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How Stands Our Press?

By OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD



Human Events Associates

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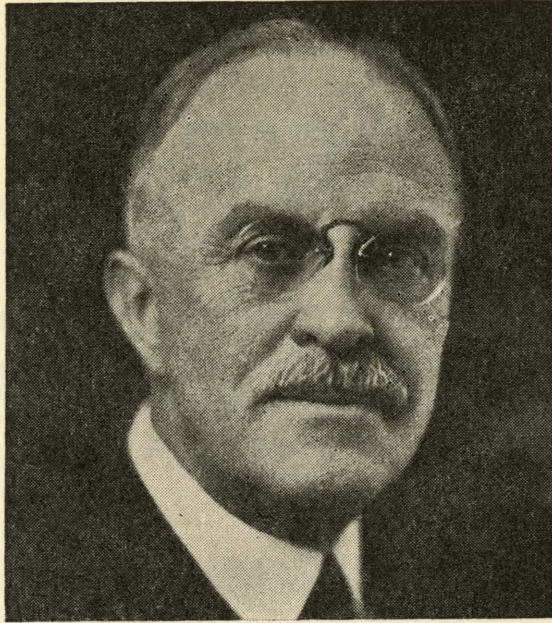
*Perhaps an editor might . . . divide
his paper into four chapters, heading
the first, Truths; 2d, Probabilities;
3d, Possibilities; 4, Lies.*

— THOMAS JEFFERSON



Human Events Associates
CHICAGO, 1947

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OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD, by background, experience and interest is qualified as is no one else to write on the American press. He is the grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, and his father, Henry Villard, builder of the Northern Pacific Railroad, was a Civil War correspondent.

His experience as a journalist began fifty years ago as a reporter in Philadelphia; from 1897 to 1918 he was associated with the *New York Evening Post*, first as an editorial writer, then president, and finally as owner. From 1918 to 1932 he was owner and editor of the *Nation*; it was during his editorship that this New York weekly won for itself a unique place as a truly liberal journal.

He is the author of *John Brown—A Biography Fifty Years After*, 1910; *Germany Embattled*, 1915; *Newspapers and Newspaper Men*, 1923; *Prophets True and False*, 1928; *The German Phoenix*, 1933; *Fighting Years, Memoirs of a Liberal Editor*, 1939; *Our Military Chaos*, 1939; *Within Germany*, 1940; *The Disappearing Daily*, 1944.

Appreciation is due the *Progressive* and the *New Leader* for their permission to use certain material which had already appeared in those publications.

HOW STANDS OUR PRESS?



HOW WELL DID THE AMERICAN PRESS, next to the radio the foremost means for the communication of information, emerge from World War II? How well did it live up to its sacred trust of keeping the public informed as to what was happening in the years leading up to the war and during the struggle? Did it fulfill its task of standing sentinel over the Government even in wartime lest there be an infringement of American liberties because of the delegation by Congress of such enormous war powers to the Chief Executive? Did it insist upon civilian supervision of the conduct of the war in accord with the historic American tradition? Did it protect the freedom of individuals, uphold the right of free speech, and safeguard minorities, however unpopular? These questions are of vital importance, especially since the enunciation of the so-called "Truman Doctrine" committing us, if not to a third World War, then to direct political warfare against the only other great military Power in an effort to prevent the further extension of Communism. Surely the gravity of the crisis confronting this nation justifies it in taking stock of its spiritual and intellectual assets, in measuring its ability to guide its own destinies, to supervise and direct its elected representatives, and, above all, to control the forces that seek to dominate public opinion.

