge amassing of wealth by a Police Inspector of Gujarat through corrupt means. We have considered it proper to reproduce the relevant portions of the extensive report, highlighting the main issues but without mentioning the name of the Inspector which of course is given in the 'OUTLOOK' magazine. The assets of this Police officer are now stated to be of the order of about Rs. 400 crores. Our objective is to acquaint the people with this type of unfortunate happening, at the level of an official of police force which is expected to insist for enforcement of the law.

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This story of a police inspector in Gujarat is fantastic enough to flabbergast the most hardened of cynics. The man, alleged to have amassed a fortune of Rs. 400 crores, is reputedly the richest inspector in India today. Listen to the State's Director General of Police talk, mock-indulgently, like a loving father, when asked: "He'll be the revenue minister of Gujarat one day", he predicts,

Using his uniform, his intrinsically astute Gujarati brain for business and, of course, his political clout to create a saga which would match any crime thriller of standing in its nail-biting narrative and juicy content. His fortune is a millionaire's dream, but a lawman's nightmare.

None of his eight petrol pumps, one chemical plant, five cars, two luxury apartments, one bungalow, one housing scheme and several hundred hectares of land is directly in his name or his son's. The Indian Evidence Act sometimes comes in the way of proving anything because no circumstantial evidence or hearsay is admissible in a court of law. Inspector's son is in jail for his alleged involvement in the solvent scam where petrol pump owners have been accused of mixing naphtha in petrol. He himself had been arrested for forging a will bequeathing him some land but is currently out on bail. And though the income tax authorities have begun their belated investigation, no notice has been issued as yet.

But what is the story behind the 'irresistible rise' of this person. Son of a reasonably well-to-do farmer, he inherited some 80 acres of land after his father's death. But by then - that is in 1977 - he had already joined the Gujarat Police as a sub-inspector. The two stars on the shoulders of this six feet tall and handsome Rajput were hardly any measure of his abilities. He was capable of much more and he obviously knew it. With his luck, he landed straight in late Chief Minister's lap, who indulged him and nurtured him for bigger things. It ignited in the lowly police officer a latent desire to succeed beyond his means.

The story is shrouded in grey, but officials say it may have all begun with bootlegging. That, ironically, is the bottomline of every success story in Mahatma Gandhi's 'dry' State. Providing protection to bootleggers is one of the biggest money-spinners for all kinds of law enforcement authorities. The Inspector probably accumulated enough wealth over the years that enabled him to swim further up the creek of slush money.

The next rung of the crime ladder in Gujarat, as elsewhere, is land. Protect the land sharks, evict unauthorised tenants for them or simply grab it with the force of uniform. Real estate prices in the State kiss the sky and owning plots of land in any town - particularly Baroda - can rake in the moolah faster than anything else here.

The modus operandi is simple. Builders buy only disputed property or property with squatters on it. They pay a fraction of the actual price of the land (it's otherwise unsaleable) and thanks to a well-oiled graft machine they manage to get the land vacated - bribing the politicians and the police all along the way. Then comes that familiar cancer - multi-storeyed shopping complexes and housing schemes - bringing in big money.



The Inspector went a step further. With his initial corpus he allegedly went into lucrative partnerships to buy benami land at throw-away prices and resold it or built complexes. There is also a Bombay Tenancy Act in force in Gujarat which till two years ago prohibited sale or purchase of any land by anybody except the farmers. The farmers could also buy land only within eight km. radius of their holding. This latter provision has now been scrapped because it severely restricted the number of buyers for a plot of land and kept the land prices down by using artificial mechanisms.

Police say that in 1989, to get around the then existing provisions of the Act, he forged a will in which a Muslim family near Baroda 'gifted' him some land. This enabled him to buy more of it within an eight km. radius and he intelligently invested in agricultural land closest to Baroda city. Later, with his political clout, this land was converted from farm land to commercial plots.

Once he managed to do that, it was unbridled prosperity and unaccounted wealth all the way. So much so that he is now allegedly the richest police inspector in the country who sits pretty in the middle of, well, a thick plot. But he was hardly the man to get stars in his eyes because of all this. He proceeded in a very meticulous fashion to get some petrol pump licences. And that was followed by the setting up of a chemical plant that produced naphtha which he used to adulterate the petrol being sold at his pumps.

