

Bnd 1-3 1947  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
JAN 30 1949  
P 198.1

# Nieman Reports

VOL. I NO. 2

Published by the Society of Nieman Fellows

APRIL, 1947

## A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE PRESS

### A REVIEW OF FREE PRESS REPORT

by Louis M. Lyons

In December, 1942, Henry R. Luce of Time, Inc. suggested to President Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago an inquiry into the freedom of the press: its present state and future prospects. President Hutchins selected a dozen scholars to serve with himself on a Commission on Freedom of the Press. Their conclusions now published mark an important event in the history of American journalism.

For the first time an examination of the performance of the press has been undertaken by a highly competent, independent body with adequate resources. They spent three years and \$200,000 of Mr. Luce's money, then \$15,000 more that President Hutchins dug out of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

The variety of experience of the Commission membership lends weight to its findings. Besides President Hutchins, they were: John Dickinson, general counsel of the Pennsylvania Railroad; Beardley Ruml, then president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York; Archibald MacLeish, formerly assistant Secretary of State; Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary; George N. Shuster, President of Hunter College; Harold D. Lasswell of the Yale Law School; John M. Clark, economist of Columbia University; Charles E. Merriam, political economist of the University of Chicago; Robert Redfield, Dean of Social Sciences at that institution; and three scholars of Harvard University, Zechariah Chafee of the Law School, Arthur M. Schlesinger, historian, and William E. Hocking, philosopher. As director of their staff they had Robert D. Leigh, former President of Bennington College, assisted by Llewellyn White.

Their extensive inquiry included all agencies of mass communication—books, magazines, movies, radio, newspapers. But with books they found little problem, and with magazines less than the other media. They are bringing out separate studies on radio movies and radio. Their central report is largely concerned with the newspaper.

They considered freedom of the press in terms of a responsible press and they came out with the warning that only a responsible press can remain free. Failure of the press to meet the needs of a society dependent on it for information and ideas is the greatest danger to its freedom, the Commission finds.

Its answer to the question "Is the freedom of the press in danger?" is a flat "Yes." But the reasons do not echo the familiar assumption of the publishers that freedom of the press is their proprietary right to act as irresponsibly as they please.

The Commission's reasons are:

1. As the importance of communication has increased its control has come into fewer hands.
2. The few in control have failed to meet the needs of the people.
3. Press practices at times have been so irresponsible that if continued society is bound to take control for its own protection.

The citizen also has a right . . . (to truthful information on public affairs), the Commission asserts. "No democracy will indefinitely tolerate concentration of private power, irresponsible and strong enough to thwart the democratic aspirations of the people. If these giant agencies of communication are irresponsible, not even the First Amendment will protect their freedom from government control. The Amendment will be amended."

This is an urgent warning to the interests in control of the press. It is going to be a hard one to brush off or forget as so many criticisms of less weight have been brushed off and ignored.

The Commission recites the communications revolution that has made the press big business and shows it acting increasingly like big business and increasingly in alliance with the interests of other big business. The vital necessity of the citizen to have access to clear channels of adequate information on public affairs has never been more painstakingly presented. His right and obligation to secure such information is insistently put.

Then the Commission comes to a sticking point. How to protect the public right to access to truthful information is a complex problem. The Commission's remedy is less convincing than its diagnosis. That has been true of course of all earlier criticism of the press. The Commission shies away from public regulation to make the press accountable, lest other freedoms be endangered. This is the dilemma of a modern society enormously dependent upon a press in private hands, inevitably controlled by large capitalists whose interests are not always the public interest.

It is easy to show that accountable service in communication is as essential as pure food, public health and fair trade practices. But these other needs are protected by law. If we accept the view that government regulation of the press is a danger to freedom, then the public is cut off from the traditional means of a democ-

---

### In This Issue

- A Free and Responsible Press**  
A review by Louis M. Lyons
- Freedom for What?**  
abstract of Free Press Report
- The Emperor's Slippers**  
by Richard E. Lauterbach
- Science in the Press**  
by the 1946 Nieman Fellows
- The Publisher and His Paper**  
by William M. Pinkerton
- The Negro Press**  
a Challenge to Democracy  
by Frank Stanley
- Decency for Denver**  
by Houstoun Waring
- Reporters at Work**
- Complaints and Otherwise**
- How J. P. Ran A Newspaper**  
by Irving Dilliard
-

racy to protect its interests by public regulation.

That the Commission has not taken us out of that dilemma is both the weakness of the report and the riddle of the problem. If you refuse the public the sole public recourse to protect its rights, you haven't much left but hope and prayer. The Commission prays that the press may make itself more responsible. It urges that it restore the professional status of journalism, long a captive to the publisher's business. It wants professional standards applied to the performance of the press. It insists that the press cease shielding its own miscreants by the device of refusing publicity to the malpractices and libel suits of its fellow members. It asks a sense of trusteeship by publishers. These are indispensable reforms.

But the only means to these ends that it finds to recommend are public concern, public appraisal, public criticism of press performance. It proposes an endowed agency to supply continuing appraisal of press performance. This is a very mild poultice to apply to the organic and spreading disorder of irresponsible giantism which it finds in the institution of the press.

But the report is not to be judged by failure to find the cure. Its value is in alerting the public and warning the publishers of the failure of the press to meet the public need. The definition of "common carrier of public discussion" as the function that a responsible press must accept is one for all journalism to paste in its hat.

The great strength of the report is its penetrating examination of the performance of the press. It has the courage to challenge the whole rigamarole of press clichés as to what is news and the silly game of scoops and headline hunting. "The news is twisted by emphasis on the novel and the sensational. . . . Too much of the regular output consists of a succession of stories and images that has no relation to the typical lives of real people anywhere. The result is meaninglessness, flatness, distortion and perpetuation of misunderstanding." It finds the press preoccupied with the sensational and trivial "to such an extent that the citizen is not supplied with the information and discussion he needs to discharge his responsibilities to the community."

Every newspaperman knows how generally this is so. With a few notable exceptions which the Commission might well have emphasized more than it did, newspapering in the United States is pretty sloppy business, casual, trite, almost ritualistic in its clichés, and so stereotyped that the individual differences among newspapers in widely differing communities are

hardly more distinctive than among the different brands of canned corn. The easy flow of such stuff as comes from the Police blotter gets so much of the attention of the press as to squeeze out most of the information on public affairs that makes any sense. The giant modern press has exploited our high literacy and the rapid technology of communication. But its own contribution in serving the one with the other remains for the most part as primitive as the hand press and post rider. It is directly because newspaper publishers as a class are among the most conservative groups in America that newspaper performance is as uninspired, as unoriginal and uninformed as it is. It makes its own definition of news which is often so peculiar and parochial as to exclude most information that has any use or any meaning. The value of this report lies in its jolt to the mentality of those who control most of the press to their own profit.

The honorable exceptions are easily identified. The public stake in the issue runs parallel to its stake in self government and peace, for both, as the Commission shows, are threatened by the frequently irresponsible and often false presentation of government activity and international relations. They are threatened even more by the usual absence of useful information on these vital areas.

The Commission might have, but did not, make note of those exceptional newspapers that operate on a very high level of responsibility to serve the reader with information essential to the citizen. But they are highly exceptional as every one knows who has tried counting them up and found fingers left over.

The Commission's recital of the increasing concentration of newspaper control and consequent contraction in the number and diversity of outlets for information and ideas is a twice-told tale. Morris Ernst explored it in his "The First Freedom." But it will bear emphasis. Even as this report was in the press, the sale was announced of the Philadelphia Record to the Philadelphia Bulletin. That leaves the third city of America at this writing with one morning and two evening newspaper ownerships.

It underscores the Commission's point that: Through concentration the variety of sources of news and opinion is limited. The insistence of the citizen's need has increased . . . .

True, but some instances would have been in order. With \$215,000 and a research staff and three years to work, the facts about the press handling of such stories as the destruction of the OPA and the wrecking of the housing program would have illuminated the report. It was possible to measure how much the public

was told of the lobbies and pressures and industry sit-down strikes to end price control and to muscle out Wilson Wyatt's program. It would have been possible to show how little attention was paid to the profits made out of the removal of price limits when the headlines were crying over strikes for more wages. Facts are the most telling evidence. Had the Commission been more journalistic in its own report, its conclusions would have more effect.

The report is a philosopher's summation of the state of the press. It would be more informative if it contained more research into instances. The Commission cites "charges" of distortion and says "bias is claimed" against consumer cooperatives, food and drug regulations and Federal Trade Commission orders on fraudulent advertising. "Many people believe" it says, "that the press is biased on national fiscal policy." The Commission had the means to run down these charges.

It is hard to believe that it did not. It heard fifty-eight witnesses from the press and its staff recorded interviews with 225 others. The report is derived from 176 separate documents developed in the study. Some of the cautious language of the report is quite evidently a device to appease the more conservative members in the interest of the unanimous agreement which they present.

Very usefully, the Commission shows that radio rates far below the newspaper as a responsible channel of information. Public affairs take from zero to 10 percent of radio time. The Commission says bluntly that before it can be respectable radio must take control of its programs away from the advertisers:

"Radio cannot become a responsible agency of communication as long as its programming is controlled by the advertisers. No newspaper would call itself respectable if its editorial columns were dominated by its advertisers and if it published advertising, information, and discussion so mixed together that the reader could not tell them apart."

It sums up radio programs with this: "The great consumer industries which in 1945 gave the networks three-quarters of their income determine what the American people shall hear on the air. A dozen and a half advertising agencies place contracts and prepare programs. The result is such a mixture of advertising with the rest of the program that one cannot be listened to without the other."

The devastating report on radio recalls the curious results of certain polls that have found more public confidence in news heard on the radio than read in the news-

## Col. McCormick Reacts

papers. There is no accounting for this except by the magic many people still feel in hearing a voice. Any newspaperman who at times performs on the radio has had the experience of receiving a charmed response from neighbors and acquaintances who never mention his familiar daily reports in his newspaper. Yet he knows, and so do they if they ever think about it, that he contributes far more to their information in the less restricted channels of the paper.

After reading its report on radio one can better understand the Commission's lack of enthusiasm for government regulation, though it doesn't offer that as a reason. Radio has been under regulation from the start, and obviously regulation has failed to result in adequate radio service. To say that the FCC has been prevented by the power with Congress of advertiser-backed radio pressures from ever trying real regulation does not add much comfort or increase anticipation of benefits from press regulation.

This is not the reason the Commission seeks to avoid governmental action to require press responsibility, but it is a consideration not to be overlooked by those who disagree with them about it.

The Commission finds the quality of the press affected by the fact that "wages and prestige of the working newspapermen are low and their tenure precarious." This is an understatement. The newspaper is a prep school for the fields of radio, magazines, movies, and public relations. The most talented of its staff are grabbed off by these competing enterprises often for an extra \$20 or \$30 a week and all the years of their development lost to press and public. This is one of the sorest points about American newspapering and one of its grievous ills.

Everybody else appreciates the value of a trained newspaper man except the newspaper publisher. So journalism is drained constantly of the men capable of operating at a level of public service.

It would have been easy to show this. Take the number of men in government agencies who left newspapers for a little more money. Take the whole personnel of radio and see how many were trained in newspapers. Take the salary levels of radio and compare with newspapers. Take the staff of a few representative papers of fifteen years ago and show where the featured reporters of that time are working now. This forfeiture of the press' own human resources has reached a point where even Editor and Publisher, the trade organ of the press, has been plaintively editorializing on it.

But a deeper disturbing note is the Com-

(From the Chicago Tribune of Mar. 5, reporting an address to the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers.)

Col. McCormick referred to the Senate subcommittee on newsprint shortages . . . also to a book about the press, now under preparation and financed chiefly by Henry Luce of Time, Inc.

"Books contemplated long ago have been issued to coincide with the meeting now being held in Washington [on newsprint] purpose of which was, when it was conceived, to destroy the freedom of the press. Its true nature is revealed in the recommendation that laws forbidding advocacy of the violent overthrow of the government be repealed.

"Among the proponents of this extraordinary doctrine we find Prof. Merriam

of Chicago who is motivated as always by his lifelong besetting sin of envy.

"We find Chancellor Hutchins always seeking and seeking futilely a position of leadership in any movement. We find Henry Luce, editor of today's 'Town Topics', who paid the others, striving to disassociate himself from Walter Winchell. We find a number of more or less obscure professors and crackpots mentioned in the report of the committee on un-American activities for Communist front activities no less than 67 times. How Zechariah Chafee comes to be one of this motley crew is beyond me. They very carefully refrained from finding out anything about newspapers, so that when confronted with the facts they could avoid the charge of deliberate falsehood."

mission's discovery of the "frustration" of reporters and editorial writers.

"The Commission was disturbed by finding that many able reporters and editorial writers displayed frustration—the feeling that they were not allowed to do the kind of work which their professional ideals demanded. A continuation of this disturbing situation will prevent the press from assuming effective responsibility toward society."

As remedies, the Commission urges the press "use any means that can be devised to increase the competence and independence of the staff."

That is all very well. And very true. Better reporters and better paid reporters are needed. But to say this and stop there misses the central issue.

Can the Commission imagine a journalist being "independent" and working for Hearst, McCormick, or the paper controlled by the First National Bank?

What is it that turns idealistic newspapermen into frustrated cynics? It is the context of the job itself. It is the very irresponsibility the report complains of. The Commission is going around in circles to say that the press is irresponsible, that it should be responsible, that it requires professional standards, and that the press should develop professional standards in its staff. The newest tyros in the city room have the standards desired until they are conditioned on the job to something else that defeats and frustrates the best of them.

It is a very insidious thing. The Commission has sensed it, explored it, been revolted by it, but never quite come to grips with

it. The Commission realizes that a profession has been taken over and exploited. There is no parallel for that in other professions. It clearly baffles a Commission made up of members of the professions of law, education, religion, science and philosophy. Any of their "frustrated" newspapermen could have told them more than they understand about the catch in the game. But their contribution is in describing the problem. That is a large contribution. They leave it as they must in the lap of the public:

"We have the impression that the American people do not realize what has happened to them. They are not aware that the communications revolution has taken place. They do not appreciate the tremendous power which the new instruments and new organization of the press place in the hands of a few men. They have not yet understood how far the performance of the press falls short of the requirements of a free society in the world today. The principal object of our report is to make these points clear."

A Free and Responsible Press. Report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press. University of Chicago Press. \$2.

With charges of bribery in the Boston City Council under investigation by the district attorney, the Boston Traveler issued a front page invitation daily to "any citizen having information of graft or bribery to relay that information to this newspaper." They dug up at least one case that way and made it a lead copyrighted story.

# FREEDOM FOR WHAT?

ONLY A RESPONSIBLE PRESS CAN STAY FREE, HUTCHINS COMMISSION FINDS

(An abstract of the report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press)

## The Problem

The Commission set out to answer the question: Is the freedom of the press in danger? Its answer to that question is: Yes. It concludes that the freedom of the press is in danger for three reasons:

First, the importance of the press to the people has greatly increased with the development of the press as an instrument of mass communication. At the same time the development of the press as an instrument of mass communication has greatly decreased the proportion of the people who can express their opinions and ideas through the press.

Second, the few who are able to use the machinery of the press as an instrument of mass communication have not provided a service adequate to the needs of the society.

Third, those who direct the machinery of the press have engaged from time to time in practices which the society condemns and which, if continued, it will inevitably undertake to regulate or control.

When an instrument of prime importance to all the people is available to a small minority of the people only, and when it is employed by that small minority in such a way as not to supply the people with the service they require, the freedom of the minority in the employment of that instrument is in danger.

This danger, in the case of the freedom of the press, is in part the consequence of the economic structure of the press, in part the consequence of the industrial organization of modern society, and in part the result of the failure of the directors of the press to recognize the press needs of a modern nation and to estimate and accept the responsibilities which those needs impose upon them.

## The Remedy

We do not believe the problem is one to which a simple solution can be found. Government action might cure the ills of freedom of the press but only at the risk of killing the freedom in the process.

The real remedies lie in a greater assumption of responsibility by the press itself and in the action of an informed people to induce the press to see its responsibilities and to accept them.

The problem is of peculiar importance to this generation. The relation of the modern press to modern society is a new and unfamiliar relation.

The modern press is a new phenomenon. It can facilitate thought or thwart progress. It can debase and vulgarize mankind. It

can endanger peace. It can do it accidentally, in a fit of absence of mind. Its scope and power are increasing.

These great new agencies of mass communication can spread lies faster and farther than our forefathers dreamed when they enshrined freedom of the press in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

With the means of self destruction now at their disposal, men must live, if they are to live at all, by self restraint and mutual understanding. They get their picture of one another through the press. If the press is inflammatory, sensational and irresponsible, it and its freedom will go down in the universal catastrophe. On the other hand, it can help create a new world community by giving men everywhere knowledge of the world and one another, by prompting comprehension and appreciation of the goals of a free society.

## Freedom for What?

Modern society requires great agencies of mass communication. Breaking them up is a different thing from breaking up an oil monopoly. Breaking them up may destroy a service the people require.

But these agencies must control themselves or be controlled.

Freedom of the press is essential to political liberty. Freedom of discussion is a necessary condition to a free society.

The press is not free if those who operate it act as though they had the privilege to be deaf to ideas which freedom of speech has brought to public attention.

Freedom of expression does not include the right to lie.

The principle of freedom of the press is not intended to render society supine before possible new developments of misuse of the immense powers of the contemporary press.

The aim of those who sponsored the First Amendment was to prevent the government from interfering with expression. The authors of our political system saw that a free society could not exist without free communication.

They were justified in thinking that freedom of the press would be effectively exercised. In their day anybody with anything to say had little difficulty getting it published. Presses were cheap.

It was not supposed that any one newspaper could represent all the conflicting views regarding public issues.

## A Press Revolution

This country has gone through a communications revolution. The press has become big business. There is a marked

reduction in the number of units relative to the population.

The right of free public expression has therefore lost its earlier reality. The owners of the press determine which persons, which facts, which versions of the facts, and which ideas shall reach the public.

The press has become a vital necessity in the transaction of the public business of a continental area. A new era of public responsibility for the press has arrived. The variety of sources of news and opinion is limited. The insistence of the citizen's need has increased.

It becomes an imperative question whether the performance of the press can any longer be left to the unregulated initiative of those who manage it.

Their right to utter their opinions must remain intact. But the service of news acquires a new importance. The citizen also has a right . . . to adequate and uncontaminated mental food, and he is under a duty to get it.

The freedom of the press can remain a right of those who publish it only if it incorporates into itself the right of the citizen and the public interest.

Freedom of the press means freedom of and freedom for. The press must, if it is to be wholly free, know and overcome any biases incident to its own economic position, its concentration and its pyramided organization.

The press must also be accountable. It must know that its faults and errors have ceased to be private vagaries and have become public dangers. The voice of the press, so far as by a drift toward monopoly it tends to become exclusive in its wisdom and observation, deprives other voices of a hearing and the public of their contribution.

Freedom of the press for the coming period can only continue as an accountable freedom.

## What the Public Needs of the Press

The requirements of a free society:

- A truthful meaningful account of the day's events;
- A forum for exchange of comment;
- A means of projecting group opinions and attitudes to one another;
- A method of presenting and clarifying the goods and values of the society;
- A way of reaching every member of the society.

Especially in international events the press has a responsibility to report them

in such a way that they can be understood. It is necessary to report the truth about the fact.

In domestic news too, the account of an isolated fact, however accurate in itself, may be misleading and in effect untrue.

A flow of information and interpretation is needed.

The great agencies of mass communication should regard themselves as common carriers of public discussion.

The giant units can and should assume the duty of publishing significant ideas contrary to their own, as a matter of objective reporting. Their control over the various ways of reaching the ear of America is such that if they do not publish ideas which differ from their own, those ideas will never reach the ear of America. If that happens one of the chief reasons for the freedom which these giants claim disappears.

Identification of source of facts and opinions is necessary to a free society.

#### Concentration of Control

The outstanding fact about the communication industry is that the number of its units has declined.

In many places the small press has been completely extinguished. The great cities have three or four papers but most places have only one. The opportunities for initiating new ventures are strictly limited.

Only one out of twelve of the cities with daily papers have competing dailies. In ten states there are no competing dailies. 40% of daily circulation is non-competitive.

A few big houses own the largest magazines. Drastic concentration obtains in women's magazines: six have 9/10 of the circulation.

Books show a broader competitive area.

