

# Nieman Reports

January, 1951

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# NiemanReports

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## The Devil and the Editor

The following is from an address by Josephus Daniels at the Associated Press Banquet in New York on April 24, 1913, when Daniels was the successful editor and publisher of the *Raleigh News and Observer* and the newly-appointed Secretary of the Navy:

"The appointment a few days ago by the President of the United States of Mr. Walter Hines Page, of your state, as Ambassador to Great Britain recalled to me the warning given by Mr. Page exactly a quarter of a century ago of the fate of a man who became editor of a daily newspaper. That distinguished scholar and diplomat, early in the eighties, established at the capital of North Carolina a weekly newspaper by the name of the *State Chronicle*. It had about it a fineness and quality and vigor that made it a power in a community that lacked the population to give it the support which its excellence demanded. When he heard the call of the wild and went to Boston to become editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, I succeeded him and in a few months the bee of converting the paper from a weekly into a daily began to buzz in my bonnet. That bee had a great big sting, particularly in a town with a population of only 15,000. About that time, upon a visit to Ambassador Page in New York, I confided to him that I was considering changing the paper from a weekly into a daily. He made no reply to me, and, turning to my wife, he said: 'If ever he gets to the point of seriously contemplating doing this dangerous thing at Raleigh, I wish you would tell him this story which will enable you to keep him from the rash act.'

"The story was like this as near as I can recall it: Once upon a time there lived a man whose soul the Devil coveted and he threw out all the nets known to his Satanic Majesty

to enmesh this good man's unwary foot. Finally, finding that the ordinary temptations with which he purchased the soul of the average citizen did not seduce his soul, the Devil went to him and made him a straight-forward proposition and said to him: 'Now if you will give me your soul when you die, I will honor your draft for any amount while you live and nothing you desire shall be withheld from you.' The man accepted the proposition and entered upon a career of luxurious living not recalled since the days of Babylon. The first thing he did was to buy a residence on Fifth Avenue and entertain the 400; then a yacht was added to his possessions, and he took his friends on a cruise around the world, entertaining lavishly on his yacht and at the chief hotels of Europe. The expense was great but the Devil honored his drafts. He went to Monte Carlo and got on the wrong side of every game and lost millions, but the inexhaustible treasury of hell was at his command. After travelling all over the world, and spending as if he was a reincarnated Croesus, he tired of pleasure and travel and determined to go into business, so he bought a seat on the stock exchange and plunged into speculations recklessly. Everything he purchased went down like McGinty. He got on the wrong side of every market, but the devil made no complaint. He then engaged in high finance of the most frenzied type and his money took wings. Finally excitement palled upon him and he decided he ought to enter upon some work that would be of use to the world and so he decided to establish a daily newspaper in the Metropolis. He purchased the finest presses and the most up-to-date machinery regardless of the cost; he employed the most gifted writers and most celebrated artists and everything that money could buy was at his command to establish his daily newspaper. The plant was a thing of beauty and the product was a work of art. But, My! How it did deplete the treasury of the infernal regions, and finally, when the drafts became so heavy as to alarm the Devil, he sent for the man and said, 'What in the — are you doing now, you are about to exhaust the treasury of hell.' The reply was: 'I was trying to establish a daily newspaper.' Whereupon the Devil said, 'I will withdraw from the contract. If you are trying to establish a daily newspaper, you will exhaust the treasury of hell before you do it, and besides if you try to become editor of a daily newspaper I will get your soul anyway.'"

Well, despite the story, Daniels established the daily *News and Observer* in Raleigh and made a success of it—and he was one editor whose soul the Devil didn't get, either.

Carroll Kilpatrick, Washington correspondent of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, contributes this anecdote of Josephus Daniels.

# THE TOUCHSTONE OF FREEDOM

by James R. Killian, Jr.

*A scientist describes the crucial need of society for informed reporting of the complex and vital knowledge that men must have to resolve the world crisis for peace and freedom. This is from a talk by Pres. James R. Killian, Jr. of M. I. T. to the 10th annual dinner for the Nieman Fellows at the Brotherhood of Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline, Mass.*

Both education and journalism stand in the front ranks as guardians of freedom of speech and information and champions of these freedoms as a first prerequisite of a peaceful world.

Peace and freedom and individual rights go hand in hand. And freedom of information has been called "the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is dedicated, without which world peace cannot well be preserved."

Perhaps we should think less about peace as the absence of war and more about peace as a way of life. It is the peace of a community of men living in harmony, a fellowship of men with a future.

Here in the United States we have gone as far as any nation in demonstrating that such a way of life is not only right but possible. We and the other free nations of the world have by our actions put meaning behind the words "individual rights" and "order under law." But if a free society is to live up to its promise, it must keep its sense of purpose constantly in view and implement that purpose in all that it does.

Recent years have seen us lose some of this sense of the purpose behind the institutions we say we cherish, and have found us using our freedoms in ways inconsistent with freedom. Nowhere is this more true than in our use of free speech and our thinking—or lack of thinking—about the right of a free people to be informed.

Much too often have disparagement, condemnation, sensationalism, taken the place of constructive discussion. In journalism fright and bite have been all too frequently substituted for light. In both education and journalism quantity has been achieved at the expense of quality. Yet cynical men cannot build the good society. Nor can ignorant men face the great decisions of our day.

Education and the press stand at the bar of public opinion, and we must ask in all seriousness to what extent the failure of freedom to shine as a beacon of hope to the world is their failure. I think that out of the present world crisis freedom will re-discover its conviction and its voice. But the voice of freedom will become strong only if we make

a mighty effort to see that our activities support the purposes of a free society.

If the purpose of a free society is to enable men to develop as individuals and to participate in the decisions of the day, education and information are of essential importance. We have recognized this. In the United States we have mass education and mass journalism on a scale beyond that to be found in any other country. But our very success in this respect has raised its own problems, problems with which both journalism and education are confronted.

Can we take care of the mass without a steady drop in quality? Is there perhaps a need for more differentiation among institutions, especially among those that attempt a mass coverage and those who are the pace-setters, the standard bearers, and the small quality institutions? Are we succeeding in our job of helping our citizenry to become well enough informed and well enough educated to carry out their responsibilities in a free society?

The American voter now deals with issues which have effects far beyond the local community. His vote—sometimes even his casual remark—may cause a tremor on the political seismograph of some distant nation, and every political act can have a long-term, moral significance. At the same time we live in an age in which science and technology are vastly and with extreme rapidity increasing man's knowledge and the tools with which he can be effective. Each increase in knowledge makes additional demands on man's understanding. It is a new age, one which requires new things of man. We live in a radically different world than that of fifty or even twenty-five years ago, and this world changes daily. The responsibility for keeping American citizens informed has a new and awful magnitude. It is a responsibility that is shared by both our universities and our press. It is a responsibility to help men to be rational rather than visceral in their reactions.

As developments in science and technology increase the complexity and the importance of the problems which we have to solve, and make of the world one neighborhood, the very nature of the problem of information is changed. I am inclined to believe that one of our great troubles today,

one of the causes of a general loss of faith in man's ability to meet the demands of freedom, lies in our slowness in solving the enormous problems of information and communication which the rapid increase in specialization and our progress in all directions has posed.

For those of us who share the responsibility of helping our citizens to become well-informed, a major problem is that of transmitting complex and specialized information to the general public. For example, the American voter needs far more information than he now has about Russia, about the Russian mind. In our universities in recent years there have grown up the area studies or regional study groups which have been systematically accumulating a vast amount of information about their countries. So far only a little of this has become generally known and understood. Just the other day I was talking with a professor who headed one of these regional groups, and he was expressing concern that the information now available is not reaching the American public. Both the press and the educational institutions have an obligation to find techniques of making the fruits of scholarship available and understandable to the public.

These techniques are being developed. Recently the American Society of Newspaper Editors decided that the field of atomic energy was one in which men at the copy desks needed better background information if they were to have a basis for evaluating news stories as they came in. The Society got in touch with M.I.T. and asked the help of the Institute in planning a seminar for newspapermen.

As a result, a group of nuclear physicists, representing several institutions, and a group of representative editors, held a two-day discussion on the atomic bomb and atomic energy. Of course no classified material was involved. Discussion was completely off the record with no reports of any kind. The result was to put at the disposal of both the journalists and scholars negotiable information on these problems. This conference, and similar ones which have been held in other parts of the country, have had an observable effect on the quality of reporting and press coverage with respect to our total atomic energy situation. This type of conference represents a kind of responsibility which a university or group of specialists ought to take in a field where it has special knowledge.

To see the interdependence of specialized knowledge and to develop techniques for bringing many specializations to bear on single problems, is to re-invigorate our concepts of freedom by making freedom meaningful in terms of the citizen. If we are to avoid being panicked into thinking that these vast new developments make dictatorial controls necessary, we must fast develop the teamwork which is the answer of democracy to the great challenges of our age.

Our scholars and specialists have an urgent responsibility

to make themselves understood, to translate the jargon of their specialties into negotiable ideas and language. In a democracy scholarship should come out of its ivory tower.

On matters of public concern we must try in every possible way to increase discussion and exchange of views. We need more of such devices as convocations and Columbia University's American Assembly. We must develop better methods of bringing about a clarification of opinion and of arriving at a consensus on public issues. A good example of a question which needs such discussion at the present time is that of manpower, and how we can best build our armed services to a total of three million men or more. President Conant has presented his informed views, and this gives us a good basis from which to start a full discussion.

I would like to say, too, that I believe there are untackled problems of journalism implicit in the need for public understanding of the relatedness of diverse branches of knowledge. Is the public informed or only confused by the heterogeneous collection of news items with which it is confronted each day? Must random reports depend for integration on the editorial pages or the reader's own knowledge, or are there perhaps techniques of news presentation that can be developed to help the reader see a situation whole through having related reports brought into juxtaposition in some orderly fashion? Should reporters use more enterprise in searching out related information which will give meaning to a particular report? I do not know. I only throw this out as suggestive of the kind of thinking which I believe must animate the approach of journalists as well as educators if we are to do our job as it should be done. I can think of nothing that would pay greater dividends in strengthening the voice of America and the voice of freedom than to have our mighty complex of daily information services marshal their full potential to the purpose of serving free men in a free society, and experiment with radically new methods to meet the radically new demands of this day and age.

The problem of secrecy, arising from the current dictates of national security, is another example of a problem which must be of major concern to both universities and the press. Secrecy can seriously retard creative scholarship and teaching. A ban on information strikes at the heart of a democracy.

No one can question the fact that security problems in the face of a well-organized and invidious world-wide conspiracy against the free world, are grave and difficult. But we must be very careful that we deal with security problems with full understanding of what security means. For many people secrecy is mistakenly considered synonymous with security. A little thought will show that security is not that simple to obtain.

For instance, it is clear that scientific progress is an essential part of any program to increase our national strength in the face of the present challenge. Yet secrecy and scientific progress are mutually inimical. Science and technology depend for their advance on communication among men working in various fields, on stimulating exchanges of information on new techniques, new discoveries, and new insights.

Nor is secrecy compatible with democracy. Yet only if we have a functioning democracy will we have anything worth making secure. Here again we run up against the hard necessity of protecting legitimate military secrets. But we must try at the same time to give the public the maximum opportunity to debate and appraise policies and decisions which affect the national welfare and which involve moral considerations that are best resolved by the open procedures of democracy.

The problem of how to keep secrecy confined to the minimum necessary for obvious security needs is not an easy one to solve. It will demand a lot of thought and a great deal of discussion by all of us. But I think that we are now letting ourselves drift dangerously with the tide, despite some loud talk by people like myself about the shoals ahead. As we drift the tide strengthens. Just the other day President Truman asked the Bureau of the Budget to study the need for putting more restrictions on the release of government reports.

Public discussion of this urgent and serious problem will be immeasurably aided by the studies of our security program which have recently appeared, "Security, Loyalty, and Science," by Professor Gellhorn of Cornell, and "National Security and Individual Freedom" which Harold Lasswell has just completed for the Committee for Economic Development. I hope that this excellent source material will now be used to stimulate wide public interest and understanding and that out of this will come an awareness of true and false dangers which will lead to a constructive re-appraisal—I won't say re-examination—of our security program. I believe that the mounting world tension makes it more rather than less important that we do so.

Before closing, I would like to turn to one other aspect of the responsibilities which seem to me to concern journalism as well as education. That is the importance of making the unifying concepts which bind the free world together both explicit and implicit in all activities which affect public knowledge and understanding.

Let me give one example. The very heart of our belief in democracy is our faith that if given the opportunity men will on the whole act with reason and judgment in assuming responsibility for their own affairs and the society of

which they are a part. Education can affirm this faith by helping men learn how to think and how to develop their powers of judgment. Or education can deny the assumptions and needs of democracy and concern itself with teaching men to learn by rote and thus training automatons.

Likewise journalism can affirm our democratic faith in man by giving him the information he needs to act with reason and judgment or it can deny this faith and feed him on sensationalism and appeals to his emotions rather than to his intellect.

We are reluctant to give up our cherished conviction that because "facts" are blessed with neutrality, the men whose job is to handle facts must pretend to be neutral too. To say that a reporter must be neutral seems to me to be the same thing as saying that it makes no difference what kind of a person a scientist is because his job is to learn the facts of an impersonal universe. Common sense tells us, however, that it does make a difference, a very great deal of difference, what kind of men play these crucial roles in our society.

A good reporter, no more than a good scientist, will tamper with facts as they are revealed to him. He will conscientiously present these facts with as much objectivity as is humanly possible. But we overlook at our peril the fact that the choices a reporter must make at every step of his activity will reflect his general knowledge, his personal set of values, his view of what is important. The choices a newspaper will make in the way it presents the news will reflect an opinion of what its readers will want to hear. Even a superficial look at two reports of the same event can show in what different ways the same facts may be interpreted. But the semi-fiction that we have created about the objectivity of news reports as compared to editorials has imposed an almost insuperable barrier to clear thinking on this matter.

However, a good beginning is being made through such careful and precise analyses as that which was recently done by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University on the press coverage of the so-called "Condon Case"—the attacks and replies to the attacks on the loyalty of Edward U. Condon, Director of the National Bureau of Standards. At the request of six university scientists and the magazine *Scientific American*, the Columbia group, a group which is engaged in communications research, made an objective study of the New York City press coverage of this case during the Spring of 1948, the nine general daily papers of that city being chosen as a representative cross section.

This study, using carefully developed techniques of communications analysis, did not deal with editorial comment; it was concerned only with news reports. It was able to

classify statements of fact as pro-Condon and anti-Condon. An anti-Condon statement might be: "Dr. Condon was accused by a Thomas subcommittee of associations with Soviet spies." A pro-Condon statement might be: "The Committee's attack on Dr. Condon was condemned today as irresponsible by 20 leading scientists." In the nine papers covered, the difference in emphasis was shown by the percentages of pro-Condon and anti-Condon statements: 65 per cent pro to 35 per cent anti in the *New York Times*; 18 per cent pro and 82 per cent anti in the *New York Journal American*. Further analysis showed that the anti-Condon statements were almost entirely statements of the Committee on un-American Affairs, or references to that Committee's statements. The pro-Condon statements came from a wide variety of sources—government departments and loyalty boards, university professors and dozens of scientists and scientific societies. Four of the nine newspapers gave considerably more attention to the wide support of Dr. Condon than did the other five whose coverage largely ignored these letters and statements. Seventy-seven per cent of the case for Dr. Condon as presented to the readers of those papers came from Dr. Condon himself, from representatives of the Administration, or from unnamed sources.

One method of determining objectivity, which was used in this analysis, was the examination of the background material presented each time a new development occurred. It was found that the newspapers in their review material repeated general denunciations of him six times as often as they repeated general statements in his support. On the committee's promise to give Condon the hearings he requested and the subsequent breach of that promise, the *Times*, *Tribune*, *Star*, and *Post* published fourteen statements on the committee's promise for every ten statements on its failure to keep the promise. In the other five papers the overall ratio was about eight to one.

This illustrates the point I want to make, that there are many ways of presenting the facts, and that the general education of both the reporter and the man who buys the paper will have a bearing on how the facts are presented and what total picture of a situation is given. I would suggest, too, that we may be tending to institutionalize a disregard for some of our basic concepts because of our failure to take cognizance of the fact that in the news columns opinion is both reflected and formed.

It has become widely recognized as imperative that scientists and engineers must be well-educated men, and men who are committed to the concepts of democracy if freedom is to remain strong. It seems to me that no one should be immune from this injunction. That is why I believe that the Nieman program is such an excellent one because it stresses the knowledge and understanding of the journalist rather than his training in techniques.

When it comes to the matter of making our democratic concepts explicit in journalism and education, we run into a great wall of misconception, I believe, about the role of reporter and teacher in transmitting ideas. In journalism we have sometimes acted on the assumption that it is a bad technique to deal with ideas as a part of the news of the day. Today when our democratic concepts are in danger of being forgotten because we as a people have lost a sense of the relation of our ideals to our everyday activities, I wonder if we should not at least raise the question of whether perhaps we have been wrong.

I think that education and journalism have common responsibilities if the voice of freedom is to become so strong and clear that freedom will again become a crusade. I have confidence that we will be successful in meeting these responsibilities. These are perilous times. But if our faith in freedom, and our faith in our ability to make freedom live up to its promise, remains strong, we can look forward to the day when freedom and justice will prevail.

f Condon 12/25

# CURRENT LIBEL TRENDS

by Harold L. Cross

*Libel, with its perplexing and changing interpretations has long been the bane of journalism. Here its flexible and varying forms are discussed in fascinating detail by one of America's great specialists in libel, Harold L. Cross, distinguished lawyer and former professor and associate dean of Columbia's School of Journalism.*

"The newspapers, magazines and other journals of the country, it is safe to say, have shed, and continue to shed, more light on the public and business affairs of the nation than any other instrumentality of publicity." In that and other utterances United States Supreme Court Justice Sutherland, in writing the opinion in which his court struck down as violative of the First Amendment Louisiana's attempt to restrain the press by means of taxation, pointed up the significance to the public welfare of decisions of courts and acts of legislatures affecting newspapers and emphasized the concern with which readers in their own interest ought to view a legal event which might diminish the newspapers' rights, abilities or incentives to shed the light of full publicity.

Significant legal events affecting newspapers, therefore, are more than mere determinations of the personal rights of private litigants. They constitute, in the functioning of a complex society, mechanisms of adjustment of the balance between the conflicting rights, desires and interests of (1) the newspaper, which are to speak out and shed the light of full publicity; (2) of some individual or office holder, which are to avoid publicity; and (3) of society—the readers—to "preserve the untrammelled press as a vital source of public information" with a minimum of individual injustice. Thus each such event, especially in the field of libel, represents the end-product of a three-sided controversy in a sensitive area, and libel trends reflect and to some extent create shifts in the opinions of courts, legislatures and readers on a wide variety of subjects including the matter of performance by the craft.

Current libel trends appear to include these:

*First.* A long-term trend toward decrease in the volume of litigation. This seems traceable to three factors—an increasingly high sense of ethics and responsibility evidenced, for example, by emphasis on these matters whenever newspaper performance is under discussion and the growing number of specific, down-to-earth "care and accuracy" programs in newspaper offices; an increasing "libel consciousness" evidenced, for example, by the frequency with which "libel talks" are called for at conventions and seminars; and

the diminished volume—diminished in relation to the past and especially in large metropolitan dailies—of local crime, sensational and other kinds of "libel-sensitive" news. Foreign news, so-called "socially significant" news and types of "heavy news" are less productive of libel suits. It is safer to defame a sheik in Afghanistan than the sheriff in Altoona, to expand interpretatively on sex problems in South Africa than to crack a brothel in San Francisco, to cover a purge in Petrograd than a brawl in Boston. Other things being equal, the number of libel suits against a metropolitan daily is likely to bear a fairly definite relationship to the number and nature of its local crime and court stories. This trend may go too far, as several writers pointed out in *Nieman Reports* for April, 1950. It will do so if it sets up fears that trammel the press.