Let it be said at once that the press is entirely satisfied with its behavior during the war. It points proudly to its coverage of war events, which, despite the restrictions of a too often stupid and always bureaucratic censorship, was far fuller than the reports of any other war in history. It was marked, moreover, by closer cooperation between the newsgathering associa-

tions and individual newspapers which frequently pooled their resources to inform one another, thus rising above the usual news rivalry in order to serve the public as a whole. Its corps of correspondents at the front paid for their courage and devotion to duty with the lives of such brilliant journalists as Ernie Pyle and Raymond Clapper and numerous others. It dwells with satisfaction on a record of service marred by only one governmental effort to discipline an English-language daily and one bad error by the Associated Press. Finally, it has emerged from the war with a slight increase in the number of dailies—five, marking a temporary cessation of a steady decrease for years past. To those who stress this dwindling, it retorts that the total sales of all the daily journals are larger than ever before despite the great wartime scarcity of paper, but for which many dailies would have increased their circulation far more.

So far the record is largely to be commended. The truth is, however, that the press has not emerged from the war with enhanced prestige, that its hold upon the people is not strengthened, that very serious indictments can be brought against its wartime policies, and that it cannot assert that it fully defended individual freedoms or those of minorities, or guarded the people against unconstitutional encroachments by the Chief Executive. It did not insist upon Congressional supervision of the conduct of the war, as in previous hostilities. Worst of all, out of mistaken patriotic desire to serve the country, it betrayed its trust to the people in that it assented to and accepted in February, 1941, a voluntary censorship, under cover of which the Roosevelt Administration hid from both the Congress and the people the commission of overt hostile acts contrary to the Constitutional provision that the Congress alone may declare war. Under that screen of secrecy this country attacked German vessels, killed German nationals, and placed fully-manned American destroyers under British commanders for war service against German submarines and raiders. Months before Pearl Harbor thousands of troops were landed in Iceland after Mr. Roosevelt's repeated promises not to send American boys into the European war.* The American people were allowed to know nothing about these hostile acts.

*On November 7, 1941, a month before Pearl Harbor, Admiral Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, wrote to Admiral Hart of the Asiatic fleet: "Whether the country knows it or not we are at war."

INDEED, AS MORE AND MORE FACTS appear in print about the secret agreements entered into by President Roosevelt at Quebec, Yalta and Teheran, and President Truman's acceptance of the abominable Potsdam pact, thoughtful readers of our dailies are bound to have increasing doubt as to the completeness and trustworthiness of the political news which is spread before them. In this case responsibility lies not so much with the press as with the censorship, the Government and, finally, with President Roosevelt, whose satisfaction in keeping as much as possible from the public on the ground of military necessity, whether actual or not, was beyond any question. Moreover, American skepticism as to the independence and reliability of our dailies has probably been increased because millions of our soldiers have been able to contrast press reports of overseas happenings with the things they actually witnessed.**

Although no censorship intervened in this instance, the press readily accepted the cruel, lawless and needless military expulsion of Japanese and Americans of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific coast, and has generally made no effort to have those unfortunates financially reimbursed by the Government for the loss of property and long-established businesses. Although the military was guilty of gross negligence in its judicial administration of Hawaii, the press neither revealed these shortcomings nor adequately commented upon them after they appeared in the open, thanks to Fulton Lewis, and were censured by the courts. Yet these happenings, like the deceptions of President Roosevelt, constituted acid tests of the fitness and the readiness of our editors to act as the guardians of our liberties, to stand firm for press freedom and press responsibilities at all times and under all circumstances. Nor has the press, except for a few outspoken dailies, challenged the right of the Executive to bind the United States by entering into the secret political agreements already referred to, which did not relate to military operations and are largely responsible for the existing international chaos.

**The public now knows that the heroic Capt. Colin Kelly did not sink the battleship Haruna; that the navy flier who, according to the press, radioed "Sighted sub. Sank same," sent no such message and would have been court-martialed if he had, and that Lt. Col. Devereux, our gallant commander at Wake Island, never radioed the words credited to him: "Send us more Japs," when he was fighting desperately to save his men and the island.