In radio the networks lie outside regulation. Four networks grossed nearly half radio's \$400,000,000 in 1945. 800 of 1000 stations are in chains.

Five movie companies own the best movie theaters.

Newspaper chains: 375 dailies—25% are in chains; small chains increased as Hearst and Scripps-Howard shrank. 175 places have combination. 92% of places have only one paper.

In 100 places the only newspaper owner owns also the only radio station. This creates a local monopoly of local news.

Great newspaper-radio ownership is increasing. One-third of radio stations are owned by the press.

"The Boiler Plate King," John H. Perry, provides insides of 3,000 out of 10,000 weeklies (survivors of 26,000 in 1900).

Three press services serve 99 4/5% of all daily circulation.

Syndicates are related to press associations and chains.

Besides economics and technology, other forces work toward monopoly. Personal forces—exaggerated drives for power and profit—have tended to promote monopoly. The means used vary from economic pressure to violence.

The Hearst-McCormick news stand war was a factor in the gang warfare that has distressed Chicago ever since.

Monopolistic practices and high costs have made it hard for new ventures to enter the press field.

Has the press by becoming big business lost its representative character and developed a common bias—of the large investor and employer?

Economics calls for an omnibus product for a mass audience, something for everybody. The newspaper is as much a medium of entertainment and advertising as of news.

News of public affairs is even lower in radio—0 in some; 2%-10% on some network stations.

Public affairs are often a minor part of mass media—shaped to a mass audience.

#### The Newspaper "Game"

So "news" has a special meaning. Its criteria are recency or freshness, proximity, combat, human interest, novelty.

Such criteria limit accuracy and significance.

The game played in press rooms often seems childish and sometimes cruel.

Unauthorized "scoops" at the end of the war produced much distrust of these news sources. It led to doubts about the value and legitimacy of a game that could be played with such irresponsibility and heartlessness.

The press emphasizes the exceptional rather than the representative; the sensational rather than the significant. The press is preoccupied with these incidents to such an extent that the citizen is not supplied the information and discussion he needs to discharge his responsibilities to the community.

Illustration—The San Francisco Conference.

So completely was the task of manufacturing suspense performed that when an acceptable charter was signed the effect on newspaper readers was one of incredulous surprise.

#### The Press is Big Business

The Press owner is a big business man. "He has the country club complex. He and his editors get the unconscious arrogance of conscious wealth."—W. A. White.

(Virginius Dabney and Erwin Canham are quoted on the big business character of the press.)

Evidence of advertising domination is not impressive in strong papers.

Incident: The Am. Press Association, advertising representative of 4000 weeklies and small dailies, placed U.S. Steel policy ad on steel strike of 1945 in 1400 papers.

Its letters to the papers in which it placed the ad urged: "This is your chance to show the steel people what the rural press can do for them."

#### Who Runs Radio?

Radio advertising is concentrated. Five companies accounted for nearly 1/4 network income in 1945. A dozen and a half agencies place contracts and prepare programs. The great consumer industries which in 1945 gave the networks 3/4 of their income determine what the American people shall hear on the air.

The result is such a mixture of advertising with the rest of the program that one cannot be listened to without the other.

Sales talk should be separated from material which is not advertising. Public discussion should not be manufactured by a central authority and "sold" to the public.

#### The Failure of the Press

Criticism of the press in the press is banned by a kind of unwritten law. If the press is to overcome its own shortcomings this practice of refraining from criticism of the press should be abandoned.

Our society needs an accurate truthful account of the day's events. We need a market place for the exchange of comment and criticism. We need to clarify the aims and ideals of our country and every other.

These needs are not being met. The news is twisted by emphasis on freshness, on the novel and sensational, by the personal interests of the owners and by pressure groups.

Too much of the regular output of the press consists of a miscellaneous succession of stories and images which have no relation to the typical lives of real people anywhere. The result is meaninglessness, flatness, distortion, and the perpetuation of misunderstanding.

When we look at the press as a whole we must conclude that it is not meeting the needs of our society.

This failure of the press is the greatest danger to its freedom.

#### Self regulation is Absent

The motion picture code is enforced. It sets standards of acceptability, not responsibility.

Movies go farthest in accommodation to pressure groups. This may thwart development of documentary films.

Radio stations are licensed. They must operate in the public interest. But the FCC cannot censure programs. The NAB code is not enforced.

FCC now says unless broadcasters deal

with overcommercialization, government may be forced to act. So far it has produced little from the broadcasters except outraged cries about freedom of speech.

In newspapers there is no enforcement of codes.

The Guild does not seek professional standards but recognizes the right of publishers to print anything.

Professional standards are ineffective in the press because the professional works for an owner. His is the responsibility.

Schools of journalism have not accepted the obligation to set standards of the profession, as have law and medical schools. Most devote themselves to vocational training. That is not what a journalist most needs. He needs the broadest, most liberal education.

#### What can be done?

##### By Government—

The problem will not be solved by laws or government action.

But no democracy will indefinitely tolerate concentration of private power irresponsible and strong enough to thwart the democratic aspirations of the people.

If the giant media are irresponsible, not even the First Amendment will protect their freedom from government control. The Amendment will be amended.

If the press does not become accountable by its own motion, the power of government will be used, as a last resort to force it to be so.

There is nothing to prevent government participating in mass communication. It is not dangerous to freedom of press for it to do so.

Government should facilitate new ventures.

It should keep channels open—stop monopoly—invoke anti-trust laws to keep competition.

It should see that the public gets benefits of concentration.

Radio service should be supplied to the whole country either by radio industry or by government. We prefer the former.

Redress of libels should be expedited.

State anti-syndicalism laws should be repealed.

Government has a duty to inform the public. If the press cannot or will not carry reporting about government policies and purposes, the government should publish itself.

#### What the press can do

The press is a private business but affected by a public interest.

The press has an obligation to elevate rather than degrade public interests.

The press itself should assume responsibility of service the public needs.

We suggest the press look upon itself as performing a public service of a professional kind.

We recommend that mass communication accept the responsibility of a common carrier of information and discussion.

The press should finance attempts to provide service of more diversity and quality for tastes above the level of its mass appeal.

The press should engage in vigorous mutual criticism.

#### Nieman Fellowships

The press should increase the competence of its staff.

The quality of the press depends in large part upon the capacity and independence of the working members in the lower ranks.

Adequate compensation, adequate recognition and adequate contracts seem to us the indispensable pre-requisite for the development of professional personnel.

We should suppose three year contracts would be sufficient to guarantee the independence which the worker in the press must have if he is to play his part as a responsible member of the profession.

The type of educational experience provided for working journalists by the Nieman Fellowships at Harvard seems to us to deserve extension, if not through private philanthropy, then with the financial aid of the press itself.

#### Radio should control advertisers

We recommend that the radio industry take control of its programs and that it treat advertising as it is treated by the best newspapers. Radio cannot become a respectable agency of communication as long as it is controlled by the advertisers.

No newspaper would call itself respectable which was dominated by its advertisers and which published advertising information and discussion so mixed together that the reader could not tell them apart. The public should not be forced to continue to take its radio fare from the manufacturers of soap, cosmetics, cigarettes, soft drinks and packaged goods.

#### What can be done by the public?

We are not in favor of a revolt and hope less drastic means of improving the press may be employed.

We have the impression that the American people do not realize what has happened to them. They are not aware that the communications revolution has taken place. They do not appreciate the tremendous power which the new instruments and new organization of the press place in the hands of a few men. They have not yet understood how far the performance of the press falls short of the requirements of a free society in the world today. The

principal object of our report is to make these points clear.

Non-profit institutions should help supply the variety, quantity and quality of press service required by the American people.

In radio and documentary films, chains of libraries, colleges and churches should put before the public the best thought of America and make the present radio programs look as silly as many of them are.

Schools of journalism should not deprive their students of a liberal education.

#### For Press Appraisal

We recommend the establishment of a new and independent agency to appraise and report annually upon the performance of the press.

It should be created by gifts, given a 10-year trial to:

1) Help define standards of press performance.

2) Point out inadequacy of press service in some areas and concentration in others.

3) Make inquiries in areas where minority groups are excluded from reasonable access to channels of communication.

4) Make inquiry abroad regarding the picture of American life given by the American press.

5) Investigation of press lying, especially on public issues.

Make appraisal of tendencies of press. Make appraisal of government action on communication. Encourage centers of advanced study in field of communication.

Encourage projects to meet needs of special audiences.

These are methods by which press may become accountable and hence remain free.

#### Make Journalism a Profession

The Commission was disturbed by finding that many able reporters and editorial writers displayed frustration—the feeling that they were not allowed to do the kind of work which their professional ideals demanded. A continuation of this disturbing situation will prevent the press from assuming effective responsibility toward society. As remedies we have urged the press to use every means that can be devised to increase the competence and independence of the staff. In many different ways the rank and file of the press should be made to constitute a genuine profession.

#### THE COMMISSION ON THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Robert M. Hutchins Archibald MacLeish  
Zechariah Chafee, Jr. Charles E. Merriam  
John M. Clark Reinhold Niebuhr  
John Dickinson Robert Redfield  
William E. Hocking Beardsley Rumel  
Harold D. Lasswell Arthur M. Schlesinger  
George N. Shuster

Press Reaction**Fortune's Criticism**

(From an editorial, "Dangers to Press Freedom", in the April issue of Fortune which carried the full text of the report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press.)

Certainly the report is important. Three years of conscientious attention to the footings of liberty by some of the nation's top minds is not to be taken lightly. The report is balanced. Many will find it unexciting. . . . The Commission condensed and recondensed and, unfortunately, overcondensed its thought. The Commissioners are philosophers and obviously not journalists, and achieved brevity at great cost to clarity.

It might seem that the Commission is about to propose considerable or basic new legislation, but this is not the case. It recommends only one new law, "an alternative to the present remedy for libel" whereby "the injured party might obtain a retraction or a restatement of the facts by the offender or an opportunity to reply." Most editors and publishers would probably welcome such a law.

Again, the Commission is open to misunderstanding when it undertakes to describe the qualitative performance of the press. The description is an indictment. . . . The Commission finds the press biased, one-sided, mendacious, and sometimes corrupt, deficient in providing full and accurate information or a sound forum of opinion on international and other public affairs. The press is charged with threatening to abort "the new world," which the Commission believes is struggling to be born. In short, the press does not adequately meet its responsibilities in serving the needs of society.

The Commission's picture is overdramatized by a light emanating from a mythical Golden Age of the press. . . .

The Commission is, in fact, complaining about the worst sections of the press, and to them it administers some well-deserved rebukes. Some readers may be disinclined to heed the indictment because its application seems at times to be so universal and indiscriminate.

The basic answer that the Commission advances, the old but only answer possible, is the assumption of greater responsibility by the press itself.

And if the Commission inspires the press of this country to make more strenuous efforts to meet responsibility, it will have

done well. A corrupt and irresponsible press helped bring France to collapse and slavery. In Russia a fettered and responsible press makes freedom a mockery.

In short, the professionalization of the press is imperative.

To assist in the professionalization of the press and the institutionalization of its conscience, the Commission urges the creation of a continuing, independent body to keep the press under steady critical surveillance. Such a body, if wise and courageous, might in time achieve a prestige that would make its pronouncements a strong deterrent to irresponsibility. The proposal deserves the serious attention of press and public.

The Commission's argument as to why and how the press fails to meet its responsibilities is somewhat bedeviled by extensive discussion of alleged trends toward monopoly. . . .

True, the number of daily newspapers in U. S. towns has been diminishing, and the list of communities in which there is no competition in the local daily field has been lengthening. The danger, if any, would seem to be local. . . . But the Commission. . . makes an unwarranted fuss about this fact. . . .

Competition has not disappeared; its form has changed. And no basic research has been done to determine exactly what its present form is or what its present effects are.

The quality of the contemporary press in Boston indicates one of the weaknesses in the Commission's monopoly theory. None of Boston's competing local dailies approximates the Commission's standards as well as does the daily product of the "monopolistic" publisher in, for example, Louisville, Kentucky.

It is, of course, entirely possible to make readable news out of the good, the true, and the dull. But as any member of the working press could have told the Commissioners, it is exceedingly difficult. The editorial pages of many American newspapers are monuments to attempts that failed. Journalism must be not only free and responsible. It must also be effective, and that is not easy. It is not enough to refrain from pandering to the kind of bad public taste that Henry L. Mencken blasts. . . . It is also essential to present the picture of the good and the true so that it is not dull.

**What About the Staff?**

"A Free and Responsible Press" will, I am sure, be read with thoughtful and careful interest by thousands of working newsmen. Certainly it merits such reading. It is regrettable, however, that maximum use was not made of the opportunity to impress this part of the report's audience with its responsibility and its potency, both as a group and as individuals, in shaping the future of the institution which it serves.

At the risk of being considered a traitor to my class—the "wage slaves" of the American press—I would like to suggest that the report overemphasizes the oft-cited sins of newspaper owners and publishers and underemphasizes the sins of the members of the working press.

A newspaperman of long experience, who, incidentally, is now a publisher, once admonished me to "advocate that which is practicable of accomplishment." It is on the basis of this advice, and not on any question of fact, that I take issue with the report. No matter how often their knuckles are gently rapped by academic analysts, or their souls damned by embittered and cynical "wage slaves," it should be evident by now, to the most casual observer, that the lords of the press are not going to undergo any miraculous transformation.

The futility of such criticism is not its greatest danger. Even more serious is the fact that it results in a preoccupation with the faults of publishers and owners which tends to obscure the responsibilities of reporters and editors for the shortcomings of the press. No group is more susceptible to this form of obscurantism than the working press itself.

I know there is a type of round-robin reasoning which places on the publisher's shoulders responsibility for the numerous sins of his hired help. With this I cannot agree unless we are to assume that newspapermen have been producing so long for the mythical twelve-year-old mentality, that they have sunk to that level themselves.

Is the publisher responsible for sloppy, careless, inefficient reporting? Is he at fault for faked stories, misleading headlines, twisted facts? Must he accept the blame for confidences violated by staff members, for bribes, under whatever name they are tendered, accepted for suppressing or slanting the news, for reportorial and editorial timidity which result in a self-censorship far more stifling to freedom of the press than directives from the counting office?

In part, perhaps. But only in part. The

(Continued on next page)

# DECENCY FOR DENVER

## PALMER HOYT'S FIRST YEAR AT DENVER POST

by *Houstoun Waring*

Somewhat over a year ago E. Ray Campbell, Denver attorney and currently president of the Denver Post, was given the assignment of finding a new editor and publisher for the largest newspaper in the Rocky Mountain region.

Campbell had never picked an editor before, but he had two set notions. He wanted a man young enough to carry out any program he might map for himself. He concluded the new editor should be under fifty years of age.

Making a list of every editor, managing editor, and city editor in the West, Campbell narrowed his choice to twenty working newspapermen. On the list was Palmer Hoyt of the Portland Oregonian. Since everyone to whom he submitted the list cast his vote for Hoyt, the attorney's next move was to win Hoyt to Colorado. This he did.

A year of Palmer Hoyt's editorship was completed on Feb. 20, and the people of Colorado are making an appraisal of his work.

They recall that jump stories at once disappeared, that Marquis Childs, Ernest Lindley, Harold Ickes and other columnists began making their appearance, that the typography was toned down, and that eighty-nine days after the new editor's arrival the Denver Post started a complete editorial page which has improved month by month.

For years the citizens of the Rockies had heard rumors of a black list containing the names of those who had crossed the will of Champa street. In twelve months, Hoyt has pretty well convinced everyone that the Post has no generation-old hates, and no enemies except the people's enemies. He has not said this in so many words, but with more than a half million men and women scrutinizing his policies, his character has become apparent to them. It is inaccurate to state that everyone has discovered this change in the Post, for one still meets an occasional person, who,

Debauched for a generation by the incredible team of Tammen and Bonfils, the Denver Post has been undergoing gradual redemption under the steady hand of Palmer Hoyt, formerly publisher of the Portland Oregonian. This appraisal of Hoyt's first year in Denver comes from a neighbor small town editor, Houstoun Waring, who runs the Littleton Independent. Waring, a Nieman Fellow in 1944-5, has long been a champion and sponsor of high standards of journalism in Colorado weeklies which labored under the handicap of the corrupting influence that blanketed the State from Denver. He is naturally enthusiastic about Palmer Hoyt.

having long ago banned the Post from his doorstep as a matter of principle, blandly explains that he has not looked at a copy of the paper for a decade. Like the first monkey who would see no evil, they have not discerned a change which is shaping the economic, social, and political course of a region that takes in a third of continental United States. In this million-square-mile area there is no newspaper, radio station, or magazine that exerts an influence equal to the Denver Post.

At first glance, the Post looks almost like the newspaper of 1945. The outside pages are still of pink newsprint, and the heads are larger and blacker than most metropolitan dailies. The comics and sports news are plentiful, and the classified section, for which the Post has always been famous, runs up to 122 columns on Sundays. The news is there in abundance, but it is untainted news. Ask Hoyt what he considers the most important of the hundred changes he has made on the Post, and he will tell you "separation of news and

editorials, and giving all sides a hearing."

The old Post made a pretense of letting the people speak by devoting a page to a Public Forum department each Sunday. But when Hoyt looked into the operation of the page, he found that 85 per cent of the letters were written by only five persons who used various names. The new policy is to have letters in the paper each day with all shades of opinion represented. Citizens of modest means, unable to own a mass medium of communication themselves, now feel that they can contribute toward the constructive thinking in the society of which they are a part.

Last fall the Post supported in its editorial columns the Republican candidate for governor and all the Republican candidates for congress.

What did the opposition think of this? Gene Cervi, Democratic state chairman, was questioned on this point.

"It seems to me that fairness is almost a fetish with Palmer Hoyt," he replied. "I believe that if anyone has an idea and is able to present it intelligently he can get a hearing through the Denver Post."

The head of the Communist party disagrees with Cervi. This well-dressed and businesslike minority-party leader came to Hoyt's office last October.

"We think you are unfair in your presentation of facts about Communism," he declared.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Hoyt answered. "You bring in your party views and we'll print them in the Post—anything up to a full page."

The Communist leader never came back. Hundreds of Colorado liberals feel that the Post is too critical of Russia. It is true that nearly every edition presents opinions about the menace of American Communists or of Russian expansionism, but in spite of this crusade the columns remain open for letters of those taking an opposing view.

The Southwest has about the same pro-

(Continued from page 7)  
major share of the responsibility for these failings must, in the final analysis, rest with the hired reporters and editors who, all too often, are so conscious of the beam in the boss' eye that they ignore the moat in their own.

Allow me to digress, momentarily, at this point to comment on an argument which I am certain must be in the mind of every newspaper "wage slave" who has

read this far—that the publisher or owner is responsible for this incompetence, inefficiency and low professional standard among his hirelings because he doesn't pay high enough wages. Will anyone wishing to raise this question produce, as Exhibit A to support his contention, a reporter who isn't certain that he is worth the Guild's minimum goal of \$100 a week, even though he doesn't get it? Until such an exhibit is produced I'll continue to believe

that newsmen are primarily responsible for their own sins.

I regret the failure of the commission to place greater emphasis on this phase of the problem simply because I believe the working press, despite its multitude of shortcomings, offers the most fertile starting point for reformation and revitalization of American newspapers.

Paul L. Evans, editor,  
Mitchell, (S. D.) Daily Republic

portion (one in ten) of Spanish-speaking citizens that the East has of Negroes. The Spanish-Americans and the later arrivals, the Mexicans, have received much the same treatment the colored man has in the South. In some Colorado towns it has been the practice of restaurants to place a sign in the window reading, "White trade only." The Spanish-speaking citizen was looked upon as only fit for labor in the sugar beet fields, in railroad section gangs, and other poorly-paid tasks. The old Denver Post fostered this attitude. A few years ago one of its reporters cautioned that the facts in a certain news story were not reliable and might prove libelous. His editor replied: "You can't libel a Mexican."

A talented Japanese-American woman called on the Denver Post in the mid-years of the war and requested fair news reporting for the loyal native-born members of her race. "A Jap's a Jap to us," she was told.

How far the Post was responsible for racial hatreds in Colorado cannot be judged. But the situation was so bad in 1924 that the Ku Klux Klan elected a governor and sent a senator to Washington. This condition will not return. The new Post has demonstrated an appreciation of all races and faiths. In its weekly gallery of fame, the paper has printed the pictures of Negroes, Mexicans, Japanese, Jews, Catholics, laboring men, and others who have rendered noteworthy public service.