*Second.* A short-term trend toward increase in volume of litigation in one field—that of "politics." This trend, in connection with the first, resembles the occasional higher wave that rolls in on an ebb tide. The term "politics" is used here as referring not alone, or even as much, to campaign stories in the ordinary sense as to articles dealing with politics in the broader sense. Thus, several years ago there was a rash of suits over such terms as "Fascist," "Quisling," "pro-Hitler" and the like—the sort of thing of which John O'Donnell's suit against the Philadelphia *Record* was typical. The current epidemic involves particularly, though not exclusively, various forms of the charge of "Communism." Other types in this area include the suit threatened by Col. James V. Hunt against the New York *Herald Tribune* over its initial exposure which set off the five-percenter inquiry; the suit by former Governor Millard V. Caldwell of Florida which resulted in heavy verdicts against *Collier's* and suggests as the court intimated that the War between the States is not over when litigation between a Virginia-born Floridian office holder and a damn-Yankee periodical gives the opportunity partially to reverse the verdict at Apomattox; the defamation suit of Alger Hiss against Whitaker Chambers and the million dollar claim of William J. Connors of Honkytonk Chicago against Robert Montgomery. The causes of this trend appear to include the increasing number of stories in political-ideological fields, the provoca-

tive nature of output of columnists which set in motion a sort of fashion to sue, and increasing sensitiveness of politicians.

*Third.* A trend toward judicial severity in determining what constitutes libel or, in other words, what constitutes a newspaper article that is defamatory so that the court will not dismiss the case as non-libelous but will put the newspaper to proof of its defense—truth, privilege, fair comment or some other complete defense or, if no complete defense is provable, partial defenses in mitigation of damages. This is discussed further below.

*Fourth.* A long-term trend toward judicial and legislative liberality in the matter of defenses. This liberality has been two-fold. It has operated, first, in easing the law as to the existence of defenses with recognition of new ones and, second, in easing the requirements as to the facts recognized as sufficient under the law. And recently something new has been added by some state legislatures in the form of strikingly favorable law on partial defenses in reduction of damages. This also is examined in some detail below.

*Fifth.* A trend—operative when the published matter is libelous and no complete defense is proved—toward larger verdicts. The reasons here, of course, are the diminishing value of the dollar and the tendency toward a more open-handed distribution of wealth. The trend is not peculiar to suits against newspapers. It exists more or less in all litigation where damages are not liquidated or otherwise susceptible of yard-stick measurement. It applies especially, however, in libel suits against newspapers for the reason, among others, that the elements of damage—injury to reputation, capacity to earn and wounded feelings—are singularly difficult to measure and peculiarly the subject of emotion. Examples are the \$237,500 verdict on the first trial of the *Caldwell v. Collier's* case and the \$100,000 award on the second.

The judicial trend toward severity in determining what is and what is not libelous, that is actionable defamation, or mere non-libelous disparagement, is not uniform, clear-cut or statistically provable. Yet it is sensed and its existence deserves recognition. A newspaper article is not libelous merely because it is false, or is merely disparaging or has caused actual damage or because of its effect on the mind or the feelings of the person identified (though such effect may be considered on the issue of damages if the article is libelous and there is no complete defense) or because of the presence of a combination of two or more or even all of those characteristics. This is illustrated in the recent case of *Cardiff v. Brooklyn Eagle*. The newspaper ran a paid obit to the effect that Mr. Cardiff (the plaintiff), prominent Irish-Republican patriot, had died, that he left certain survivors, that services would be held at a stated time and place and that his remains were lying in state at a named address.

That was false, mildly disparaging, perhaps productive of some actual damage and certainly productive of grave injury to the feelings of the alleged deceased. For the truth was that Mr. Cardiff was very much alive. Moreover, the place where he was said to be lying in state was not a mortuary establishment or a suitable place for a wake, but a bar and grill—Mr. Cardiff's own bar and grill. Yet the court quite properly dismissed the ensuing libel as non-libelous on the ground that the publication was in substance merely a premature announcement of an event which is neither escapable nor necessarily discreditable.

In order to have a libelous publication the matter printed must have been of such character that the court may determine that its natural tendency was such that it might be conclusively presumed without proof to have damaged the person identified in the minds of other persons in respect of his reputation or good name, his means of earning a livelihood or his right to normal social contacts. Of course, even if the article had that tendency the plaintiff is not entitled to damages if the article was true or privileged or otherwise the subject of a complete defense. Therefore, a fair general statement in brief terms of what constitutes libel is this: a newspaper publication is libelous if it identifies a person to any readers and produces an ill opinion of him in the minds of a substantial number of reasonable and right-thinking readers.

It is apparent that that general statement has been and will continue to be the subject of uncertainties, difficulty and differences in application. In applying it the courts are in effect determining public opinion without the benefit of election or poll, for the result depends not only on what is printed but also on the state of mind of readers. Thus, under court rulings applying the same rule of law as to what constitutes libel, to say of a white man that he is a Negro is libelous in Alabama, Georgia and Oklahoma and some other states, but is not libelous in Maine, New Hampshire or Vermont or some other states probably including New York. Similarly, it was libelous at the turn of a century to say that a man had gone to Utah and joined the Mormon Church—a statement which, of course, would not be libelous today. In like manner, it was probably not libelous in any American jurisdiction in 1940 to charge a man with Communism, whereas such a statement published today would almost certainly be held libelous in every American jurisdiction.

Such elasticity, which prevents safe reliance on precedent, creates problems for publisher, broadcaster and their lawyers, but on balance constitutes a continuous and highly salutary process of adjustment of the rights and interests of individuals and newspapers in the light of shifting public opinion and changing social needs. When the process be-

gan, long ago, defenses were few and difficult to prove and the consequences of libel, especially libel upon government, were barbarous. It was natural that the courts, in their urge to produce justice, were prone, even to the point of unabashed rationalization, to seek an innocent meaning for published matter and to hold it non-libelous even when it was susceptible, perhaps logically more susceptible, of a defamatory meaning. Later, as defenses became more readily available and the freedom of the press concept expanded, the courts, still with the same urge, felt less need to protect the publisher at the threshold, tended to stop hunting for an innocent meaning and became inclined to apply the "natural meaning" of the words.

Now two tendencies seem detectable. One is to enlarge the jury's participation in determination of the primary question—is the publication libelous. Whether or not a publication is libelous is basically a matter of construction of the meaning of a printed document which is primarily a question of law for the court and not, under our system, a question of fact for the jury. Now the courts seem prone to look for two possible interpretations of the published matter, one of which as a matter of law is libelous and the other of which as a matter of law is not libelous, and then to leave it to the jury to determine as a question of fact which of the two interpretations was actually adopted by readers. The other tendency is for the courts, without departing from their basic rules as to what is libelous, to construe the meaning of the published matter strictly against the publisher and let him justify as best he may what he has printed in the light of easing rules in the field of defenses.

An example of the latter tendency is a recent decision in Massachusetts where the court held libelous of a naval officer parts of the movie "They Were Expendable," based on William L. White's book of the same title narrating exploits of PT boat officers in Pacific waters shortly after Pearl Harbor, on proof that the picture was shown in Boston to an audience which included career officers of the Navy. The plaintiff naval officer was depicted as fine, brave, indeed highly heroic, but also as somewhat impetuous and perhaps "undisciplined," on which ground libel was found because of adverse effect on the reputation of a naval officer in the minds of other Annapolis men.

The same court held the same film non-libelous when shown to an audience free of naval officers. Thus the court adopted as the test the effect upon the minds of a particular class with a special, and perhaps unreasonably exalted, set of standards; and that is a far-reaching and potentially dangerous doctrine. One shudders for society editors if the same doctrine applies to a piece about a society leader's cocktail party because of effect on the minds of career officers of the W.C.T.U. Another instance is a recent decision of the high court in Georgia ruling libelous a story in mild, straight narrative form that a legislator had asserted spon-

sorship of a tax refund bill which the records showed was actually introduced by another—a case of an inadvertent error illustrative of two of the trends mentioned, for a few years ago such a suit would hardly have been brought by a politician and if brought would hardly have been viewed as libel.

If there be poison in the adverse trends as to what is libelous, some antidote is found in the favorable trend in the field of defenses. Viewing the field as a whole, the law of libel recognizes and, depending on the fact, applies one or more of eight complete defenses—defenses which wholly bar recovery no matter how libelous and injurious the published matter. Two have nothing to do with the language of newspaper published matter. One is the statute of limitations—a statute of repose which kills suits not brought within the required time after publication, the required period varying from state to state and ranging from one to three years. The other is the absolute privilege which attaches to pertinent utterances by *participants* in judicial, legislative and some public and official proceedings—a defense for judges, legislators, witnesses, etc., not for *reports* of the utterances or proceedings.

The other six do depend on the content of the published matter and in some instances, but not all, on matching up the *published statements* with the *actual facts*. There are:

*Truth*, which has long—nearly always in Anglo-Saxon law—been a complete defense in civil actions to recover damages. In most states truth alone—and that means proof not of the literal accuracy of the *report* but of the truth of the substance or gist of the *defamatory charge* made in the report—is sufficient. A few states require more—usually that the matter was proper for public information or was published with good motives and for justifiable ends or the like. The trend here is away from necessity for proof in exact, precise and complete detail toward recognition of sufficiency of proof of "substantial truth."

*Privilege*, which provides the basic protection for, stated in general terms, fair and true reports of judicial, legislative and other public and official proceedings published without actual malice. Old rules which limited the privilege to reports of proceedings in courts of record, to proceedings relating to the merits of the controversy and to proceedings which are not *ex parte* and in which both parties were heard, have quite generally been abandoned. New York has dropped the need for proof of publication without actual malice and other states are squinting that way. Texas and California have extended the privilege to meetings which are "public" even if not official—a strong advance. New York and California in court decisions grant the privilege to reports of judicial proceedings which have actually been commenced in accordance with procedural requirements but in which at the time of publication there had been no

judicial action, that is, action by a judge. So do Kentucky and Kansas.

That liberal view, in line with realities, has brought the law to correspond with common practice—to report the commencement of suits when they become of public record in clerks' offices without waiting action by a judge. It is hoped, and reasonably to be expected, that other states will fall in line when the issue is presented.

*Criticism or fair comment*, which is available in proper circumstances to protect defamatory expressions of opinion as distinguished from libelous statements of fact; and, along with truth and privilege, forms the great foundation for freedom of the press so far as libel is concerned. The press may be singularly free from fear that libel law will stifle discussion in the form of adverse criticism in matters of public interest and concern. Thus a high court in New York has recently held clearly justified as criticism letters and editorials bitterly assailing a Congressman for his vote on lend-lease. The newspaper said the Congressman was hardly dry behind the ears; discussed "softening" and found it was not necessarily in the muscles and inquired whether he was going to take the line of least resistance and end up with the Quislings, whether he was the representative of the district or "merely of a small minority of weak-kneed, jelly-backed, slab-sided, parasitical mugwumps," etc. The court, viewing all this as non-defamatory criticism, said, "In times like these through which we have recently passed, the doctrine of fair comment should be extended as far as the authorities permit. With unprecedented social and governmental conditions, our own institutions threatened, national legislators . . . should be held to strictest accountability . . . Queasy words will not do . . . Great issues require strong language."

The "*Kansas Rule*" of qualified privilege which grants a defense for libelous statements which, though untrue, were published of a candidate for public office or a public officer if the publisher acted in good faith and had reasonable grounds for believing his charges to be true. This favorable rule has limited litigation by politicians in the states which have it. It is, however, a minority view, for the majority of American jurisdictions deny this privilege for untrue libelous statement of fact however liberal as to expressions of opinion, and decline to discriminate between those who are candidates or office holders and individuals who are not. Nevertheless, the trend is toward adoption of the Kansas Rule, Florida being one of the recent converts.

The remaining two complete defenses, less commonly used and far less well-known, are in process of development in response to the needs of society for more information and the needs of modern journalism for better protection in performing that service. Each of them has received

substantial judicial recognition in some states, but in many states there are no decisions; in all states broad areas are in need of clarification and in general courts of last resort have not spoken with finality.

The first of them is the defense of reply or *self-defense*. As in the area of physical assault and self-defense, where the plaintiff has begun a public controversy against the defendant newspaper, the latter has the right of reply or self-defense at least in the same media and, in the exercise of such right, may not only block or parry the blow—that is, deny the charges—but may also use reasonable affirmative force—as, for example, by publishing statements exposing what it believes to be infirmities or misconduct of the plaintiff, though such statements be libelous and turn out to be false, provided they were made in good faith, on reasonable grounds and without actual malice. This defense, which protects in the circumstances stated, libelous statements not defensible as true, privileged or fair comment, has been allowed in many states where the initial attack was on the defendant newspaper. In some cases it has been allowed when the attack was aimed at someone whom the newspaper was sponsoring—a defense resembling that available to a parent where his child is attacked physically. In at least two lower court decisions the newspaper was given the benefit of the defense available to the person attacked though the newspaper itself was not attacked and was not sponsoring the person who was attacked. In one of them the plaintiff had given an interview to the *New York American* to the effect that her dismissal as a college faculty member was due to race prejudice. The *New York Herald Tribune* ran an interview with the dean denying the charge of race prejudice and saying dismissal was for incompetence—a libelous statement. College, dean and newspaper were sued for libel; the newspaper received the same status defensively that college and dean clearly had and all three were thus relieved of the burden of proving truth.

The other such defense is that of *consent* or authorization. In ordinary circumstances a person cannot sue in a libelous article if he has consented to its publication. Consent does not include an assent obtained by fraud or duress or from a person, such as an infant or mentally incompetent person, lacking in legal capacity to give valid consent. Consent may be express or implied. If express it may be written or oral. Express consent, written or oral, will rarely be forthcoming from the subject of a libel. However, even in the absence of express consent or in circumstances in which express consent might have been withheld, consent may be implied.

Decisions have held that consent by implication may be available as a complete defense where the person who was the subject of a defamatory article about to be published was given the opportunity to state his side of the controversy and, voluntarily and in his own interest, without being overreached or threatened, and without express disclaimer of

consent or warning against publication, furnished the reporter with statements he wished to have appear in the forthcoming story and where, of course, such statements were published. Whether or not consent by implication actually happened as a complete defense is one of fact to be determined by the reasonable inferences from the words and conduct in the light of the surrounding circumstances. At all events it appears that the decent journalism of "giving the other side" has acquired a legal advantage which may rise to the dignity of a complete defense.

Where no complete defense is present to bar all recovery, the law of libel recognizes and, depending on the facts, permits recovery in general of one or more of three kinds of damages. These are:

*Special* damages, which are specific items of pecuniary loss proved to have been caused by the publication. These are not presumed, must be proved, are difficult to prove, when proved are essentially liquidated and rarely, if ever, produce large verdicts.

*Compensatory* (or general) damages, which are awarded, as the legal parlance is, "to make the plaintiff whole." The law gives the plaintiff the *right* to recover these and conclusively presumes that they flowed in some amount from the publication. Therefore, the plaintiff need not prove any such damage and the defendant cannot wholly disprove any, though the plaintiff may introduce competent evidence to enhance, and the defendant may do likewise to reduce, the amount. The amount is in the discretion of the trier of fact, usually a jury, which may take into account injury to reputation, means of earning a livelihood, mental and physical pain and suffering, etc. Quite often large verdicts result.

*Punitive* (or exemplary, vindictive or "smart money") damages, which may be awarded, in addition to special and compensatory damages and without regard to actual injury, at the discretion of the trier of fact if, and only if, actual malice was found to be present or, in other words, if there was ill will, gross carelessness or a false publication of extreme or atrocious character. Here lies the chief danger of catastrophe verdicts.

Many state legislatures have been moved to temper the damage situation by statutes to the general effect that, in the absence of personal ill will, unless the plaintiff demands and the defendant refuses a retraction, the former shall recover only "special damages," as some states enacted, or "actual damages," as others provided. Usually, though not always, the legislative intent was to deprive the plaintiff of both compensatory and punitive damages. Quite generally, though not in all states, that intent was thwarted by the courts which, disliking the special interest character of the legislation, construed the word "actual" to include special and compensatory damages thus depriving the plaintiff of punitive damages *only*; or, with like effect, held the legislation unconstitutional so far as compensatory damages were concerned as deprivation of a right.

The current trends include highly favorable decisions in California and Florida on retraction statutes. Each statute requires demand for a retraction as a condition precedent to the commencement of suit. In event of demand and publication California limits recovery to "special damages" and Florida to "actual damages." In each state the high court upheld constitutionality and dismissed suit for failure to demand retraction.

# PORTRAIT OF A NATIVE

## *A Reminiscence of Grover Hall*

by Carroll Kilpatrick

One hot summer day in Montgomery, Alabama, nearly fifteen years ago, a distinguished looking man in a handsome double-breasted suit, a cane on his arm and a talisman rose in his buttonhole, walked spryly down the main street, attracting much attention. He tipped his hat to his friends, who looked a bit startled but warmly returned his greeting. Not until he sat down in his favorite restaurant did he realize why there had been so many lifted eyebrows. His carefully-trimmed mustache was in order, but he had left his collar and tie behind, hanging on the old-fashioned hatrack in his office, under the portraits of Lee, Jackson and Cleveland.

That was one of the few times that Grover Cleveland Hall, editor in chief of the *Montgomery Advertiser*, was not equal to the occasion.

Grover Hall was one of the South's greatest editors in a day when fighting, personal editors were largely a thing of the past in American history. He was a human being with a greater passion for life and people—and a greater passion for the basic human decencies—than anyone I have known. His religion was freedom—freedom of the human spirit—and he practiced his religion faithfully and fearlessly. For so doing he was honored with the love of thousands of people, and he won nation-wide applause.

Hall was the product of our eroded soil. He lived all his life in a state once ruled by the Ku Klux Klan. He had only a meager education and he was untravelled. But he believed in the dignity of man, and he spent his life trying to lighten the burdens of his fellow men.

In his youth, Hall knew the deepest poverty. His later life was not without tragedy, for his wife was long an invalid. Yet this man, without inheritance except the great freedom to make his own life, was an example of the blessing that freedom can be and of how it can enrich our soil. To a whole generation who knew his tremendous buoyancy, his relish for life and his essential goodness, Hall was a symbol and a guide. In this present time of troubles, when we are confronted with another terrible challenge to our faith in our heritage of freedom, the thing that Hall was and the faith he maintained stand as proof of the genius of this free land.

Hall was born in 1888 on a farm in one of the poorest parts of Alabama. It was nine miles from his home to the nearest railroad. His town had never known, he once said, a football player, a Roman Catholic or a Harvard graduate.

When still a plowboy in Henry County, he was invited by his older brother, then editing a paper in Dotham called the *Daily Siftings*, to join the paper as a printer's devil. Not long thereafter the paper folded and Hall spent several years on several different nearby small town papers.

In 1910, he moved to the capital of his state to become associate editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser*, a vigorous, conservative newspaper with a strong political bent. His first editorial was in defense of the right of Alice Roosevelt to smoke cigarettes. From that day on he fought against Prohibition and Blue laws, against anti-sedition and anti-evolution laws and for the right of man to govern himself. He continued as associate editor until 1926, when he became chief editor of a paper that always gave the editor very great freedom of action.