The press must face, too, its share of the responsibility for the "unconditional surrender" policy which lengthened the war, cost the lives of many thousands of precious young Americans, and has put upon the Allies the burden of keeping the Germans alive and reconstructing many of the factories we deliberately destroyed. If it has in the main stood behind the creation of the United Nations Organization, that is much to its credit. Yet it has generally accepted without demurring the new Truman policy of combatting Communism the world over, and in so doing it condones the brushing aside of the United Nations Charter which gives to no member the right to determine what international disputes come under the jurisdiction of the UN and what do not. It must also be added that in this situation the press, for the most part, is not giving the people adequate facts about the actual situations in Greece and Turkey.

For many of these shortcomings the press naturally excuses itself with protestations of "patriotism", and professes surprise that anyone can question the righteousness of its obeying the will of the Chief Executive and welcoming an unofficial censorship when the whole world was ablaze. It is open to question, however, whether in doing so the press did not forget that its most solemn responsibility was and is to the American people above any Government, and especially to protect the people at any cost from Presidents who exceed their powers and privileges and, for that matter, from the Congress, too, should a need arise. The proper conduct for the editors who are so concerned about the liberty of the press would have been to declare that they would accept no censorship except one legally constituted. As it was, even the members of Congress were kept in profound ignorance of the President's belligerent activities, save as they learned of them by gossip or rumor. Today the practical question presents itself whether, if Mr. Truman's adventures-to-come in Greece and Turkey lead toward World War III, the press will not immediately fall in line again, cheerfully accept another voluntary censorship, and once more make it possible for an Executive to conceal from complacent legislators and the public what is actually being done by him behind the scenes. Even today editors in plenty defend Mr. Roosevelt's actions on the ground that he foresaw that we must enter the war and therefore was justified in his unethical deeds and deceptions!

TO RETURN TO THE REPORTING of the war. As in World War I, the press under governmental pressure outdid itself in a campaign of hate and in the spreading of atrocity stories under big headlines. This propaganda was carried to such an extent as to make the public think that most of the victims of the German horror camps were non-Germans, and that our men in German Army prisons were starved and maltreated in accordance with a general policy of Hitler and his army. An interesting example of this was afforded when the American Red Cross reported officially that "99% of the American prisoners of war in Germany have survived and are on their way home"—a remarkable record certainly and one vastly superior to the ghastly showing in our prison stockades, North and South, during the Civil War. This was the more noteworthy since we were bombing German supply and communication lines and millions of homeless civilians were roaming around the country. But this favorable comment by the Red Cross was not allowed to make any impression upon our public. The dispatch reporting it appeared under these headlines in the *New York Herald Tribune* which thus "buried" the statement as to the safety of our prisoners in Germany:

HITLER ORDERED U. S. AND BRITISH FLIERS KILLED
*But the Army Refused, Says the Red Cross,
Because Allies Followed Geneva Rules*

Surely no dispatch more clearly belonged on the first pages, for none could possibly have meant greater reassurance and encouragement to the families of many thousands of American prisoners.

So skilfully was this dispatch hidden that I have yet to meet anyone who saw it, and I have found only one or two who read the subsequently printed official statement of the Provost Marshal, General Archer L. Lerch, that while some individual German camp commanders were violating orders and mistreating American prisoners he was "convinced that in general the Nazi Government was trying to treat Americans with strict if not generous legality". What was the *New York World-Telegram's* top headline on this story? Here it is: "Are We Coddling Prisoners?" The second headline, bigger and blacker, read: "Army Blames German Crack-Up For Mistreatment of

Yanks" which certainly gave no intimation whatsoever of the contents of General Lerch's statement.

Allan Wood, a war correspondent of the London *Express* wrote:

"The most amazing thing about the atrocities in this war is that there have been so few of them. I have come up against few instances where the Germans have not treated our prisoners according to the rules and respected the Red Cross. . . I have seen much of the way in which human chivalry is kept alive amid all the sickening bestialities of war; though, of course, I have rarely been permitted to mention chivalry when it was on the German side. . . And even if the censor does not object, the newspapers exert their right, under our system of a free press, to suppress anything which contradicts their policy".