For several years Colorado tolerated a public health condition that compared with the poorer Southern states. The city of Denver has a public health director who has had no training in the field of public health; he is not even a medical doctor. Raw sewage from the city has at times been dumped into the river untreated; undulant fever, diphtheria, and many other preventable diseases are killing Coloradans by the score. Dr. Florence R. Sabin, perhaps America's most eminent woman physician, began a fight last year to clean up the situation. With the strong help of the Post and others, she is winning her battle in the legislature.

Education never won favor with the Denver Post until a year ago.

"I think," said the principal of a large Colorado high school last month, "that the greatest single thing that has happened to Colorado in its history is the appointment of Palmer Hoyt as editor. At last, education has a good friend in the Post."

Hoyt knows what people are thinking and he lets them know his thoughts. He

gets around. He went to the Pacific theater during the war, and he was one of the twelve editors who recently toured Europe on invitation of Secretary of War Patterson. He is always flying to various parts of America. When he returns home he likes to accept invitations to speak and to answer questions from the floor. He has made as high as 25 talks in a month, his favorite themes being the atomic bomb, the international situation, and, above all, "World-Wide Freedom of the Press." He cannot envision a stable and peaceful world unless American editors are able to convince the powers-that-be on this point. He admits that it is a long, slow crusade, but he believes the ideal would be embraced by one nation after another if the American state department were to require press freedom as a condition for economic aid.

Until Hoyt became editor, readers of the Post did not know there were any points in favor of the proposed Missouri Valley Authority. Last spring the Post sent L. A. Chapin to the South where he studied the TVA and came home with enough material for fifteen articles. Now the people of the upper Missouri valley have some information on which to base a judgment.

Hoyt believes Rocky Mountain resources should be developed. He has christened the area the Rocky Mountain Empire and assigned an "Empire Editor" to discover

these resources and to learn how they may be developed.

Not only are the Empire Editor and Hoyt himself well-traveled, but many members of the staff are sent on trips ranging in scope from fashion shows on both coasts to Bikini atoll. Old timers on the paper are enthusiastic over this broadening and pleasure-giving program, and the editorial staff, which has been increased from 56 to 82, appreciates the informal and friendly atmosphere which their progressive new boss has created on Champa street.

It won't be "Champa street" much longer for by the end of next year Hoyt hopes to move the Denver Post to a new location on California street, with offices on 15th street and the plant extending all the way to 14th street. Twenty-four Goss black-and-white units and nine rotogravure units will be installed in the remodeled building. The black-and-white units will be able to turn out 360,000 32-page papers an hour. Major F. W. Bonfils, business manager, has a secret use for these presses which he hopes will revolutionize newspaper advertising.

Besides changing the moral fibre of the Post and planning its physical rejuvenation, Hoyt has won over the small-town editors of the region. The Continental Divide splits his territory into an Eastern Slope and a Western Slope. With the big money and the large newspapers on the east side of the mountains, the Western Slope has long been neglected. Palmer Hoyt is seeing to it that this will no longer be true. For the first time scores of editors from both sides of the divide have been able to meet the head of the Denver Post and find a sympathetic ear. This fact has quieted their fears of Denver domination, and the slurring attacks against the Post in the small-town press have ceased after fifty years.

Hoyt is more than a manufacturer of newspapers, spilling forth profits for the Children's hospital and other stockholders. He is attempting to compound an understandable body of knowledge for his readers, who are the teachers, the public officials, the housewives, and the cowhands of the Rockies.

The New York Times has increased its already important service to education by presenting a special weekly session for New York City teachers, on "Evaluating the News." Times reporters discuss the news of the week. Sponsored jointly by the Times and the New York City board of education, the news sessions, held Tuesday evenings, have drawn 500 teachers.

## Indigenous to Texas

Ted Dealey, publisher of the Dallas News, makes a special point, in an interview with Editor & Publisher, that a newspaper needs to be "indigenous"—his word. It should have its roots in its own region, he insists, and express the distinguishing character of its local area, and without neglect of outside news, emphatically cover the activities of the section it serves.

"If it's published in the Southwest, to just as great an extent as possible its local stories should be written in the Southwestern vernacular, with the use of Southwestern words, and idioms typical of the Southwestern country.

"The ability to write as you talk is an art."

Dealey believes in staffing a newspaper with members who are specialists in a given field. The paper "must be built under its own roof," he says.

He thinks the day of the all-round reporter is practically gone.

# THE EMPEROR'S SLIPPERS

## HIROHITO IN THE LUCE FORMULA

by Richard E. Lauterbach

This correspondent, like many others, had been seeking an audience with Hirohito for several months. As bait, one reporter actually sent the Emperor a weekly gift of chocolates along with his request for an interview. In addition to an interview, I wanted permission to have LIFE'S great photographer, Alfred Eisenstaedt, shoot an informal picture-story about the royal family.

A member of the Imperial Household staff was enlisted on LIFE'S side. He entertained, at LIFE'S expense, higher-ups in the palace staff and members of the Cabinet. Various arguments were advanced against the picture-story. It would break tradition. The Japanese people were unprepared for it. Others had asked before me. One of Premier Shidehara's aides suggested that the last objection could be met by raising my rank above that of an ordinary Tokyo correspondent or Bureau Chief. LIFE obligingly made me Chief Far Eastern Editor and Correspondent and Business Manager, *pro tem*. The cable nominating me for this exalted position, which sounded even better in Japanese, was unfortunately addressed in the routine manner: Life Correspondent.

I was invited to outline in writing for the Emperor the kind of pictures which my magazine wanted. I tried to explain to the Emperor's staff that this was impossible to do accurately unless I knew something in advance of the ordinary activities of the Emperor and his family. The aides were all too embarrassed to discuss this with me. In desperation I typed out a script which had the Emperor reading the funnies with Crown Prince Akihito on his knee, listening to his daughters play the piano, pushing his grandchild in a perambulator, browsing in his library with a good book and standing over a hot microscope in his biological laboratory. I wrote a letter with the script explaining that this was the LIFE formula for great men and urged that a

picture-story be permitted "to show the people of the world how the Emperor actually lived."

Eisenstaedt never got into the palace to take the pictures, much to his disappointment and mine. But one afternoon I was summoned to the office of the director of Sun Photo, the largest Japanese picture agency. With shades drawn and doors closed the director told me that he had the greatest scoop in the history of journalism. It did no good for me to try and hasten his story. He unfolded it at great length between loud sips of tea. Finally he built up to the denouement: for the first time in history—as a special courtesy to LIFE—photographers had been allowed to photograph the private lives of their Imperial Majesties. With much ceremony the prints were taken from a wall safe and unveiled before me.

There were about forty of them. My script, offered only as a sample, had been followed to the last detail. In fact, the Japanese had thought up certain telling details which I had omitted. In the library scene, for example, where Hirohito was shown reading the New York Times, a bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln was discernible in the corner of the room.

When I protested that the set was sensational and magnificent but undoubtedly untrue, the Director was incensed. His own sons had been in the crew of photographers who snapped the pictures. He himself, dressed in frock coat and top hat, had supervised the entire production. They had worked a month of Sundays to make the pictures.

It was pointless to argue with him. I contacted the Imperial Household. Would they verify the truth of the pictures? Certainly, why should I doubt them? Wasn't I satisfied? I pointed out that the pictures followed my outline very closely. The Imperial Household man looked me straight in the eye and asked, "What outline?" He and his colleagues from that moment on stoutly maintained they had never seen any outline or suggested script. The pictures represented the true way in which the Imperial Family lived. I think they believed it even if I did not.

The Imperial Household told me that the pictures must not be released in Japan

because they would "shock" the Japanese people. After LIFE published the best of the set, duplicates were released in Japan—with certain exceptions. The Imperial Household ruled that no Japanese publication could show the royal family eating lunch ("because of the food on the table") or in the living room ("because most Japanese do not have pianos"). I inquired, in conversation with a prominent Tokyo editor, if this censorship had been protested. "Oh, no," he said, "it is a praiseworthy censorship. The censors merely want to show the people that the Emperor does not live any better than his people. That is censorship in the name of democracy." I later found out by talking with two of the photographers who worked on the story that the forty pictures which I received had been pre-censored. The Privy Council men had killed various shots showing Hirohito in uniform. The Americans must see him as a harmless little man.

The Japanese photographers felt that they had reached the pinnacle of their careers. "Unless we photograph MacArthur," one said, "there is nothing left to do." When they began the palace assignment they found every one "stiff and cold" because they had always posed for formal shots. But "the Emperor saw that all was not well and said, 'We will be natural so you be at ease, too.'" When the cameramen recovered from their shock at being addressed directly by the Emperor, they set to work. The Crown Prince asked his father, "What shall I do? How shall I pose?" His father replied, "As you do ordinarily."

When the photographers saw the Imperial slippers, worn and frayed, on the floor outside the Imperial bedroom (which they could not enter) they broke down and cried. "We had no idea things were like that," they told me. "You see the Emperor makes sacrifices for his people."

On the following Sunday when they returned to the palace the cameramen noticed that the slippers had been mended with tape. They wept again.

The pictures were sent off to LIFE with the warning that "Naturally this is all part of a galvanic public relations campaign to prove the Emperor is a good guy and lives very simply, therefore he is democratic and should be retained."

---

War correspondent for Life in Russia, China and Japan, author of "These are the Russians" and "Through Russia's Back Door", Richard E. Lauterbach is now spending a Nicman Fellowship in the new China regional studies at Harvard.

---

# "SOMETHING CALLED FISSION"

## SCIENCE IN THE PRESS

*(An Appraisal by the Nieman Fellows of 1945-6)*

One night in May, 1940, William L. Laurence, science reporter of the New York Times, had a heavy argument with the paper's news editors. Laurence had run across a physicist's report about something called "fission," having to do with the splitting of atoms of uranium. He thought it was quite a story, and wanted a lot of space to tell it in. The editors thought it was all rather academic, certainly not worth the seven columns Laurence demanded. But Times editors have long been trained to be respectful toward science (and Laurence) and he finally won his extravagant demand.

At the rival *Herald Tribune*, science reporter John O'Neil was less lucky; his paper did not use his story on the same subject at all.

In August, 1945, the situation changed dramatically. The press suddenly became very interested, indeed, in the atom. But it cannot be said that its interest has contributed very much to general enlightenment. With few exceptions, newspapers fumbled the atom badly. They were unprepared, for the most part, to satisfy the immense public curiosity aroused by the Bomb. A measure of the newspapers' failure is the fact that all over the country, clubs and groups of people, failing to find adequate explanations in the papers, besought scientists and even pseudo-experts to come and explain to them the elementary facts about atoms and the Bomb.

Nor can it be said that newspapers have been helpful in guidance on what to do about the Bomb. Most people clung to a blind belief that the scientists would somehow find a defense against it, in spite of the scientists' attempts (ill-supported by the press) to assure them to the contrary. The press nudged false hope along by printing silly little stories, like the one that Bing Crosby's brother had discovered a way to stop the Bomb. And newspapers, particularly Hearst's, have done much to foster the illusion of safety in secrecy—"We must not give away the secret!" The press could have rendered the American people a great service by killing this idiotic notion, which has obsessed and bedeviled Congress' entire approach to the problem. It has been clear to scientists all along, and they said it again and again, that the Bomb could not long remain a secret; U.S. insistence on retaining exclusive possession of the secret (and continued manufacture of the bombs) could have

only one result: to stimulate other countries to arm themselves with atomic weapons of their own.

Of matters scientific, the American people are appallingly ignorant. The press is not entirely to blame for this (incredible as it may seem, in view of all the press and radio attention to the Bikini bomb tests, a 1946 poll showed that 20% of the people had never heard of the events at Bikini). Our schools have done a poor job of interesting people in science or equipping them with basic knowledge in it. This lays a great handicap on newspapers; readers do not have enough elementary scientific knowledge to understand scientific news. Lacking such knowledge, they tend to look upon science as Black Magic, and to misunderstand its aims, methods and accomplishments.

A large portion of the press still has to be convinced that science deserves much of its attention. When we asked a publisher in a small city how his paper covered scientific news, he replied:

"Well, we often get a university professor to do a science story for us or a story on some particular economic matter or something of that sort. We have no regular member of the staff who does science coverage."

Question: "Are you thinking about it?"

Answer: "I hadn't been, very much. I can't conceive what kind of science we could have that would be interesting to the average newspaper reader."

This comment is not exceptional; in fact, the editor who made it publishes rather better than average science news, since his paper subscribes to the New York Times news service.

Nevertheless, many editors are beginning to realize that they could, and probably should, do a much better job of reporting science than they do.

In a world in which the people are increasingly called upon to legislate on atomic energy, on public health and medical care, on support of scientific research, they must be informed about at least the basic facts and significance of scientific work. The newspapers are probably the most important agency for such information. They can spread error or truth; they set the pattern and the pace. They are, in a sense, already "educating" the public about science—via patent medicine ads, astrology

columns and 57 varieties of Sunday supplement pap.

If the Bikini bomb tests were intended to contribute to public enlightenment, the press certainly muffed the ball. Hundreds of reporters covered the event, but most of them seemed to have no idea of what happened, except that there was a big, beautiful explosion. The failure of their stories to agree, or to present an informative account, is understandable, since many of the reporters, to make sure of meeting deadlines, wrote their stories before the explosions actually took place. After the big flash, newspapers quickly lost interest; few bothered to follow up to find out what, if any, scientific findings developed from the test.

Like atomic energy, radar dazzled, mystified and then soon wearied the press. After the first dramatic descriptions of radar's accomplishments as a military weapon, the papers dropped it, and radar's application to improving the safety of commercial aviation, due to lack of public drive, was delayed.

Biological warfare is another item in the journalistic gallery of Black Magic—a vague, formless fear that newspapers discuss without any real understanding. Typical of their ignorance and gullibility was a story they bought in 1946. The *London Daily Express* excitedly reported that United States bacteriologists had developed a "germ weapon" consisting of infantile paralysis virus. The story was absurd on its face; if bacteriologists had actually discovered how polio may be spread, it would have been tremendous medical news, a great step toward prevention of the disease. But the Associated Press solemnly picked up the story, and American editors gave it wide circulation. The AP, however, should not be singled out for special criticism; at least it employs one or two special science reporters. The United Press, somewhat less reliable in this field, treats science like a peep show; it does not hesitate, for instance, to put out a story announcing watermelon seed as a "cure" for pernicious anemia.

Scientists gloomily complain that the press distorts their work; its science coverage consists mainly of sensations, "cures" and "miracles." At a 1946 Boston meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, about the only thing the *Boston Post* found worth

reporting (with a huge page one headline) was a new permanent wave process for women's hair (and not very new, at that). The prize for the most typical science story headline of 1946 might perhaps have been awarded to this one in the Chicago Daily News:

**NEW MOUTH WASH PRAISED  
END OF TOOTH DECAY FORESEEN**

The story was not quite as bad as the headline; it did mention in passing that the Chicago dentist who had concocted this wonderful mouth wash conceded that it "does not completely stop decay," and that diet was important, too.

The notion that a mouth wash may solve our dental and social problems admittedly is attractive (it makes a lot of money for mouth wash manufacturers and advertising men), but even a headline writer ought to retain a decent amount of skepticism. Newspapers are far too uncritical of what comes to them in the name of science. There are errors and phonies to watch for in science as in other fields. To be sure, a newspaper is in no position to make an expert judgment of a scientist's evidence, but the least it can do is to interview other authorities in the field before publishing a doubtful story. A scientific event, like a political one, always has a history and background which needs to be consulted to give the story meaning.

One of the chief reasons for the newspapers' poor reporting of science is that most of them lack reporters trained in science. Dr. Edwin Cohn, who directed Harvard's famous research on blood components during the war, told us: "You can't expect to get sound science reporting as long as the press will use a reporter who is not trained in that field. Publishers take the easy way, covering science at a personality level."

We don't agree with Dr. Cohn's objection to personalities; scientists are interesting and important as people, and reporting science in terms of people helps to enliven an otherwise cold subject. But there is no question but that a reporter who undertakes to cover science ought to know something about it. The newspapers' failure to use trained science reporters is partly due to a theory that what an ordinary reporter does not understand, readers would not understand, either. It is an erroneous theory. The British are far ahead of us in popularization of science, principally because some of their greatest sci-

entists have gone in for popular writing; men like Eddington and Jeans have written about difficult scientific ideas so clearly and fascinatingly that they are read with enjoyment by laymen all over the world. In the United States, books of scientists who can write, like George Gamow's *Mr. Tompkins Explores the Atom*, have been widely read, and *Life Magazine*, using scientifically trained writers, has done a beautiful, pioneering job in graphic explanation of serious science.

We fail to understand why newspapers don't use more charts, drawings, photographs, pictographs and cartoons to illustrate science stories. A few papers, notably *PM*, have pioneered in that kind of illustration for other types of stories and shown that it is a practical idea. With skill and resourcefulness, a science department could be at least as attractive as crossword columns and quiz columns.

Newspaper science reporting suffers from a curious, double-headed disease: it is both trivial and stuffy. Most stories are either so oversimplified or so full of technical terms that hardly anybody can understand them. A librarian's survey in New Jersey turned up the significant fact that most readers consider science reports in newspapers too technical; they much preferred the science stories in popular

### Power of Press

A. B. G. Jr., writing in your first issue of *The Nieman Reports* on the Florence Crittenton (not Crittenden, please) Home for unwed mothers, wasn't the only one to snag an assignment about that worthy institution.

As a cub I also caught one which I submit could still serve as a final examination problem in any school of journalism.

Lowell Mellett, then editor of the *Washington Daily News*, set me to work—with the admonition that I was to observe the canons of delicacy but not to neglect the elements of humor—on a story which would bring out the fact that the Home was troubled because of the waste of its facilities. It had lovely accommodations for at least 30 more unmarried mothers, but there were no takers. Maybe if *The News* wrote a story of the situation, it might be remedied, the matron thought.

The story was written, but I was too shattered by the experience ever to inquire whether it did any good.

Washington

A. F.

magazines. This is simply an indication of newspaper laziness. There is no point in publishing a science story that readers cannot understand. The newspaper's job is one of translation, and a science reporter who really knows his job and understands what he is talking about ought to be able to explain at least the fundamentals of any scientific story (except, of course, in higher mathematics).

The scientific curiosity of readers, as the large-circulation Sunday supplements, in their own perverted way, have shown, is not restricted to super-dramatic events like the atomic bomb. Readers are hungry for information about health, medicine, technology and invention and the nature of the universe. Medical discoveries have lengthened the average life span and made man useful and employable for a longer period. Now cotton pickers may throw millions of farm hands out of work in our southern states. The high cost of modern medical care has produced great pressure for social medicine. Such great changes and social pressures generate informational wants and needs that the press must somehow satisfy. The press should feel a sense of guilt about the fact that, according to polls in 1946, six out of ten Americans had never heard or read about the Wagner-Murray-Dingell health insurance bill in Congress. The fact does not speak well for the service of information the press is providing. The press may be able to point out, for the record, that many papers did mention the bill, but they did not go out of their way to explain or advertise it.

Science presents a great, unexplored opportunity to the press. On the stage of world affairs, it occupies an increasingly prominent, not to say dominant, place. We are convinced that if newspapers gave science really serious attention, it would pay dividends, in circulation and press prestige.

Science, in the social as well as the physical realm, is important to a modern democracy, for democracy rests, at bottom, on scientific method. It functions best in a climate of public respect for facts and for expertness. Moreover, science is a universal, unifying language; like music, it makes the whole world kin. Its most momentous achievement, the atomic bomb, was the joint product of Austrian, German, Italian, Danish, British, French and American scientists. The world-wide fraternity of science gives us an international bond which the press is bound to develop and safeguard. Freedom of science and freedom of the press are two sides of the same coin.

A Contrary View

## AGAINST SPECIALISTS

By Stephen White

I have the distinction of being, I believe, the only science writer to be refused membership in the National Association of Science Writers, and it all happened at a dinner given by the Nieman Fellows. I had listened, for hours, to my colleagues in the field of science writing speaking on two subjects: how important science writing is, and how stupid managing editors are for printing papers which include less than thirty-five per cent science news. Since I am in agreement on neither point, I got to my feet and somewhat clumsily expressed my disagreement with those views, in a desperate effort to point out that not all science writers shared them. The next morning the N.A.S.W. met to discuss applications for membership, and included me out.