When Hall moved into the editor's office at the age of thirty-eight, Alabama was dominated by the KKK. Senator J. Thomas Heflin, Governor Bibb Graves, a large part of the Legislature, much of the Baptist and Methodist clergy and many of the small town editors were pro-Klan. Hall attacked them all, savagely and by name. Physical floggings increased. Night riders could be seen almost every week performing their vicious missions against the weak and unprotected.

Hall's vigor and his anger were equal to the challenge, and he gave no quarter. He wrote powerful, vitriolic editorials, highly readable and effective. "What a callous and wretched demagogue Heflin is," he wrote.

Finally, the inevitable threat on Hall's life was made one night in a telephone call as he worked late, as usual, in his office. Hall bought a pistol and carried it for two days. "Then I put it aside with scorn and shame," he told me later. "I'm no gunman anyhow. I can't shoot." He was never threatened again. But the violence of the fight continued.

In January 1928, as if to throw further defiance at the Klan, Hall declared for the nomination for President on the Democratic ticket of Alfred E. Smith, a Catholic and a wet and a darling of the anti-Klan forces throughout the country.

Tom Heflin immediately went after Hall and the *Advertiser*. "When I said the *Advertiser* had come out for Al Smith," Heflin solemnly informed the United States Senate, "I said the whiskey interests and the Roman Catholics had gone down there and put sugar in their coffee." Heflin later pledged more than thirty-five large audiences to boycott the

*Advertiser*. But the paper's circulation increased steadily as the campaign developed, and Smith carried Alabama in November. His majority was assured by the vote he won in the middle- and south-Atlantic counties where the *Advertiser* was the Democratic Bible.

Hall's unrelenting fight against Heflin and the Klan won him the Pulitzer Prize "for the best editorial writing in 1928." His campaign against gangism, flogging and racial and religious intolerance had brought him national attention.

Two years later the victory was complete. Hall saw Heflin's strength as a towering Alabama politician broken at the polls, and the *Advertiser's* candidate for Governor on an anti-Klan platform carried the state.

The new Governor unmasked the Klan, broke its grip on the jury boxes and reformed the primary voting laws which had made many Klan victories possible. The Klan was a thing of the past in the state which once had been the home of the Confederacy.

A few years later, Hall, sentimental human being that he was, appealed to Alabama's Senators to help Heflin find a job. The two old enemies, who had little in common but their love of politics and good yarns, became reconciled.

But when Heflin later tried to make a political comeback, Hall dipped his pen in the old ink and helped block the former Senator's last attempt to gain public office. "Heflin is Heflin, a buffoon and a hog-bladder," Hall wrote in summarizing his opposition to Tom.

"I know I'm a softie," Hall used to say after spending a few hours swapping stories with Heflin. "I have never really hated anyone—and I've known some of the lousiest men ever born of woman. Stump speakers have called me variously 'liar,' 'buzzard,' 'kept,' 'atheist' and 'Roman Catholic'. But most of them have been courteous and generous, and we usually became friends in the end."

The Klan in Alabama in the nineteen twenties was primarily anti-Catholic, directing only secondary attention to the Jew and the Negro. It was the effrontery of a majority attacking a tiny minority that aroused Hall's burning contempt.

Hall's anger was aroused again a few years later when the Nazis sought to make a scapegoat of the Jew. "In Nazi Germany," he said, "I should probably be accounted eligible for all the current benefits of citizenship. My line must have been purged soon after the panic in the Garden of Eden. I am Anglo-Saxon-Pict-Celt-Welsh, out of an interminable line of deep-water Baptists. My forebears on both sides 'Lindberghed' across the Atlantic, the biggest ocean then known to them, and some of them later became involved in the American Revolution."

Hall said he was either born tolerant or learned tolerance early. "At any rate," he wrote, "I came early in my days to

like minorities and to distrust majorities with regard to all questions involving delicate human relationships and prejudice. I had Jewish neighbors along with Catholic and Protestant neighbors, but that was after—or maybe it was how—I came to know that Jews were people like other people, a part of the warp and woof of the same country that had nurtured my ancestors and me."

Despite his qualifications in forebears, Hall could not have survived a day in a country where one group ruled over another and where one man claimed superior wisdom. If he had not been shot for defying the regime, he would have died of suffocation. In a letter to me that could apply just as well today to another monstrous totalitarianism, Hall outlined his basic philosophy.

"The *Advertiser*," he said, "has but one dogma—freedom of the human spirit. It believes in the right of each and every human being in the two hemispheres to think and say what he likes, and it will angrily attack anyone who questions that right.

"With reference to all other social and political questions, the *Advertiser* is purely pragmatic. It supports what it likes, rejects what it does not like. The *Advertiser* pleads always for the utmost freedom of the human mind, at last the only friend of man, the only known link with what we call God. It affirms that the man has not yet lived who has the right to say what another human being, however lowly, shall think and say. This is the *Advertiser's* primary passion."

When Hall offered me his old job as associate editor he said I would never be asked to write anything I didn't want to write except the anniversary and "drive" editorials. "You would be expected to whoop for the YMCA, the Salvation Army and the Community Chest once a year," he said. Hall thoroughly disliked the task of writing anniversary and "drive" editorials. He had done only one that had really pleased him—a Christmas editorial fourteen words long, written one year when he was engaged in a particularly bitter fight with a couple of political bosses. Hall's editorial that Christmas morning said:

"With one or two well chosen exceptions, we wish everyone a very merry Christmas."

Everyone got the point.

The anniversary that almost proved Hall's nemesis (and confirmed his opposition to anniversary editorials) was a Fourth of July—a Fourth that Hall never forgot. Just before the holiday, he stuck his head into his assistant's office and said:

"We have a lot of Fourth of July fans. I think I'll write a piece in honor of the great day."

He did. He wrote a long, glowing editorial about the birth of the Federal Constitution! The next morning as he drank his coffee he looked over his handiwork.

"I read the editorial and nearly fainted," he confessed afterwards. "As soon as I saw it I realized that the Fourth

is the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, not of the Constitution. I expected to be kidded outrageously from one end of the state to the other. But my original theory was confirmed—nobody takes note of an anniversary editorial."

The next day Hall wrote a nice editorial about the Declaration of Independence, but he did not stop to explain that the day to celebrate the birth of the Constitution is September 17, not July 4.

Hall's lighter side, which endeared him to thousands of people and won him an amazingly large audience, found its best vehicle in Clarabelle. One day as Hall sat at his typewriter in the old building that had been a hotel during the Civil War, he was interrupted by a purring noise. A stray cat, dirty and hungry, had made its way to his office.

Hall fed the visitor, gave her a name and began writing occasional short paragraphs about her activities. The reaction of his readers was spontaneous. "We have decided to name the office cat Clarabelle," he wrote, "but actually she does not deserve so swell and lovely a name. She has dirt all over her body. She is the most ungrateful bum among all the retainers of the *Advertiser*."

To satisfy the demands of his customers, Hall wrote more and more about the cat, of her views on Hitler and other disturbers of the peace. Before long his mail became so heavy with comments about his feline visitor—one reader sent him a cat encyclopedia—that he threatened to be rid of the animal.

But Clarabelle was an institution.

"The *Advertiser* is asked to write more about Clarabelle," he said one morning. "But what is it to say of such an unworthy, unreliable member of the staff? She comes by this office only to eat her beef and sip her cream and take a nap."

For two years, Hall reported on Clarabelle's love life, her offspring, which were numerous, her unruly disposition and her ability to absorb great quantities of coffee cream.

Whenever Hall made a speech, there were demands from the floor for the latest intelligence on Clarabelle. Hall spent hours trying to pet the sullen cat, all the while insisting that he did not like cats. Once, when he couldn't find her kittens after he had promised one to a neighbor's child, he wrote:

"Clarabelle never hides herself, being without reticence, but always hides her kittens. She is a chiseller, a cynic and a dead-beat. The *Advertiser* is on the point of breaking with her once and for all."

But as long as Clarabelle survived, she was fed and humored—and talked about wherever *Advertiser* readers lived.

Hall loved the cat, but his greatest love was the newspaper business. He thought that it was favored above all others. And he thought that newspapermen were a race apart.

Every young writer had Hall's help and encouragement. "Read David and Solomon," he would say to them. "They were the best columnists of their time. They could do their stuff and bring down the curtain in a flash.

"Pour your souls into your work. Write no witticism that does not spring from conviction, or some principle of philosophy, but take liberties with style. Get fresh about pompous utterances of vast wigs. Speak softly of the sad—and quit when you are through. Spoof, sympathize, interpret—but quit writing when the sap stops flowing."

When the time came to speak softly, Hall could speak as Father Montgomery. When a local dignitary deserved honoring, Hall knew how to do it well. When a friend died, he was deeply shaken and his obituary editorials came from the heart. Here is the first paragraph of one on the death of a local clergyman:

"Dr. Charles A. Stakely came quietly into this strange world, remained for 78 years to study some of its mysteries, but never to be bowed down by any of them, and then at last breathed softly and made a characteristically quiet exit. He was a compassionate, wondrously understanding man. He never said a harsh thing about those who were destined to live this unpredictable life. He counselled them and strengthened them, but he never condemned them beyond their grace to bear."

The *Advertiser* was founded in 1828 by a Jacksonian editor, who soon thereafter was run out of town by the Whigs. "The *Advertiser* remained from its birth until 1929 a hardy states rights newspaper, always under vigorous editorship," Hall once told me in the mid-thirties. "But after the depression I compromised to conform to the unexpected needs of society, and today I do not know whether we are for states rights or human rights first. Lately I have endeavored to reconcile Bourbons to the facts of a changing life and a novel experience."

Hall was a poor economist, however able he may have been as a philosopher. He was bored by statistics. He was often swayed more by human appeals than by factual analyses. The New Deal often disturbed and perplexed him, but the personality and humanity of Roosevelt won him. Hall supported Roosevelt in three elections and unquestionably would have a fourth time had Hall lived.

Hall was proud of the staff he organized on the *Advertiser*, and he spent hours with the men who worked for him. "The *Advertiser* is the least bossed newspaper gang I ever saw," he said one day. "I don't like to have people around me who need bossing. I like gentlemen who love their work and will respond to suggestion and their native instincts."

The publisher of the *Advertiser* and Hall were on good terms, but Hall did not hide the fact that he looked askance at business-office publishers. Once he was invited to address

the American Society of Newspaper Editors on the subject, "The Problem of the American Editor." A few days after he accepted the invitation to make the speech, he received a telegram explaining that he would have to keep it to fifteen minutes. "I don't need that much time to expound the problems of the American editor," Hall replied. "The problem can be put in one sentence, to wit, how to get the publishers out of the second grade."

Grover Hall's heroes were the famous personal editors—Frank Cobb, Henry Watterson, William Allen White. He had their gift of an easy, readable style as well as a Menc-

kenesque invective when the occasion warranted. Hall did not feel a close kinship with the latter-day editors of some of the more serious and solemn dailies.

"They have native wisdom and acquired culture," he said. "They are bright and entertaining. But they lack passion." And that is what Grover Hall never lacked.

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CARROLL KILPATRICK was associate editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser* under Grover Hall when he was awarded a Nieman Fellowship in 1939. He is now Washington correspondent of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

## The Individual Standards of Journalism

by Louis M. Lyons

*This is from a talk to the National Conference of Editorial Writers at Des Moines, November 18, 1950, by the curator of the Nieman Fellowships.*

In his will, leaving his paper with his hopes for it to his children, Josephus Daniels said: "I have never regarded the *News and Observer* as property, but as having an unpurchasable soul."

He wrote of it in his will:

It is my earnest desire and hope that the *News and Observer* shall be edited and directed by my descendants, though I do not believe the dead hand should attempt to control the living spirit . . .

Its future depends upon complete devotion to the ideals that have characterized its course. I advise and enjoin those who direct the paper in the tomorrows never to advocate any cause for personal profit or preference. I would wish it always to be "the tocsin" and devote itself to the policies of equality and justice to the underprivileged. If the paper should at any time be the voice of self-interest or become the spokesman of privilege or selfishness it would be untrue to its history.

It could be said of Daniels' paper that the character of the paper was the character of the editor. It was a moral force because he was. Every one of our great newspapers—regardless of size—has been the projection of the personality of a great man. With luck the character he infused into the paper has been maintained by those who followed him. A community is fortunate if it has the continuity in a paper provided by Jonathan Daniels, who wrote of his father's final admonition: "They are the words we were taught to live by. They represent our faith and our conviction."

To insure the continued independence of another newspaper of character, Eugene Meyer invested approval of any

future change of control of the *Washington Post* in a distinguished committee who had no part in ownership.

In the case of the *New York Times*, Adolphe Ochs and his great editors so impressed a character on the *Times* that the paper had acquired in his lifetime the status of an institution; so that a course that was "in character for the *Times*" was clearly recognized by the public and could be identified and faithfully applied by his successors. Indeed it would have been recognized as a public loss had his successors failed faithfully to continue the character of so vital an institution.

The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Raleigh News and Observer* and other papers newspapermen honor are today recognized as institutions whose character is a force in the American community and whose responsibility in the performance of their indispensable function is counted on as confidently as that of a great university. Yet only a generation ago each was the dream, the ambition, the life struggle of a man who had to create the character of the institution he established.

He did much more. He created standards—he and his devoted colleagues and similarly dedicated contemporaries—standards out of their own character which today could not be traduced or ignored without the undermining of a strategic part of the fundamental concepts on which a free society rests. All around them other papers fail to achieve and often even fail to attempt such a standard. But everybody knows what the standard is and where it is to be found. And it is only because it can be found and identified as the standard, that the press of America has the standing it has and the opportunity it has as one of the great forces to maintain and defend and develop the American traditions.

For those who believe in the press and its potential to pull its weight with the other great institutions men must live by, these standards are what we have to hold to. They are essential to our faith in the worth of the profession we claim. They give whatever distinction attaches to the Fourth Estate in our time. And they have been created out of the life force and faith of individuals.

It is healing and restorative for a newspaperman to remind himself of these standards when he sees the shocking cynicism with which standards are turned aside in many places in such a political campaign as we have just had.

As newspapermen we can feel a sense of relief that, with very few exceptions, newspapers did not at any time in the recent political campaign reach the lowest levels of the politicians.

Indeed our major papers will generally be found overriding narrow partisanship to take a responsible position on some of the most vital issues affecting human rights.

The Buffalo *Evening News* points out (October 28) that the metropolitan press spoke overwhelmingly with a voice of skepticism and warning when the McCarran bill on "subversives" went sailing through Congress over a presidential veto:

The congressional vote on final passage of this bill was 313 to 20 in the House and 51 to 7 in the Senate. No similar statistics are available on the way the press "voted." But a fairly comprehensive roster of the so-called "conservative" newspapers that criticized or warned against it, in whole or in part, may be compiled from the editorials that have been inserted in the Congressional Record, and from the many "exchange" papers that have come to our attention.

Among them, for example, are the entire Scripps-Howard chain, the New York *Times* and *Herald Tribune*, all three St. Louis papers, the Washington *Star* and *Post*, the Boston *Herald*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the Minneapolis *Star-Journal and Tribune*, the Baltimore *Sun*, the Portland *Oregonian*, the San Francisco *Chronicle*, the Denver *Post*, the Atlanta *Constitution*, the Raleigh *News and Observer*, the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, the Des Moines *Register & Tribune*, the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, the Milwaukee *Journal* and—as our readers needn't be reminded—the Buffalo *Evening News*.

This is an honorable roll and, as the Buffalo *Evening News* says, many others could be added to it.

It is also noteworthy that in the heat of the recent national election campaign, the Portland *Oregonian*, which is listed as Independent Republican, headed its editorial on the Dewey-Hanley letter episode: "Doesn't Smell Good." And the conservative Milwaukee *Journal* stated explicitly in its editorial: "From this distance the smell seems positively bad." It is not surprising that other important papers

saw the incident through partisan-colored glasses, but it is worth recording that two leading papers did not let their traditional support of Republicans determine their expression. Of course they were not alone, but they will serve as distinguished examples.

We have to remind ourselves that the standards of journalism are individual standards. Yet when the individuals are strong enough to maintain their own standards these become by the very fact of their continuity and perseverance institutional standards. It can be true in a community the size of Emporia, Kansas, as much as in Louisville or Milwaukee. The standards of individuals can be imparted to institutions with such force and clarity that they become permanent and our children can speak of the character of an institution as our fathers spoke of the character of a man who launched the institution. It is no small thing to establish an institution and endow it with character. Our great universities are the product of many generations of dedicated men. But such is the tempo and pace of journalism that our greatest journalistic institutions are identifiable after one generation. True it was what Allan Nevins has called a transitional generation, and the question is raised whether the present economics of newspapers would allow the repetition of such individual creative achievement.

But every present unit of power will in a generation pass to individuals now too young to exercise it. They are now forming the standards they will apply. And their standards are formed out of their present associations and influences. Any man in a newspaper job is a part of the total association and influence of the young man, whether in the editorial or publishing office, who will inherit or achieve the power of the future control.

No man in any part of a newspaper can be so isolated from the influence of its printed columns as not to identify what has merit and distinction and character in those columns—and to be influenced by them. By them an individual performance by reporter, editorial writer, city editor and headline writer does contribute to the character of his paper and to the awareness of its ownership of what gives it character. And this in its effect is cumulative.

Whether journalism is a profession or not is an academic question. What matters is that those engaged in it act as if it were—that they assume and exercise a responsible attitude toward the reporting and editing of a paper. Every time they do they bring their calling closer to the standing of a profession.

The standards of an individual can affect a whole office. We have all seen it happen. And then you get the standards of an office and an esprit de corps that make a strong team. The tone of an office is reflected in everything published in the paper—and ultimately in the tone of the community—for no institution has a greater opportunity than the news-

paper by its daily impact to affect the moral tone of a community.

Journalism can be a lonely calling. Its most important work is done alone—the reporter following a difficult trail—the editor striving against lethargy or corruption. He must find his force within him. He has only his own standards to apply. Except as he has the morale of the office on his side. Then he is not alone. He is sharing in a task that commands his utmost.

The editorial writer, especially in the paper with a small editorial staff, suffers most, I suspect, from a sense of isolation, of working alone. He has to find his standards where he can and erect principles sufficient to deal with the chaos of events and to guide him. No one else can tell him where to find them, what books will be the great books for him, where to find his lode star. But find it he must if his work is to have meaning for him.

The editorial writer sees the columnist encroaching on the editorial function—actually encroaching onto the space of his page, and dealing with many aspects of national and international affairs. The columnist often writes with a license denied the editorial writer, and he often succeeds in dramatizing and individualizing his contribution so as to draw attention to himself and away from the impersonal editorials.

Many papers offer their readers such a variety of points of view through their columnists that it leaves little to be said on national issues by the editorial writer.

But it leaves him inevitably the area of local and regional affairs. This after all is where his reader lives. So he can, if he is able, come closer to the reader's immediate interests. It is in the area of local affairs, both in news and comment, that the paper must depend to establish an individuality of its own. Outside news is collected largely by the press associations. Column commentators are syndicated. Any other newspaper can and will have the same general news and columns. But what it finds newsworthy in its own area is its own distinctive news, and the position it chooses to take on home affairs is its own. Neither the wire service nor the columnist can encroach far into this domicile of local affairs.

This is the most challenging area for journalism, for the reader knows more about these events, and is more closely affected by them. He is most apt to be critical of his newspaper service in the area closest to him, on matters he is most aware of. This is good luck for the editorial page, for as a critic the reader comes into a relation with the page—either as a contributor, if he is articulate enough to write letters, or as a reader who can have his own informed appraisal of the performance of the page. It seems to me that critical letters should always be welcomed, so long as they stay within the bounds of libel and good taste. They can add an additional dimension to the page and

give it a further and valuable function of a public forum. But only if opposing views are welcomed and adequately published. Especially in a one-newspaper town this is the only opposition or challenge the editorials have. Without it the page can become a tedious monologue. And a letter may often afford a useful corrective to an editorial that may have been less than fully informed, or written too hastily or in less than complete equanimity of mind and spirit.