But this statement did not appear in the United States, so far as I am aware.

Even more striking was the inability of the great corps of American correspondents we had in London to send one word across the Atlantic about a book published by a high English official, J. M. Spaight, formerly the Principal Assistant Secretary of the Air Ministry, which appeared in 1944, long before the end of the war and was duly passed and approved by the British censorship, civil and military. In that volume called "Bombing Vindicated", Mr. Spaight stated not only that England began the "strategic" bombing of German cities before Germany attacked England, but that the English should be proud of having done so, saying:

"Because we were doubtful about the psychological effect of propagandist distortion of the truth that it was we who started the strategic bombing offensive, we have shrunk from giving our great decision of May, 1940, the publicity which it deserved. That surely was a mistake. It was a *splendid decision*. [Italics mine]. It was as heroic and self-sacrificing as Russia's decision to adopt her policy of "scorched earth". It gave Coventry and Birmingham, Sheffield and Southampton, the right to look Kiev and Kharkov, Stalingrad and Sevastopol, in the face. Our

Soviet Allies would have been less critical of our inactivity in 1942 if they had understood what we had done."

Subsequently this statement was confirmed by Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, the British military expert, who also stated that after the first German raid on England the Germans held off for a few days in the hope that this would induce the British to negotiate with them for the abandonment of aerial bombing of cities. Not only was this book authorized by the censors, it was obviously approved by the Government since, as a former official, Mr. Spaight was liable to severe penalties for revealing Government secrets without permission. Still, not one of the American correspondents abroad could take cognizance of this sensational volume and only the few Americans, relatively speaking, who read *Harper's Magazine* could have seen Captain Liddell Hart's statement or understood its significance.

Our press was not even concerned when in May, 1946, the Allies in Berlin decided to destroy all pro-Nazi books and all German military and Nazi memorials, and all books glorifying militarism. It seems that Major-General Robert W. Harper, our military representative, who agreed to this, made some protest, but, as his woman assistant reported, "not on the ground of freedom of speech and of the press. . ." And yet we are supposed to be in Germany to teach the Germans both the spirit and the value of the Four Freedoms! General Harper's assistant further stated that books might be banned if they had *only one passage* in them which did not please their military revisers. She admitted that there was no difference in the principle involved in that action and the Nazi burning of books, but that it was "imperative to cleanse the German mentality of any militaristic traits." Now if there ever was a clear-cut case for the American press to make its military rulers back down, this would seem to have been it. Of course a few spoke up; for the rest there were too many other important matters for the newspapers to take hold of. The American Society of Newspaper Editors remained conspicuously silent, and the volunteer committees that have been battling for the freedom of the press throughout the world had apparently no time to say to President Truman and to the War Department that this action of ours in Germany made a mockery and a hypocrisy of all our pretenses

of literary freedom. The White House was not heard from.

UNDOUBTEDLY MANY OF THESE SHORTCOMINGS in dealing truthfully with the conduct of the war were due to the eagerness of so many of our dailies to follow the herd. Bowing down before authority has long been a discouraging feature of most of our dailies, and when with that is coupled the upholding of certain nationalistic policies, a newspaper owner does not have to give orders to his subordinates—they know which way to write. Another vital reason for the lack of real editorial independence and integrity is the nationwide decay of the editorial page which has followed the disappearance from journalism of the great editors of the past, many of whom, like Horace Greeley, Charles A. Dana, Henry J. Raymond, Edwin L. Godkin, Henry Watterson, Samuel Bowles (father and son), Murat Halstead, and Joseph Pulitzer, were known throughout the country. Their written words carried enormous weight, and people subscribed to their newspapers primarily to read the leading articles and secondarily to get the news. In the last resort, however, the responsibility for the deterioration of the editorial pages rests with the stupidity, the ignorance and the lack of moral responsibility to the public of the owners of many of our journals. I know some, and I think there are probably a good many such, who print worthless, spineless editorials and who print the news service dispatches without editing, interpretation or inquiry as to their correctness. They never oppose any government trend, unless it jeopardizes their financial interest—then they rise up and make a great fuss. They are void of true leadership, yet believe that they are giving perfect journalistic service.