There was an attempt, later, to impress upon me the enormity of my crime, and some displeasure, I think, because I stubbornly maintained my ground. As it happens, the whole subject of specialty writing is one that interests me. At heart I will always be a general assignment man, and I share the reporter's distaste for the specialist in spite of the fact that the combination of Hiroshima and a desperate city editor made one of me.

Somewhat presumptuously, I would like to submit a few footnotes for specialists. They are written with reference to science, but they apply with equal rigor to the aviation writer, the medical writer, the education writer, the labor writer, and all the other specialists who these days infest the city room. It seems unfair that I should provoke only the N.A.S.W. So, to me, to them and to all our allies—look, boys:

1) Your specialty isn't very important, and that goes, whatever your specialty is. The newspaper exists to present news and comment on news, and you cover only one portion of the current scene. On any day, the value of your contribution must be judged in its relation to all the other material that comes before the editors.

When an atom bomb drops, the science writer is the most important gentleman on the staff. When Dr. Ergo Mutzlif determines once and for all the electro-static charge on a meatball, the science writer is the least important. The good doctor's

contribution may be of extreme interest to science, but it can't run one-two to a reasonably good homicide, or a sharp statement by the mayor, or even a fairly interesting Rotary Club meeting. In fact, nobody gives a damn about Dr. Mutzlif except Dr. Mutzlif and a few of his colleagues, and they will read all about it in the next issue of "The Physical Review."

Of course, Dr. Mutzlif's contribution may mean that in ten years we will have meatballs with the mustard built in. In that case, the managing editor will be glad to hear about it, and will move the value of the story up a notch or two. But it is the interest of your story to his readers that sways him, not the value of Dr. Mutzlif's contribution to science. The managing editor who cares about science as science should change jobs and edit "Naturwissenschaften."

2) Your newspaper is paying you that fantastically ponderous salary on the assumption that you are a newspaperman. If they wanted a great physicist to work for them, they would have hired a great physicist. Instead they wanted someone who could write about physics for a daily paper, so they hired you.

Out of a sense of elementary decency, you should get out of the newspaper business the moment you have convinced yourself that the years have made you a great physicist. Get into physics, you fool. It pays better, and look at all the prestige.

Meanwhile, as you debate your future to yourself, would you mind acting like a newspaperman? At press conferences when a Nobel prize winner explains his latest theory, be a good fellow, and don't argue with him even though you do know better. Pretend that you are just a reporter, even though deep in your heart you know that six or seven years of meeting physicists has given you a far more dependable knowledge of their specialty than they have been able to get in a lifetime of hard work.

3) Try writing in English from time to time. You and I both know that this is a disgusting thing to be forced into, since the best way to express the meaning of the word "paleobotany" is to write "paleobotany." The trouble is, again, that the people who know what paleobotany means don't read your stories anyway—they were all at the meeting.

It is undeniable that most attempts to make a specialty clear to a person who does not know the specialized vocabulary

convey information that is not entirely accurate. But if you retain the special vocabulary, you convey no information whatsoever to the average reader. You don't convey much information to the managing editor, either, so quite properly he throws your story away or places it carefully with the rupture ads. I wouldn't work for a managing editor who did anything else.

4) Undoubtedly you know more about your specialty than the general assignment reporter does, but that doesn't alter your responsibilities to your paper, which are the same as his. Your stories should be readable and as accurate as you can make them. If, as is mentioned above, the English language doesn't permit absolute precision for you, remember that it doesn't permit it for him either—he has the same difficulties in another form. He tries to describe a fire, when all the time he knows that a good fire is indescribable.

And don't sensationalize, just because you know that your specialized knowledge makes it difficult for anyone on the paper to check up on you. I have worked in every department of general reporting, and I am convinced that the worst offenders in sensationalizing the news are the specialists. They get away with murder, and every success makes them bolder. For my part, it has reached a point where I trust no science story without checking the facts unless I know the writer personally and know him to be accurate. (Most of the time, it goes without saying, I know the writer personally and know him to be inaccurate.)

Finally, as I write this the man at the next desk is bringing the obit of Harry K. Thaw up to date, and it reminds me... The story goes, probably apocryphally, that the day after Sanford White was killed the drama editor for a New York newspaper pointed out to the city editor an inaccuracy in the news report of the shooting.

"How do you know all this?" asked the city editor.

"I was at the next table," said the drama editor, "when the shooting began."

The city editor rose to his feet and shrieked. "And you didn't call in or come to this office?"

"Oh, I checked up," said the drama editor. "There was no theater angle whatsoever."

Maybe it isn't apocryphal at that. It sounds like the way a specialist's mind works.

---

Stephen White writes currently about science—but would rather write about other things, he claims—for the New York Herald Tribune.

---

# THE NEGRO PRESS

## A CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

by Frank Stanley

Throughout the world today, people are vitally concerned about man's inability to live in Christian Brotherhood. The sinister forces at play portray a picture of conditions that are grave and full of evil portent. It is a picture of man's incapacity to master his environment, one of violence, of fear, of mistrust and shortsightedness. It is self evident that a climactic situation exists which threatens to overturn human affairs. The physical conclusion of the greatest war known to mankind has given us a new chance to re-examine our ideals. Mankind has been given another trial—another chance to foster universal brotherhood in order that we might learn to live decently together.

If we fail again, we are doomed. This time we must give more than "lip service" to the democratic way of life. A price must be paid for the ideals and privileges of democracy apart from understanding them. We have to live and practice them. We have professed great ideals in the past but have not lived up to them. We say that in this land of ours there is no discrimination because of color or creed yet we know that men are denied public office and other opportunities because of religion or skin pigmentation. We have failed to make democracy function to the fullest extent and time is running out on us.

Many of us as exponents of gradualism predict that a workable democracy will come in the distant future but do nothing to hasten its arrival.

Those who would attain true democracy must not only live and practice its principles but if necessary—fight for them. This obligation is incumbent upon every sincere and true American who would have first class citizenship himself and willingly extend the same to all regardless of station in life.

By first class citizenship here is meant full equality—of employment opportunities, of the ballot box, of education, of pay, of housing, of recreation, of health and hospitalization and equal protection under the law.

A civil government can grant to an individual some rights as when the government confers citizenship upon an immigrant. These are civil rights; the government gives them and they may be retracted. But there are other rights which are so fundamental that the civil government

cannot abrogate them. They are natural.

In the profession of journalism the application is patent. The rights of the Negro are the same as those of the white man. He has the right to live without fear of bodily harm, to own a home and to pursue happiness. Every responsible newspaper seeks to secure fuller observance of the natural rights of all citizens.

Unfortunately in America today there are those reactionary, narrow-minded diehards who insist that the right to live decently and with dignity is to be restricted to color.

The ghettos in which the majority of Negroes in America are forced to live are bulging at the seams while restrictive covenants operate to keep Negro families from being able to buy or rent property outside of them—meanwhile creating aggravated problems of health, sanitation, inadequate police protection, delinquency and deficient public service. This and many more internal disorders are traceable to the white supremacy complex—the greatest menace to democracy.

It is based entirely on false concepts and its biggest fear is social equality. The term "Social Equality" is a misnomer and is incorrectly used as an argument—in its narrowest meaning—personal and intimate relationships, against equality of opportunity. Neither the Negro nor any member of

---

Publisher of the Louisville Defender, Frank Stanley is also president of the Negro Newspaper Publishers' Association. He spoke, with President Truman and Justice Felix Frankfurter, at the second annual Willkie awards for the best Negro journalism of 1946.

The award for public service went to P. Bernard Young, Jr., editor of the Norfolk Journal and Guide, for articles on the deficiencies in Negro rural schools in the State; for objective reporting, to Ralph Matthews of the national bureau of "Afro-American" for his articles on economic and social conditions in Haiti at the time of William Hastie's appointment as governor; for other than news writing, to William O. Walker, editor, Cleveland Call-Post, for his columns on race relations; special award to Chicago Defender and Radio Station WBBM for a weekly program, "Democracy USA."

---

other minority groups, has a desire to force intimacy any more so than those of the privileged classes. But he does have the ever-present desire to exercise full citizenship rights such as the right to sit anywhere on a bus, to go to a theatre without being restricted to the gallery, to be served in restaurants, to belong to a professional association or to pursue a degree without a racial tag.

In short, he wants full access to all of the public accommodations accorded any other American citizen without wearing the eternal "badge of inferiority" which segregation implies. Those of us who seek to improve race relations must keep the issue on social equality clear and refuse to let the reactionaries cloud the public mind.

A formula must be developed that takes into account the two attitudes of mind commonly defined as "Northern" and "Southern" but not necessarily confined to the geographic boundaries within these United States.

Northern minds can be taught very forcefully the facts of biology and the actual conditions, economic and social, under which minorities suffer. On the other hand the Southern mind already knows these handicaps because he applies them and will not accept the facts of biology readily. You can strike at the very root of his prejudices, however, by pointing out concrete examples of successful Negro and white relationships in the South, particularly in employment, government and civic endeavors. Relate the fate of the Negro to that of the Jew, the poor white and the foreign-born and denounce all narrow nationalisms which seek to make the members of any group believe they can lift themselves without allies among other classes.

More important than anything else—openly and courageously expose all stumbling blocks to interracial progress. These are but a few of the many techniques employable in the concentration of efforts and the marshaling of forces necessary to develop a basic program to effect real democracy.

Newspapers, along with other mediums of expression, have a great opportunity to inform people correctly. Every newspaper must be decent, unprejudiced, reliably informed and technically proficient.

It must possess character and should crusade for the causes of freedom, abstract truth and enlightenment.

The race problem is part and parcel of the problem of democracy and equal participation in life's benefits. It is all of the problems rolled into one. Discrimination involves not only races but inner weakness, insecurity and fears. Therefore, no newspaper performs its complete function as a medium of reliable information unless it consistently tells the truth unremittingly. This, the Negro press seeks to do. It has the double function of objectively reporting the news as affecting all people and more particularly its readership; second, it must of necessity, fight against race hate, bigotry and social fear.

It is essential that the great American press create a broad and consistent frontal attack on racial tyranny and injustice as affecting all people. The fight must be pressed with intelligence, vigor and vision until every clear-thinking citizen is made aware that oppression because of accident of birth can only produce continued turmoil and destroy all chances to full enjoyment of the American way of life. This is the challenge of democracy to the American press.

The great American press was made famous by such warriors in the public's interest as Greeley, Pulitzer, Dana, Waterson and Grady. True to their heritage of birth in passion and protest such metropolitan newspapers as the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Washington Post, New York Herald Tribune, PM, Louisville Courier-Journal, Chicago Sun and others, are dedicating their editorial pages to the welfare of all the people and not to the interests of one exclusive and fortunate class.

Only through the establishment of a liberal editorial policy with regard to democracy can we ever hope for success. This is both a responsibility and an obligation. Newspapers, white and black, should pace the fight by first putting their respective houses in order through the elimination of everything suggestive of racial differences, certainly the elimination of racial classifications, sensationalism and bias.

We Americans, just for the reason that we are not a homogeneous people, but a vast mixture of races, nationalities and creeds, have the greatest opportunity of our lives to emulate the ideals of world democracy. Among ourselves and before all the world we can demonstrate that democracy is workable and that it can be real, by establishing here in America, once and for all, a democracy that knows no distinction of race, creed, color or national origin; that holds all human beings in high respect and seeks for all of its citizens, full opportunity to a good life.

## Color Line Overruled

Bert Andrews, Washington correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune, thought it was news when the standing committee of the Congressional press galleries denied admission to Louis R. Lautier, Negro correspondent of the Atlanta Daily World, a Negro daily. The New York Times, with most other papers, saw no news in it.

Andrews described it as an issue that has long caused controversy in Washington newspaper circles. He named the four members of the committee who voted to exclude the Negro newspaperman and one—Griffing Bancroft of the Chicago Sun—who voted to admit him. He reported that the denial of admission to Negro correspondents to the press gallery, which includes some 700 newspapermen, has historically been put on the basis of their failure to represent daily papers. Most Negro papers are weeklies. But Andrews cited Ayers' Newspaper Directory as describing the Atlanta World as a daily. He noted that the rejection of the Negro applicant came on the heels of the Willkie awards for Negro journalism, an occasion which President Truman used to praise the "courageous and constructive" reporting of the Negro press.

The 14 Nieman Fellows at Harvard joined in a telegram to protest the exclusion of the Negro correspondent. They said:

"The committee has failed to make use of a great opportunity to widen the sphere of the American free press. The Negro press represents 10,000,000 American readers. For years it has been denied access to essential sources of national news. The committee should be alert to such an opportunity as that afforded by Mr. Lautier to eliminate this injustice and further ensure free access of information to all American citizens."

Editorially the Herald Tribune said that "Mr. Lautier has been barred on the ground that his application failed to meet the rules. Interestingly enough, the chairman, although a minority of one, voted to admit him. At least one man on the committee had his doubts . . . If the rules don't fit, then perhaps the rules should be changed."

When Lautier carried the issue to the Senate Rules Committee, it overrode the correspondents' standing committee to admit the Negro correspondent. It took no action on proposals for revision of the rules for the correspondents' gallery. Griffing Bancroft, chairman of the correspondents' standing committee, invited the Senate Rules Committee to join in discussion of revising the rules. He pointed out that the many weekly Negro papers are still

## NOTES

On March 4, the Boston Globe observed its 75th anniversary by turning the whole front page over to an historical article by its editor-emeritus, James Morgan, biographer of its founder, Gen. Charles H. Taylor. The normal front page makeup went on page 2.

The Globe has announced the first 10 winners of its World War II Memorial Fellowships. Each carries \$1,000 for a year of travel or study anywhere in the western hemisphere.

Page One Awards by the Detroit Newspaper Guild were received by the following for "distinctive contributions to Detroit journalism during 1946":

Henry George Hoch, Detroit News church editor; Marguerite Gahagan, Detroit News court reporter; Howard Shirkey, Detroit Times photographer; Waldo E. McNaught, Times picture editor; Hugh Daly, Times Washington correspondent; Robert Sturgiss, and Warren Stromberg, Detroit Free Press reporters.

Robert J. Casey of Torpedo Junction and the Chicago Daily News, and W. A. S. Douglas, ex-Chicago Sun war correspondent and columnist, have organized Historians, Inc., to write business, industrial and personal histories for large companies. Mrs. Casey (formerly Hazel MacDonald of the Chicago Times) is treasurer of the new Chicago firm.

Charles Francis Coe, noted lawyer and author of crime stories, became publisher of the Palm Beach Post and Times after their purchase in February by John H. Perry, "the boiler plate king."

Mr. Coe, who is attorney for the Perry interests in Florida, represented Mr. Perry in the transaction which was negotiated by Smith Davis & Co., brokers. Albert Zugsmits, executive vice-president of that firm, represented the estate of Charles Barry Shannon.

Neil O. Davis, editor and publisher of the Lee County Bulletin at Auburn, whose paper won first place for general excellence in the contest sponsored by the University of Alabama Journalism Department for the second straight year, was named president of the Alabama Press Association at its 76th annual convention.

unrepresented. Meantime the periodicals gallery executive committee unanimously approved credentials to the first Negro magazine correspondent, who is Percival L. Pratts, of "Our World."

Reporters at Work**PRESENT DAY AMERICAN TRAGEDY**

by Vincent Sheean

Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 26—A central theme in the American tragedy of our time is being developed day by day in the county courthouse at Lawrenceburg, Tenn., surrounded by local indifference and national unconcern. Twenty-five Negroes from the nearby town of Columbia are on trial for attempted murder as a result of the night of terror on Feb. 25 last, when both whites and blacks in a few hours were swept by all the dark forces of unreason, and the frightened Negroes of the whole area gathered to defend themselves or die together in the single block of shabby little shops, their Broadway and their Fifth Avenue, known in Columbia as "Mink Slide."

The case is practically unique in the history of race relations because it contains no illusive or delusive elements. That is, the usual appeals to sentiment or prejudice, to Southern chivalry, to the defense of white womanhood or to other pretexts familiar in previous cases cannot be made here.

The most the state can hope to prove, judging by its witnesses up to now, is that the terrified Negroes of Columbia, huddled in the darkness of their single business center on the night of Feb. 25, expecting attack by a white mob, fired enough ammunition to injure four white policemen who were coming toward the slope called Mink Slide. No effort is made to prove who fired the shots that injured the policemen, nor even, really, to connect the specific defendants in this trial with the shooting. In the darkness and terror of that night nobody knew and nobody saw anything.

Under collective responsibility, as originated by British in India, on the Indian border and in Palestine, and afterward developed by the Nazis in the occupied territories of Europe, a whole unit of population, such as a village, is held responsible for the deeds of any member or members thereof. The most notable case in Nazi practice was the destruction of the village of Lidice in Czechoslovakia.

In this case the whole Negro population of Columbia, Tenn., was originally held responsible for the disturbance of Feb. 25, 103 of them being held in jail without charges for a week and thoroughly beaten

---

The Nieman Fellows of 1945-46 made a blueprint of the kind of newspaper they would like to see. They selected this story from the New York Herald Tribune to illustrate what they mean by reporting.

---

up, according to the evidence. During this week of terror the Negro shops in Mink Slide were smashed to smithereens by the state troopers and two of the 103 men and boys in jail were shot during questioning, or, as the classic phrase has it here as in Germany, "while trying to escape." Among the survivors the state has picked a certain number to be defendants in the trial, choosing them impartially in ages from seventeen to seventy-six and has selected a certain number of others to be witnesses. Ten of the twenty-five defendants served in the Army and Navy during the war which ended last year, and they sit this year in the Lawrenceburg courtroom in the odds-and-ends of their country's uniform.

The trial is conducted in a way which has to be seen to be believed. Even after a lifetime of reading accounts of these operations I was not prepared for the ruthlessness with which every scrap of explanatory evidence is ruled out. The prosecution is allowed to do anything it chooses, including the most bizarre outbursts of anger and threats of violence against defense counsel, while the defense is not permitted to introduce a shred of proof bearing upon the reasons for these events.

Last Friday the chief defense attorney, Mr. A. E. Loobey, of Nashville, presented a closely reasoned and coldly legal argument for the introduction of evidence on previous lynchings in Columbia, as well as on the general causes of the terror of the Negroes on Feb. 25. This argument was presented in the absence of the jury, lest their ears be contaminated by the knowledge that in other states and other cases explanatory evidence has been admitted. The judge in this case ruled it all out. If there had been fifty lynchings in Columbia in the present century, instead of only two in the last twenty years, it still would provide no reason for Negro apprehension, according to this ruling.

In the same way the defense is cut short whenever it attempts to bring home

to the jury the quality of the state's witnesses. These consist chiefly of terrified Negroes who have been beaten up at various times and made to sign statements which few of them were ever permitted to read. All that I heard had been in the crowded and horrible Columbia jail during the week of terror, when all were tortured and two were murdered. One finds it almost impossible to believe that statements obtained in this way can be regarded as evidence anywhere on earth.

As a matter of fact the chief prosecutor, whose name is Paul Bumpus and whose official title is Circuit Attorney General, seems very ill at ease himself with this kind of evidence and is careful to ask each witness if he was beaten up, tortured or maltreated in his, Bumpus's presence. "Were you at any time beaten up or physically maltreated in my presence?" he asks, with his accent on the last three words. The Negro witness replies that he was not—which is quite enough for this court. The torture which preceded Bumpus's interview with his witnesses can be brought out if the defense is quick and clever, but the court rules most of this evidence out as loud and fast as possible.

The judge's name is Joe—not Joseph, but Joe—Ingram, and his bark, sounding off in a sort of comic unison with that of Bumpus, chokes off everything in the whole complex of race relations which might make explicable the dreadful uprush of animal terror in Columbia last Friday. The defense is muzzled to a degree one had never believed possible in the United States, and is in effect limited, in its cross-examination of the state's witnesses, to strict details of what Bumpus has elected to ask in his direct examination. The defense, of course, attempts at this stage—the prosecution's case—to shake the state's witnesses, to attack their evidence as having been obtained by torture and intimidation, or to show that the evidence offered cannot be true because of physical or other reasons. Thus earlier this week, during the cross-examination of a high school boy, when the defense was attempting to show that the boy had been visited at his home and questioned at length during the height of terror by a white man unknown to him, the judge, Circuit Judge Joe Ingram, said the following exact words: "It makes no difference who questioned him."