The best editorial pages are apt to draw the best letters. And if the editorial pen slips, such letters are a safety valve. The great pages often draw distinguished letters, and even short miscellaneous letters add to the interest of the page. They are often easier to read than the editorials. They attract other readers. And they are free. They may at times raise the tone of the page, as for example in the heat of a political campaign if a temporary bias leads the editorial writer further than in a calmer season he would go.

When Lt. Gov. Joe Hanley of New York released a letter that revealed the circumstances of his yielding place to Gov. Dewey on the state ticket, the variation in its handling, both in news and editorial, made a convenient index, for any who sought one, of the moral tone of different newspapers. Whether they gave the news its full impact, top of page one and full text and revealing background, as the *New York Times* did, or blanketed it by something else, and backed into by way of denials and counter charges before the news itself was printed, as some other papers did. And on the editorial page, the attitude varied from the *Times'* "concern" all the way to complete cynicism. But on both the *Times* and the *Herald Tribune* a few days brought the reader response, and the readers for the most part went beyond their papers in expressing their views of the Hanley letter episode. In the *Herald Tribune* seven of the ten letters printed October 24 rebuked the paper for failing to come down harder on Mr. Dewey. The *Times* the same day gave two full columns to its readers' view of the incident. This may have been momentarily embarrassing. But in the long run the editors of those papers must feel an added security in having such readers. Such readers themselves set a standard. The cynical paper doesn't have such readers or doesn't long keep them if there is any other place they can go.

The editorial writer has a task to write in competition with the columnist to keep the attention of the reader. He can't do it wholly by synthetic processes. He has to have something to write that interests him, that seems to him worth the trouble to get over to the reader. And he has to feel something to say about it. If he has been a reporter, he is lucky in that he has always the chance to report a situation so that he can add to the reader's information. Most of the editorial writing at its best is reporting. It is

informed reporting, that expresses a judgment, and that interprets and clarifies a situation that brings the reader up to date, and gives him a better chance to make his own judgment. The editorial writer may often see a chance to add up the score after a period of news on a given development and help the reader to keep up with it. Or if the news is incomplete or inconclusive it may be a real service to tell the reader so.

The editorial writer can often supplement the news out of his own background or that of others on the paper. He ought to keep in touch with the news room to be sure he knows all that the reporters can tell him of what's going on. His page will be more appreciated if he keeps in mind chances to lighten the page with any bit of humor or color that offers.

He can share with the reader his reading, if he has a chance to read, whether it is a new book on China, or a new American biography. The paper may have no regular reviews, and the page may have scant space for any. But a short editorial on a point in the book may be a refreshing change of pace—and it may lead some readers to get the book.

There's one very fundamental problem of journalism that seems likely to increase—to get and keep the best quality of men on newspapers. Competition for the best brains is severe and growing. America's new position in the world adds to it. ECA has taken away some of our best newspapermen—and the Atlantic Pact. The Far East is only beginning to make its demands to staff the agencies and special commissions by which our aid is implemented and our responsibilities met. The demand will increase.

Newspapering has much the same problem as teaching to get good enough people at the wages available.

It takes something to offset the relatively small financial return. The teacher has a sense of a call of service that attracts a kind of person who gets a satisfaction out of useful service. The newspaper job at its best has offered that kind of satisfaction. I sometimes think it offered it more, or more often, at an earlier time than now. The kind of fellow who comes in to see me to talk about going into journalism is usually an idealist. He wants a chance to express ideals, to crusade for them, to help make a better community. Such a fellow will work hard at a low beginning pay in an arduous apprenticeship if he can feel there

is something in it—that the newspaper job he is apprenticed to offers a way to influence the community to the ends that are implicit in the American tradition. If he finds a cynical or static attitude in the newspaper, there is nothing to hold him against the inevitable pull of higher pay in public relations or any of the variety of fields that lure away men of newspaper training. If we are to attract and hold the men who are most needed in journalism and most worthy of its high calling, then those in the strategic spots in a newspaper need to keep a flame burning that will hold a glow to the acolyte. If it flickers out with them, what's left of the job is cold fish for a man who has an urge to qualify for a career of service.

And you can't laugh it off. These are the only people who should ever be allowed near an editorial job if the character of the press is to remain worthy of the Horace Greeley tradition.

It's always easier not to do the whole job that needs to be done. Often the only spur to do it the hard way, as it needs to be done, comes from within oneself. Unless—and this is the big if—unless it is in the climate of the office that there's only one way to do it, then the new reporter is not alone and the crusading editor speaks for an institution that is a force in the community because he and his dedicated staff make it so.

Carr Van Anda, the great managing editor of the New York *Times* under Ochs, had a principle: The reader is entitled to the facts. That was his standard, and it became the tradition of *Times* reporting. The boss' standards, if he has them, will quickly be shared by the staff, for the staff are idealists at heart, given a chance and a lead. Every newspaper is potentially a great moral force just by its existence and its function. It is always a tragedy when it fails that function—through inertia, incompetence, or cynicism.

I remember long ago joining with another young reporter in an interview with William Allen White. As we left he put his arms over our shoulders and said:

We all have the same face. The newspaper face.

It is not an acquisitive face.

By that act he shared with us a standard which prevailed, so far as it did prevail, because it was his own standard and one that younger men out of admiration for him sought to make their own.

# ROLE OF THE NEWSPAPER BROKER

by Malcolm Donald Coe

***Many newspapermen cherish the hope of owning a newspaper. But most know nothing about the business of buying or selling a paper. They must usually depend on a newspaper broker. Malcolm Donald Coe, of the journalism faculty at the University of South Carolina, has looked into the role of the broker and is convinced that a system of accrediting brokers is needed.***

Every year about fifty high-class newspaper properties, valued upwards from \$35,000, change hands. And many more smaller properties, of course, are sold in a single year. Increasingly the man behind these newspaper sales is the newspaper broker. Like the reporting of news, the selling of newspaper properties has become a specialized job: a specialized job that few prospective buyers know about.

To get some facts about newspaper brokers, this writer has corresponded with all the leading brokers in the country. He interviewed several brokers personally, and he solicited the comments of others through a mail questionnaire. What follows are the fundamental findings of this investigation of the methods, techniques, and value of newspaper brokers.

First of all, why are newspaper brokers today regarded as important and practical in almost any newspaper sale? The answer is that a good newspaper broker may save money for both the buyer and the seller in a newspaper transaction. The broker may do this by protecting the buyer against any incomplete or inaccurate information that could lead to later dissatisfaction. And the owner may profit from the broker's experience in selling other properties. A good newspaper broker will quickly detect any flaws anywhere on either side of a deal. In this way he may be worth much more than his fee.

A definition of what we call a "good newspaper broker" is not easy to make. But we think that Clyde Knox's comments on the qualities of a good broker are apropos. Before his recent retirement, Knox was one of the largest and most respected newspaper brokers in the country. He said that good newspaper brokers should be working, practical newspapermen who understand every detail of the newspaper business. He said they should be men of the highest integrity, who are diligent and firm in protecting the interests of sellers and buyers alike. He suggested that they should be men adequately financed so that no temptation to sacrifice a principle for the need of a quick commission could ever prevail. We shall see later how brokers meet these professional standards.

The cost of using a broker—from either the seller's or

buyer's point of view—is not prohibitive. The broker's fee technically is paid by the seller. In practice, however, the fee is added to the selling price of a paper and passed on to the buyer. This writer's investigation shows that reputable brokers do not charge more than five per cent of the selling price for handling papers valued at \$5,000 or more. For papers selling at less than \$5,000, brokers may charge a flat fee ranging between \$200 and \$500.

Most brokers claim that in view of the protection and help they give both buyers and sellers in newspaper transactions, they are worth much more than their fees. The validity of this claim, of course, depends on the particular broker and on how much protection and help he actually gives. It seems clear that the good broker, as defined by Knox, is worth more than his fee.

Most of the listings that a broker has are weekly properties. The brokers who advertise in the leading trade journals, for example, have listings that are more than seventy per cent weekly papers. But this predominance of weekly listings means only that dailies sell too fast to be listed. In this connection, one newspaper broker told the writer:

We seldom have a daily listed any length of time. We have just sold one. We have nothing in the daily field at the present time. But should one come up tomorrow, it would soon be disposed of. We probably have thirty people on our waiting list looking for dailies.

Most brokers insist on exclusive listings: that is, they insist that the property not be listed with any other broker. While there is no direct evidence to support his hypothesis, the writer suspects that there is a direct relationship between the caliber of a broker and his policy on exclusive listings. The more established a broker is, the more secure his financial status; so the better—it appears—is his position to demand exclusive listings.

Brokers prefer exclusive listings because their experience has shown that multiple listings (properties listed with more than one agency) frequently lead to expensive and unpleasant controversy when a sale is made. Controversies

usually involve arguments about the commission. Many brokers, too, believe that newspaper brokerage is semi-professional in nature. Accordingly, they feel that multiple listings cheapen the profession.

This brokers' practice of exclusive listings means that unless a buyer deals with a broker he may have no access to desirable newspaper properties. This clearly is an important consideration.

The function of a newspaper broker varies a little from broker to broker. Basically the broker represents the man who hires him, the seller. This fact, however, works to the advantage of the buyer, too. The broker who wants to stay in business must provide for the long-run interest of the seller. Accordingly, a good broker must not induce a buyer to purchase a property he is not capable of operating successfully. He must not induce a buyer to pay more than a property is worth, nor to agree to terms of payment which a reasonably competent man could not expect to meet.

Besides this indirect representation of buyers, brokers may represent purchasers to this extent: when a broker gets an inquiry for a specific type of paper he does not have, he may try to locate an appropriate paper. If the broker finds an acceptable property, the seller, nevertheless, pays the brokerage fee.

Besides handling the actual sale of newspapers, some brokers provide various other services. They may, for example, act as appraisers of newspaper properties. This service is usually available whether the paper is listed with the appraiser-broker or not. Some brokers provide contract service, making contracts, mortgages, notes, and other legal forms available to buyers. This service, the charge for which is commonly included in the five per cent brokerage fee, can be exceedingly valuable. Usually the average attorney is not particularly qualified by experience or training to draw up a newspaper sale contract. A few brokers also may provide a consultation service in which they give their experienced counsel to a publisher on some serious problem that confronts him. This service usually incurs no listing obligation.

There should be no mystery about how brokers operate. Brokers get their listings through advertising in trade journals, direct mail advertising, and personal contacts. Some brokers have been established many years and get listings on the basis of their reputations without solicitation of any kind. May Brothers in New York, for example, reports that in recent years virtually all of its listings have come in unsolicited.

Clients are referred to brokers by satisfied buyers and sellers, and by advertising in the trade journal. A client's initial contact with a broker is ordinarily by mail. In dealing by mail with buyers, most brokers use form letters to separate the curiosity seekers from the really interested

prospects. Curiosity seekers frequently account for seventy-five per cent of a broker's mail.

Most brokers recognize that they cannot fit buyers to papers and locations without a consideration of the buyers' preferences, finances, and newspaper experience. Accordingly, most brokers urge serious prospects to visit them in person or to write to them in detail about their backgrounds.

A few brokers inspect personally each paper they list. However, most brokers inspect only the papers that are within a two-day automobile trip of their offices. This is an important fact for buyers to remember. A broker who has never personally inspected a paper may urge a client to buy it. He may describe the paper ideally and give the impression that he has actually seen it.

A buyer may inquire about the listings of any broker without obligation. Some brokers list papers throughout the country. A buyer who wanted to see if these brokers had any desirable papers for him would have to get in touch with each broker. If a buyer were interested in locating in a particular state, he could deal with brokers who limit their operations to an area including this particular state. Conversely, if he knew he was not interested in particular areas, he could avoid brokers specializing in these areas.

It is important to remember that brokers who deal in papers from all states may have exclusive listings in the specialized areas of other brokers who do not have the listings. Wayne Peterson, for example, limits his brokerage business to papers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North and South Dakota. Yet the Dial Agency in Michigan may list exclusively papers from these states that Peterson does not list. Ordinarily, of course, the broker who operates in a specialized area may have the most desirable papers from that area. By reason of his proximity to papers he sells, he may be of more service to a buyer than a more distant broker.

The most important problem in selecting a broker is ascertaining his integrity and qualifications. Part of the reason for dealing through a broker is to take advantage of the judgments he can make about the value of a paper and the ability of the purchaser to run a paper. Unless a broker understands every detail of the newspaper business, he will not be qualified to make these judgments, and his value to a buyer will be limited. If the broker is not absolutely honest he may misrepresent the buyer and seller, making difficulties for each expensive and even disastrous.

There is no complete list of approved or rated newspaper brokers that a buyer can use as a guide in choosing a broker. There are various directories that will tell him about the training and experience of any lawyer. But there are no similar directories of newspaper brokers. Those who

are concerned about the professional element in journalism might be able to render a real service to their cause by sponsoring such a directory.

In the meantime, the buyer or seller must investigate for himself the qualifications and integrity of the broker he uses. It is true, of course, that most state laws require that newspaper brokers be licensed as real estate men. Yet a broker may be licensed as a real estate man and still be neither qualified nor honest as a newspaper broker. So the burden of investigation is with the buyer or seller. Most of the investigation may be through contact with the brokers' past clients. In any event, a buyer can learn such things as: (1) what a broker's financial standing is; (2) if the broker knows anything about the actual organization and operation of newspapers; (3) whether he is fully licensed; and (4) whether he has ever been found guilty of malpractice under state codes.

Inherent in this study of newspaper brokers is the procedure—from the buyers' point of view—for dealing with brokers. Yet some special points may be emphasized here.

The buyer who wants to use a newspaper broker, must first of all make up his mind definitely about what he wants to buy and say so. The importance of this matter is stressed by one broker:

We receive many inquiries (he says) from correspondents who ask for "your listing of properties for sale." When we ask them to be a little more specific and give us a definite idea of what they have in mind, they decline. We have weekly listings running from \$10,000

to \$125,000. Obviously they could not be interested in both. And when they refuse to be specific about their wants, there is little we can do to help.

Besides being specific, most brokers want their clients to be honest. The buyer should state definitely what he can pay down, and he should describe his newspaper experience honestly. When this information is known in advance, a broker may be able, for example, to get a seller to reduce his down payment if necessary. But the result is inevitable when a buyer represents that he can pay \$15,000 down, for example, and after protracted negotiations reveals that he has only \$10,000: the result is an irritated seller and no deal. This fact may seem obvious. But it is the complaint of many newspaper brokers.

Brokers emphasize that the buyer must be prepared to pay a fair price for a newspaper. They report that too many buyers want something for nothing. They urge that a buyer acquire an understanding of newspaper values before he looks for a paper or deals through a broker.

It is clear from this study that newspaper brokers can offer a valuable service in a newspaper sale. In a business as specialized as the newspaper business, the newspaper broker has a legitimate place and function. In the newspaper profession, however, where the professional elements are still not conclusively established, the broker's function could be much improved. The way to this improvement is through an accrediting system voluntarily set up by the profession for brokers meeting approved standards.

## THE CHURCH BEAT

by Martha Hall

*Martha Hall covered church news for the Washington Post. When she left the Post to do graduate study at the University of Michigan the city editor asked her for a memorandum on the church beat. It proved a frank and provocative analysis, which he distributed to the staff.*

### I. Church Beat

To many on the staff the church beat is a joke.

Reporters and editors think of it as a dull and bothersome part of our coverage of the city.

Stories on the churches are often relegated to the obit page. Items not newsworthy enough for the daily paper are tossed to the church reporter for use on the church page. Ministers too frequently make the news columns only when they do something wrong.

The church reporter sometimes finds the desk uninterested in ideas for changes in coverage or in the features written. At times, one gets the idea that the desk's feeling

is that he should take care of the churches, keep them calm and not bother the desk. The desk does not read the church page and often demands stories on things already handled there.

But the fact that 54 per cent of the Nation's population claims membership in some church should remind us that the church news is of interest to many in our city. One-third of the city's population claims to go to church regularly. Many who do not go to church are still interested in reading about what has been happening in their denomination.

This church strength should be borne in mind constantly by both church editors and editors. It should also be re-

membered that the church people, on the whole, are pretty responsible citizens and active in community life. They are the ones whose backing for certain city projects is voiced often through their church organizations.

## II. *The Church Reporter*

The church reporter is faced with a complex beat. He should become familiar with the total picture of church life. In addition, he should know about the organization and general beliefs of the major church bodies.

A knowledge of the church administration is particularly important: that it, how are ministers hired and fired, what is the training of the minister, how is the local church governed, etc. We don't deal with theology a great deal. The reporter should know, however, the major theological differences of the denominations.

Some of the information can be gained from reading church histories and a good comparative religion book. Where the reporter finds these sources inadequate, the best thing to do is talk with someone in the church who will explain the setup. Most ministers are happy to explain things to anyone who wants to do the job right.

With this general background of knowledge, the reporter will be better equipped to deal with the stories that come up. He will know whether an action taken by a church body is significant and represents something new, or is merely a reaffirmation.

The reporter will also learn a great deal about church organization and politics from talking informally with ministers at meetings. A meeting of the ministerial union may not result in a front page story for the next day, but it may tip off the reporter on something of importance which is coming off, or may give him a background for something which will happen later.

In writing about any phase of the church's doctrine, it is wise to make a check with someone who knows before sending the story out. The church people take mistakes to heart.

Words which are peculiar to a church should be marked so that the desk will not change them. An editor, when reading a story, should check back with the reporter on changes which may seem harmless, but which may be important because of some particular practice within the church which makes a certain terminology necessary.

The reporter should be friendly with the church people, use a sense of humor, but maintain a certain amount of formality. The first name business, on the church beat, should be used very carefully.

A reporter shouldn't give a clergyman the impression that he thinks that clergyman's church better or worse than any other. This does not rule out compliments and the normal amenities. The reporter should be very wary of talking down another church, minister, or denomina-

tion. The minister may agree completely, but he may later feel that the reporter has revealed favoritism or prejudice, which will influence his work.

In my opinion, the reporter should do his best to keep his own religion completely out of any discussion. I have been frequently asked what mine is, and have come to the conclusion that a non-committal answer is the only solution. Tell the questioner that that is the one question a church reporter never answers, or something of the sort. Joke about being a mixture of them all as long as you are on the beat.

The reason for this is pretty obvious. If one tells a Baptist he is a Baptist, the minister will expect special treatment for the Baptists. But if one tells a Baptist one is a Congregationalist, the man may immediately decide that the church reporter has always been pro-Congregationalist, which explains the anti-Baptist tone of the paper.

Never promise anyone anything. Some ministers demand to be told when and how a story will appear. In view of the fact that the church page is made up by someone other than the church reporter, the reporter couldn't guarantee anything if he wanted to. And he usually doesn't want to.

## III. *The Church Page*

A constant attempt should be made to keep the church page lively. Of course it is necessary to get in the ground-breakings, cornerstone layings and dedications. These things are terribly important to the members of the church, who have spent years and months raising money and planning the program.

The liveliness can come from good perky features which are of interest to church people. Good art is a big help in livening the page.

It would seem to me that a good formula for the page would be: one good local feature with art; one good national or international (church conventions, legislation the churches are interested in, work of national church bodies, etc.; both the church reporter and wire editors should be on the alert for things of this nature); and the remainder of the page devoted to the regular advances and news of the churches.

As for the news, the church reporter often has to dig for it. The churches seem to be a little afraid of the papers sometimes, or maybe they just forget them. They don't tell about their regular activities in which there may be a good story. Instead they wait until they have a ground-breaking, then expect the reporter to get all excited about it.