Undoubtedly it is asking a good deal of a small newspaper in a small city to be well informed as to what is going on in a world in which there are the most ominous happenings and trends. At least, however, some one man could be employed to inform himself as to the facts that are circulated by so many eager civic associations, such as the Foreign Policy Association in New York, the various institutes dealing with Pacific problems, the generally intelligent publications which specialize in overseas happenings, like *Foreign Affairs*, the organ of the Council on Foreign Relations. The trouble is that the desire to

be well informed is not there, and the belief prevails that readers are not interested in world events, but only in their local concerns—as if those local concerns were not likely to be gravely affected by happenings overseas.

It is, of course, true that there are honest and fearless and well-informed newspapers which live up to the highest standards and whose editorial pages are intelligent and all-embracing. I know that there are editorial writers who are free men and write accordingly, just as there are some owners who will print attacks upon themselves and the policies of their dailies in their correspondence columns. In the main, however, the indictment herein must stand: The average editorial page is not well written because the average editorial writer is not well posted or determined to print the truth without fear or favor. It is not true that the advertisers rule the newspapers to any serious extent; that is becoming less and less the case as the newspapers decrease and the remaining ones become monopolies, thoroughly entrenched in their districts and quite beyond attack. Only weak dailies let themselves be ruled by advertisers, or are willing to puff those who insert large advertisements. There are still too few who would imitate Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* which, when called upon by the head of a great New York department store not to print the account of a serious elevator accident there, promptly carried the story on its first page under a double head, so that no one should fail to see it. Still, the news columns are far cleaner than they were and the advertising columns, too. The old bitter abuse of other editors has wholly disappeared; no longer does a newspaper limit its political news to the utterances of the party leaders it favors. No longer are there foul and false attacks printed about public men and their private lives.

The press has finally awakened to the existence of labor unions; and some of the more liberal, or richer ones, have labor editors or reporters wholly assigned to writing labor news. Nonetheless, the trend of the entire press is toward the employers' side, notably in strikes. How was not John L. Lewis abused during the 1946 coal strike for daring to suggest that the companies make payments in advance to a relief fund for the care of the 60,000 to 70,000 miners who are annually injured and for the dependents of the 1,500 who are killed—as were the 110

just recently at Centralia! Yet we now learn that the coal companies are enthusiastic about that very benefit fund for which they and the press so bitterly attacked Mr. Lewis. A journalist of 35 years' experience, writing anonymously in *The Colorado Editor*, summarizes thus the relation of the newspapers to labor: "And what chance did a union have then [years ago] or does today of getting its side of a controversy before the public through the average newspaper on even terms with the large employer? Virtually none. . . ." Only occasionally, he added, does a newspaper give the public "the real low-down on a strike situation." Here, too, there are excellent exceptions; and the press does help in reporting flagrant union abuses, even if it often fails to uphold praiseworthy unions and often does not print the reasons for a resort to a strike.

THE FUNDAMENTAL DANGERS threatening the American Press have only been slightly affected by the war. These dangers are the trend toward monopoly, the growth of chain-ownership, standardization, the turning more and more to purely amusement features, and the steady decrease in the total number of dailies. The last, as has already been said, has been temporarily checked, but the sudden disappearance of the three daily newspapers owned by David Stern in Camden, New Jersey, and in Philadelphia—leaving only two daily newspapers, both ultra-conservative, and a weak tabloid in the third largest American city—together with the suspension of the *Asbury Park Sun* and the *Waterbury, Connecticut, Democrat*, show that the prevailing trend continues. In 1909 there were 2,600 English-language dailies, and there are now but 1,763. This serious change Mr. Wilbur Forrest, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, tries to minimize by saying that the reader is getting a much better newspaper today than he did when two or three weak newspapers "were struggling for what little business there was." That may be true, but it does not offset the fact that there are now eleven States in which there is no newspaper competition in the cities.