I heard this with my own ears and it is also stenographically recorded. This remarkable trial is being recorded verbatim, at the expense of the National Committee for Justice in Tennessee. Normally no running record is kept of such proceedings and the custom here is for the opposing attorneys to meet after court sessions and decide between them what the evidence was.

As a result of this salutary precaution it is already possible to read the astounding record of the search for a jury, during which most of the veniremen frankly confessed that they could not give a fair trial to any Negro. "I just don't like niggers" was a common remark. This took place last week, and the defense used up all of its 200 peremptory challenges. The prosecution used its challenges to get rid of the Negro veniremen.

Aside from the general bewilderment of the newcomer at the way this trial is conducted, the chief impression made by the state's witnesses is the way in which, bit by bit, and usually unconsciously, they build up the picture of the dreadful terror that seized the Negroes of Columbia on the night of Feb. 25. It comes back in scraps. A slim, frightened girl who contradicted herself badly, was asked: "What was the first thing they said to you when you got to Mink Slide in the car?" She answered: "They said to put the lights out." The little street was darkened and the men and boys who had arms held them ready for what might be their last defense. The white mob had formed in the courthouse square a block away and was demanding first of all the Stephenson boy—James Stephenson, a nineteen-year-old sailor just back from the wars, whose quarrel with a white man over what he supposed to be an insult to his mother brought on the whole outbreak of passion and fear. By the state's evidence, the white mob had already attempted to rush the jail; the sheriff himself testified to this.

I went to Mink Slide at dusk last night. It is a pitiful street of gaiety, the soda fountain of Julius Blair (he is seventy-six and a defendant); the barbershop of his son, Sol Blair; two or three cafes, some lights and sidewalk loungers now. It is one block long and its right name is East Eighth Street. At the foot of the street is the shabby, gray wooden Church of the Holy Comforter, where nine of the Negroes hid in the hole under the foundations. The Baptist church and the funeral parlor of James Morton (also a defendant) are across the street. It is a sharp slope, the

single block of this street, and with all the lights out it must have been quite impossible for the frightened huddle around Blair's soda fountain to see anything up on the top of the hill where the street leads to the courthouse.

Some rather important state's evidence had to do with what one frightened Negro boy—now held in jail on a robbery charge and brought out to give evidence in this case "so that it will go easy with you"—said he could see out in the street, Mink Slide, from his position on the floor behind the first billiard table in the back room of Blair's soda fountain. I went to the back room and got on the floor behind the billiard table (now tables have been put in exactly in the places of those destroyed by the state police during the terror). I could see nothing whatever in the street outside.

Similarly, a policeman's evidence about having seen armed Negroes "on the skyline" is made preposterous by the fact that there is no skyline—the hollow called Mink Slide is far below the wooded skyline of the town behind, and nobody in Mink Slide could be seen upon a skyline so distant, except by an excited imagination. But it would apparently be impossible to ask a male white jury in Tennessee to go and look for themselves at the place where these events took place. Just as impossible, apparently, as to get into evidence some explanatory fragments of the vast and terrible social problem which causes such events, and of which the men in the Lawrenceburg Courthouse are all in their various ways the victims.

## Folliard Reports:

### The End of the Record

The reduction of the third largest city in America to one morning newspaper by the sale of the Record to the Bulletin in Philadelphia, with its attendant dramatic, tragic and confusing circumstances, was a major event in American journalism. It was treated voluminously from the management side in Editor & Publisher and from the labor side in the New Republic. In most newspapers it was treated with bulletin-like brevity of wire service reports, largely limited to official statements on the sale. This followed the newspaper convention that news of other newspapers is not news or very little news.

In marked departure from this self-conscious newspaper convention, the Washington Post assigned its top flight political reporter, Edward T. Folliard to the story. He did three full length articles that told more than had been told till then about the circumstances of the sale and the re-

sulting situation. Folliard tackled the story as he would any other of major importance. He interviewed all sides and the middle. He presented the story of the Guild strike on the Record, Publisher J. David Stern's long record with the Guild, and his changed attitude as revealed in an interview; the views of Record writers, both pro and anti-strike, and of Guild leaders. He described what the Bulletin has done with the Record features and investigated the prospects of resumption of the Record under independent ownership. His three articles were under the tag lines: "Who Wrote '30' for the Record?" "Anti-trust Angle?" and "Publisher's View of Strike." It was a thorough, penetrating, wholly objective piece of reporting, such as the best newspaper reporters are habitually assigned to do on situations that concern other than newspaper situations.

Without a breath of editorializing, Folliard explored all the involved questions of personalities, psychology, finance and motivation. Where he found no answers he left the questions themselves spelling out their riddles and dilemmas in the mind of the reader. His painstaking recital of the details of the disaster to Philadelphia, to the Guild and to journalism registered with a poignant note that recalled the death of the New York World.

## S. F. Chronicle Quarterly

The San Francisco Chronicle published the fourth issue of the Chronicle Quarterly in February, a 32 page issue, handsomely printed and illustrated on high-grade magazine stock, with the "key editorials" of the paper during the preceding three months. Among the editorials the Chronicle chose to reprint "in more enduring form" were a long two-part essay on "Labor in the Atomic Age," one on "Poverty, Always With Us," "A Great Challenge" (to the Republicans); "Why the Democrats Lost," "Trieste and the Danzig Lesson," "Fugitives from Fate" (on displaced persons); "They Look to America" (also on d p's); "Luxurious Living," (meaning the U.S. army brass in Germany—Paul Smith had just been over there); "Federation, 1787 and 1946"; "The Veto is Inevitable"; "Austria Must Be Free"; "The Plan to Strip Japan"; "The Dawn of a New Day" (international control of atomic energy); "Capitalism and World Food" (capitalism feeding the world); "No Peacemeal Panaceas" (no little plans for San Francisco); "A Secret City in the Desert," a report on a Navy ordnance laboratory in the Mojave Desert.

# COMPLAINTS AND OTHERWISE

## ON NIEMAN REPORTS NO. 1

### Typos, Etc.

Just read the first Nieman Reports. Said I to myself "with so many typos what will they think of us? . . . Bill Miller's piece on the newspaper reader will certainly get itself refuted, and I for one will start it . . ."

Charles Wagner  
New York Mirror

Please send the next two issues of Nieman Reports provided the proof reading gets better.

Brooks Atkinson  
New York Times

Except typographically, tsk, tsk, your first issue is a honey. I hope you can prevail on current Nieman Fellows to furnish a substantial part of your copy. What they found it desirable to delve into this year is not unlikely to be what a lot of us would like to be studying could we but.

John M. Conley  
Pathfinder

I thought it was all right (despite the typos). I would take some sharp exceptions to Miller's piece about the newspaper reader, however, and think it was not exactly the right thing for page 1, Vol. 1, No. 1.

Robert Lassetter  
Rutherford Courier  
Murfreesburg, Tenn.

(The Editor was unanimously retired as proof reader after the first issue came out.)

### Bouquets for Circulation

Where is my copy?

Leon Svirsky  
Time, Inc.

My copy hasn't arrived.

Ben Yablonky  
PM

I have not received my copy yet.

Stephen Fitzgerald  
N. W. Ayer & Son

None of the Kentucky members has received the first issue.

Paul J. Hughes  
Louisville Courier-Journal

NONE OF EIGHT NEW YORK TIMES STAFF YOU SAID HAD BEEN SENT NIEMAN REPORTS HAS RECEIVED IT. CAN YOU SEND ME ONE FIRST CLASS MAIL.

HERBERT H. LYONS

(Huh, the two copies sent by same third class mail to New York Herald Tribune staffers produced one column story, one editorial, and 124 letters, carrying enough subscriptions to exhaust the first issue in twenty-four hours.)

### Fine Project

I think Nieman Reports is a fine project and should be very useful. I am asking our Library to place a subscription at once.

Frank Luther Mott,  
Dean University of  
Missouri School of  
Journalism

May I congratulate you upon a brilliant idea in the founding of the Nieman Reports? I am asking the University Library to place a standing order for it . . .

William F. Swindler,  
Director U. of Nebraska  
School of Journalism

Please enter our subscription.

E. A. Pillar, Editor  
Reader's Scope

I enclose check for \$2 for a year's subscription. I should like to contribute an article on the Cincinnati Enquirer's attitude toward impartially reporting local political news and myself as one who has opposed the local Republican gang here. . .

Cincinnati

Murray Seasongood

Please send the Nieman Reports to the Central News Agency of China.

Doris Jenkins, Secretary to T. C. T'ang,  
Chief of Bureau, N. Y.

I am chief assistant editor of the Australian Associated Press in New York. I should be grateful to be on the list for future issues.

Walter E. Cummins

Enclosed find \$10.00 for subscriptions for myself and four others. I would really like to see this thing flourish . . . The enclosed story is for you if you think it worth publishing.

Stephen White  
New York Herald  
Tribune

CONGRATULATIONS ON VOLUME ONE NUMBER ONE. IT'S A SPLENDID JOB AND I'M CONSTITUTING MYSELF A VOLUNTEER SUBSCRIPTION GETTER. REGARDS.

Henry Moscow  
New York Post

I didn't agree with William Miller's analysis of PM, but it was a provocative piece. I wish you would add my name to the mailing list.

Eleanor Early

I am a Negro journalist and I would appreciate receiving the Nieman Reports.

Cleveland G. Allen,  
316 W. 138th St., N. Y. City

Please put me on the mailing list.

Dan Jenkins, Managing Editor  
Motion Picture

I would like to subscribe.

Stuart Gorrell  
Editor, "The Chase"  
Chase National Bank

I congratulate you and the Nieman Fellows on the Nieman Reports and I enclose herewith my subscription for what I hope will be a long and fruitful history for the periodical.

Felix Frankfurter  
Supreme Court of the  
United States

Naturally I would like to subscribe to the Reports.

John B. Danby  
Associate, Liberty Magazine  
Picture Staff

Would it be possible for me to subscribe?

Reuben Maury  
Chief Editorial Writer  
The Daily News, NYC

Enclosed please find \$2.00 for which please send a one-year subscription to the Nieman Reports to:

R.A.Henderson, Esq.  
Eastern Road & Braeside Street  
Wahroonga  
Sydney, N.S.W., Australia

Kindly bill us for the additional postage and we will send you a check.

Sincerely yours,  
A. D. Rothman  
The Sydney Morning Herald

I enjoyed the first Nieman number. One thing which annoyed me however was the very bad proof reading. It seems to me a publication of this kind should have perfect proof reading.

Victor O. Jones,  
Night Editor, Boston Globe

It is a darn creditable job. But there are examples of loose writing. I call attention to it because it is typical of much of the writing we newspapermen do and also in the conviction that the Nieman class (in writing) under Ted Morrison is well advised.

A. B. Guthrie, Jr.  
Lexington, Ky.

I find the Nieman Reports of interest, typographical errors and all. I hope you will keep me on the list . . .

Robert W. Desmond, chairman,  
U. of Cal. Dept. of Journalism

Please send us the Reports as they are published.

C. Owen Smith, Editor  
Maine Coast Fisher-  
man

We would like to have your publication.  
John E. Allen, Editor  
The Linotype News

What are your advertising rates?  
—Harvard University Press

### Author Winces

The thing that made me wince most about the first issue was the number of typos . . . In the lead position my piece which was intended to be mildly acid and ironic appeared to set the tone for the quarterly which I think unfortunate.

Wm. J. Miller

## CROSS FIRE

### Wrong Assumption

The lead article in the new quarterly of the Society of Nieman Fellows finds that what is wrong with the nation's newspapers is their readers. They would rather not think . . . This assumes that our press is in a bad way . . . We're not doing so badly by comparison considering that we do have the best informed citizenry on earth.

—Editorial, Boston Herald, Feb. 26.

### Warmth Tempered

The warmth of the journalistic welcome that must be accorded the new quarterly, Nieman Reports, as a contribution to newspaper science is somewhat tempered by perusal of its first leading article "What's Wrong with the Newspaper Reader?" The author, William J. Miller, implies that there is much wrong with the newspaper reader, that he's a dull fellow who does not like to think, and Mr. Miller suggests that American newspapers cater to that laziness. This strikes us as a juvenile generalization on American newspapers and their readers reminiscent of Mr. Seldes but lacking his labored documentation . . . We do not agree with Mr. Miller that the American newspaper is "pretty bad." We believe it better, more honest, more informative, more useful to society than the press of any other country or of any other period of history . . ."

—Editorial, New York Herald Tribune

### From George Seldes

In its editorial on William Miller's article on what is the matter with the newspaper reader in the first issue of Nieman Reports the Herald Tribune stated that my documentation proving the press unfair, dishonest, etc. etc. was "labored." I assure you that I get about 100 times the factual documentary evidence I have space for.

Cordially yours,  
George Seldes

P. S. 1. Will you have future Nieman Reports mailed to my home.

P. S. 2. "In Fact" bound volumes now in Harvard Library.

### Fills A Void

Nieman Reports will fill a void in our literature about one phase of modern life. With all their pride of craft, newspapermen have no voice of their own. Nieman Reports gives us at last a journal about newspapers and newspapermen by newspapermen. It is dedicated to the betterment of the press and to healthy self criticism.

Harvard Alumni Bulletin

### Give Us Another Dana

I have been amazed (like many others) to learn from your lead article in volume one, that in the writer's judgment the various weaknesses of our press can be traced to a public which prefers not to think and wishes only to be entertained. Of course, I have not seen the whole article but only a review in the New York Herald Tribune.

When and how does the public have any chance to express its wishes on the content of its daily paper? Is there a single newspaper in the United States that supplies an intelligent account of the proceedings of Congress? Yet in London a full page of Parliamentary proceedings is not too much and anybody can see in the Underground and elsewhere with what eagerness the public turns to that page. Are my wishes consulted when I find on the first page of my paper a dozen articles broken off in the middle and carried over God knows where? Do you think that any reader unless mentally deficient finds amusement in the so-called comic pages? And what can be done with unwieldy Sunday supplements other than to throw them in the waste basket? And where are the editors, today, who have sound and invigorating opinions on this and that? Is it not true that about all the heady stuff the reader obtains, nowadays, is provided by the columnists?

More might be said but I desist. Newspaper readers are not all perfect but the softness, the flatness and low tone of the press assuredly can be attributed in large part to editors and publishers. Give us another Charles A. Dana, Henry Watter-son, and Joseph Medill and you will see things happen in the newspaper world.

Very truly yours,  
Robert P. Skinner  
Charlottesville, Va.

# THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

## Writer Liebling vs. Editors Jagger and Croat

### For Endowed Papers

A. J. Liebling

I think that anybody who talks often with people about newspapers nowadays must be impressed by the growing distrust of the information they contain. There is less a disposition to accept what they say than to try to estimate the probable truth on the basis of what they say, like aiming a rifle that you know has a deviation to the right. Even a report in a Hearst newspaper can be of considerable aid in arriving at a deduction if you know enough about (a) Hearst policy (b) the degree of abjectness of the correspondent signing the report.

Every now and then I write a piece for the *New Yorker* under the heading of "The Wayward Press" (a title for the department invented by the late Robert Benchley when he started it early in the *New Yorker's* history). In this I concern myself not with big general thoughts about Trends (my boss wouldn't stand for such), but with the treatment of specific stories by the daily (chiefly New York) press. I am a damned sight kinder about newspapers than Wolcott Gibbs is about the theatre, but while nobody accuses him of sedition when he raps a play, I get letters calling me a little pal of Stalin when I sneer at the *New York Sun*. This reflects a pitch that newspaper publishers make to the effect that they are part of the great American heritage with a right to travel wrapped in a cotton boll. Neither theatrical producers nor book publishers, apparently, partake of this sacred character, I get a lot more letters from people who are under the delusion that I can Do Something About It All. These reflect a general malaise on the part of the newspaper-reading public, which I do think will have some effect, though not, God knows, through me.

The profit system, while it insures the predominant conservative coloration of our press, also guarantees that there will always be a certain amount of dissidence. The American press has never been monolithic, like that of an authoritarian state. One reason is that there is important money to be made in journalism by standing up for the underdog (demagogically or honestly, so long as the technique is good). The underdog is numerous and prolific—another name for him is circulation. His wife buys girdles and baking powder and Literary Guild selections, and the advertiser has to reach her. Newspapers as they become successful and move to the right leave room for newcomers to the left.

E. W. Scripps was the outstanding prac-

(From a symposium in the Dartmouth Alumni Magazine for February among A. J. Liebling, bright star of the *New Yorker's* "Wayward Press" department, Claude A. Jagger, A P executive and associate director of the American Press Institute, and Carl T. Groat, editor, Cincinnati Post, all Dartmouth men.)

itioner of the trade of founding newspapers to stand up for the common man. He made a tremendous success of it, owning about twenty of them when he died. The first James Gordon Bennett's *Herald*, in the 40's, and Joseph Pulitzer's *World*, in the 80's and 90's, to say nothing of the Scripps-Howard *World-Telegram* in 1927, won their niche in New York as left-of-center newspapers and then bogged down in profits.

At any given moment there are more profitable newspapers in being than new ones trying to come up, so the general tone of the press is predominantly, and I fear increasingly, reactionary. The difference between newspaper publishers' opinions and those of the public is so frequently expressed at the polls that it is unnecessary to insist on it here.

I believe that labor unions, citizens' organizations and possibly political parties yet unborn are going to back daily papers. These will represent definite, undisguised points of view, and will serve as controls on the large profit-making papers expressing definite, ill-disguised points of view.

I also hope that we will live to see the endowed newspaper, devoted to the pursuit of daily truth as Dartmouth is to that of knowledge. I do not suppose that any reader believes that the test of a college is the ability to earn a profit on operations (with the corollary that making the profit would soon become the chief preoccupation of its officers). I think that a good newspaper is as truly an educational institution as a college, so I don't see why it should have to stake its survival on attracting advertisers of ball-point pens and tickets to Hollywood peep-shows. And I think that private endowment would offer greater possibilities for a free press than State ownership (this is based on the chauvinistic idea that a place like Dartmouth can do a better job than a State University under the thumb of a Huey Long or Gene Talmadge). The hardest trick, of course, would be getting the chief donor of the endowment (perhaps a repentant tabloid publisher) to: (a) croak, or (b) sign a legally

binding agreement never to stick his face in the editorial rooms. The best kind of an endowment for a newspaper would be one made up of several large and many small or medium-sized gifts (the Dartmouth pattern again). Personally, I would rather leave my money for a newspaper than for a cathedral, a gymnasium or even a home for street-walkers with fallen arches, but I have seldom been able to assemble more than \$4.17 at one time.

### The Evolving Newspaper

Claude A. Jagger

An amazing proportion of the critical writing about newspapers has been of the wild-eyed expose variety. Some of it is constructive. Much of it is bunk.

Now what of the charge that newspapers are big business, are often monopolistic? It is true that there has been a marked tendency in the past quarter century toward newspaper mergers, and many cities have only one newspaper, or two newspapers owned by the same publisher. It seems obvious that this trend reflects primarily the economic development of this mass production age. Newspapers have greatly expanded their services to the public, both in content and in distribution. Newspapers are bigger and thicker, and they are delivered rapidly over greatly expanded circulation areas. Of course, this has greatly increased the plant, equipment, organization and capital required.

Certainly one result is far better newspapers. One strong newspaper can do a far better job than three or four weak ones. Also, a strong newspaper is far more secure in its independence than one which is in constant financial jeopardy. I doubt if many well-informed persons seriously believe any more that newspapers are influenced by advertisers.

It is certain that the newspaper of tomorrow will be a far better newspaper. Most of us agree readily with our critics that we have been overconcerned with reporting those things which involve merely novelty, shock, violence or conflict. The oldtime newspaper man who insists that a news sense is something intuitive, something which escapes definition, is going out of date. There has been a sharp curtailment of the printing of crime news over the country.

But the main thing is, the newspaper of tomorrow will concentrate on the significant happenings all over the world. This world has grown small. The newspaper

man will be increasingly better trained, better educated and more specialized. Even today, a great newspaper has a staff organized almost like a college faculty.

Mere routine reporting of facts will not be enough. That can only bring on that "crisis of meaninglessness" of which Sevelon Brown warned the Press Institute. We will have far more conscientious, objective putting of the facts into perspective, more background and explanation. The process must necessarily be selective. The reader can absorb only so much.

## Best On Earth

Carl T. Groat

Taken as a whole, the American press is constructive, fearless and infinitely more informing than any press elsewhere on the globe. And, if one is inclined to quarrel with editorial viewpoints in some newspapers, it must still be realized that information (news) itself is the newspaper's greatest and most beneficial commodity.