It was liquid gold indeed and his petrol pumps quadrupled his income. At any rate his fortune, estimated at Rs.400 crores by the local media and Rs. 200 crores by Superintendent of Police, has grown around his murky real estate dealings and his eight petrol pumps, none of which is owned directly by him or his family.

It is now widely believed that the clout he enjoyed is backfiring now. His close associate alleges that his friend is being victimised because of political rivalries and the politicking within the police force.

But would it be fair to blame him alone? He is only one of the 10 police inspectors under investigation for disproportionate income-assets ratio. And this perhaps points to the fact that in Gujarat, the most coveted and cushy job is that of a low-ranking police officer, the long arm of the law stops well short of touching their own. Says a senior police officer : "There are at least 200 police inspectors in the state who own more than Rs.5 crores worth of property". Some of the booty is definitely shared. In spite of all the cases and the bad press, the Inspector is yet to be suspended.

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Talking about two lines. These are some of the best two liners we've heard in a long time:

- # Money is not everything. There's Mastercard and Visa.
- # Love thy neighbour. But don't get caught.
- # Success is a relative term, it brings so many relatives.
- # Never put off until tomorrow, what you can put off today.

...

Men who treat women as helpless and charming playthings deserve women who treat men as delightful and generous bank accounts.

...

"If we are a country committed to free speech," asks a critic, "then why do we have phone bills?"

...

A woman came up behind her husband while he was enjoying his morning coffee and slapped him on the back of the head. "I found a piece of paper in your pant pocket with the name Marylou written on it," She said furiously. "You had better have an explanation."

"Calm down, darling," the man replied. "Remember last week when I was at the races? That was the name of the horse I bet on."

The next morning his wife sneaked up and again whacked him. "What was that for?" he complained.

"Your horse called last night."

...

A real friend never gets in your way, unless you happen to be on the way down.

...



## CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF INDIA PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT

We have been closely in touch with the operation of Consumer Protection Act since its enactment in 1986. As the State Governments were not taking enough initiative in setting up District Forums, which are provided for in the C.P. Act, the matter was taken from the platform of COMMON CAUSE to the Supreme Court, and a strong verdict was given by the Court directing the State Governments to take immediate action in setting up the District Forums; this brought about setting up District Forums in all the 500 odd districts of the country whereas there had till then only about 30 District Forums previously been established.

Having thus been in close touch with the operation of the Consumer Protection Act since its inception we feel very concerned that huge accumulations have taken place and enormous delays have started coming about in the disposal of cases in Consumer "courts", more so at the level of State Commissions and National Commission. It is very disturbing to know that in the National Commission, which is the apex court under the C.P. Act, pendency of cases has come about to the extent of 10,000 cases. These include original complaints, appeals from State Commissions and revision cases, and quite a few of these have been pending since 1994. It is very unfortunate that this state of affairs has come about. In the C.P. Act there is a provision in the Rules that a case under this Act should be disposed of within a period of 90 days; they have now started languishing for years. The position in the State Commission of Delhi is equally disturbing; pendency there has gone to about 5000. This is partly due to the fact that at Delhi the number of District Forums have multiplied to nine, and there is proposal for setting up two more forums. Appeals from these District Forums go to the State Commission.

Full information about the pendency of cases in District Forums, State Commissions and National Commission is available in the Department of Consumer Affairs. The Department is regularly receiving information about the number of cases filed, disposed of, and pending. From this information it is obviously possible to determine the specific steps that need to be taken to expedite disposal and to avoid accumulation.

The position with regard to State Commissions and the National Commission needs to be specially considered. Under the provisions of C.P. Act, National Commission exercise "Administrative Control" over the State Commissions and the latter exercise "Administrative Control" over the District Forums. There appears no indication that any particular administrative control is being exercised, respectively, by the National Commission and State Commissions; ostensibly they are not bringing to the notice of the Government any particular points on which action needs to be initiated for checking the expansion of pendency and for expediting disposal of cases. The general impression presently prevails that cases in all these consumer "courts", of different levels, have started languishing. This seriously affects the image of effectiveness of C.P. Act.