Talking with ministers at meetings, reading church bulletins, etc., will give the reporter a line on many good news or feature stories.

Of course there are also some churches which are dis-

tinctly unafraid of the papers and want to be featured every week.

Some of these people seem to think the church page is not good enough for them; they want all of their stories in Sunday papers.

As long as people have this attitude about the page it will never be any good. But if they send the good stories for Saturday, the page will gradually improve in prestige, and they will want to be on it. I think we should remind the ministers and church people that the Saturday page is for them, that we want to make it what they want, and that we want to do a good job so that their people will look to the page for the news of the churches.

Balance on the page is especially important. Wherever possible there should be top heads on each of the major groups, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish. Some weeks, of course, this will be difficult. I think stories on church cooperative work are also particularly valuable. The reporter should watch carefully to see that he is not over-playing any one group.

If one church has had a big story, say a feature with art, I usually hold off on it for a while. A single good story creates more good will than a lot of little insignificant ones, and the church which has had such a story should be willing to be out of the limelight for a while. Once in a while someone will be resentful about this policy and will have to be reminded that there are more than 1200 churches in the city and they will have to compete with them all.

On this matter of balance, the church reporter must also be careful when it comes to feasts and holidays celebrated by all groups. For example, the Catholic Church at Easter time has a particularly impressive ritual. Stories written should not tell all about the details of the Catholic worship and give the impression that Protestants don't celebrate the holiday or pass it off with a few hymns. A story should tell about all groups, and if possible treat all equally.

This also comes up on the matter of art. Some of our largest Protestant churches are thoroughly non-liturgical. Their ministers look like any business man. When we want church pictures, we head for the Catholics and Episcopalians. It may take more work, but the reporter should look for something in the non-ritualistic church which will also make good art. It can be done, but it takes searching.

The reporter may at times have to defend his policy by balancing the church news before the desk—that is, by making a Christmas story a general story, he may have to tone down on one group a bit. An editor familiar with that group may feel that it should be played to the hilt. The reporter must explain the reason for his action in such terms that it will be understandable to all.

#### IV. *General News*

The church reporter should keep an eye open for stories that will break for the news columns. It is wise to make regular checks on when conventions, area meetings and such things are coming up.

The desk should be told about these in advance, and arrangements made for coverage. It is at these conventions, presbyteries, church councils, etc., that the resolutions and actions on race relations, housing and other things of current interest are passed.

On the whole, it is best to cover these things in person.

In covering general news stories, as in all church coverage, the reporter's background comes into play. He should recognize certain factors in the life of the church in the nation today and be prepared to write a story which will connect the local with the national.

I hope that gradually we can improve our coverage of these national meetings. The wire services, at this point, do not do an adequate job of it—at least they do not appear to when compared with stories sent from the meetings by George Dugan of the *New York Times*. Local people are very interested in these meetings, and want to know what happens—often their church is affected. The reporter should always alert wire editors about these meetings.

The Sunday sermon round-up, as a rule, is completely dull and worthless. I have the same high opinion of the system of asking each of the ministers in the city to write us a piece for a certain Sunday of the year.

The alert reporter can usually spot a few things that might make good sermon stories while he is writing the church page, or by careful study of the ads. He can call the clergyman in advance for excerpts or can cover the service. Some weeks the Sunday coverage need not be of sermons, but can deal with the various activities of the day—May processions, ground-breaking, dedications, tearing downs. I still think the idea of church features for Monday papers is a good one, in spite of the fact that not everyone agrees.

I believe we should beware of playing up the screw-ball. Such things are all right once in a while, but too much emphasis on the odd things about the churches doesn't set well with the traditional groups.

In conclusion, I think the church coverage can be whatever the reporter and his superiors want it to be. If they want to do it in a minimum of time with a minimum of effort, it can be done, but it will look that way and no one will be interested.

But if the reporter will really dig at it and if the desk will recognize its importance, it can be as readable and interesting as anything in the paper.

## "Tomorrow's Newspapers"

# THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER CRISIS

by John Gleason

Paradox-ridden since birth, the American newspaper business now faces one of the most threatening contradictions in its 260-year-old history. Publishers are peddling more papers and taking in more money than ever before; and newspapers are going out of business faster than ever before. Since 1929, dailies have been shutting up shop on an average of almost three each month (with 1930 depression losses lending emphasis to the statistics). Weeklies and semi-weeklies are disappearing even more rapidly. Some 1400 of them have closed their doors during the past three years.

In the meantime, the circulation of daily newspapers has reached almost 53,000,000, an increase of almost 2 per cent over 1948. Thirty years ago daily newspaper circulation totaled about 28,000,000; it reached 39,000,000 in 1930 and 48,000,000 in 1945. Weeklies have a total circulation of about 18,000. The annual newspaper income following World War II reached an all-time high of almost \$2,000,000,000 and is still growing.

Increase in costs, however, has completely outstripped increase in income in the post-war period, despite the fantastic growth in advertising volume and circulation revenue, according to statistics reported by *Editor and Publisher*.

In 1947 revenue was up 24 per cent over 1946, but costs were up 28 per cent. In 1948 revenue was up 15 per cent over 1947, but costs were up 20 per cent. In 1949 revenue was up 8 per cent over 1948, but costs were up 10 per cent. Except for extremely large and powerful newspapers, usually monopolistic, the margin of profits has narrowed to the vanishing point.

Yet to keep readers happy newspapers had to increase the number of pages of information and entertainment. To stay in business, they had to increase the number of pages devoted to advertising. Generally, the publishers compromised at first with a ratio of 60 per cent advertising to 40 per cent editorial content. This subsequently increased on many newspapers to a 70-30 ratio, a prevailing standard in many parts of the country. But under the stress of rising labor costs in an era of forced expansion, publishers soon saw that even a 70-30 ratio was only a makeshift arrangement, and could only be developed when the newspaper did not find it necessary to rely on its second-class permit for distribution.

Increased circulation revenue has been prohibited by a self-imposed five cent ceiling on price per newspaper copy. Publishers agreed at a recent meeting of the American

Newspaper Publishers Association that they could not raise their single copy prices beyond five cents or they would price themselves out of the mass circulation market. What happens when the squeeze becomes as great as this? Newspapers "merge" usually, "cease publication" occasionally, but in effect go out of business.

Since 1929, 714 daily newspapers—40 per cent of the dailies now publishing—have failed or have been absorbed by other papers. There are now 1776 daily newspapers in the United States, 80 per cent of them under 25,000 circulation and only 6 per cent of 100,000 circulation or more.

In the fight for solvency the most fortunate publishers, according to the cost records compiled by *Editor and Publisher*, are those with newspapers of 100,000 or more circulation, whose incomes have risen an average of 7.74 per cent and their costs an average of 7.32 per cent in 1949, a small gain which has not been maintained with the continuing rise of labor costs and the demands, particularly by the mechanical brotherhoods, for higher pay, pensions and innumerable other benefits which most newspapers cannot meet.

The hardest hit financially are newspapers under 100,000 circulation. For example, although on newspapers between 25,000 and 50,000 circulation expenses rose 11 per cent, revenue advanced only 7 per cent in the past three years, obviously a trend that will eliminate profit and thus destroy some of the nation's best newspapers.

In an effort to dramatize the effect of costs over revenue in the struggle of a socially-conscious newspaper to stay solvent, *Editor and Publisher* for the past several years has been telling the story of an unnamed but actual 50,000-circulation daily newspaper. In 1948 this newspaper announced a gross revenue of \$260,000 over 1947 and all but \$1,000 was eaten up by higher costs. In 1949 revenue went up \$180,830 and costs \$244,811. On this daily, operating expenses have increased 83.48 per cent in the past four years. Profit in this period totaled \$35,608, or about \$8,000 a year on a business worth several million dollars.

The condition of the 1416 dailies under 25,000 circulation is little better. Last year costs rose 9 per cent and income 7 per cent. During 1950 revenue has continued to lag behind expenses. Publishers of the smaller dailies can see no let up until they find it possible to adopt new methods of production that might eliminate the expensive and

complex mechanical problems of printing a newspaper. Yet in this circulation area, and in the weeklies, through the promise of technical advances, lies the greatest opportunity for young men and women entering journalism, and on the shoulders of newspapers in the smaller circulation group rests the responsibility of continuing to maintain a free press while metropolitan newspapers disappear or succumb to other influences.

Through 1950 costs have continued to rise faster than revenue for all newspapers—large and small, dailies and weeklies. There has been no abatement in failures or newspaper mergers which, since the latter part of 1948, have been occurring on the average of one a month among daily newspapers. Just how long newspapers can survive this battle of unprofitable publication is a matter for speculation. Some are already in the red. Consequently, any decline in revenue would be fatal. A score or so of daily newspapers could stand no more than a 5 per cent drop in advertising if costs remained at the 1949 level. A drop of 10 per cent would eliminate possibly 100 dailies and a loss of 20 per cent could destroy the whole industry.

How much publishers may increase their advertising rates depends naturally on how much advertisers will stand without decreasing their volume. Although publishers only several months ago decided that advertising rates could not be increased, they now have reversed their stand by querying their agencies and representatives on how much rates might be increased. They are thinking in terms of added income anywhere from 2½ per cent up to 10 per cent. About 26 per cent of the daily newspapers have already jumped their prices an average of 10 per cent, but whether they can retain their volume is still to be determined.

These appear to be stopgap measures, however, and have not diminished the efforts of publishers to analyze the reasons for their financial predicament. They have inspected their costs carefully, of course, and have discovered that one obvious difficulty continuously shows up: the amount of money involved and complexity of producing a newspaper physically. The printing department of newspapers unfailingly dramatizes itself in red on every ledger.

William M. Garth Jr., president of the Graphic Arts Research Foundation, Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts, stated in a talk recently that "We must first turn to the elements of the production process and study the cost relationship of composition, of plate making, of press operation and of the mail room to the total cost. This will locate for us the area that should be first attacked."

Since 1945 composing room costs have risen more than 100 per cent; stereotyping costs 90 per cent; photoengraving 90 per cent, and press room 70 per cent. One editor of a daily newspaper recently revealed that a pressman on his

newspaper was making \$16,000 a year, \$2,000 more than the editor.

Actually, the mechanical employees of newspapers are the highest paid workers in the country, with wages averaging 15 per cent more than any other like group. The backshop costs run 10 to 14 per cent higher than front shop expenses, although front shop employees are expected to be well-dressed, well-educated (usually with one college degree) and capable of adjusting themselves to extreme conditions of environment and enterprise.

At a recent meeting of mechanical employees in Buffalo, New York, James M. Cox, Jr., president of the Dayton (Ohio) *Journal Herald and News*, a victor in many a newspaper amalgamation battle declared:

"I have no quarrel with organized labor and I feel it has been one of the great contributing factors in giving our workers the highest standard of living in the world. However, there is a point beyond which demands and practices which threaten the existence of a business must be refused if we are to survive . . . we can't continue to raise advertising costs nor can we price ourselves out of the mass market by increasing circulation rates."

However, continuous high pressure by backshop unions for higher wages and increased benefits has resulted in a major reaction—a search for quicker, better and less expensive ways to produce a newspaper, a search that has been a long time coming. In fact the salvation of the newspaper industry rests upon the total discard of reproduction principles which date back five centuries, and acceptance of the photographic and electronic principles of 1950.

Nor are the unions solely to blame. To some extent it is the publishers who have kept the industry static through their lack of interest in technological development and simplification of printing methods. As Elzey Roberts, publisher of the St. Louis *Star-Times*, has stated:

"Some of the blame for this (technological) backwardness must rest on the many publishers who have been more interested in using newspapers for purposes other than as a public service and a private livelihood. Part of the blame must rest on the restrictive agreements between management and labor. But the consequence is that newspapering is technologically archaic. It stands on the brink of vast technological changes. Some of these changes are in the realm of photographic reproduction, others in the realm of electronics."

Certainly, there is sufficient evidence to point not only to vast technological changes but also toward the most successful era of newspaper publishing the country has ever known. It is a particularly hopeful situation for the publishers now operating weekly and small daily newspapers and for the young men and women seeking to enter

the business but lacking at this point the opportunity and capital for original investment.

Both publishers and the unions have stood by while persons outside the industry itself have invented, designed and in some instances have placed on the market various types of machines which have divorced printing from mechanical procedures and have established reproduction processes around photographic principles. There is also an obvious reluctance on the part of men trained in the centuries-old techniques of movable type to accept the new principles. As one printer expressed himself recently after observing the functioning of the new machines, "It just ain't type."

However, publishers in the past several years have pulled out of the lethargy that has so handicapped their thinking until this post-war period of spiraling costs. The American Newspaper Publishers Association has established a research division with its plant and headquarters in Easton, Pa., to conduct original research into quicker and cheaper methods of publishing and to cooperate with and encourage outside investigation and discovery. Under the guidance of C. M. Flint, the ANPA's research department has in the past several years accomplished amazing results.

It must be remembered that until within the last few years no fundamental changes in the principles of printing had been made since Gutenberg. The invention of the linotype by Ottmar Mergenthaler in 1886, the improvement of motorized presses and the development of stereotyping processes have not fundamentally altered Gutenberg's invention of movable type in 1450. They certainly have improved upon the principle that raised metal or wooden letters can by use of pressure leave their impressions on paper, but they have not altered the principle that type is fixed material dependent wholly upon mechanical procedures for its maximum use.

The change is coming swiftly. It is so far advanced that Mr. Flint told the daily newspaper publishers meeting in New York last spring that, "Relief offset . . . is well beyond the stage of an inventor's dream." Relief offset to which Mr. Flint refers is the use of metal plates, usually zinc, aluminum or magnesium, which have been etched by acid, then attached to an offset press. The press is called offset because it does not print directly from the plate, but from a rubber mat on which the plate has left its impression. Offset printing is so simple in concept and practice that a layman wonders why it hasn't been used before. Actually, offset machines have been available for years. Their use has been delayed by the fact that type still had to be set, then photoengraved, before it could be photographed on a plate for offset reproduction.

A number of inventions which eliminate typesetting in the process of making a printed page are either in the labora-

tory stage or are already on the market. The most publicized machine is the Higonnet-Mayroud photo-composing machine which is being perfected in the Graphic Arts Foundation laboratory in Cambridge, Mass. Vannevar Bush has affiliated himself with this revolutionary device which is based on both photographic and electronic principles. It has a keyboard much like that of a typewriter, occupies about as much space as an ordinary office desk and looks very much like one. Instead of setting type, it photographs images of type, enlarging or reducing them as the requirement might be, and preparing them for offset plate reproduction or any similar process.

Simply, the H-M photo-composing machine photographs the type characters and makes available the incredible number of 11,000 characters, differing in either size or description, in a single machine at one time. Type styles can be mixed at will. Point size can be mixed in the same line. corrections can easily be made at high speed.

The H-M photo-composing machine should be in use on a Boston area newspaper by the time this is published.

Since photographic principles are used, offset would be the most adaptable form of printing. But offset machines are unavailable in sizes large enough to handle the press run of a daily newspaper. In any case newspapers don't want to scrap their expensive presses. So, the ANPA's research division has developed a magnesium plate that can be etched in less than five minutes by a "vapor blast" process. The magnesium plate is backed up with metal on either a flat-bed or rotary press and scotch-taped to the press, and in a few minutes is ready to print. Thus the three-quarter of an hour photoengraving process has virtually been eliminated so far as newspapers are concerned.

Other devices are the Intertype Corporation's Fotosetter, the International Business Machine Corporation's electric typewriter, the DSJ composing machine which is an electric typewriter with changeable type faces, the new Lithotype produced by the Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation and many other products not yet on the market. The IBM, DSJ and Lithotype machines justify the type automatically and differ not at all in principle but differ in the manner in which fonts of type are employed. These three machines print from direct image and do not employ photographic principles. They all look like the electric typewriters which indeed they are.

The Fotosetter is only one step removed from the old type-casting machines, employing a camera instead of the metal-casting assemblies. It has retained the appearance of a type-casting machine and is only a little faster.

Of these various methods Mr. Flint of the ANPA has said, "These new composing methods will provide the economy required to make offset applicable to small newspaper production."

A number of weekly newspaper publishers have antici-

pated Mr. Flint by a year or so. Some of them have turned to the DSJ and offset to keep from going out of business. Others have adopted it for what it is—a simpler, less expensive production method. About 165 weekly newspapers now use offset production methods and only those published by persons unfamiliar with newspaper techniques, and in some instances with the possibilities of the machinery, have failed to profit. What has resulted in general is a smaller, more compact and more versatile newspaper. Pictures can be used liberally, since no photo-engraving need be employed for halftones or line etchings. Advertising can be changed or developed in any way the publisher or advertiser desires, since the engraving camera photographs anything that is placed before it, just as any camera will include any material in focus; the chemical bath will etch anything the camera picks up, and the offset press will reproduce anything that is etched.

Apparently the cost of going into business depends more on the initiative and willingness to work on the part of the persons involved than on actual cash. Two young men starting a year ago with \$200 capital are now publishing a successful weekly newspaper in the outskirts of Akron, Ohio. Two others are publishing a successful paper in the metropolitan area of Chicago after establishing their businesses with an investment of \$500. One of the country's outstanding editors, Basil L. Walters, executive editor of the John Knight newspapers (*Chicago Daily News*, *Miami Herald* and others), recently declared in *Quill* magazine:

"The cheering thing about these new production methods is that it is bringing back the day when an ambitious

young man with a shirt-tail full of type can actually start a newspaper of his own."

He also stated in his article that the next ten years will see the greatest changes in newspaper production that this country has ever known, opening a new way to variety and flexibility in the appearance of newspapers and of magazines as well. He included daily newspapers in his prediction of newspaper changes in the next ten years but stated the "number of large newspapers in America will constantly decrease." So in the end it is to the small dailies and weeklies we must look for a revitalized press freedom, greater opportunity, larger acceptance of community responsibility and improvement of newspaper content.

Exciting years are ahead in all areas of publishing—years of expansion and enterprise for newspapers that exist and the hundreds of newspapers that will be. Mr. Walters in his prophecy maintained:

"While the press of this nation today is by far the best in the history of the world and the best in the history of this nation, we shall look back upon the papers of today and regard them as Model 'T', good but outmoded.

"Many of the so-called giants of today will have disappeared. Those that disappear will have held too long to the past and failed to keep up with the times. They will be replaced by papers inspired by youthful ideas.

"We know now from actual demonstration and experience that new papers cannot be founded with money alone. Ideas, backed by the daring to risk untried fields, will provide the new papers of tomorrow."

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## Lawsuits in Russia

by William M. Pinkerton

JUSTICE IN RUSSIA, by Harold J. Berman, Harvard University Press, \$4.75.

A system of law and a system of "un-law" exist side by side in the Soviet Union, according to Harold J. Berman, Harvard law professor and associate of Harvard's Russian Research Center.

"Soviet law is always precarious; the secret police may step in at any time," writes Mr. Berman in a book, *Justice in Russia*, published by the Harvard University Press.

But where no question of political or "counterrevolutionary" crimes is involved, the Stalin regime in the past fifteen years has officially emphasized "stability of laws," based on Soviet Russian concepts of justice.

Although the Soviet rulers started out with the theory that law altogether is a capitalist bogey which would completely disappear in a socialist planned economy, Mr. Berman reports, Soviet courts now hear hundreds of thousands of lawsuits between industrial trusts, factories, and other state economic enterprises, as well as cases involving crimes, family matters, workers' grievances against management, personal property, and the like.

In his study of Soviet legal literature and court cases Mr. Berman was aided by Boris Konstantinovskiy, a former Russian lawyer now in America, who served as counsel for the Odessa Bread Trust for many years.