Of course there are those who harbor the notion that not governments but advertisers or other impressive interests determine actual freedom or slavery of the press. It may surprise them to know

that such editors and publishers as are timid shiver more about pressures from their reading public than from the counting room. But a publisher with a strong paper backed by public confidence needs have little or no concern about inappropriate pressures whether from private or public vested interests. As a matter of ordinary operation most papers hear little or nothing from their advertisers about what gets into the news columns.

On the other hand there has never been a time when any government was fully happy about freedom of the press. Is the profit motive compatible with impartial and full coverage of the news? Some of our earlier observations would tend to give yes as a reply. Let us make it here a very definite yes. In fact, the profit motive, far from being a sinister force in newspapering, is a definitely beneficial factor. A paper cannot continue long to exist if it is anemic financially. If it makes good profits, it can the more readily be strong and independent of undue pressures than if it is so poor and feeble that it is tempted to compromise with conscience.

Most politicians, most businessmen, most of the public—be they saints or sinners—know that they do well not to monkey with the buzz saw of a strong and fearless paper. And, in our humble judgment, a paper with good profits is in a position to be that sort of paper. True, some are timorous

even in that situation. But they are not the majority.

And, more than incidentally, the paper with good income can afford better and more reporters, better and more news service, better and more features, columns and special articles. So their financial strength almost inevitably leads to a better news product.

There are trends which will probably be accentuated with time. Many newspapermen think the press will turn increasingly to "service" to communities. That is a definite trend. And there is an increasing conviction that the newspaper will become more "local" in its news coverage without however neglecting the broad fields of national and international news and interpretation.

Development of news and articles of special merit and interest will grow. Perhaps as great a weakness as the American press has today is that of uniformity. Many features, columns, comics are to be found across the country. There is perhaps too much "standardization." Watchful editors are giving thought to employment of more "specialists" who shall cultivate news and articles in their given fields, as government, labor, housing, welfare, science, travel. The tendency is to greater "interpretation"—that is, a wider offering of the "news behind the news" or the "why" of governmental and other happenings.

## The Gentle Ascetic Skeptics of the Press

by Christopher Morley

The world of newspapers and the life of newspaper men are for the most part vulgar, and therefore delightful. I mean vulgar in its exact sense; it is a word neither of praise nor blame, both of which are foreign to philosophy. O thrilling, delicious, childish world! The other day from a green glade in the country, I telephoned to a newspaper office. "City room, please," I said. The connection was made, and as the receiver was taken down, I could hear that old adorable hum, the quick patter of typewriters, voices on the copy desk tersely discussing the ingenious minutiae of the job. No man who has dabbled, ever so amateurishly, in that spirited child's-play outgrows its irrational and cursed charm. Over miles of telephone wire that drugging hum came back to my ear, that furious and bewildering pulse of excitement which seems so frantically important and really means so little. O world so happy, so amusing, so generously emotional, so exempt from the penalty of thought! World that deals with quaintly codified and abstracted notions of life!

---

Reprinted by permission of Mr. Morley from his *Religio Journalistici*, Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924; written just at the end of his last newspaper job as columnist for the old New York Evening Post.

---

How idle to ask whether newspapers tell the truth! With truth they have little concern. Their trade is in facts; like all prosperous tradesmen they are reasonably conscientious. To belittle newspapers for not telling the truth is as silly as to regard them as training-ground for literature. Literature and journalism rarely overlap.

The fact is that the whole ingenious mechanism of a newspaper is so automatically conjoined and revolves so rapidly that by sheer fury and speed of movement it takes on a kind of synthetic life of its own. It could well be imagined thundering round and round of its own accord in a great jovial, shouting stupor. A leading editorial, tearing passions to tatters, could arise by spontaneous combustion, exhaling

itself somehow from the general uproar and joy. Virgin birth would be no miracle in a newspaper office: I have seen, and myself committed, editorial matter whose parent had never been approached by any siring intelligence.

Or, in the case of the reporter, painfully trained in a generous human skepticism, enforced student of the way people behave and the way things happen, alert to discern the overtones of irony and pathos in the event, you might expect him to be the least credulous of beings. If so, the general flavour of the press little represents him. He acquiesces, consciously or unconsciously, in the fact that in all but a few really intelligent journals the news columns are edited down to the level of the proprietor's intelligence, or what the active managers imagine to be the proprietor's taste. Not in facts, but in the tone adopted in setting out those facts. An Index Expurgatorius is issued for office guidance, lists made of words and phrases not to be mentioned in news stories. The more essentially vulgar a paper is, the

more cautious it will be not to use words the managing editor believes dirty. "Obscene," for example, is deleted, and the truly disgusting word "spicy" is substituted. And the reporter himself having acquiesced, it is not unnatural that the readers of the paper do also. The great majority of them, tipling their customary sheet day after day with the regularity of dram-fiends, are so indurated to the grotesque psychology of the more popular news columns that to find a paper habitually speaking recognizable moderate sense would afflict them with a warmth of indecency and dismay. The daily journals give them the same pleasure that the serial parts of Dickens's novels gave the early Victorians eighty and ninety years ago. So we have the agreeable paradox that these papers we see all around us, roaring their naivetes and scandals, are written and compiled by those who are, as individuals, studious, serene, and gently ascetic skeptics.

All this, as you shall see presently, has its just bearing on our topic of religion. We need, but are not likely to get, a new "Aeropagitica" to liberate our press from its cheery bondage of vulgarity and slip-slop thinking. The newspaper man who has pride in his honourable tradition may well feel grim to see the things he has sweat for trafficked across counters like bundles of merchandise; yes, and to see the transaction applauded by eminent statesmen and divines who feel the need of a front-page quote. A little pride is desirable now and then; yes, in God's name, a little pride, gentlemen. We who have lived, as best we could, for the decency of letters; who have vigiled with Chaucer and taken wine with Descartes and changed opinion with Doctor Johnson, are we to be hired to and fro by the genial hucksters who know the art of print chiefly as a rapid factory for gaily tinted palaver?

In his tight place, beset by doubts just as acute as those of the young theologian, our newspaper man ratiocinates upon the quaint processes of mind. He broods on the haphazard, interest-tainted, and fallible nature of most mortal opinion. He studies the relativity of truth and the proliferation of rumor. He notes how every event is like a stone cast into a pond; it ejaculates concentric vibrations, widening loops of hearsay. Varying layers or rings of truth are available for different classes of bystanders, or by-thinkers. How well he knows the queer fact that you can say, unrebuked, in a weekly what would never pass in a daily! You can say still more in a monthly; in a quarterly review almost all the beans can be decanted. And in a book, quite often you can print your surmises in full. Of course, to tell

## Critic of the Box Office

Nothing said in these columns today should be regarded as disinterested, for I have a vested interest in criticism as Mr. Maxwell Anderson has in plays. But I am not much impressed with the common assumption that critics make or break plays. . . .

The fundamental trouble with the theatre is economic. Tickets to the theatre cost two or three times too much because the costs of producing have become insanely high, and that, in turn, is largely due to the fact that real estate and the craft unions take too great a share of the income in proportion to the services they contribute. . . .

And I would be more hopeful about the future of the theatre if its tycoons were less exercised over the opinions of critics and more disturbed by the fact that the theatre is no longer a popular institution and the great bulk of the public can never decide whether or not it likes a play because it cannot afford to go to the theatre. If Mr. Anderson wants the public to decide whether his plays are good or bad he will have to find some way to make it possible for people to go to the theatre. From the economic point of view it is not democratic now. . . .

There is one thing every critic knows to be true: he personally cannot make or break a play at the box office. In my own case this season the public has shown a most unflattering disposition to go its own way. I had a high opinion of "Temper the Wind"; it closed after thirty-five performances. I was much stimulated by "No Exit"; it had thirty-one performances. On the other hand, I managed heroically to restrain my enthusiasm for the revival of "Lady Windermere's Fan," for "Another Part of the Forest," "The Fatal Weakness" and "John Loves Mary," but the public has had the lamentable taste to make hits of these plays.

The facts do not bear out the contention that critics decide the fate of plays. What the theatre needs is not the suppression of opinion but a sharp and drastic deflation in the cost of theatre tickets and a sharp and drastic improvement in the quality of plays.

—Brooks Atkinson  
in the New York Times.

exactly what happens, as Pepys did, it is best to be dead. (How odd is the saying, "Dead men tell no tales." Why, they tell the best tales of all.) It does sometimes seem as though the more immediate readers there are for any bit of print, the less candour can be rationed out for each.

## Movie Reviewing

The one thing more than others which the movie industry is reported to have resented in "Freedom of the Movies," by Ruth A. Inglis, one of the studies of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, was the statement that the industry can't take criticism and seeks to pervert, cajole or bribe professional critics. Wolfe Kaufman, reviewer for Newsweek, Chicago Sun, Modern Screen, Friday, Charm, and the Paris Herald Tribune, is quoted on his experience with studio publicity departments. One quote:

"It is expected and understood by both parties (publicist and reviewer) that the reviewer must be taken to lunch and or dinner every so often. He must be given a trip to New York or Hollywood every once in a while if his paper's circulation is big enough."

There was once a young drama critic name of Woolcott, who wouldn't let the Shubert's tell him how to review. They barred him from all their theatres and that made him famous. But he had back of him Carr Van Anda, late managing editor of the New York Times, and a publisher named Ochs.

This was the conversation on the issue between editor and publisher, as reported by Samuel Hopkins Adams in his "A Woolcott":

Ochs—What do you think we should do?

Van Anda—Get an injunction against the Shubert's.

Ochs - I'll call up our lawyers. Anything else?

Van Anda—Throw out the Shubert advertising.

Ochs - Do so.

Ruth Inglis lets down the movie reviewers with this:

"Reviewers are not critics. They are selected on the basis of their similarity to the norm of mass audiences rather than because of any special training or critical ability. On most newspapers and magazines it is considered a back job of no social importance . . . . Probably the kind of criticism that goes in the New York Times would not be acceptable anywhere else in the country . . . . Criticism should be encouraged as a service to the industry and to the development of the art of movies."

The reviewers' reaction has not come in.

Two Nieman Fellows who came to Harvard to study economics and government turned up in a course in Development of the Child. Many G I students were in the same course for the same reason—new babies at home.

## SOME NOTES ABOUT PICTURES

Opening remarks by Turner Catledge, Assistant Managing Editor, New York Times: News pictures are "here to stay" as a means of communication. It is high time we got over our left handed treatment of pictures, an offense of which many of us are still guilty. Both words and pictures, after all, are only a means of communication: A really sound newsman must be familiar with both media.

The segregation of type and pictures (a la pix pages) is a bad thing: the two media cannot be separated that arbitrarily. Pictures and words play mutually supporting roles, if intelligently handled.

Why do we not handle photos "just as plain editors" rather than as picture editors?

Unquestionably, pictures drew a larger audience than type (most surveys show about 85% interest for illustration).

The danger, however, is that pix are unable to convey qualifications. They smash an image onto the brain which cannot be retouched, "saved" or "modified" by a caption—yet that image may reflect a mere fragment of a complex sociological situation: the result may be an extreme distortion in the readers' minds. There is no softening or hushing the voice of the photograph. It must be allowed to say what it wants to, or be censored entirely. Thus, pictures can be "more dangerous" than words (see N.Y. Times, Oct. 29, 46).

**Floyd Taylor, Am. Press Inst. Dir.:**

Readership surveys show that, page after page, in paper after paper, people look at pictures first and most often. The amazing fact is that even poor pix beat superior text in attention and interest.

We realize, now that Managing Editors' Seminar is ended, the M.E.'s do want to

---

Jack Wallace of The San Francisco Chronicle kept careful notes on the Picture Editors' Seminar at the American Press Institute at Columbia. These are extracts from "Pix," the bound volume of his notes, done for the Chronicle staff.

---

know more about pictures. They too looked into pix here at Columbia. Which would suggest that even more changes in pix policy and technique are coming. The picture trend continues. The general aim is to improve handling and processing.

**Dick Sarno, Dir. of Photog,  
Hearst Newspapers and I.N.P.:**

There are perhaps 2500 fotogs in America.

One of the things we're just getting over, and not sure we are sometimes, is the old battle of reporters vs fotogs. So many reporters have looked on fotogs as mere "button pushers" or "shutter men."

"I remember how it was in the twenties. A reporter would go on a story with a fotog, on a cold wintry day, and he'd tell the fotog to wait outside while he went in for an interview—maybe one or two hours. Well, he'd finally come out, spats and gloves, and before waving for a cab he'd tell the subject, 'I wish you'd give my photographer one minute.'

"One minute? Why it took twenty minutes to get warm!"

**Gilbert P. Gallaher**

Pix ed Chicago Daily News, was concerned over the problem of how to make reporters pix minded.

He pointed out that because papers provide cars for fotogs but not for reporters, fotogs often are treated as chauffeurs for reporters. Or even to run a strange as-

sortment of non-coverage errands. The natural result is lowered morale.

Bill Eckenberg, N.Y. Times, said that on the Times the teamwork trend is growing, and that it must grow if a story (type and art) is to be integrated properly.

Joe Costa, King Features, appealed for better planning by editors before making pix assignments.

One Seminar member suggested a daily post-publication CLINIC between fotogs and editors to correct coverage weaknesses and evaluate results.

Some one quoted the great photographer Captain Steichen: "The essential difference between an amateur and professional photographer is that the amateur shoots a picture when the spirit moves him, and the professional newsman must have inspiration always on tap."

There was a good deal of discussion over whether news pictures should carry fotogs' bylines, and under what circumstances.

There was some feeling that when a fotog gets a byline on ALL PIX he'll do better work because he's sensitive about pix with which his name is identified. Some members thought a permanent byline would become so routine it would be taken for granted, like an AP Slug, and would have no value as a gesture of commendation for an outstanding picture.

In a show of hands, most members said they gave bylines for merit, on a selective basis. Fifty percent give credits "liberally."

Some thought pix bylines are valuable public relations for fotogs in that they identify the fotog in the public mind and assure him cordial reception when ringing doorbells.

(Reminder that all war correspondents got bylines but damn few war fotogs did.)

## A Kiss for Jimmie Walker

W.C. (Bill) Eckenberg, of the foto department of The New York Times, offered his ideas on "selection and training of fotogs."

Said Bill: Select men who are eager to learn, willing to work and think for themselves, who will be a credit to the organization, and who can write intelligent data-captions!

On the Times, they took in quite a number of Army Signal Corps trainees, and although there was some slight resentment

at first ("breaking in guys who'll someday take our jobs") eventually all got along well, going out on jobs together, etc. Eckenberg strongly urges veteran newsmen to give tyros the breaks and teach 'em everything possible (always room for more good fotogs).

He cited N.Y. Times pix coverage of a Jimmy Walker gala welcome for the Bremen flyers in the twenties. Eckenberg was one of many fotogs there. All others shot the usual medal pinning. But Bill kept

his eyes open, saw bemedalled pilot's wife thrust her arms out in a sudden gesture, aimed his camera and got a great shot of wife planting a kiss and hug on Mayor Walker.

On that type of assignment, (parades, demonstrations, etc.) Eckenberg recommends men for usual straight coverage plus another fotog who shoots no straight stuff but keeps his eye open for off-beat shots—with no penalty or criticism if he doesn't bring back a single pix. In other

words, the "oblique" pix which are naturals, never forced setups.

Rule of thumb: Always save a plate for the unusual pix (Egg tossed at Willkie).

Bill Eckenberg got a great fight pix because he learned from an old error in covering fights. He knew, but had never before taken advantage of, the fact that famous referee Arthur Donovan always took a "swan dive" (arms spread wide and low) when he gestured for the count of ten. In a Schmeling-Louis fight he ignored the obvious action, kept his eye on Donovan, and when, amazingly enough, Schmeling knocked out Louis, Bill focused on Donovan and got one of the classic ring photos of the era. It shows referee's swan-dive, Schmeling leaping for joy, Louis flat, and the timekeeper's upraised fingers to show count of ten.

Some one said it pays for a fotog to follow strict assignment orders but also to shoot his own version of the pix if he has what he thinks is a better idea.

Joe Costa, famed fotog of King Features, opened the discussion in these words:

Because, as Catledge points out, pix cannot be qualified and words are more pliant—that's where the pix editor comes in. A good pix editor must know how to treat, display and caption a picture so that the element of pliancy is added nevertheless.

It's up to the pix ed and pix assignment ed to exploit and take advantage of the best qualities of each of his fotogs.

Train men who can adequately repre-

sent the paper. Don't let any more shoddy, rundown, careless men become fotogs. It is basically simple to take pictures—only average intelligence is needed: but personality is important.

'We all like to think of the purely pictorial foto which tells the story without any words, but only one pix in a thousand can go captionless. (Iwo Jima, Chinese reading Tokyo raid headline, etc.)

Give more thought to the idea of fotog and reporter as a team, sent out together: a reporter who will also think in terms of pix and gather pix data, and a fotog who will share his news ideas too.

Costa posed the question of how difficult it is to get complete name captions in a fast breaking pix assignment. (Example: 30 feet from a line of UN conference diplomats who were walking away. How can fotog cope without an experienced reporter who knows all the brass, not just the Molotovs?) Point is, which is preferable, one pix and a complete caption, or several fast action pix (as in a melee) with some names missing?

Not only does the fotog need understanding and cooperation from his editor, he needs modern, versatile equipment. For a minimum:

1. A general assignment camera.
2. A high speed lens.
3. A long distance camera.

A newspaper is placing great handicaps in fotogs' way—selling their future short—

if it does not provide absolutely the best of modern lab equipment for the painstaking, delicate precision chemical work involved in processing Magic Eye and color film. Absolute cleanliness and temperature control is essential.

For serial pix, special equipment is desirable but a regular camera can be used in an emergency. It might seem that a long focus Big Bertha lens might be effective for aerial work but this is not so... as it is necessary to come down pretty close for a closeup when shooting from a plane.

A fotog deserves backing, inspiration and support from his editor, so that he will be accepted—and confident—wherever he goes to represent his newspaper.

Costa cited the case of a Chicago paper which slandered the profession and hurt the public relations of photographers by headlining a story, "Photographer Imperils Mad Pianist's Debut." Pianist's manager asked the fotog not to take pix in the radio studio, but the pianist himself didn't react at all, and the "imperiling" was mythical.

A fotog should stand on his dignity to some degree. He should be so backed up by his paper that he can refuse to shoot press agent stuff if he's pushed around. Any loyal fotog will allow himself to suffer indignity on a legitimate story, but will walk out on a publicity fashion show when he's told "Fotogs must ride the service elevator." (Is it then OK to boycott the hotel?)

## Photographic Enterprise

Photographer Frank Scherchel of LIFE was terrific, full of energy, enterprise, ideas and lively stories.

Scherchel says he found mass apathy when he went to a certain Milwaukee newspaper's photo department. Everything was in shoddy shape but buckpassing prevented improvement. "So in self defense I learned all the alibis. How to make a cut, what stereo did, what happened in the press room. Then, when I got printed results I didn't like, I could follow through in all the mechanical departments, find out what went wrong and correct it."

**MOST PICTURE EDITORS WERE BORN WITH REDUCING EYES!** Every editor knows how to reduce a pix, in fact it's his first instinct, but few know how and why to blow up. One good test of a pix editor is whether he can visualize a double truck in a contact print."

Another crazy thing about picture editor psychology:

If two papers got the same pix, then your editor doesn't want to use it. But

if the opposition has it and you don't the editor screams "Why not!" Scherchel fixed that for a while.

"Where's the pix the opposition has?" cried the editor. "Would you use it if you had it?" asked Scherchel.

"Certainly!" said ed.

"Okay, then here it is," replied Scherchel, who had concealed it.

\* \* \*

Scherchel and Costa went round and round about fotogs who are pushed around, and who take handouts and setup arrangements, etc.:

Costa: Discourage pool coverage. It's all right in war time or some other security situations, but otherwise discourage pools hard. Use pools only when it is impossible to squeeze all competing fotogs into a tight spot (say an execution or small courtroom).

Stop asking favors, a la Caspar Milquetoast, "Where may I ride please?" Be courteous of course, but firm, bearing in mind the rights and dignity of the press. PLAN coverage from paper's viewpoint

and PROCEED, then COPE with objections if any.

Trouble is that when fotogs are pushed around they are not always backed up by office.