A meeting was recently called by the Central Minister of Food & Consumer Affairs for considering proposals for amendment of this Act. A number of very useful suggestions had emanated from various quarters for making amendments in the light of operation of the Act during the past many years. We have given our comments and suggestions for consideration in this meeting, and have highlighted also the following points regarding the functioning of District Forums, State Commissions and National Commission :

- (i) National Commission needs to have three Benches, at Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta, so that parties do not have to come to Delhi for contesting cases and also that the accumulated cases get more expeditiously disposed of;
- (ii) Likewise, State Commission should operate with at least two Benches in the State where cases have accumulated to the extent that has come about in Delhi. Where cases in any State Commission exceed 1000 it should have the authority to operate two Benches.



- (iii) In the case of District Forums the Supreme Court has already given orders, on the Writ Petition mentioned above, that in the district where cases accumulate beyond the prescribed limit another District Forum should be established. This direction should get properly enforced.
- (iv) For creating more Benches of the National Commission, and the State Commissions where necessary, more staff as well as infrastructure will need to be provided. The Department of Consumer Affairs will need to secure more funds for the purpose and allocate these to the States; there will be need of keeping close watch on effective implementation of the proposals. Likewise, at the level of National Commission provisions need to be made, of the funds and infrastructure, for setting up the requisite Benches.

Ministry of Consumer Affairs & Public Distribution has recently taken the initiative of preparing a detailed note embodying various amendments proposed to be effected in the Consumer Protection Act. We have very carefully gone through the proposed Amendments. It is felt that every lacuna in this important Act has now been taken up for appropriate correction, against the background of functioning of the Act for over a decade. We feel that if these amendments are effected all the various problems and deficiencies in the administration of this Act will be overcome; the concerned authorities at the Centre and in the States will possess an important instrument for enabling problems of consumers to be effectively and expeditiously redressed. Everybody is a consumer, in relation to the procurement of a product or provision of service, and the proposed Amendment Act will enable redressal to be forthcoming in relation to all aspects and also quite expeditiously. Certain important suggestions for amendments in this Act were made some years ago after a Committee constituted by the Government had gone into details of the requirements of amendments. It is a matter of concern that the proposals for effecting those amendments have languished. We hope that those proposals and the newly drafted proposals will now be expeditiously dealt with for effecting the required amendments.

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Since her husband's job required him to rise extremely early, Mary didn't feel it necessary to drag herself out of bed each morning, especially since she had three small children to care for all day. Quite often one or more of the little ones would crawl into with her.

One morning, she awakened to the shrill ring of the phone. Half-asleep, she picked it up. "Hello," she muttered groggily. "Has Ted left for work yet?" It was her husband's boss.

"I'll check," she answered, still not awake. "Someone's in bed with me. Let me see if it's him."

...

He was at the doctor's for a followup examination. When asked if he'd any problems since his last visit, he thought for a while. Then he answered, "Now that you mention it, I did have a flat tyre a couple of weeks ago."

...

After extensive tests the person was told that his hearing was well above average. The technician was curious to know why anyone with perfect hearing would undergo these procedures.

"Well," replied he sheepishly, "my wife sent me because she claims I never hear a word she says."

...

A woman who went to the police station to report her husband missing, described him as "29 years old, 190 centimetres tall, fit and handsome."

"I know your husband," pointed out the desk sergeant. "He's 48, short and overweight."

"Sure he is," the woman answered. "But who wants him back?"

...

The cleaning lady of the bank gave notice, saying, "You don't trust me."

The branch manager replied, "How can you say that? I even leave the keys to the safe lying around."

Said the cleaning lady, "That's true, but none of them fit."

...



## CONSUMERS HAVE RIGHTS

Consumer rights have evolved since US President Kennedy introduced the term in 1962 and outlined the first four: the right to safety, to be informed, to choose and to be heard.

Over the years, Consumers International, by consensus among its members, has expanded these to eight. The right to redress and the right to consumer education were the first additions to be incorporated, followed by concern for the environment and the right to the satisfaction of basic needs. Rights of consumers, as they are now recognised everywhere, and which we consumers should seek to enforce, are spelt out hereunder.

### **Consumer policies should :**

Protect consumers from unethical and illegal practices, especially in the provision of health care, food, housing, water, energy and other basic services, employment, education, financial and investment services.