In explaining the Soviet "police state" and the Soviet "welfare state" as two sides of the same coin, Mr. Berman traces the sources of Soviet law to the requirements of a planned economy, to the pre-revolutionary Russian heritage, and to the Soviet concept of the individual as a child or youth to be educated and disciplined by the state.

"A Five-Year Plan may be a beautiful thing," he writes, "but it is not self-executing; and in its execution the very problems which socialist theory has sought to eliminate return to haunt the planners."

Bottlenecks of planning have "caused Soviet economists and lawyers to emphasize managerial responsibility and initiative, strong personal incentives both of reward and punishment, 'business account-

ability,' decentralization of operations. The parties are now government officials rather than private capitalists, but the questions which confront the courts are the same: Was there a contract? Was there offer and acceptance? Did the director act beyond the scope of his authority? Is a superfluous turbine basic capital or working capital within the meaning of a statute restricting the sale of basic capital?"

The Communist manager of a factory or trust has more legal worries than the threat of suit by another company, Mr. Berman reports.

"Under socialism," he says, "new economic crimes are created to protect socialist property, to prevent and punish negligence or wilful misconduct of state

business managers, to deter workers from tardiness or absenteeism. New 'official crimes' and 'crimes against the administrative order' provide sanctions against wilful or negligent breach of planning discipline by officials and administrators." Indeed, "criminal law is central to the whole Soviet legal system."

The "Restoration of Law" since the mid-1930's, a movement in which the present Soviet foreign minister Andrei Vyshinsky played a leading role, is linked by Mr. Berman with "the return to a sense of tradition, to Russian history, to patriotism." Instead of Communism swallowing up Russia, "today we see that Russia has swallowed up Communism."

"The Revolution is in process of settling down," he writes. "But this process is not an easy one. The first and the second phase of the Revolution are in conflict."

## In Praise Of Harvard

HARVARD. Four Centuries and Freedoms. By Charles A. Wagner. 326 pp. New York, E. P. Dutton & Co. \$5.00.

by H. I. Brock

You might think, after Samuel Eliot Morison had taken care of the matter, that little more need be done in the way of a history of Harvard. Yet Morison is a Harvard man from the beginning and by inheritance, and the attitude of all such Harvard men is touched with a spirit—or affectation—which treats their Alma Mater, however fondly, with a certain irreverence.

It is different with this author, who is a Harvard man only because he held a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard for a year. Mr. Wagner cherishes an admiration which has no reserve. He regards the institution as the well-spring and flowing river of all that is best in the cultural expression of this democracy. In that mood he tells the story from John Harvard and his gift of books to James Bryant Conant, now engaged in completing the transformation of a Massachusetts college into a university truly representative of all these United States.

The incorrigible spirit of criticism of what happens on the home lot—the old Yard and its broad extensions—has caused Harvard to wash its dirty linen in public

as few other American institutions of learning dare to do. This spirit springs, in our author's view, from the instinct of the rebel that created this nation, and it is that instinct, inherent and persistent, that gives to Harvard today distinction and keeps alive and enlarges its influence in all walks of American life.

Mr. Wagner, who is Sunday editor of the New York *Mirror*, teaches journalism at New York University, and is a prize-winning poet besides, has written a book in which the academic panorama of 400 years becomes a procession of affirmations of our fundamental freedoms. His enthusiasm pervades the whole, though criticism is by no means lacking when "Tory" tendencies crop out—as they do, sometimes, even at Harvard—and his industry and his interest have produced information, scenes and anecdotes which even Morison has omitted despite his industry.

Mr. Wagner's estimate of Harvard's last three great presidents is fair and generous, his admiration for Harvard's literary, scholastic and political luminaries is grateful and sincere. He has supplemented his text with pictures all the way from H. R. Shurtleff's sketch of the Yard, when cows still browsed there in 1638, to photographs of the great university city of today.

—N. Y. Times

# The Rackets That Menace Labor

by Sylvan Meyer

CRIME ON THE LABOR FRONT, by Malcolm Johnson, McGraw-Hill, N. Y. \$3.50. 243 pp.

The concise, emphatic reporting and the involved, painstaking research that won Malcolm Johnson the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for news writing bring to his book on labor crime a terrifying trustworthiness. This quiet and effective volume leaves no doubt that gangsterism in labor unions is a real threat to the union movement, even to the nation itself.

Johnson uses his prize-winning series on waterfront labor crimes in the New York *Sun* as a springboard for describing mob setups in other labor fields. When the *Sun* was purchased by the *World-Telegram*, Johnson's new employers, the International News Service, gave him a leave of absence to finish the book.

INS, I think, thereby made a genuine contribution to nationwide understanding of a terrible problem in organized labor, because Johnson, a native of my hometown of Gainesville, Ga., is more familiar with labor crime and particularly dock-front racketeering than any reporter in America and has done a workmanlike job of presenting what he knows.

An ardent supporter of organized labor, Johnson fears that the few corrupt unions will lead to increasingly stringent legislation against labor and to public distrust of the many honest unions. But since corruption begins in the lower echelons of hiring bosses and comes to a focus in the highest ranks of politics and industry, reforms have been few and difficult. Specific indictments are levied in the book against shipowners who have tolerated gangster control of docks and passed higher costs on to consumers; against politicians who have saved known racketeers with long prison records from further prosecution; against leaders in government, names we usually associate with "statesmen," who have contrived, either willingly or unconsciously, to rescue convicted criminals and aid their seizures of labor power.

Long before his present involvements with the law, Gambler Frank Costello, according to Johnson, worked hand in

glove with lieutenants of the Capone gang in grabbing control of the Building Elevator Employes' union in New York. This union knocked down hundreds of thousands of dollars from building owners to "protect" them from strikes, then hired out as strikebreakers when the workers walked off anyway.

Willie Bioff, a convicted labor racketeer, is revealed in all his despicable machinations as a graft artist in the movie industry from which he obtained a \$2,000,000 protection contract. He promised to keep projection machine operators on the job. The operators, of course, received nothing. Bioff later spilled the whole sordid tale of alliances with top executives of the picture industry to save themselves some profits.

Johnson explores union gangsterism in Philadelphia's Dock street market, in the Pittsburgh beer war. He reveals the fine, strong lines which tied together the far-flung Capone organization in a syndicate which did millions of dollars worth of business. These costs, naturally, were passed on to consumers also.

But it is in the story of New York's docks that Johnson hits his real stride. *Crime On the Labor Front*, had it been published in July, might have had an important effect on New York elections because former Mayor William O'Dwyer's suppression, when he was district attorney,

of his murder case against Anastasia (for which the Grand Jury severely rebuked him), and Governor Thomas Dewey's apparent knowledge without action of waterfront conditions, certainly suggest that both Democrats and Republicans in high places might have done more toward reform than they attempted.

For once, it is clearly established that the press, New York's newspapers particularly, did just about everything the printed word can do to break up labor racketeering. Johnson's own paper, and others as well, screamed, supplicated, editorialized about conditions which were breeding poverty, murder and corruption. The story was made clear to public and politicians alike.

The finger points toward politics and labor leaders. William Green, president of the AFL, is charged with condoning, at the very least, the operations of such gangsters as George Scalise and George E. Browne. Both men were later convicted by Dewey and sentenced to prison.

Johnson's book is a straight, factual presentation, unemotional as a court record, of labor crime in the theaters he has chosen. It seems to me essential reading for anyone covering labor, required reading for public understanding of a dangerous situation, and tangible evidence of great reporting skill combined with endless perseverance and a talent for getting at hidden facts.

## The Pace of Reform

by Edwin O. Guthman

THE AMERICAN AS REFORMER, by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, \$2.25. 96 pp.

Newspapermen, who have wondered whether McCarthyism has had parallels in American history, will find thoughtful reading in Professor Schlesinger's compact study of the stresses and strains of American reform movements.

The material is presented in three essays. The first looks at the historical factors from which American reform derived its impulses and enduring vitality. The second uses the anti-slavery movement as a study of methods which forward-looking men and women use to put a reform into

effect. The third probes into the rooted objections to reform and with the stage thus set, Professor Schlesinger analyzes present-day dangers to democratic traditions under which the would-be reformer always has had his day in court to criticize, protest and advocate unpopular causes.

Until very recent times, the United States nearly always set the pace for the Old World in reform. Americans have avoided excessive measures and have preferred to achieve reform gradually. This, plus the fact that two World Wars have driven Europe to extreme actions, has given the United States the reputation abroad of being the last stronghold of conserva-

## Merk On the Oregon Question

by Malcolm Bauer

ALBERT GALLATIN AND THE OREGON PROBLEM. By Frederick Merk, Harvard University Press, Cambridge. \$2.50. 93 pp.

This little book is an important event—an original consideration of an obscure chapter in the history of the West written by the day's foremost scholar in that field.

Professor Merk deals with the negotiations which resulted in 1827 in the renewal of the British-American convention for the settlement of the Oregon Country. The book is a continuation of the author's detailed examination of the Oregon problem, earlier phases of which he has set forth within recent months in two papers: "The Genesis of the Oregon Question" and "The Ghost River Caledonia in the Oregon Negotiation of 1818."

Because the 1826-27 discussions were inconclusive, they have received little, if any, mention in standard texts. And Albert Gallatin is a name too little known, especially in the West. Professor Merk throws light on both subjects.

Gallatin's role was that of conciliator between the extreme and adamant attitudes represented in the United States by John Quincy Adams, then president, and in Great Britain by George Canning, the foreign minister. It seems clear from Professor Merk's conclusions that Gallatin's adroit diplomacy can be thanked for maintaining the peaceful, if ambiguous, situation following upon 1827. And in the next two decades American settlement made certain a final solution both peaceable and favorable to the United States.

Had American extremists pressed their point in 1827, the British may well have felt obliged to take military possession of what is now the state of Washington, thus sealing their claim to the rich triangle that was the only real point of contention.

Here Mr. Merk points up a moral of current significance: "I have conceived of it (Gallatin's negotiations) as a case study, a chapter in the history of the greatest problem facing mankind, the maintenance of peace among nations."

Gallatin accomplished his patriotic task in spite of, or perhaps because of his view—common to many at that time—that

tism. Professor Schlesinger shows, however, that the spirit of reform is as alive as ever here and that Americans will continue to make haste slowly until events demonstrate the failure of this method.

The tactics of smearing, distortion and fear are as old as the United States itself and are undoubtedly effective. Professor Schlesinger's thesis is that they endanger and insult the nation.

"No one," he writes, "not even (ex-President) Hoover believes that the basic idea of the welfare state is at stake; but questions of how and when and where the concept should be applied are. How fast and far should we go? How much can we afford without draining the financial sources of support? At what point will the government's intervention sap individual initiative and independence? . . . These are matters that require the most searching and objective examination. They cannot be wisely decided by verbal pyrotechnics that merely confuse the issue."

Professor Schlesinger decries the cloak-ing of bigotry and suppression under appeals of "Americanism," another old custom of our land. He writes:

"To the historian such fevers and fears evidence a sorry lack of faith in American ideals and in the capacity of free institutions to command the people's continuing confidence and allegiance. Communism is a world threat. It is a cruel hoax which has tricked and coerced millions of confused and hungry men into trading their hope of liberty for a police tyranny. . . . In our detestation of Communism we must not, however, do irreparable harm to our American heritage of freedom. Abhorring authoritarianism, we must not substitute an authoritarianism of our own, match repression with repression, and become like the thing we loathe."

The book grew out of a series of lectures which Professor Schlesinger gave last spring at Pomona College, Claremont, Calif., sponsored by the Haynes Foundation of Los Angeles. Some may wish that in expanding the lectures for publication, Professor Schlesinger had presented his material in greater detail. This is the first book dealing expressly with the reform spirit. Professor Schlesinger has sought to stimulate others to gain an understanding of how and why our institutions have changed from generation to generation and will continue to do so.

the Oregon country would never become a part of the United States because of its distance from the seat of government. He acted upon his conviction that the country must be kept free of European colonization.

It must not be supposed that Gallatin was an appeaser. Too often these days that is the epithet directed at any diplomat suspected of lack of diligence in promoting to the extreme what at the moment seems to be the national interest. Gallatin's accomplishment in gaining by peaceful means what the nation may not have been able to gain by war is a reassurance that the way of peace is the best way.

Also of interest to 20th century readers is the reminder that diplomacy of a century and more ago operated under severe time handicaps. Gallatin referred to his home government an important issue in December, 1826, and did not receive the reply from across the ocean until March, 1827. The answer was not actually delivered to the British negotiators until May, five months after the formulation of the question.

Currently it is often an inconvenience at Lake Success if a United Nations delegate from the other side of the world is obliged to wait overnight for a ruling from his government.

New to many who must rely upon a schoolbook knowledge of the Monroe Doctrine is the revelation of the important application of the doctrine in the Oregon question. Only three years old at the time of the negotiations, Monroe's pronouncement was a fresh and important weapon in the hands of American diplomacy and, in these negotiations, recognized as such.

Oregon historians will not be surprised to read that the difficulty of the passage of the bar at the mouth of the Columbia river played an important role in the consideration of the Oregon problem; but Columbia river chambers of commerce will probably wince at the repeated mention of the obstacle in Mr. Merk's book. They can take comfort, however, in the fact that improvements have long since removed this discouragement to Columbia river trade.

# THE TRUMAN STORY

by John Hulteng

THE MAN OF INDEPENDENCE, by Jonathan Daniels; 370 pages; Lippincott; \$3.75.

Jonathan Daniels made front pages throughout the country with his biography *The Man of Independence*—and the placement was appropriate in more ways than one. For Mr. Daniels is a newspaperman himself, and his book is more an exhaustive reporting job than a portrait in depth.

But of course the front page space on publication day was earned by the collection of pungent Truman quotes with which the latter half of the book is studied. Most of them had received little if any publicity up to that time, and they stirred up a first-class fuss in Washington and elsewhere—notably South Carolina, where Jimmy Byrnes reacted with peppery promptness to the news that Truman had said he “failed miserably as Secretary of State” and “lost his nerve at Moscow.”

Though some of these quotes may still be reverberating around the cloakrooms of Washington, most of them have been forgotten in the press of larger events. It would be unkind to suggest that Mr. Daniels' book may suffer a similar fate on the literary scene, but the temptation is there.

For *Man of Independence* is neither a great nor a definitive biography of Harry S. Truman. The President was not running for office this year; so it could not be described accurately as a campaign biography. It resembles one, however, in its frankly partisan bias and its careful glorification of the Truman life story as the “design for democracy” and its depiction of the man of Independence (Mo.) as a personification of “the American direction through our times.” Mr. Truman himself would likely reject such phrases, even after five years in the heady atmosphere of the presidency. For Mr. Truman is an honest man.

And it would not have been necessary to build a halo around the Truman story. It is an interesting and satisfyingly dramatic chronicle on its own—some of its details thoroughly familiar but many of them revealed to the national public for the first time in the Daniels biography.

Everyone knows, for example, that the President once lost his shirt as a Kansas City haberdasher. But certainly fewer were aware that he was a sure-enough farm boy in his early years (he could “plant the straightest row of corn in the whole country”); that he once nearly joined the Ku Klux Klan for political purposes; that he invested (and lost) \$7500 in a zinc mine; and that in 1917, just before he went off to war, he and his partners just missed bringing in a fabulous oil strike that would have made them all wealthy—and probably turned them into Republicans to boot.

Captain Truman's war record is known in outline, but Mr. Daniels has filled in some details of his rise from the ranks of the Missouri National Guard, and some anecdotes that well reveal the courage no one now denies Harry Truman possesses.

There's the story, for example, of an evening barrage in the Vosges mountains. Under combined high explosive and gas shell fire from the Germans, Truman's Battery D of the 129th Field Artillery broke and ran in confusion when an unnamed sergeant hollered: “Run, boys, they got a bracket on us!” At that point Harry Truman got to his feet in the midst of the barrage and lit into his boys with the bluest streak of Missouri profanity that had ever rattled the leaves of that ancient forest. And “pretty soon,” says a grim but reminiscent Truman, “they came sneaking back.”

The war experience built the friendships upon which Truman's political career was founded. One war buddy was Lt. Jim Pendergast, son of Mike and nephew of old Tom Pendergast himself. And it was big Mike, boss of the old “Bloody Tenth” ward in Kansas City, who rolled into Harry Truman's all-but-bankrupt haberdashery in 1922 with the query: “How'd you like to be county judge?”

Mr. Daniels makes no effort to ignore the facts of Harry Truman's relationship with the Pendergast machine, but he tries again and again to underscore two points: Truman was never asked to do anything dishonest; and it was Pendergast who

sought out Truman for the several posts he helped him to, not the other way around.

There is much in the record to support the assertion as to Truman's honesty, both before and after Pendergast. Even the President's enemies will concede a good deal on that score. But Mr. Daniels touches only fleetingly and unsatisfactorily on one feature of Truman's political personality that dates from the Pendergast days and persists to this moment. His motivations are often those of the ward leader, bred in the paternalistic traditions of the bosses, whose test of loyalty was the deliverance of so many votes on order and whose sense of obligation to their followers was satisfied in terms of scuttles of coal and patronage plums. This explains the “cronyism” that infected the earlier years of the Truman administration particularly, and accounts for the masterly grasp of grassroots politics that upset all the pollsters and experts in 1948.

More than half of Mr. Daniels' book deals, naturally enough, with the last decade. There is a great deal of detail about the Truman Senate campaigns, particularly the nip-and-tuck battle of 1940 during which the magic Roosevelt approval seemed to be reserved for Truman's opponent, Governor Stark—though, as was often the case with Roosevelt indorsements, no one could be quite sure which candidate he was backing.

There are some fascinating glimpses of the enormously complicated maneuvering that preceded Truman's nomination for the vice-presidency, bringing out again that the Missouri senator had not been a Roosevelt fair-haired boy up to that time, although Truman himself had been thinking about the nomination and the shadow of the presidency that everyone on the inside knew lay over the office in those days.

Then the terrifying immensity of that April evening in the White House when the chief usher solemnly intoned, “President and Mrs. Truman, Mrs. Roosevelt.” Frightened, humble Harry Truman had assumed the most powerful office in the world.

The much-publicized quotes throw new light on the familiar events of the presidential years, as well as on the Truman character. The President emerges more

and more as a relatively uncomplicated personality, a man deeply bred in the philosophy and loyalties of the politician, and one heavily dependent, but not in a servile sense, on the advisers around him.

Mr. Daniels has written well, entertainingly and informatively, even if he has not said the last word on Harry Truman. Certainly he must know what he is

talking about—as presidential assistant to both Roosevelt and Truman he was on the inside at Washington for many years. And his family background (his father, Josephus Daniels, served Cleveland, Wilson and FDR) admirably qualifies him to comment on the direction of Democratic Party growth during the era covered by the Truman life story.

Bowles turned his talents to other directions. The author notes that his diverse enterprises during the *Republican's* crisis years included, "a neon sign company, a trucking company, a magazine printing plant, a tack manufacturing company, a hotel, a chain of restaurants, a local air line, two railroads and real estate in Springfield." All this time he held at least veto power when not exercising actual managerial control over the *Republican*. On the newspaper side, he turned his first attention to a new one-cent afternoon paper, the *Daily News*, which he soon bought and developed in circulation, and let the *Republican* go its own way, combining only the press work of the two papers and offering an optional combination of advertising rate to meet the combination of the morning and evening Springfield *Union*. When the rival *Union* in 1922 opened a price war, coming down to one cent, Bowles fought them to a standstill and ended by buying both. This four-way newspaper monopoly was achieved in 1926 when such a situation was still a novelty. As the paper of least circulation among the four, the *Republican* may, from a post-mortem analysis, have been doomed to extinction from the start. But at first it appeared to many, if not perhaps to Bowles himself, that the arrangement was insurance for the continuance of the *Republican*. Bowles kept the four papers going under their separate editorships and editorial policies for 20 years. It was very generally said that he did this to keep out competition. He exploited the single control to sell a single "package" to advertisers and later to secure the economies of a single press operation.