\* \* \*

**HERE IS THE DAILY NEWS WAY WITH PICTURES:**

1. Photo Assignment Editor sits in with City Desk, gets dupes of all local copy, sends out cameramen on best possibilities.

2. When local negatives come in, and are developed, Studio chief makes preliminary selection. He works under Assignment Editor.

3. Fotog writes data-captions (in triplicate form, one to back of pix, one to Assignment Editor, one to Caption Writer) while Studio is developing his negatives.

4. Assignment Editor keeps book on incoming prints, noting number of pix and time received. He's the watchdog of quality and speed of coverage. After recording, all prints are sent to the Picture Editor.

5. All pix of all types from all sources

are sent to the Picture Editor. He makes decisions on which pix should be sent to what department. Once a feature department (Sports, Society) receives pix, it's up to them to handle. Spot newspages in the daily have first call.

6. Picture Editor works directly with his artists on layout of double truck, front and back pages and inside page news art.

7. The "With Story" picture editor consults with the News Editor for inside pix possibilities (often anticipating him by having stuff ready, on basis of news dupes he's seen). This is possible because a Pix Assistant scans all wire dupes.

\* \* \*

Complete versatility is the rule on the Daily News picture staff. Pix Assistants are interchangeable with Caption Writers and are occasionally shuffled, so a man won't go stale.

Bill White calls it "a tragic mistake" that librarians are allowed to decide which photos to save. "Men who handle the pictures for publication should decide Yes or No on filing."

**Sid Mautner, Editor, International News Photos:**

What is a great news picture?

There is no formula but here are examples:

Vestris sinking, Snyder execution, Cermak assassination, Iwo Jima flag, Sewell Avery being carried out of his office by soldiers.

A great picture is one that captures a noteworthy instant for posterity.

Mautner says we all fall into the group of editing for ourselves rather than for readers. What does it matter what an opposition editor thinks of our product (unless we're fishing for a job)?

Original thinking is one great key to successful editing. Phil Aquaviva of Hartford Courant interjected that LIFE reported the tragic Hartford circus fire with a full page photo of a clown carrying a bucket of water—instead of using the fiery tent pictures.

Magazine editors enjoy a vital flexibility of treatment which daily editors should exercise. Latitude of choice and display is urgently needed on most American picture desks.

Mautner of INS, a very engaging fellow, who brilliantly expresses his picture philosophy, continued with this advice to Photo Editors:

"Start each day from zero. Approach each day with naivete, frankly and freshly!"

We must have picture editors who will work harder, with creative drive, to get the best photos possible, whether or not such pictures are self-evident in the day's news budget.

The good picture assignment editor has a "mind attuned to symbols in the news. Story dupes ring a bell in his mind on pix possibilities. Thus the pix editor must be freed for thinking and planning. He cannot do a creative, original job with pictures when he is concerned primarily with text."

Picture consciousness must exist FROM TOP DOWN in a newspaper organization. At the very least the picture editor must receive sympathy and room for flexibility from top executives. Only when the top brass are nearly as picture conscious as he is, can the photo editor feel free to attempt fulfillment of his potential.

## Photo Selection

By way of precede, Claude Jagger, Associate Director of the American Press Institute, pointed out that "Newspaper picture editors are a new, select group. There just aren't very many of you, on even the biggest papers. Many publishers when invited to nominate delegates to the Columbia Seminar on pictures, replied, "We just wish we had a man good enough to send."

One hundred and fifty to two hundred photographs are produced daily by the N.Y. News staff, in addition to heavy agency coverage.

"Selection of pictures must start with selection of the man who's to do the selecting."

New York Daily News criterion is that their pictures should appeal to every member of the family and reflect popular modern tastes, not the limited highflown tastes of some editors.

"How many of you seminar members know what the Number One song hit on the Hit Parade is this week?" Only one of 27 raised his hand. That's White's point—that popular journalists must know "what's cooking," and keep up with the youth.

"How many people will this picture ap-

peal to?" the News picture editor always asks himself. It sounds elemental, White adds, but it is not often followed on most papers.

White says too many picture editors have a habit of rigidly classifying pix as Roto, Features, Daily, Society or whatnot. The distinction really is not that great. A good picture is a good picture, and the point of what will interest people, on a news page or a roto page, is the only important point.

Bill White, who can well afford cabs, rides the subways to keep an eye on what people look at first and longest.

N.Y. Times used a 4-col photo of "Big Mo," the battleship "Missouri," planked down in the Hudson, with a plane sitting like a duck on deck. The Daily News figured that every one'd seen that before shot "Big Mo" personalities instead (sailors and girls).

There is nothing too wrong with people looking right into the camera; that's another silly taboo on newspapers. After all, if it's a new personality, you want to "meet" him and see what he looks like. You do face a man when you're introduced.

People don't give a damn about fancy borders, trick vignettes and cookie shape

overlaps. SHOW THE NEWS, not your artist's ability to get odd effects.

The Daily News tries to send reporters along with fotogs on 75% of all stories. They want the fotog to devote all his time to getting pictures, not a mad scramble for captions and background.

I asked Bill White to what extent he was influenced in later edition pix selection by seeing Mirror's first editon.

He replied he tried not to be. White says that, having made a decision to run or not run a picture, an editor should stand by his decision.

Daily News believes they're better off, the more time they can give the engraver. Never hold till ten pm a picture they can send at 9 pm. Even so, 40 minutes is normal cutmaking time at News.

News believes in using one or two pictures big and smart in layout, not jamming too many in with excessive crops, mortices and reductions (but often they jam up on the double truck).

BUILD UP YOUR PICTURE DEPARTMENT, White urges. Pix cannot and must not be handled in an offhand, rushed way. A caption writer needs time for digging, checking sources and for THINKING, not just batting out "left to right" cliches.

## LIFE'S Approach

**Wilson Hicks, of LIFE, speaking:**

How does LIFE select its pictures?

Does it consider that moot thing, "reader appeal?" Not really, says Hicks.

LIFE edits by "editor appeal." Our policy is simply that if a picture appeals to us it will appeal to readers. LIFE editors are presumed to have: a picture sense, a story sense.

Think of pictures as a means of communication, a flexible, plastic medium of expression of information and ideas.

LIFE thinks the trouble with most US newspaper editors is they ask themselves: "Is this story worth a picture?" (On the silly theory that one story is worth one picture), then reaching for a picture to "match" the text. Rarely do editors begin by asking "How can I tell this story best—in words or in pictures?"

LIFE's idea is to "let some one else know, see and feel what you know, see and feel."

LIFE does not pretend that it has done any more than scratch the surface of picture-journalism's possibilities.

Hicks sees LIFE's recent essay, "The American Man" by Nina Leen, as a pretty good example of "the marriage of words and pictures."

A newspaper or magazine can "go far toward the fluidity and natural continuity of the film (witness the Leen story) but it is necessarily still restricted." Despite their great facilities, LIFE editors are frustrated by relative inability to suggest motion, as in a film.

Hicks cites one of his photographer's definitions of what every good magazine photographer must be:

**A TECHNICIAN:** For optics, color, chemistry, etc.

**AN ARTIST:** For composition, lighting, perspective.

**A JOURNALIST:** For story sense beyond pictorialism.

**A DYNAMO:** Self evident but not always found.

Hicks points up the "artist" component by reminding that 20 cameramen focusing on one subject will come up with nearly 20 different approaches. Thus, photography is a "point of view"—the way a cameraman feels about the picture he's taking. He makes the camera express himself.

Twelve thousand pictures are available to LIFE each week! Of these, 3,000 are taken by LIFE staff fotogs. Of all these, 250 are used—one-twelfth of staff production.

LIFE concedes that it has not by any means learned very much yet about how to TELL a picture story—but neither have people learned how to READ a picture story. Many people persist in reading magazines backward, flipping pages or ignoring continuity, no matter how carefully designed. It's discouraging but true. (These are the same people who enter movie houses in the middle of a film.)

LIFE hopes to "de-complex the complex things."

Hicks pleads for "more truth" in photography—more natural light, fewer flash bulbs. He points out that, generally, European photographers have made much more judicious use of artificial light, rather than using bulbs for everything in sight. Most European photographers try to avoid destroying spontaneity.

Bill Churchill, LIFE Assignment Editor, stressed the need for BRIEFING fotogs before they go out on an essay job. Make it plain (with a script if necessary) "Why we are taking pictures," but also give the fotog complete freedom to toss the script if he finds conditions not as anticipated, or simply if he has a different IDEA when he gets to the scene.

## Taboos---Snakes and Sex

Nearly every American magazine editor is plagued by scores of taboos—house rules on what is or is not "nice" for breakfast reading.

There appears to be a double standard of morality in print: what you can say in text you musn't say in pictures. Many of these taboos appear to have no justification other than an editor's whim or personal squeamishness. For several years LIFE had a managing editor who didn't like Indians! It became a game to try to sneak an Indian into the magazine.

Most papers ban pictures of frogs, snakes, blood and smashups. The question comes up, "How does an editor come by all this private information as to what

shocks people at breakfast?" For that matter, what real difference whether people are shocked at breakfast or later?

The feeling is that many shocks, even ugly ones, are healthy because they inform. ("Birth of a Baby" in LIFE) The question we must ask and answer ourselves is whether we are using a picture for its NEWS Value or its Shock Value.

LIFE's statement of its approach is that "a publication has no right to keep facts from the people. Witness our printing the photo of dead Marines embedded in the sand of Buna Beach. Shocking, but necessary for people's knowledge of what war means."

Perhaps the most intelligent criteria for

publication of some "questionable" photos is: Are they interesting? LIFE feels that snakes, for example, are interesting, and that people don't know enough about them.

The point is to avoid setting up a list of taboos and inflexible conceptions, as though to deny life's realities.

Rather, approach every subject with a truly open mind as to its message and meaning.

Otherwise one soon builds a list of prejudices so long and weird that the publication becomes a distorted mirror of life: in fact, it reflects a denial of the broad scale of humanity and the world it shares with other people.

# THE NEWSPAPERMAN

## I. THE PUBLISHER AND HIS PAPER

by William M. Pinkerton

In Oshkosh, Wisconsin, there was, during my childhood, a factory known as Clarke's Carriage Works. In the days before Henry Ford's mastery of the machine, Clarke's had done a substantial business in the manufacture of various horse-drawn rigs. As the automobile grew in importance among means of locomotion, Clarke's found fewer customers for their sturdy box-trucks and handsome buggies. But they found a new outlet in the manufacture of bodies for motor-driven trucks. The new line was fitted into the old. Soon the motor-body business became Clarke's chief concern. There was a change of name. Eventually, the company was absorbed by a large automotive concern. Yet, even at the end of the twenties, the factory still was known to the neighborhood as "Clarke's Carriage Works."

Such tales, not uncommon in the annals of American industry, raise intriguing questions: Should we say that the old carriage-maker died with the passing of the horse? Should we say that a "new industry" ran the carriage-maker, the blacksmith and the harness-fitter out of business? Either answer might be defended; but neither would describe the train of events as they happened.

And who could have said, in 1914, that Clarke's was going out of the carriage business and into the motor-truck trade? There are instances enough where an industry has tried a sideline for a time—the phonograph industry, for instance, in radios—and then found a new untapped market for the original product.

Such considerations suggest caution in trying to define the industrial situation of the newspaper business today. They cast doubt on confident assertions either that the newspaper press is a dying institution or that the newspaper is an inherently deathless institution in a democracy.

There is little doubt that the newspaper business today is in a condition of change. Evidences are all about: new typographies,

new departments, new features, Wirephoto and its competitors, refurbished editorial pages are concrete signs. Newspapermen are alive to the potentialities of new competitors—radio, television, news-magazines, picture-magazines. Many alert publishers long since have hedged their investments by venturing into the radio field. At the same time, the depression decade left the nation with fewer metropolitan dailies than it had in 1929. Dozens of cities which once supported four or five newspapers are now "one-paper towns." The great chains have displayed their financial weakness in a rapid-fire succession of mergers, sell-outs and close-outs. Inside the newspaper business itself, few persons are not aware of new technological developments which might change the mechanical and financial basis of the business: developments like the teletype-setter, which conceivably might set type simultaneously in a dozen or hundred cities; the telephoto process, which similarly might alter methods of transmitting news; the offset printing process with its asserted economies, and radio facsimile which, if made practicable, might shift both technique and control into new hands. Certainly, the straws of change are in the wind.

Some critics of "The Press" find solace in the thought that new processes, by cutting down the financial factors in publishing, may bring a resurgence of "the personal journal" in a newspaper of comparatively small circulation printed at low cost.

The fact remains that, as of today, a daily newspaper is a financial venture of corporate dimensions. To start from scratch with a brand-new newspaper, even in a rather small city, means financing which runs into the hundreds of thousands. Not only must the enterpriser purchase linotypes, presses, stereotypes, trucks and quarters, but he also must be ready to meet the awful financial drain of daily rolls of newsprint, weekly barrels of ink, press service assessments and the bi-weekly salaries of reporters and ad-men during the long months of getting established.

Finance, then, is a basic fact. And yet many a metropolitan newspaper is not three generations removed from an enterprising youngster who borrowed a couple of thousand, set up a press, hired report-

ers on half-pay-and-stock and laid the foundations of a great institution. This development parallels, of course, similar histories in other fields of American industry.

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle rose to great heights under the guidance of its founder, held its lead during his son's lifetime, and was in the hands of a third generation when it fell into financial difficulties a few years ago. The Omaha World-Herald, now the only newspaper in that city, was founded by Gilbert Hitchcock (later Senator) in competition with three other newspapers, and rose to a preeminent position in its trade area during his lifetime. Upon his death in 1934, control passed to Senator Hitchcock's son-in-law, Henry Doorly. Lucius W. Nieman founded the Milwaukee Journal and built it up to its present commanding position during his own lifetime. Being childless, Mr. Nieman provided in his will for purchase of controlling interest in his newspapers by the employees. This was accomplished during the thirties. Examples of the meteoric rise of newspaper enterprises in the span of one generation could be multiplied endlessly; but I know of no example of this poor-boy-to-publisher saga during the past 20 years.

I should think that a major question concerning the future of the newspaper business is: Will newer newspapers spring up to challenge these well-established organs, now largely in the hands of the founders' heirs, or may we expect particular newspapers to become dominant and self-perpetuating institutions, such as one finds in the railroad business, in the public utilities and in banking? I should hesitate to guess the answer.

Nevertheless, the manner in which modern newspapers have come into being—sparked by the genius of a single man—is reflected in the formal organization of the typical newspaper. Typically, the financial interest in a newspaper rests in a rather small group of stockholders—often, for all practical purposes, in a single family. With the exception of Hearst enterprises, the stock of newspapers is not available for purchase on the New York Exchange. It seldom changes hands, and then only in such emergencies as financial difficulty or death. I think it might be inferred that newspaper stock is valued both as an investment and as a vehicle of trust or power.

---

Formerly an Associated Press reporter in Washington, William M. Pinkerton was a Nieman Fellow in 1940-41, a lieutenant in the Navy, and a member of the staff of United States News before becoming director of the Harvard News Office this January.

---

Because of the nature of stock-ownership, I would venture the further generalization that control of a newspaper rests typically in the hands of the actual owners. In such great corporations as U.S. Steel and General Motors control of business policy may be lodged in less than five percent of the stock—the rest being scattered widely among thousands of small, unorganized investors. In the newspaper, however, control and ownership tend to merge. Usually "the family"—which may include a few associates occupying key positions and deriving their status, not by kinship, but by life-long service to the enterprise—actually owns a majority of the stock.

In this connection, it is interesting to speculate on the fact that the newspaper business largely escaped the tendency toward consolidation into great nation-wide holding companies which marked so many other American industries during the twentieth century. While the Hearst chain and the Scripps-Howard chain might be compared in size with Commonwealth and Southern in utilities or American Airlines in transportation, it is still true that the locally-owned, independently-financed newspaper remains the most typical management set-up in the newspaper field. Development of the Associated Press, a cooperative enterprise for performing the costly function of "covering the world" for all its members, may have been a strong deterrent on the economic side. This development was paralleled, of course, by the private-owned services of United Press and International News Service. On the social side, the prestige of the publishing family in the community—hardly to be compared with that of a merely industrial dynasty—must be reckoned a factor. There does not appear to be anything in the Hearst and Scripps-Howard experience to prove that an economic advantage attaches to chain operation of newspapers.)

A family which does not own a majority of the stock subjects itself to the danger which hounded the railroad tycoons in the days of Jim Hill and E. H. Harriman—the danger that a jealous rival might seize power by a stock-buying coup.

Control is vital. Beyond the financial benefits of newspaper ownership are much larger benefits in the field of public affairs. The publisher of a newspaper is a potent factor, almost per se, in his community. He is a personage; people read "his" newspaper, sometimes they read "his" editorials, they discuss what "he" had to say on a vital issue of the day. Often a publisher's friends will speak in these terms even when they know that the publisher does not write a line of the printed matter appearing in "his" newspaper.

And what "he" says is important. He may rank with the banker, the industrialist

and the department-store proprietor in the city's business councils; but in the field of public affairs he outranks them all. The institution which he heads says its say daily, to a large audience, on matters of public concern and public policy.

Still, what the publisher says in "his" newspaper is not always a direct reflection of the views he voices at the country club or at the dinner tables of his friends. This is not the place to discuss at length the publisher's function (and indeed I am not equipped to do so), but a few considerations which limit his editorial management of a newspaper might be suggested:

The newspaper enjoys a certain institutional standing in the community, quite apart from the individuals who produce it at any given time. People "swear by the Globe" or "always read the Journal." (I remember that my father continued religiously to read the Milwaukee Sentinel, once the editorial wheel-horse of Wisconsin Republicanism, long after it had become an adjunct of the Hearst chain.) Thus, a publisher—even if he comes from outside the newspaper's organization—is limited in his policies by a force that can only be called tradition. He may order a complete about-face on policy; he may, over a period of years, drastically change the entire nature of the newspaper, but in any decision to do these things, he is inhibited, more or less, by the "character" of the newspaper. "Character" is a factor of importance both to financial success and to public influence. Ill-considered change may destroy in short order a following built up by the struggles of decades.

The dead hand of the founder continues to check the reins of newspaper management long after his death. Principles—like Joseph Medill's Republicanism on the Chicago Tribune (in 1928, the Tribune faced a serious conflict between its tradition of Republicanism and its strong editorial policy against prohibition. Tradition won.)—and taboos—like William Rockhill Nelson's stricture against mentioning snakes in his Kansas City Star—continue in force long after the man himself has passed on. The family nature of newspaper ownership may be a partial explanation of this phenomenon.

The newspaper's very position in public life is a factor further limiting the publisher's freedom. Rare indeed is the American newspaper publisher who has not paid his respects to the non-commercial functions of his organization—its functions as a servant of the people and an instrument of democracy. Thus, the publisher may well feel a sense of responsibility concerning the public attitudes of his newspaper which he would not feel about his own personal attitudes expressed in private. In this

contrast of "public" and "private" attitudes, the publisher is not much different from a doctor, a lawyer or the governor of a state.

The fact that the publisher occupies a position of unusual prestige in his community—that he is at once the peer of bankers and industrialists and also the peer of ministers, mayors and professors—does not spring from any inordinate lust for power on his part. It springs from the very nature of the newspaper business.

In the menagerie of modern industry, the newspaper is a strange two-headed creature. One head is a business head, with an eye single for the profit margin. The other head is shaped on the classic lines of a Greek embodiment of Justice. It has an all-seeing eye, an all-hearing ear and a tongue with which to tell. It has horns which may be used for hanging dilemmas out to dry or for goring the unrighteous enemy of the people. This is the head of Journalism.

The thin nerve center which connects these two heads is the Publisher. His function is to keep the balance between the two parts of his beast. He has power to throw the balance of control now to the business side, now to the editorial side of his newspaper.

By training, most publishers of today are businessmen. They know the technical facts of cost-accounting, advertising solicitation, circulation, promotion and profits. The mysteries of the city hall run, the magic of headline-writing and the metaphysics of news-judgment they know at second-hand, as men who have followed the process from outside. Their bias is toward the business function of the newspaper.

But the publisher's function is not that of a technician on either side. He is the top executive, the final word on policy, "the boss." Strangely enough, he is the only man on a newspaper who can claim an active role on both "the business side" and "the editorial side." All other employees work on one side or on the other.