Ensure that all consumers have access to the means to meet their basic needs.

Protect consumers from products and services which are dangerous or unsafe or whose use might cause injury to others, by:

- # establishing a general duty of safety upon suppliers;
- # banning unsafe goods;
- # establishing obligatory safety and information standards for goods and services;
- # establishing procedures to examine alleged unsafe products and services;
- # monitoring the marketplace for unsafe goods and services;
- # warning consumers of possible risks involved in the use of certain goods or services.

**Ensure that information about unsafe products and services is made available to consumers, by:**

- # establishing procedures to collect and disseminate information on goods and services identified as being unsafe;
- # establishing procedures through which consumers can notify authorities of allegedly hazardous goods and services;
- # requiring suppliers who learn that goods or services are unsafe to advertise any dangers.

**Ensure that dangerous products are recalled from suppliers, by:**

- # requiring any manufacturer who recalls goods for safety reasons to notify authorities;
- # establishing procedures to monitor voluntary recalls and ensure they are effective;
- # allowing authorities to order a manufacturer to recall goods and specify how goods are to be recalled;
- # giving authorities power to investigate the actions of manufacturers to determine whether they have complied with recalls.

## INFORMATION

Require all necessary information to be given to consumers about the goods and services they acquire, by:

- # requiring appropriate statements and warnings to accompany toxic products;
- # regulating the supply of therapeutic goods and toxic products to ensure that information is disclosed in a manner consistent with international best practice;
- # establishing procedures to monitor national and international developments relating to therapeutic goods and toxic products;
- # prescribing mandatory information standards for disclosure.

**Promote provision of information to consumers about products which may adversely affect them, by:**

- # requiring therapeutic goods to carry information about safety, efficacy and side effects.

**Ensure consumers are able to compare products, by:**



- # prohibiting deceptive packaging;
- # requiring packages to clearly identify price and their contents.

**Protect consumers from conduct which is false or misleading, by:**

- # prohibiting untrue or misleading representations about goods, manufacturers and suppliers;
- # prohibiting sales and marketing practices that are detrimental to consumers.

**Require all necessary information to be given to consumers to enable them to make informed decisions.**

Require that necessary information about goods and services is accurate and comprehensible.

**Protect the privacy of consumers, by:**

- # ensuring that communications, including telecommunications, are secure from unauthorised interference and are not used to provide unsolicited commercial communications;
- # ensuring that personal information about consumers is used only for the purpose for which it is collected and with their knowledge and approval;
- # ensuring that consumers have the right to access and amend any personal information held by government or non-governmental entities.

## CHOICE

**Consumer policies should:**

**Encourage consumers to acquire only the things they need, by:**

- # establishing procedures for community and consumer education.

**Protect consumers from anti-competitive conduct and exploitation, by:**

- # encouraging competition both within products and service sectors and within geographical areas;
- # ensuring that manufacturers and suppliers do not abuse their powers.

**Prohibit direct sales and marketing practices without appropriate "cooling off" periods.**

## REPRESENTATION

**Consumer policies should:**

**Ensure that consumers can participate in the development of policies which affect them, by:**

- # requiring administrative and political bodies responsible for consumer affairs to include consumer representatives;
- # requiring that laws and policies affecting consumers are published before they are introduced, to allow consumers to comment on them.

**Facilitate establishment of complaints-handling systems in government and non-governmental sectors, and include consumer representatives in the process.**

**Ensure that consumers can take action in courts and tribunals, including as third parties, to protect consumer interests.**

**Enable disadvantaged consumers to secure their rights by providing access to legal and financial assistance.**

## REDRESS

**Consumer policies should:**

**Provide consumers with speedy and accessible means to enforce their legal rights, by :**

- # establishing courts, tribunals or alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms with simple procedures to hear consumer complaints;
- # establishing procedures to ensure that consumers know their rights and how to enforce them, particularly in relation to disadvantaged groups;



- # ensuring that consumers are allowed an equal role in resolution of their disputes;
- # providing consumers with effective remedies and reasonable compensation if their complaints are found to be justified.

Provide consumers with a right to compensation if they are injured as a result of unsafe goods or faulty services.

Enable consumers to take collective action before courts and tribunals.