At what time Bowles determined to let the *Republican* die is not disclosed. For more than a decade before its end, key men were not replaced as they died or retired and no apparent effort was made to keep its circulation from sliding gradually to Bowles' other papers. He appeared to be merely letting it finish out the span of the men who were editing it when he came into control. To an entrepreneur of his varied interests, that might have seemed its natural span. The author very fairly observes that the readers may be said to have made the choice that Bowles merely ratified. It is generally to be expected, however, that management will exert such

## The End of a Newspaper

THE PASSING OF THE SPRINGFIELD REPUBLICAN, by John J. Scanlon, Amherst College, \$2.00, 82 pp.

In a day that has seen the passing of so many distinguished newspapers, no special obsequies are indicated for the Springfield *Republican*, now four years dead, even though it may have been more missed than most. This very compact, readable and practical book traces the grim economic factors in the decline and demise of the *Republican* after 120 years. The fact that these are for the most part circumstances that have been multiplied by many instances in this period of newspaper consolidations and eliminations only makes the study more valuable as a case history, and very revealing to the newspaper reader. The *Republican's* case was more than ordinarily interesting, quite aside from the exceptional character of vigorous independence and sensible, informed writing that distinguished it to the end. It had been published through four generations by the same family, which is still in the newspaper business. This suggests something more than economics in the passing of the *Republican*. Indeed the author has to deal with a more enigmatic problem in the inscrutable individuality of Sherman Bowles, the *Republican's* last publisher.

Mr. Scanlon traces the final three decades through a price war, a resulting merger and two disastrous strikes. Sherman Bowles was a key figure in all these crucial events. He was 25 when he came into his heritage on the death of the third Samuel Bowles. He later bought and developed a second paper, then acquired two more, to gain a monopoly in Springfield. He has reduced the number to two and in the process of acquisition and extinction the paper of his heritage ceased to exist.

Springfield now has one morning and one evening paper, like many another city, and neither surviving paper has the distinction of the old *Republican*.

Things were not going too well with the *Republican* when Sherman Bowles returned to Springfield in 1915 from a journalistic apprenticeship in Philadelphia, aged 25. For all its editorial quality, the old *Republican* was not keeping up with the changing fashion in newspaper making. Its entire front page was still given over to small ads. Its price was three cents. It lagged in sports and disdained comics. It was often beaten on local news and was losing circulation to its local rivals. For similar causes other great newspapers had fallen upon similar crises, notably the New York *Times* and the London *Times*. Both these papers had the fortune to find new leadership with vigor to pilot them through their crises to new periods of greatness without loss of character. Not so the *Republican*. Its editors were the equal in quality and sturdy character to the New York *Times'* Charles Miller or to London's Buckle. But it needed a modern business man and news manager. Bowles himself has said that he found any changes he suggested at 25 "were not especially welcomed by staff, subscribers or advertisers." By hindsight, that may be the most important commentary now to be made on the course of the *Republican*. Whether its fate might have been changed had Bowles not been initially rebuffed the author does not conjecture. But a reader is bound to wonder whether Bowles' own marked idiosyncrasies of stubborn individualism, had circumstances channeled them to single-minded devotion to saving the *Republican*, might not have been the very force needed to sustain its own rugged independence.

But as matters stood in 1915, Sherman

influence as it can upon such choices. Had the author been a psychologist instead of an economist, it might have been profitable to seek an explanation in the complex character of Sherman Bowles. He may conceivably have preferred to see the paper of his forebears end its life with its character unchanged to making such changes as he may have felt inevitable for its survival. Sentiment is not, however, a factor that anybody would be inclined to push with Bowles, and the author had at one time worked for him. The only explanation offered by Bowles for letting the daily die in 1946 was that its great editor, Waldq Cook, then 82, chose that time to retire, "and could not be replaced." Mr. Scanlon does not accept that explanation as adequate. The time, significantly, that Mr. Cook chose to retire was at the start of the second wracking strike that had aligned Bowles against his employees in the last years of the *Republican*. Bowles weathered both. Mr. Scanlon has done as much as anyone could to trace the facts of these two very complicated and disturbing strikes that were major disasters to Springfield, one leaving it newsless for five months. They did not increase the community's satisfaction over Sherman Bowles' news monopoly. From each strike he appeared to emerge the only winner. From the 1935 strike he won elimination in his shop of the Typographical union. From the 1946 strike he won elimination of two of the four newspapers to leave him a single morning and single evening publication without competition. A strong attempt to start a newspaper to compete with Bowles' monopoly was launched during the 1946 strike and it failed for lack of newsprint supply after 17,000 subscription pledges had been obtained by Roger Putnam, a leading industrialist of Springfield. Whether the Bowles monopoly had any relation to Putnam's failure to find a newsprint supply, this study does not show. But the fact that a rich and able leading citizen was unable to start a competing newspaper with the support of a substantial part of the community that had been twice put through a news famine, is a significant fact in a case study of a monopoly.

Mr. Scanlon states that he sought Sherman Bowles' help on many of the unanswered questions of this study and got

from him in all 20 pages of statements. It is too bad that he didn't publish it all, for it seems to have been more than anybody else ever got out of the laconic publisher, including the Federal district court in Boston and the National Labor Board, both of which had him up for violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Neither was able to unravel the complex structure of ownership of the papers and Bowles was very little help to them. He told the court that ownership of the papers was "a moot question" and described to the Board his own relation to the papers as "just a fellow walking around the floor."

## Something Is Lost

Much more needs to be done—by the newspaper industry itself as well as by Congress—to halt the trend toward consolidation and concentration of ownership in the American press. A thorough study of the present situation and the conditions which created it is essential before any program of action can be undertaken, either by Congress or by the publishers themselves. Particularly, there is a need for a study to determine whether concentration and consolidation are "inevitable," as some publishers contend, or whether smaller and more diversified newspapers are economically feasible and socially desirable. There is also a need for a study to determine what means can be taken to incur greater ease of entry into the publishing business. It is possible that technology may point the way toward lower investment requirements, cheaper production costs, and more abundant supplies of newsprint.

There is ample cause for concern, and little reason for complacency, in the present situation. In a democratic society, the widest possible dissemination of information and opinion, from diverse and even antagonistic sources, is essential to the welfare of the public. But consolidation is drying up the once-numerous sources of news, and monopoly is destroying diversity. In a very real sense, democracy itself is being weakened in the process. In the words of Senator Murray, "with each disappearance of a competitive local newspaper, some vital part of democracy is lost."

—John J. Scanlon: *The Passing of the Springfield Republican*.

That Amherst College should publish a book on newspaper economics is due to the lucky accident that John Scanlon chose this subject for an honors thesis and it was judged the best of 1949 by the Alumni Visiting Committee of the Economics Department, which provided for publication. These circumstances give us a more strategic study into the vital journalistic issue of our times than any done, so far as I know, by all the Schools of Journalism since Sherman Bowles began to exercise his fateful custody over the *Springfield Republican* in 1915.

—Louis M. Lyons

## Our Reviewers

Sylvan Meyer is editor of the Gainesville (Ga.) *Times*, now on a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard.

William M. Pinkerton is director of the Harvard News Office. Former AP writer, he was a Nieman Fellow in 1941.

Malcolm Bauer is city editor of the Portland *Oregonian*, now a Nieman Fellow.

Edwin O. Guthman is on a Nieman Fellowship from the Seattle *Times*, where last year he won the Pulitzer prize for reporting.

John L. Hulteng is an editorial writer on the Providence *Journal*, was a Nieman Fellow last year.

## Special Issue

As long as they last, copies of the Special Issue of *Nieman Reports* for April 1950, on "Reading, Writing and Newspapers," may be ordered at 50 cents a copy or at 35 cents each in orders of ten or more.

# Nieman Notes

1939

Immediately after the tragic death of **John McLane Clark** November 26th, the municipal swimming pool in Claremont, N. H., which he initiated and promoted through his paper, was named as a memorial to him. His associates are completing the fund raising for the pool. A contribution was made by the Nieman Fellows of his year. Contributions may be sent to the Claremont *Eagle*. The staff of the *Eagle* and John Clark's many friends welcomed the announcement that his widow, Rhoda Shaw Clark, will carry on the paper as publisher.

Since the merger of the Birmingham *Post* with the *Age-Herald*, **Osborn Zuber** has been serving the new *Post-Herald* as political and editorial writer, as he did the old *Post*. He reports that his daughter, Jane, who entered the first grade in Cambridge during his year as a Nieman Fellow, is a freshman now at Agnes Scott College, in Decatur, Georgia.

**Frank S. Hopkins** returned in December from six weeks in Europe planning training programs for State Department personnel.

**Irving Dilliard**, editor of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* and **Louis M. Lyons** had a small Nieman reunion in Miami during the convention there of Sigma Delta Chi. Dilliard is a past president. Lyons was a speaker.

1940

**Weldon B. James** is on active service with the Marines, on leave from the editorial page of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*. His address: Information Department, U. S. Marines Headquarters, Washington 15, D. C.

1941

**George Chaplin** was made editor of the New Orleans *Item* in November succeeding Clayton Fritchey, who resigned to take charge of public information of the Department of Defense. Chaplin moved up from managing editor.

1943

One of the five Reid Foundation Fellowships for 1951 for travel and study abroad, was awarded to **John F. Day**,

Washington correspondent of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*. Day proposes to study the current problems of western defense in Europe, including the issue of re-arming western Germany and the operations of the Marshall Plan. Ogden Reid, late publisher of the New York *Herald Tribune*, established the fellowships. The first awards were made a year ago to three newspapermen.

The *Courier-Journal* moved **Edward Edstrom**, a Nieman Fellow in 1945, to Washington in Day's absence.

1944

**Lawrence A. Fernsworth** has recovered from a very serious illness that hospitalized him in November, and has been recuperating on his farm in Warner, N. H.

1945

**David E. Botter, Jr.**, became managing editor of the magazine, *Quick*, in November, moving up to New York from the Washington bureau of the *Dallas News*.

E. P. Dutton & Co. published a history of Harvard by **Charles A. Wagner** in November: *Harvard: Four Centuries and Freedoms*. Its review in the New York *Times* is carried in this issue. Wagner had worked on it over the past two years in addition to his newspaper work. He dedicated the book to his son Carl, a sophomore at Harvard.

**William H. Clark** withdrew as editor of *Horticulture* in November and moved to Randolph, Vermont, where he is continuing the free-lance writing that has been his principal activity for many years. "Three books to do and for once plenty of time," he writes.

**A. B. Guthrie, Jr.**, author of *The Big Sky* and *The Way West*, spoke on the Harvard Law School Forum in Cambridge, Nov. 17 and met the current Nieman Fellows in a group discussion the 18th. The New York *Times* led its book review section of Dec. 3 with an article by Guthrie on "Fiction—With a Hold on History."

1946

**Arthur W. Hepner** has joined the staff of the **Stephen E. Fitzgerald** Company, 502 Park Ave., New York. Fitzgerald, a

Nieman Fellow in 1940, has expanded his public relations firm, by opening a Washington office with Jay Richter as its director.

1947

**Paul L. Evans** became director of the journalism department at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio, this Fall, resigning as executive editor of the Mitchell (S. D.) *Daily Republic*.

**Ernest H. Linford**, editorial writer on the Salt Lake *Tribune*, and **Dwight E. Sargent**, editor of the Portland *Press Herald*, a Nieman Fellow this year, were both elected to the Board of the National Conference of Editorial Writers at its meeting in Des Moines, Nov. 15-18. Both participated in the "clinic" for criticism of editorial pages.

1948

**Robert M. Shaplen** set out December 1 on a new assignment to Asia as the Far Eastern member of a writing team on foreign affairs for *Collier's*. The other two members, both experienced correspondents in Europe, are Seymour Freidin and William Attwood. They are also joining in producing a three times a week column for a group of newspapers that includes the San Francisco *Chronicle*, New York *Post*, Milwaukee *Journal*, Arkansas *Gazette*, St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, Denver *Post* and Philadelphia *Bulletin*. Jan. 1 is the starting date of the column. Shaplen served in the Far East during the last war for *Newsweek* and wrote *A Corner of the World*, a book of short stories, against the background of that experience. Other Nieman Fellows covering the struggle in Asia are **Robert C. Miller** of the United Press, a war correspondent in Korea, **Tillman Durdin** of the New York *Times* in Indo-China, and **Christopher Rand** of the New York *Herald Tribune* in Tokyo.

**Rebecca Gross**, editor of the Lock Haven (Pa.) *Express* served as a Pennsylvania delegate to the mid-century White House conference on child welfare, by appointment of Gov. Duff.

1950

**Robert Hoover Stucky** was born Oct. 1, to Mr. and Mrs. **William McD. Stucky** in Lexington, Ky., where his father is back on the job of executive editor of the Lexington *Leader*.

# John McLane Clark

Dec. 13, 1910 — Nov. 26, 1950

The tragic drowning accident that took the life of John McLane Clark on November 26 cost New England journalism one of its finest and ablest young publishers and the Nieman Foundation one of its first Fellows and most devoted and valued friends. He was a member of the Council of former Nieman Fellows that served as the editorial board of *Nieman Reports* and was a member of the selecting committee that chose the Fellows of 1949-50. He had published the Claremont (N. H.) *Daily Eagle* for the past three years and had won a warm place in Claremont for his conspicuous devotion to the building of a good newspaper and to the interests of his adopted community. It was welcome news in Claremont and among John Clark's great circle of friends that his wife, Rhoda, is to carry on the publishing of the paper to which he had devoted his whole strength and fine talent and high principles. She will bring up their five children in the big rambling old house in the center of the town that had already accepted John Clark as one of its leading and most public spirited citizens.

The Sugar River that curls a quarter mile behind the Clark house had flooded in the great storm of that week end and covered the fields and adjacent park right up to their back door. Sunday was a fine day after the rains. The Clark children asked to go out in their canoe on the inviting expanse of the temporary lake. Their father took the three older children, Linda 12, Alexander 10, and Winfield 7. They had reconnoitered the flooded land for half an hour when they were caught in the swift current of the river and the canoe overturned. John and little Winfield went down. The older children were able to hold to the canoe, and Linda pulled her small brother to it when he came up. John, evidently stunned by the plunge into the freezing water, never came up. His body was recovered two days later. The children, though carried downstream in the surging current, were able to touch bottom some distance below, and to hold on until picked up by members of the fire department after half an hour in the

water. They recovered after a night in the hospital.

Five hundred people overflowed the Trinity Episcopal Church in a memorial service on the 29th. These included the Governor of New Hampshire whom John had served on a State reorganization commission, and the President of Dartmouth College, whom John had helped to set up the "Great Issues" course in 1947, and many friends from many places, but chiefly the neighbors and friends of Claremont, and the staff of his paper. A more enduring memorial will be the community swimming pool which John Clark had promoted and developed to meet a major need of the town. It had been nearly completed but some funds remained to be raised to which his friends immediately started memorial contributions.

Besides his immediate family, John is survived by his mother, Mrs. John A. Clark of New Canaan, Conn., and a brother, Alexander, director of the Harvard College placement office. Their grandfather, John McLane, was a former governor of New Hampshire.

John Clark was 39. Born in Evanston, Ill., Dec. 13, 1910, he prepared for college at St. Paul's School, Concord, N. H., and was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1932. He was editor of *The Dartmouth* and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and was selected his final year as one of the first group of "senior fellows," the highest scholastic honor at Dartmouth.

Right out of college he began publishing a weekly newspaper in New Canaan, Conn., but after a year as publisher joined the staff of the *Washington Post* as an editorial writer. He had served there four years when the Nieman Fellowships were established at Harvard in 1938 under the bequest of Agnes Wahl Nieman. John Clark was one of 309 applicants considered by a selecting committee of Walter Lippmann, John Stewart Bryan and Elbery Sedgwick, and one of the nine they selected as the first group of Nieman Fellows for the college year 1938-39.

His principal study at Harvard was in

Latin American affairs and he aimed at a career as a newspaper correspondent in South America. But in the absence of newspaper interest in that area, he became executive assistant to John Winant in setting up the Havana Conference of 1940 for the International Labor Office. He served with Winant later in Geneva and in South America. When the Office of Inter-American Affairs was set up, Nelson Rockefeller brought Clark into it as one of its key men. After the United States got into the war, Clark enlisted in the Army, was taken into the Office of Strategic Services, won a commission and served in Europe.

With the end of the war, he was determined to publish a newspaper and spent many months raising funds and organizing a group that sought to buy the *Manchester Union* from the estate of Col. Frank Knox. That failing, he sought other newspaper opportunities and meantime served a year as assistant to his old Dartmouth classmate, John Sloan Dickey, president of Dartmouth. His principal activity in his year with Dickey was in the organization of the new "Great Issues" course to acquaint Dartmouth seniors with the contemporary issues which as citizens they would face.

He purchased the Claremont *Daily Eagle* Dec. 20, 1947, and took charge of it Feb. 10, 1948. He brought to it a sure sense of sound journalism and a courageous and progressive editorial direction. His strategic place in the city brought him into all its most active civic groups. He found time last year to make more than 40 talks about the State in support of the reorganization plan for the State Government which he had helped to shape as a member of a State commission. When former Nieman Fellows formed an alumni organization in 1946, John Clark was elected to the Council as representative of the first group of Fellows. He joined in establishing *Nieman Reports* and served throughout on the Council which made its editorial board. President James B. Conant of Harvard appointed him in 1949 to the selecting committee to choose the Nieman

Fellows of that year. One of those chosen was Melvin Wax of the Rutland *Herald*, who had begun his newspaper work on the Claremont *Eagle*. At the end of Wax's fellowship at Harvard, John Clark hired him as managing editor of the *Eagle*, where Melvin Wax continues to serve the paper under Mrs. Clark.

## John McLane Clark

The tragic mishap which took the life of the *Daily Eagle's* publisher here Sunday afternoon, stunning in its immediate impact upon his family, came as a shock to the entire Twin State Valley. His death represents a distinct loss, not only to Claremont and this area, but to the newspaper profession as a whole.

John McLane Clark, in his term of less than three years as publisher of the *Daily Eagle*, had made his mark as an editor of strong convictions and the courage to make them known. He did not hesitate to defend what he believed right, or to attack what he believed wrong. Even those who might disagree with his viewpoints had no doubt as to his sincerity.

One of his editorial innovations which proved most popular was his "Conversation Piece" discussion of current problems by the editor and the "man on a park bench." Another was his "Journal of a Johnny-Come-Lately," in which each Saturday he sketched in diary form his week's activities and his reactions to current happenings.

From his first weeks in Claremont he threw himself whole-heartedly into projects for community betterment. Best known were his untiring efforts in promoting Claremont's outdoor swimming pool. To many other worthy causes—the dental fluorine program, the community-wide chest clinic, the Community Chest, the United Church Canvass, solicitation of new industries, expanded mercantile facilities—he gave editorial support, and personal support as well.

But his interests were more than city-

The tributes from the Washington *Post* and the Claremont *Eagle*, the two papers that he served, say something of what was in the hearts of the Nieman Fellows and many other friends who were shocked by the untimely loss of one of the finest of newspapermen.

## . . . . A Tribute

wide. They were concerned also with better state government, as witness the time and effort he gave to sessions of the Reorganization Commission and allied activities. They were concerned with cleaner politics. They were concerned with national and international affairs, for which his background and experience provided authoritative interpretation.