The business side of the organization—commonly known to newspapermen as "the front office"—plays the game of profit and loss. It solicits advertising, both from local merchants and from national producers. It handles the sales of subscriptions and the delivery of each day's edition to the hands of the readers. It runs the costly factory where the written word is converted into a merchantable mass-production unit. It keeps the books, audits the accounts and allocates the running expenses among the various segments of the establishment.

The editorial side has only an indirect connection with the money-making aspects of the business. It is true that an editor

may "sell" the publisher on an out-of-town story or a costly campaign in terms of subscriptions. It is true that editors weigh certain news accounts in terms of their possible effect on advertisers or on a large section of the citizenry whose subscriptions have importance to the newspaper's financial success. But such considerations are largely incidental. The major concern of the editorial side is to "get the news," and to get it into the paper; and incidentally to discuss its meaning in the columns of the editorial page.

Ordinarily, the editorial side does not concern itself with profits. Like a university faculty, it works on a budget which is assigned to it by economic agents outside its own group. And its conscious interests center elsewhere than on the ledger-books. Chief editors follow the circulation reports more as a measure of their editorial effectiveness—"giving the readers what they want"—than as a measure of business success. Other editorial workers are completely divorced from the profit motive of the institution. Whereas an advertising solicitor may be paid commissions in proportion to the number of advertising accounts he obtains, and a circulation manager may win bonuses for each additional thousand subscribers obtained in his district, the reporter is paid a straight salary. On the rare occasions when a reporter is given a special bonus, the reward is made, not in terms of business gains, but in terms of "good news work." Even the Christmas bonus granted employes by some newspapers comes to the editorial department worker as largesse bestowed by an outside agent, and not as an earned reward for specific labors.

The editorial worker's interest in the business success of the enterprise is that of any workman who is concerned that his employer will not close up shop overnight. There is little in his position in the newspaper organization to make him think of himself as a businessman performing a business function.

Instead, he thinks of himself as a journalist (though he may balk at using the word)—as a specialist in the techniques of obtaining information, of writing for readers of varying intelligence, of judging the value to readers of various aspects of the day's budget of history. Not uncommonly, the editorial worker will express antagonism toward "the business side," as a nuisance which must be put up with.

That the public reflects this view is a matter of simple observation. The newspaperman of story, stage and film is inevitably

## Tom Stokes—Crusader

Thomas L. Stokes, Washington columnist, received the third annual Raymond Clapper award for general excellence in Washington reporting and for best carrying on the crusading spirit of Clapper. Stokes was cited "for his willingness to tackle controversial issues, for going after tough national questions in the best journalistic tradition, for his fairness in reporting both sides of controversial questions and for his work as a real reporter."

Ordinarily, the editorial side does not concern itself with profits. Like a university faculty, it works on a budget which is assigned to it by economic agents outside its own group. And its conscious interests center elsewhere than on the ledger-books. Chief editors follow the circulation reports more as a measure of their editorial effectiveness—"giving the readers what they want"—than as a measure of business success. Other editorial workers are completely divorced from the profit motive of the institution. Whereas an advertising solicitor may be paid commissions in proportion to the number of advertising accounts he obtains, and a circulation manager may win bonuses for each additional thousand subscribers obtained in his district, the reporter is paid a straight salary. On the rare occasions when a reporter is given a special bonus, the reward is made, not in terms of business gains, but in terms of "good news work." Even the Christmas bonus granted employes by some newspapers comes to the editorial department worker as largesse bestowed by an outside agent, and not as an earned reward for specific labors.

To sum up: The organization in which newspapermen work is typically a closely-held, family-owned corporation, involving a considerable investment of money. While ownership and control are separated in many large industries, they are typically combined in a single group in the newspaper industry. The publisher of the newspaper is the repository of this combination of ownership and control. While the publisher usually is a businessman, whose newspaper experience has been business experience, he exercises administrative control over both the editorial side and the business side of the organization.

The newspaper performs an economic function as a profit-making organization, selling to the general public a commodity which has both utilitarian and cultural values for members of the community (the newspaper), and selling to other merchants the privilege of addressing these readers in behalf of their own products (advertising). The profit-making aspects of the newspaper are concentrated in the business side.

The newspaper also performs a public service in gathering information concerning events of general interest in the community and making this information available to large numbers of citizens. It is a major instrument of communication in the community. The newspaper seeks to inform and direct public opinion, by discussing current issues in the columns of its editorial page. These functions are concentrated in the editorial side.

Because of its dual function as a business institution and as an institution of public service, the newspaper—and its publisher—enjoys unusual prestige in the community. In the public mind, this prestige seems to derive mainly from the editorial side of the newspaper.

## Feather-Brained

William J. Miller states that the "public prefers not to think. It prefers to be entertained." Alas, that is too, too true.

But don't blame the public too much. Look rather to the system of education they have had foisted on them during the last generation.

Some one told the educators that the vast majority of people take their knowledge through their eyes rather than through their ears. So our educators, seeing an easy way to move their classes along and out, took the amusement method and called it modern education.

Any real educator knows that the basis of education is mental discipline: that the muscles of the mind must be trained and exercised as well as the muscles of the body, if we are to have healthy minds and bodies. But it was easier to teach the students to play than it was to interest them in book learning.

Just look at your public today—sloppy thoughts, sloppy dress and sloppy manners. Courtesy went out with spelling and punctuation. When you do meet a well-mannered child you know he learned it at home, not in the school. But seemingly there are too few homes that are equipped for this guidance, that is if we can believe the delinquency and divorce records.

Today's teachers—primary and college—are largely to blame for the public's thought processes or lack of them. But the newspaper too must shoulder some of the responsibility. . . .

Maybe it would be a good thing for your kind of newsmen to study the reasons for the "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire" by Gibbons, or the withering of the influence of Greek culture, or if you want to be more modern, delve into the disintegration of the British Empire. Slovenly thinking developed the desire to get away from responsibility, or the "let George do it" attitude that is tearing the world assunder. And it seems we are going the same way.

It has always been my conviction that the press has a decided responsibility to interpret the news so that the public can think straight. And today they have the added task of teaching the untaught of our schools. . . .

Or has our Fourth Estate gone feather-brained too?

George J. Hurst

Woodside, N. Y.

# HOW J. P. RAN A NEWSPAPER

By Irving Dilliard

*of the Post-Dispatch editorial page staff*

"My boy," Joseph Pulitzer said to one of his staff with whom he was walking to lunch, "how in the world did you get all that muscle on your arm?"

"By taking lots of exercise," the writer replied. "I do that to keep up my health, which I regard as the most valuable asset in my business."

"In your profession," J. P. corrected. "Don't think I am criticizing, my dear boy, I am not critical, but journalism is a profession—the profession."

This incident, related by William Inglis, typifies Joseph Pulitzer's reverential attitude toward and intense feeling for newspaper work.

Just as the founder of the Post-Dispatch elevated journalism from a business or trade to the foremost profession so did he distinguish between business management of a newspaper and news and editorial policy and operation. He was himself rarely successful at managing large enterprise. Business problems were almost continuously before him and one of his last worries before his death aboard the *Liberty* in Charleston harbor was an emergency in the supply of newsprint. Yet he held staunchly to the view that the men who direct the news and editorial columns should, by training and association, be separated sharply from those who manage a newspaper's business side.

A skilled newsgatherer himself, he had highest regard for those who report and edit the news. He knew and intimately understood their difficulties. Late in life he wrote to St. Clair McKelway of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*:

"Napoleon said that every private carried the marshal's baton in his knapsack. I hope that every reporter, copyreader, city editor or editorial writer will believe that he can carry his capital in his head if he will only work hard enough and stick to his convictions and principles. There are more dead papers to resurrect today than in 1872. Many reporters of today may be great revivalists generations hence.

"If there is anything in my melancholy life's work which I hope and wish may do good, it is that it should give encouragement to thousands of hard-working journalists who honestly believe that they have no chance of ever becoming owners or part owners of newspapers because

they have no capital. I should particularly like to feel that after I have passed away there will be more men than there are now in the profession which I have loved so much, possessing hope and confidence of rising to the highest position."

Within the newspaper itself, his great interest was to make it a living force editorially. As he himself said, "My heart is in the editorial page." The page, the page, the page! Always the page just as journalism was the profession.

How devoted J. P. was to the columns through which the newspaper spoke its views as distinguished from news presentation is suggested by the title which John L. Heaton gave to his book about the *New York World*. Heaton, who was for many years one of Pulitzer's editorial writers and often in charge, called it "The Story of a Page."

Pulitzer himself was utterly frank in saying that all the effort he put into the news columns to achieve a bright, popular, readable newspaper was to gain new readers for "the page."

He knew only too well that he set his store by the editorial page at the very time of the decline of editorial pages generally, in England as well as in the United States. But this lamentable situation, so he said, "ought to furnish further inspiration." He charged his staff: "This decadence is all the more inducement to make a page that stands out above the others—that means something, that believes in something, that fights for something."

How was the page to mean something and attract the hearing of people who should know its meaning? By holding to honest opinions, arrived at in terms of the interests of the people, expressed clearly, concisely and attractively.

First came utter independence. Pulitzer had a deep conviction that the editorial writer should be a man of relatively few personal friendships and that he should establish these where they would not even unconsciously warp his work.

"Friendships," he did not hesitate to say, "are dangerous. A person who presumes on personal or social intimacies to ask a newspaper to color its expressions ought to be kicked out of its office. Editorial writers should realize far more fully

than they do the immense asset of their independence, and exercise their right to say anything they please, fearless of aught save overstatement and untruth."

Clarity was basic. "The first object of any word in any article at any time must be perfect clarity," he instructed his writers. "I hate all rare, unusual, non-understandable words. Avoid the vanity of foreign words or phrases or unfamiliar terms. Editorials must be written for the people, not for the few."

Simplicity also was fundamental. "What is the use," he asked, "of writing above the heads of readers? Go over that testimony, analyze it, summarize it, condense it, so that a child can understand it. Take that page editorial and boil it down to half a column. It can be made to contain every single point or fact or idea. Introductions should be regarded as deadly enemies to be killed instantly. Begin with the beginning."

One of his messages is squarely in point here. "Tell him," J. P. once sent word back to his editorial page chief, "to take 20 hours with his editorial and to get it into 20 lines."

That brief direction covered his two fundamental precepts in newspaper writing—precepts he established in the famous motto that was conspicuously posted on the walls of his news and editorial rooms: "ACCURACY — TERSENESS — ACCURACY."

The 20 hours should assure careful preparation, double checking of all the facts. They would make possible tightest compression—even to the stipulated 20 lines! Mere words filled Pulitzer with dismay. "Grass" was what he called long scenic passages in novels and articles and woe to the secretary who made the mistake of leading him out into it.

He gave close attention to the planning and presentation of major editorials on difficult, important subjects. It was his stand, from which he could not be moved, that editorial writers were obligated to handle these themes in a way to make them attractive and understandable. Such an editorial was the *World's* on the Northern Securities monopoly case decision in the Supreme Court, March 15, 1904. Although long, it was carefully organized

**Pulitzer Centennial**

Joseph Pulitzer, founder of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the late New York World, was born April 10, 1847. The Post-Dispatch, published by his son of the same name, will mark his centennial with a special edition prepared under the direction of Irving Dilliard of the P-D editorial page.

by sections with sub-headings "The Case," "The Law," "The Decree," "The Supreme Court" and "The Effect." It concluded: "A 'campaign of education,' by all means; but let the school be opened in Wall Street, not on the farm!"

But as he liked the plain word, so did Pulitzer prefer the short, strong sentence in short editorials. And he used it himself with great effect. Take for example, the World's editorial on the fight against the Cullom Act of 1887, providing for regulation of interstate commerce. Entitled "A Question," it required even fewer than 20 lines of the editorial columns for Jan. 9, 1887:

"The Interstate Commerce bill is opposed  
By Jay Gould;  
By C. P. Huntington;  
By the Western cattle rings;  
By Philip D. Armour;  
By stock jobbers, large and small;  
By corporations generally;  
By Leland Stanford, the millionaire  
and corporation Senator.

"It is favored by  
The Western farmers;  
The Eastern merchants;  
The boards of trade and transportation;  
Anti-monopolists in general;  
The people.

Ought the Interstate Commerce bill to become a law or to suffer defeat?"

At the time of the historic New York insurance investigation, Pulitzer wrote and sent to his page the following editorial, which he headed "McCurdy's Perjury":

"Richard A. McCurdy, president of the Mutual Life Insurance Company, receives a salary of \$150,000 a year. It is probably the largest salary paid in the United States. It is \$50,000 in excess of President McCall's salary and \$70,000 in excess of President Morton's salary.

"Robert H. McCurdy, son of Richard A. McCurdy, is a director in the Mutual, general manager of the company, a member of the Finance Committee, and has been connected with the institution for 20 years.

"What is the salary of the president of the company?" asked Mr. Hughes of Robert H. McCurdy.

"I do not know," was the reply.

"My father," said the boy in the venerable conundrum, 'has a brother who is not my uncle.'

"The answer is the same: 'The boy lied.'  
"Moreover, Robert H. McCurdy lied under oath, and is therefore guilty of perjury. His case demands immediate action on the part of William Travers Jerome, District Attorney of New York."

J. P.'s cables and memos to his editors are studded with sentences which invite quotation:

NEWS EDITING: "Give me a news editor who has been well grounded, who has the foundations of accuracy, love of truth and an instinct for the public service, and there will be no trouble about his gathering the news."

RELIABILITY: "No man has the right to make grave charges against integrity by innuendo, by insinuation, on rumors or reporter's gossip."

ERRORS: "One single blunder destroys confidence in 1000 statements. Why not? The reader knows positively this one assertion to be glaringly, palpably false. How can he be expected to trust 1000 other statements that are startling?"

PERSONAL CONVICTION: "Better that certain opinions not be printed than that they appear through the medium of a writer who did not honestly share them."

CONTINUITY: "The chief defect of the page is its lack of persistence and continuing force. It lacks the red thread that should run through it like a Wagnerian motif."

NATIONAL VIEW: "Teach our people something about our own country. The East knows next to nothing about the West."

One of the fields which J. P. wanted his

writers to know thoroughly was economics—not the "old, arid, abstract, political economy," but "the new play of industrial and commercial forces that is transforming modern society." Then he said, prophetically, in 1904, "The relations between capital and labor, for instance. Can a journalist be too well informed about that?"

J. P. insisted on close liaison between news and editorial departments. It made him literally sick when he found that important news was not discussed editorially because the writers did not know it was to be printed. "The excuse that the newsmen do not come up and report is no good," he declared. "The editors should go down!"

He required that editorial writers be well read. Once he demanded: "I want to know all the magazines in our editorial room, who reads them, who marks them, why all current thought is ignored."

The editor should "be fair, judicial, moderate, tolerant, weigh every word, measure every line and sentence." The ideal editorial chief, he wrote, was like "the Chief Justice of the United States," weighing and deciding not by law but "in accordance with the truth, truth, TRUTH!" Many times he held up the ideal of the Supreme Court.

In the Pulitzer book, nothing came ahead of responsibility. "If there is anything I most especially urge," he wrote, "it is to feel personal responsibility for a word spoken, a scrupulous anxiety to weigh every word before it is irretrievably too late and it goes out to the world to be found wanting in truth, to injure the reliability of the paper, to diminish its power for good, to make it distrusted."

For, as he told Alleyne Ireland: "We are a democracy, and there is only one way to get a democracy on its feet in the matter of its individual, its social, its municipal, its state, its national conduct, and that is by keeping the public informed. There is not a crime, there is not a dodge, there is not a trick, there is not a swindle, there is not a vice which does not live by secrecy. Get these things out in the open, describe them, attack them, ridicule them in the press, and sooner or later public opinion will sweep them away."

His faith was in the people—led by a free and responsible press.

(From the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.)

## NIEMAN REPORTS

VOL. I NO. 2

APRIL, 1947

Published from 44 Holyoke House  
Cambridge, Mass.

by the

## SOCIETY OF NIEMAN FELLOWS

Editorial Council

JOHN McL. CLARK, Hanover, N. H.  
THOMAS GRIFFITH, New York  
A. B. GUTHRIE, JR., Lexington, Ky.  
PAUL J. HUGHES, Louisville, Ky.  
CARROLL KILPATRICK, Washington  
ROBERT LASCH, Chicago, Ill.  
WILLIAM J. MILLER, New York  
LEON SVIRSKY, New York  
BEN YABLONKY, New York  
LOUIS M. LYONS, Cambridge, Mass.  
Chairman

## An Opportunity

I am delighted by Vol. I, No. 1 of Nieman Reports.

May I make so bold as to give you a suggestion? I think the Nieman Reports could serve a highly useful purpose if you would have one or more of the Nieman Fellows write a piece about the weaknesses and failures of the newspapers as they have observed them in their daily work.

I am impressed by the opportunity you have to exert constructive leadership upon the newspaper profession in the United States through the Nieman Reports.

Ralph L. Crosman, Director  
College of Journalism  
University of Colorado

One of the evils of the long shutdown of news in Springfield was that the retirement of a great editor, Waldo L. Cook of the Springfield Republican, went unrecorded in the press. Waldo Cook had wielded his blunt pen in the pages of the Republican 59 of his 82 years, had been its editor 25 years, had made its editorial page for vigor, independence and liberalism, an American approximation of the Manchester Guardian. Apparently the Republican retired with him. Sherman Bowles showed no signs of restoring the paper of his fathers. Despite the heritage from three Samuel Bowles' of more than a century of an independent newspaper, he chose to be a local Munsey. He had said before his six-month strike that he would resume with only two of his four newspapers. After starting up the Daily News, he began reissuing the morning Union.

## Music Critics

Leading music critics of American newspapers are on the program of a Symposium on Music Criticism announced by the Department of Music at Harvard University for May 1, 2 and 3. Invitations have been sent to music critics on papers in all parts of the country. The Nieman Foundation is joining in sponsoring the symposium as a service to newspapers.

Alfred Frankenstein, critic of the San Francisco Chronicle will preside at the symposium May 2. Olin Downes, New York Times critic, is chairman for May 3. Virgil Thomson, New York Herald-Tribune critic, will discuss "The Art of Judging Music" May 2.

Archibald T. Davison, head of the Harvard music department, is general chairman of the program. President James B. Conant of Harvard will make the opening address May 1. E. M. Forster will follow with a paper on "The Raison d'Etre of Criticism in the Arts." Then Roger Sessions will give a paper on "The Scope of Music Criticism."

On the second day, Edgar Wind will discuss "The Critical Nature of a Work of Art." Olga Samaroff will speak on "The Equipment of the Music Journalist." Huntington Cairns will speak on "The Future of Musical Patronage in America." Otto Kinkeldey will discuss "Consequences of the Recorded Performance."

Three concerts of new music will be presented in the evenings, made possible by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation in the Library of Congress.

"In one sense of the word, there is no newsprint shortage. A good percentage of the metropolitan papers of this country used in 1946 as much, or more, newsprint than they ever used. Assuming a newspaper has the same amount of newsprint now as it had before the war, it has a shortage because of the heavier demand."

Ted Dealey, publisher,  
Dallas News.

## DEADLINE

for Applications for Nieman Fellowships at Harvard for the 1947-8 college year has been advanced to May 1.

This is to allow time for full consideration of candidates and to permit announcement of the awards by the end of June.

Requirements—At least three years journalistic experience. This includes all news media.

Age—Under 40.

Grant of leave of absence from publication should be presented with application and a proposal for study submitted.

Application forms can be had from:  
Nieman Foundation  
44 Holyoke House,  
Cambridge 38, Mass.

"We have a choice"

—Lillienthal

While the Lillienthal issue was still in doubt, with Senator Saltonstall still uncommitted, the Boston Globe ran on its editorial page Feb. 25, an address Lillienthal made at Radcliffe Commencement in 1945 on "Machines and the Human Spirit." His thesis:

"We have a choice. The machine can be so used as to make men free as they have never been free before. We are not powerless. We have it in our hands to use the machine to augment the dignity of human existence . . .

"We can choose deliberately and consciously, whether the machine or man comes first. But that choice will not be exercised on a single occasion surrounded by spectacle and drama. We will move from decision to decision, from issue to issue, and you and I and all of us will be in the midst of this struggle for the rest of our days.

"We cannot master the machine in the interest of the human spirit unless we have a faith in people.

## NIEMAN REPORTS

44 Holyoke House, Cambridge

Please enter my subscription to Nieman Reports, for which I enclose \$2.00 for one year.

.....  
..... Street  
..... City  
..... State