**Provide a mechanism through which consumers can channel complaints and grievances to the government, by:**

- # establishing mechanisms to collect and register consumer complaints and grievances;
- # establishing procedures to investigate complaints;
- # establishing procedures to monitor complaints and grievances, and to report any result back to the consumer.

**Ensure that consumers are properly compensated for any loss suffered if their consumer rights are contravened, by:**

- # ensuring that any court or tribunal can provide the consumer with an appropriate remedy if it is established that the consumer's rights have been contravened.

Protect consumers from intimidation or harassment if they seek to enforce their rights.

**Establish effective post-sale consumer protection, by:**

- # including non-excludable warranties that govern the quality of goods and rendering of services with due care.

## CONSUMER EDUCATION

**Consumer policies should:**

Ensure that consumer laws are written in language that is easily understood.

**Ensure that consumers are informed about their rights, by:**

- # establishing mechanisms to monitor consumer rights awareness.

**Set in place mechanisms to tell consumers how to enforce their rights.**

**Ensure that consumers are aware of their consumer responsibilities.**

**Ensure the provision of basic consumer education in schools.**

## A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

**Consumer policies should:**

**Protect consumers from environmental pollution, by:**

- # promoting the use of products which are environmentally sustainable;
- # encouraging recycling;
- # requiring environmentally dangerous products to carry appropriate warnings and instructions for safe use and disposal.

**Promote the use of non-toxic products, by:**

- # raising consumer awareness of alternatives to toxic products;
- # establishing procedures to ensure that products banned overseas do not enter national markets.

Ensure that the social impacts of pollution are minimised.

Promote ethical, socially and environmentally responsible practices by producers and suppliers of goods and services.

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## FROM BRITISH CITIZENS CHARTER

Six principles of public service which every citizen is entitled to expect in Great Britain have been incorporated in the British Citizens Charter. These principles are reproduced below.

This has reference to the various citizens charters which have been formulated in India by Departments, Institutions and Organisations. The unfortunate impression in the country about these various Charters is that citizens do not actually receive the benefits, within the prescribed period, and to their satisfaction which is guaranteed in the Charters. In this context it is worthwhile to have a brief glance at the principles embodied in the British Citizens Charter:

### STANDARDS

Explicit standards, published and monitored, which individual users can reasonably expect for each service. Publication of actual performance against these standards.

### INFORMATION AND OPENNESS

Full, accurate information readily available in plain language about how public services are run, what they cost, how well they perform and who is in charge.

### CHOICE AND CONSULTATION

The provision of choice wherever practicable. There should be regular and systematic consultation with those who use a service. Users' views about services, and their priorities for improving them, to be taken into account in final decisions on standards.

### COURTESY AND HELPFULNESS

Courteous and helpful service from public servants who will normally wear name badges. Services available equally to all who are entitled to them and run to suit their convenience.

### PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

If things go wrong, an apology, a full explanation and a swift and effective remedy. Well publicised and easy to use complaints procedures with independent review wherever possible.

### VALUE FOR MONEY

Efficient and economical delivery of public services within the resources the nation can afford, and independent validation of performance against standards.

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An elderly man lay moaning in his bed in death's agony, he suddenly smelt the aroma of his favourite chocolate chip cookies wafting up the stairs.

He gathered his remaining strength and lifted himself from the bed. Leaning against the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom, and with even greater effort forced himself down the stairs gripping the railing with both hands.

With laboured breath, he leaned against the door frame, gazing into the kitchen. Were it not for his dying agony, he would have thought himself already in heaven; there spread out upon newspapers on the kitchen table were literally hundreds of his favourite chocolate chip cookies.

Was it heaven? Or was this one final act of heroic love from his devoted wife, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man?

Mustering a great final effort, he threw himself toward the table, landing on his knees in a rumpled posture. The aged and withered hand shakingly made its way to a cookie at the edge of the table, when it was suddenly smacked with a spatula by his wife.

"Stay out of those," she said. "They're for the funeral."



FROM BUSYBEE COLUMN OF "AFTERNOON", MUMBAI.

When Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, generously gave away telephones to thousands of employees of the telephone industry, I thought the employees would be happy. Not so.

My telephone has not been working for three days, and, after several complaints, I thought it would be better to give the linesman a little money and get it started. So, on way to work, I dropped in at the linesman's little kholi at Khetwadi.