His personal interests ranged from his family circle to outdoor sports and activities, and from new food recipes to Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. But his chief interest lay in the varied members of the human race. He had the rare talent of making friends everywhere, and of retaining those friendships; his "Journal" was replete, week after week, with names of acquaintances far and near, and with messages from those even farther distant.

John McLane Clark will be sadly missed, not only by his immediate family, but by these thousands of friends and acquaintances. And close to the top of the latter list belong all of us who, for nearly three years, have worked with him on the *Daily Eagle*. He was a good boss, a good newspaperman, a good friend. We miss him, too.

K. D. W.

—Claremont *Daily Eagle*, Nov. 28.

## Mrs. Clark Becomes Publisher of Claremont *Daily Eagle*

Mrs. John McLane Clark today announced that she intends to carry on the publication of the *Daily Eagle*. Her name appears in the masthead of the paper for the first time today as publisher.

Mrs. Clark, in making the announcement, said, "I will make every effort to see that the policies and principles my

## An Editorial

John M. Clark

John McLane Clark, editor and publisher of the Claremont, N. H., *Daily Eagle*, was one of those young men of spirit and courage who turned to small town newspaper ownership after the war with the view of bringing to the business a dedication to public service.

He had already made his mark in his home state. This newspaper had been watching his career with peculiar interest because, in a sense, he was one of its graduates. Coming to the Washington *Post* soon after leaving Dartmouth he served as a reporter, then as an editorial writer. While here he won a Nieman Fellowship, and after serving the government in and out of uniform for several years, bought an interest in the newspaper at Claremont. He made it a sturdy upholder of good government. His work trod on many toes that deserved to be trodden upon, and there was an effort to put him out of business, but in vain.

New Hampshire, where newspapering has lately become unsavory, will miss him. A tragic mishap cut short his career just as he was hitting his stride. He was teaching his young children how to manage a boat when the high wind of last week end swept it into a nearby river in full surge. The children were miraculously saved but Mr. Clark was carried away. He will be remembered by his old colleagues here as a man of character and ideals as well as a capable and conscientious craftsman.

—The Washington *Post*, Nov. 28.

husband stood for will continue to find expression in the columns of the *Daily Eagle*. I hope that the readers of the newspaper will retain their loyalty for it and that the employes of the paper will continue the same high standards they observed for my husband."

—Claremont *Daily Eagle*, November 30.

## Nieman Scrapbook

### Regrets, With Explanation

**The chief editorial writer of a leading newspaper read this letter to his colleagues at a session of the National Conference of Editorial Writers. When all demanded copies, he asked only that they leave out names.**

In declining your offer, which I feel I must do, I am going to state my reasons rather fully. . . . Not long ago I had to decline an offer to write editorials for the *Country Gentleman*, and in doing so I told Pickett about what I shall tell you. The American editorial is a dead fish on the beach, and when the sun gets a little higher it will begin to smell. I am almost bitter on the subject. I have been writing editorials for seven or eight years (beginning in a comparative state of innocence) and I don't now know what an editorial is. But newspaper readers do. They know it is the dullest piece in the paper and the one to skip. Why newspapers insist on them being dull I don't know—force of tradition probably. . . . Today they have no more influence than the President's message has on Congress. . . .

A gentleman (in the Ziegfeld Follies) went to sleep and was supposed to sleep for 20 year and when he woke up in 1942 he wanted to know who was mayor. He was told Hylan was. Is that so? he says, surprised. Oh yes, they says, he's mayor for life. How's that? he says. Why, they says, it was this way. When he ran in 1922 every paper in New York, except one, was against him, so he was elected for four years. But, they says, when he ran the next time every one of the papers was against him, so he was elected for life.

From the way the audience laughed I could tell that everyone of them subscribed to a newspaper.

I didn't tell Pickett that story, but I did tell him another to illustrate a kindred point. I have been reading *The Way of All Flesh* and in the book a preacher makes a very eloquent sermon in which he describes with some feeling the process by which some tree flowers and bears fruit. It made a great impression until some annoying person got up and informed the preacher that with this particular tree the process was just the reverse of what

he had described. The point I make is that the preacher should have been an editorial writer, since it was apparent he knew nothing of the subject with which he was dealing. . . .

If I was going to have a leg taken off I should prefer, all things considered, to have it taken off by a surgeon, and if I was going in for any extended litigation I should like to have a lawyer on my side. But why, I wonder, don't newspapers regard it as essential to have writers get up their editorials? I mean experts in a way—men informed on the subjects on which they write. I really cannot think of more than three or four subjects on which I am qualified to write an editorial. One of them is boils—I have had boils. But every day and twice a day I have to tell our readers things it is deemed important they should know. It would be awful if it were really important that they should, but luckily they take a different view of it. When I look back I don't see how I have gone through with it and when I look ahead I don't see how I can continue to. It wouldn't be so bad if the editorial really took a subject and developed it, but it doesn't. There's neither time nor space for that. It is therefore purely perfunctory and tends to the safest generalization. It loves to say what has been said a million times before, what has never been controverted and what offers the widest opportunity for obvious and platitudinous comment. It is strong for Christmas, New Years, Washington's birthday, May Day, Decoration Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day and Armistice Day. It is for mother, home and Heaven. I would not have you think that an editorial cannot be bold and original when occasion requires. It can. I have myself condemned kidnapping in the most uncompromising terms. I have said murder is murder. I have firmly and insistently urged people to be vaccinated. I have said sternly that there is no room in this

community for a number of things which seem to have all the room they require, and have demanded over and over again that the light be turned on when everybody can see pretty well what's going on as it is.

What I am trying to make you see is that I regard myself as belonging to the intellectually unemployed. I feel that I am uselessly and futilely engaged in throwing pebbles into the ocean—and I can't even hear them splash. . . . I feel that an editorial writer is in a newspaper backwash. . . . The grind of it has driven me to writing a novel, just for mental relaxation. . . . I've got to get some enjoyment from writing, otherwise I would be better off driving a laundry wagon. It's a fine open, healthy occupation and they tell me you meet a lot of women that way. . . .

Get a young man with lots of endurance, no nervous system and no flights of fancy. Get one who never has written editorials—he'll think he's being useful. I don't think of anybody I can recommend.

### Never To Disturb?

There are questions in my mind as I look up from this handsome, big Centennial Issue of *Harper's*, questions which apply to the *Atlantic* too. From 1850 to 1865 *Harper's* climbed to a circulation of 110,000 copies; today it averages 150,000. Has the loyal intelligentsia in America increased so little proportionately? *Harper's*, like the *Atlantic*, has been consistently nonpartisan, and I applaud the independence of its editors. I realize that they continue to be so in these high-tempered days at the risk of losing subscribers and advertising. One hears today of capital in search of a publication which will bespeak the conservative view and nothing else. Is a magazine then to feed but never disturb the complacency of one's convictions? Are we as a people beginning to lose our keenness for the competition of ideas which made this country great? With all my heart I hope not. I hope that *Harper's* will never lose the strength to criticize, to be independent, and to be loyal to those standards Fred Allen has defined so well.—Edward Weeks, in the *Atlantic Monthly* for November.

# The Philosophy of a Great Newspaper

## *A Canadian Editor Talks of Taste and Standards to His Staff*

by R. A. Farquharson  
*Managing Editor, Toronto Globe and Mail*

*This statement of the "guiding philosophy" of the Globe and Mail of Toronto was made to an editorial department study group by the Managing Editor October 15, 1950.*

On the *Globe and Mail* we pride ourselves that we have only one unbreakable rule, and that rule is that any rule can be broken.

Rigid rules and good newspaper practice do not work together, but every paper, if it is to be the kind of paper of which the staff can be proud, must have a guiding philosophy that is understood by all members of the staff. This philosophy must be a live, growing philosophy that is constantly evolving but basically changes very little.

I like to think of the *Globe and Mail* as a paper published for its readers and not for any group or party, for any class or any individual, or even for other newspapers.

When I took over as managing editor my only instructions from the Publisher were to print the news, and I know that the Publisher prides himself on the news columns reflecting the news of the day as far as humanly possible, without political or personal bias. Putting it another way, we might say that the policy of the *Globe and Mail* is NEWS.

This policy has paid rich dividends. Our circulation has grown, but we have not sacrificed class for mass. I think we are all proud of the compliments we get from newspapermen in all parts of the country. We like to hear that the *Globe and Mail* is Canada's best newspaper.

What kind of newspaper is the *Globe and Mail*?

Alone in our field, with no morning competition, we obviously must appeal to all classes of readers. The *New York Times* could almost photograph the typical *New York Times*' reader. The *New York News* shrewdly estimates the exact range of its appeal. The *Christian Science Monitor* reaches across the continent for its reader who does not like crime or violence or sex or comics. Obviously, the

*Globe and Mail* could not earn the money to turn out the kind of paper we want to turn out if it were the Canadian facsimile of the *New York Times*. We do not want to be a copy of the *New York News* or the *Chicago Tribune*—in fact, we do not want to be a copy of anything. We want to be ourselves, with our own personality that is not modelled or borrowed from any other paper anywhere.

So we try for the reliability of the *Times*, the brightness of the *London Daily Express*, the extreme competence of the *Chicago Tribune*.

While we have no fixed rules, we must always consider the laws of good taste, and I know from difficult experience that mistakes of taste are always expensive. We cannot afford to do things which the *Star* and the *Telegram* do repeatedly. Many of our own readers will accept from the evening papers what they protest in the *Globe and Mail*.

I do not feel that we can afford to set our sights on the high altitudes of the *Christian Science Monitor*, nor do I think we should do so if we could. A paper without crime, without sex, without violence is a specialized journal which fails to reflect the news of the day. When a newspaper stops reporting what goes on it has ceased to be a newspaper. But it is not necessary to record every seduction to let your readers know that sex standards are changing. We try to avoid the monotony of the cheap, sordid crimes, not for moral reasons, but to provide space for what we believe to be more important and more interesting news. When an exceptional crime case comes along, it has been our policy to give it as thorough coverage as any paper in the country, and I think we have proved that we can be even franker than our most sensational competitors without serious protest from our readers.

I believe we have pioneered in Canada in the use of the magazine-type feature story which deals with an important situation with or without a spot news angle. Bill French's story of the Jewish problem in Forest Hill Village schools a few days ago was an example of how a delicate situational piece can be given effective prominence with enhanced prestige to the paper.

In Toronto our competitors do not attempt to give day-by-day continuity in developments in national and international affairs. This has left to us the responsibility of carrying news for the record from all over the world.

We sometimes forget that for every newspaper local news is of tremendous importance.

What we have not solved is the problem of making important news interesting. There are times when it would be a reasonably safe bet that some of the stories we carry with prominent display are almost completely ignored by our own staff. If some of the stories are so dull that they do not get readership in our own office, perhaps we should re-examine our display policy.

The *Nieman Reports*, which to my mind generally charts the course we are trying to steer on the *Globe and Mail*, takes newspapers to task for continual reiteration of dull facts when nothing new has developed.

We have improved at discarding stories which juggle the day before's facts into a different pattern but add nothing new. But we have a long way to go in breaking from habits of this kind.

We work in a much more casual way than many newspapers. I believe that an intelligent staff works better with a minimum of direction. When it is against a newspaper's policy to angle news, a good

reporter does not need to be instructed what to play and what to write.

There is a great advantage in a newspaper reflecting different styles of writing, and I hope never to see the day when the *Globe and Mail* develops a pattern of writing with all the staff trained to follow that pattern. We want good writing, but we want it in the individual styles of the different writers.

In the same way, on the desk we leave more initiative to individual desk men than is the case in London and in New York. This is one of the reasons why I feel so keenly that it is important we should all be working to a definite philosophy, and all striving to reach the same objectives, even if we do so in different ways.

I am not dealing with technical problems such as clearer writing, the elimination of hugger-mugger sentences, adolescent enthusiasm in presenting wildly exaggerated statements that are patently incorrect, and other matters of the kind which the public sums up in that rather nasty phrase "just newspaper talk."

I believe that accuracy must be the main goal of this newspaper. It still hurts when a stranger remarks "You can't believe anything you read in a newspaper."

We are reducing the number of mis-

takes. We still err oftener in headlines than we do in stories. At the risk of being dull, I would like to avoid overselling in headline writing.

In the last few years we have proven that eight-column lines are not important in the sale of our paper. Within the last eight years we have been progressively reducing the size of our main headings and progressively increasing our circulation. Since the price of the *Globe and Mail* went up to five cents some four years ago we have added 55,000 more readers. Our six months A.B.C., publisher's statement ending last September 30th was 234,663 against 229,420 a year ago, and our A.B.C. yearly audit will show an increase of over 10,000 over last year.

There have been tendencies sometimes to say that we have reached saturation, but that is far from true. Ontario is growing rapidly, and Toronto even more rapidly than the rest of the province, and any time we start to feel smug about sales going up we should remember the population increase.

There has been a tendency to say that our circulation is exceedingly good for a morning paper, but in New York, in Chicago, in Detroit, in England, in Australia and in New Zealand the morning papers lead in circulation, and I know of no reason why the Toronto field is basic-

ally different from other large centers.

I think that, if we were getting out the kind of paper we should be capable of getting out, and with a good keen Circulation Department, there is no reason why we should not gradually narrow the gap in the leadership the *Star* has held in the Toronto field for a number of years.

## Letters

To the Editor:

I am not a Nieman Fellow but I am taking the liberty of enclosing some material from our paper, the *Bulletin*, thinking it may interest you.

I have read your articles in the *Nieman Reports* with much interest and feel that you are making a fine contribution to better journalism.

The *Bulletin* constantly plugs for better government through heavier voting, better officials, etc. The enclosed clippings are along this line. The County school superintendent called me on the phone shortly after the enclosed editorial appeared and cancelled his subscription. He said he objected to being called a "county leech."

It's a swell profession.

Joseph E. Ray

Managing Editor

Blackfoot (Idaho) *Daily Bulletin*

### What the Editor Thinks

## Are Bingham County Offices Falling Into Disrepute?

Some men were talking in a Blackfoot barber shop the other day shortly after the general election and the subject was public offices. One man described Courthouse officials as "County leeches" and another said he couldn't understand why anyone would fight to win a public office when "they don't pay anything to begin with."

It was evident none of the participants had any exalted feeling for public officials generally, Bingham County, or any other, perhaps, including those in Washington.

Is this feeling shared by many persons in Bingham County? Do others have a similar cynicism toward elected public officials and the jobs they do?

If the voting turnout through the years is any indication the answer is yes.

If public officialdom has fallen into disrepute the fault inevitably lies partly with those who wear the titles and whose jobs are governed by the people.

Someone has to issue the licenses, record the deeds, probate the wills, arrest the criminals and manage the schools. These are jobs we have created under our form of government and trivial or not they must be performed, day in and day out, year in and year out. They are a part of that intricate pattern of self-government and if America is to survive the dual temptations of foreignisms and deadly complacency by the voters at home we must keep these little Courthouse jobs solvent. And one way to do it is to elect the kind of

men who can raise the standards of the office.

These barbershop Americans may be right in that Courthouse offices don't pay very much and that some public officials aren't worth what they are paid, but if these men like the country they live in, appreciate the right to snipe at the people who have to issue licenses, record deeds, arrest the criminals; and want America to stay great and free as they have known her best they not hasten her downfall by this kind of talk.

Better they take the time to visit the Courthouse now and then to inspect the public business and the methods of those who perform it. Any citizen can freely examine any record in the Courthouse and can question the methods used to process them. Let us exercise this right more often and democratic government on every level will be strengthened.

—Blackfoot (Idaho) *Daily Bulletin*,

Nov. 14.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Dec. 6

*His Own Old Paper*

## Charles Griffith Ross

When fate suddenly gave the United States a new President in 1945, nothing could have been more natural than Harry Truman's draft of his lifelong friend, Charles G. Ross, to be White House Press Secretary. They were schoolmates at Independence. As native Missourians they grew up together. Missourians they remained though they lived much of their later years in Washington. They liked and understood each other. Harry Truman had work for Charlie Ross and Charlie Ross had talents and experience that Harry Truman wanted on the presidential staff.

It was a hard job. Probably it was made even harder rather than easier by the very fact that the Press Secretary knew the other side so well. For more than 30 years he was a Washington correspondent himself. In the last years of Wilson and through the administrations of Harding, Coolidge, Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, his assignment was to get and write the news of the national capital for the *Post-Dispatch*. Instinctively his heart was with the reporter who had a lead to a White House news story even though time for its release was not yet ripe.

If the pressure may have eased somewhat after V-E and V-J days, it soon grew heavy again. As international problems weighed down on the White House, so did the load pile up at the desk of the Press Secretary. When he died in his office of a heart attack, his chief and the Prime Minister of Britain had just concluded their second talk on how to avert World War III. He can be listed as a casualty to Washington.

Had he not gone to the White House staff, Charles Ross would be remembered for his outstanding news work alone. When he was a cub reporter in St. Louis, his managing editor sent him back to the scene of an accident to get the exact height of a chimney from which a workman had fallen.

The cub learned his lesson. Thereafter

he always got all the pertinent facts. He got them, sifted them, organized them, wrote them into readable news copy. The result was Washington correspondence of a high order on politics, personalities and economic problems. When he described Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., walking spryly to his seat on the Supreme bench, the reader sat in a front row in the court room and saw for himself that grand old American, bravely erect after 70 years of battles at arms as well as law.

The Ross target was the plain reader and he knew that the way to reach and inform him was to be clear, graphic and forceful—forceful without undue enthusiasm and without overstatement. He believed that people wanted to understand the problems of the day and so, in such assignments as

"The Country's Plight," an extensive study on the great depression of the '30's, he sought to help them.

This page particularly regrets his passing for he was its editor, 1934-39, in an interlude between his periods of service in Washington. In St. Louis he made many friends as he did in Washington and earlier as a pioneer journalism teacher at the University of Missouri and even on a year's leave in Australia. All who knew Charlie Ross liked him and in nearly a half century of newspaper work that company grew to be a large one.

American journalism has lost a distinguished Washington correspondent, the heavily-burdened Missourian in the White House a loyal helper, and the ranks of humankind a charming and genuine man.

## Bare-Headed Correspondent

by James L. Hicks

Afro-American War Correspondent

WITH THE TWENTY-FIFTH DIVISION IN SOUTH KOREA—I met a bare-headed man over here on the battlefield and he asked me if I knew Fletcher Martin of the Louisville *Defender* down in Kentucky.

I said, yes, I know him well. (Fletcher Martin is city Editor of the *Defender*, now on vacation.)

And the man said "Next time you see him (if you ever get to see him again) tell him I want my hat."

I didn't like that part what the man said about "if you ever get to see him again" 'cause I don't like for folks to mention things like that to me on a battlefield, but he was in the same boat I was in so I went along with him.

"Who are you?" I asked, "and what's Fletcher Martin doing with your hat?"

"Well, he doesn't exactly have my hat," the man explained, "But he should have one for me by this time."

I told the gentleman that all that was about as clear as the smoke from the artillery shell that just burst off to the right.

"I'm Bob Miller of the United Press," he explained as we both ducked. "Martin and I were Nieman Fellows at Harvard during 1946-47. I was single then and he bet me a hat that I would be married by January of 1950. I'm still single and I want my hat."

We stood up and I shook hands with Bob and told him I would gladly pass on the message.

To Journalist Fletcher Martin "somewhere in the blue grass of Kentucky," please send one hat, size seven or thereabouts to War Correspondent Robert Miller, PIO, GHQ, APO 500, care of the Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.

And if you have doubts about what kind of hat to send—make it a steel helmet for he sure can use one over there!

—Louisville *Defender*, Oct. 13, 1950.