Connecticut today is without press rivalry morning or evening—as bad a situation for the surviving journals as is the lack of competition in any business. In addition, there are now fewer

than 10,000 weekly newspapers where there were 16,000 in 1910. These decreases in publications have taken place while the population has risen from 91,972,266 in 1910 to an estimated figure today of approximately 142,000,000, while many towns have grown into cities and many cities have added enormously to their inhabitants, during a time when we also took part in two World Wars, became deeply involved in foreign affairs and have now become the leading nation of the world. And Mr. Forrest apparently thinks that the elimination of some struggling newspapers and the rapid change of the press into a monopoly business which can now be entered into only by rich men—very rich men in the case of the larger cities—is of no particular importance, not even though this is a two-party government, when both sides are supposed to be represented in every community. Except for the radio bulletins a large part of the American people would be even more dangerously ignorant of world happenings than many of them are today.

The growth of chain-ownership, by one man or a corporation, has not advanced during the war, partly because of the struggle and partly because newspaper chains have not proved as profitable or as effective as had been expected. For example, both the Hearst and the Scripps-Howard chains have disposed of or abandoned several of their units, and increases have been shown only by small rural groups, except that John S. Knight has acquired the *Chicago Daily News* as the fourth member of his exceptional quartet of dailies. Mr. Frank Gannett's group of combined dailies is one of the outstanding, which owes its strength in part to its being located largely in smaller up-State New York cities, in part to their being clean and honest, though utterly conventional, and also to Mr. Gannett's wisdom in not altering the political policies of the newspapers he buys, although he is an ardent Republican, and allowing freedom of utterance to the editors he employs.

When it comes to standardization, the situation gets steadily worse, especially now that every newspaper has been given the right, by a decision of the Supreme Court, to obtain the Associated Press news. The rise of the comic strips and the great space given to sporting events add to the uniformity of appearance of our dailies, and so do the crossword puzzles, the syndicated Sunday magazines and the numerous other mass-

produced features—there are still many weekly newspapers which purchase everything from a syndicate with the exception of a couple of pages of local news. Even what are known as “canned” editorials are available and are used. All of this makes the news editors the more eager to seek the sensational and the exceptional and to overlook many fields of great interest to our urban dwellers. This has long confused the public which cannot understand why so much of vital interest to it is thrown out on the ground of lack of space, when there is always room for crime, for strikes, for accidents, to say nothing of pages and pages of “society” news, accounts of weddings, and political maneuvering of various kinds. All of this is not offset by the fact that the covering of Washington and world news has greatly improved during the last ten years.

NOW WHAT ARE THE REMEDIES SUGGESTED for the shortcomings of the press? Here special attention must be given to the report of the Commission on the Freedom of the Press, headed by Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago, for which inquiry *Time* gave \$200,000 and the Encyclopaedia Britannica \$15,000 for three years of laborious examination of the whole newspaper problem. Yet it must be said that it made only a few original proposals for change. As *Fortune*, side partner of *Time* in the Luce ownership, reported, the Commission found 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”.* After all its pondering the Commission placed “its main reliance on the mobilization of the elements of society acting directly on the press and not through governmental channels,” but here it was not beyond contradicting itself.

Thus, in the case of the daily newspapers it recommended (1) that legislation be enacted so that an injured or libeled person may obtain a retraction or a restatement of the facts by the offender or an opportunity to reply; (2) that the Government step in and use its own media of communication if the private agencies (press or air) refuse to supply information

*See *Fortune* April, 1947.

about this country to other nations; (3) that all agencies of mass communication "accept the responsibilities of common carriers of information and discussion"; (4) that the members of the press engage in vigorous mutual criticism and (5) that newspapers "increase the competence, independence and effectiveness of their staffs." Of the Commission's thirteen proposals not one offers practical, immediately applicable measures to alter the complexion of the press or its attitude toward its great responsibilities.