He was sitting at home, shouting 'hello,hello' in his new telephone while his children crawled all over him. "Arey bhai, please check my telephone, it is not working again," I told him.

"Hello, hello, hello", the linesman shouted in his new telephone, then banged it down hard on its stand. "Your telephone is not working, mine is not working also. It has been dead since the day the minister saheb presented it to me."

"I am sorry to hear that," I said. "Hope you complained?"

"Hundreds of times. All they do is each time give a new docket number, and an assurance that it has started working, 'Go home and check', they say. Then, when I come home, it is still dead."

His wife said: "I am sitting at home the whole day, waiting for it to ring. He is blaming me for it not working."

"It is her or the children, who else has been using the phone, or trying to use it," the linesman said. "As for the children, hundred times I have told them it is not a toy Uncle Paswan has given them, but will they listen. They keep playing with it."

"It is natural," I said. "When a telephone comes into the house, all children are excited."

"What is the point in having a telephone if it is going to be dead all time," he said. "I am seriously thinking of writing a letter to your editor complaining about the inefficiency of the telephone department",

"I won't help. Every day we get hundreds of such letters, nobody bothers," I said, "It would be better if you take up the matter directly with your telephone department."

"Who will the department listen to!" the linesman said. "All the employees are having problems with their telephones, some have not worked at all, others have worked for a while, then stopped, some only get wrong numbers, and one or two have got wrong bills, worth lakhs of rupees."

The wife said: "I told him not to get a telephone. I told all the employees to ask the union to bargain for more money, not free telephones in place of money. I know of no other union which instead of getting its members more salary and bonus, has got them a telephone each."

I said: "I almost forgot what I had come for. My telephone is dead. Will you please start it."

"I'll do that," the linesman said. "You are indeed lucky to have a linesman to start your phone for a little money."

A lot of people have been asking me what has happened to my dog, Bolshoi the Boxer. Did he really go off with President Clinton to Washington? He did not. When I did not see him, I thought that is what has happened, but actually he had gone next door to borrow a bone from the neighbour's dog.

I was talking to him about that. "Why do you keep borrowing things from the neighbour's dog? We have everything we need in our house."

"I am just being neighbourly," Bolshoi said. "Besides, we don't have any bones in the house."

"What do you need bones for!?" I said. "You get meat to eat twice a week. And you are too old for bones, you can't chew them, you have no teeth left."

"It is not a question of teeth." Bolshoi said. "Every dog likes to have his bone, no matter what his age. It is like how human beings eat rice and dal all their lives, so dogs eat bones all their lives."

"You are not making much sense," I said. "And all human beings do not eat rice and dal. What about foreigners, they have not even heard of rice and dal, even though Indian cooking has become the rage all over the world. But that's chicken tikka, not rice and dal."

"What is your objection," Bolshoi said. "To my eating bones or to my going to the neighbour's dog and borrowing a bone or two from them?"

"I have no objection to either. Why should I have!" I said. "But I do think you are a little old for bones and should stop eating them, and, since you will not be eating bones, there is no need to go to the neighbour's any more."

"I can borrow sugar from the neighbour's dog," Bolshoi said. "You can't, there is always sugar in the house. Besides, dogs don't borrow sugar from other dogs, housewives do. And if you are so keen on bones, I'll get you a rubber bone, you can keep it for ever."

"You can't teach an old dog old tricks," Bolshoi said. "No dog with any self-respect will chew on a rubber bone, you give them to little pups to sharpen their milk teeth."

"It is a messy habit," I said, "Chewing on old bones. Then you would want to hide them in a hole in the ground, and since you can't dig holes in the house, you will hide them under clothes. Everything stinks of stale bones."

"I have to have my bones, I cannot live without them," Bolshoi said.

"Let us not get melodramatic," I said. "I also had to have my cigarettes, but I gave them up, just like that. So you can also give up bones. And give them up before the municipality bans them. As it is they are against dogs and are sterilising all of them."

"What about the neighbour's dog, do I visit him?"

"Why can't he visit you? Why do you have to visit him all the time?"

Bolshoi explained: "Because dogs are different. He is not a friendly dog, so he does not visit me, I am a friendly dog, so I visit him."



## OUR ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES

COMMON CAUSE, a registered Society with membership all over the country and operating on All India basis, has earned reputation and credibility as an Organisation dedicated to public causes for seeking redress for problems of the people. Its initiative in public interest litigation, for solving the common and collective problems of the people, has greatly contributed to the evolution and spread of the system in the country and its adoption by the people on a substantial scale for effecting redressal of public grievances.

A large number of writ petitions have been filed by the Organisation in the Supreme Court and Delhi High Court, and quite a few important cases have been taken to the National Commission established under the Consumer Protection Act. The very first case taken up by COMMON CAUSE, almost two decades ago soon after its establishment, related to the

### OUR GRATEFUL THANKS

*We have the privilege of receiving assistance also from the well known Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Foundation which is supporting various projects and activities connected inter alia with consumer awareness, entrepreneurship development, economic and civic education, environment protection, legal services, income generation and rural development. The Foundation is named after the known socio-liberal statesman Friedrich Naumann and works towards his ideals and the vision of Liberal society. In India the Foundation operates from USO House, 6, Special Institutional Area, New Delhi-110067*

*We are also grateful to Kumari L.A. Meera Memorial Trust, Kerala, for providing us financial assistance for our activities.*

problems of pensioners. Almost four million pensioners benefited from the three important decisions which the Organisation was able to secure from the Supreme Court, relating to the extension of liberalisation of pension, restoration of commutation of pension and extension of the scheme of family pension. An important matter relating to the pending criminal cases of the courts of the country was taken to the Supreme Court. In our writ petition specific suggestions were submitted for adoption of procedures for dealing with backlog. The important decision given by Supreme Court in this case led to the discharge of large number of accused persons and release of prisoners whose cases had dragged on for long periods. These directions have brought about termination of hundreds of thousands of cases all over the country. On the subject of general malfunctioning of Blood Banks a writ petition was formulated and taken to the Supreme Court. Directions given by the court on this important matter has led to the evolution of system for registration of Blood Banks and stoppage of use of professional blood donors. On the general matter of corruption and establishment of the institutions of LOKPAL and LOK AYUKTAS in the country the Supreme Court, on a writ petition of the organisation, gave a verdict of severe punishment in a particular case, and the matter relating to the appointment of Lok Ayuktas has continued to be pursued by issuing direction to all States. On another writ petition the Supreme Court gave very important direction in relation to the conduct of election campaigns by the political parties, in

relation to a provision which has been incorporated in the election law. The Court also directed strict compliance with law in relation to the submission of Income-tax Returns by the political parties.

In Delhi High Court a number of writ petitions have been filed by the organisation. Problems of general importance, such as anomalies arising in the Property Tax and the difficulties encountered in the operation of old Rent Control laws, have been taken up and are being pursued. There has been large-scale theft of electricity in Delhi on account of which electric distribution has often got disrupted and the authority has had to resort to load-shedding; these problems have been taken to Delhi High Court and are being pursued. A major problem in Delhi has been the large-scale establishment of unauthorised residential colonies. There has been demand for their regularisation; this was challenged by the organisation and the matter continues to be further pursued.

An important matter relating to the Rail Disasters which have taken place in the country in recent years has also been taken to the Supreme Court. Another very important matter recently taken to the Supreme Court relates to functioning of Fake Universities and ineligible Teaching Shops. The National Commission established under the Consumer Protection Act has, on our submission, issued certain important decisions on matters such as use of iodized salt, stoppage of malfunctioning in relation to intravenous fluids, operation of buses on Delhi roads and strikes by Banks and Air India. Important decisions in general interest of consumers secured from the Supreme Court include establishment of Consumer Forums in all districts of the country and price printing also on all imported packages.

**Membership of the organisation is open to all. Membership fees are Rs. 100 for annual membership for individuals, Rs. 500 for life membership and Rs. 200 for annual membership of organisations and associations. Quarterly Periodical COMMON CAUSE goes free to all members; it has no separate subscription. Donations to COMMON CAUSE are eligible for exemption available under Section 80-G of Income Tax Act. Everybody can take membership of the organisation. No form is required. Send your name and address, written in capital letters, along with cheque/DD, drawn in favour of COMMON CAUSE.**