Indeed, the only recommendation accepted by Mr. Forrest in his capacity as president of the Society of Newspaper Editors is that proposing an independent agency to carry on continuous criticisms of the press, and then only provided that it have working newspapermen in its membership. He even took the absurd ground that by its criticism of our press the report of the Commission has "damaged the cause of spreading press freedom throughout the world"—seemingly the Commission should really have behaved itself, suppressed all criticism and made its report entirely colorless, and valueless! The press as a whole has severely attacked the report, chiefly on the ground that many of its members were those terrible people—college professors—the severest criticism coming from Mr. Luce's *Fortune*. Mr. Forrest took this opportunity to repeat what he has said so often, that the American press is "the best and fairest in the world", which is probably true, but this still does not prove in any way that the press has lived up to its moral duties or its civic and public trust.

Mr. Forrest was correct in citing such papers as the *Washington Star and Post*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Fort Worth Star* as being "very good" newspapers, and he could have added a number of others, such as the *Wall Street Journal* and many less well known. Yet not even they and those like them could save the press as a whole from the severe indictment of the Commission. Incidentally, it is very hard luck indeed for Mr. Wilbur Forrest that the Commission finds that in the one case where his American Society of Newspaper Editors was brought face to face with "a case of gross malpractice" by a member of the Society, which case constituted a direct transgression of the code of morals it had set for its members, the Society "deliberated long and painfully", but

“the case was dropped.” This, the Commission remarks, “settled the function of the code”; in other words, it is waste paper.

Similarly, the American Newspaper Guild, from which so much was hoped—the writer of this pamphlet was an early member—gave up any chance of exercising a moral influence when it published an official declaration that the Guild did not question the right of the owners to do what they will with their papers “even though the all-too-frequent distortions and suppression of news by large newspapers and press associations have made them less the aids to a truly free market in ideas than they ought to be in a democratic society. The Guild recognizes that newspaper proprietors have an absolute right to be careless, prejudiced and even wrongheaded, subject only to the right of the reader not to read or to read and discount”—a useful right when one lives in one of the many cities which have only one daily newspaper! Of what use is an organization with views like the above? Incidentally, the Guild has come perilously close occasionally to attempting itself to control the fate of dailies, as in the case of the *Philadelphia Record* which perished because of a Guild strike.

There is one striking note in the report of the Commission which deserves stressing: “It is no longer enough to report *the fact* truthfully. It is now necessary to report *the truth about the fact.*” The Commission declared that this should be an obligation upon the press in reporting both international and domestic news. Every journalist must recognize this. As has been well pointed out, if the background of certain statements is not given, a totally false value may be placed upon them and thus mislead the reader. This is particularly likely to happen when the American reader does not understand the position or motives of a foreigner whose views are cabled. Again, it has been frequently pointed out that one of the great vices of the press today is the intentional coloring of news and the editorial slant given to it, either of which destroys its value as news and misleads the reader. This is often more frequent than the deliberate concealing of news under false headlines, as cited above in the case of the German treatment of American prisoners. Still another maddening habit is to print a sensational story, as in reporting the arrest of Nazi conspirators, or Japanese allegedly trying to

hurt the American occupation forces, and then never either refer to the matter again or produce proof of the guilt of those accused.

FINALLY, IT REMAINS TO BE POINTED OUT that precisely the same alarming tendencies in the British press have led to the appointment of a British Parliamentary commission to overhaul British journalism in order to see if anything can be done to prevent newspapers becoming more and more the property of very rich men and to check the recent buying up of numbers of provincial newspapers by powerful London dailies. It is difficult to see how such a commission can produce any more practical remedies than has the board made possible by Mr. Luce's generosity. The evolution of the press we are witnessing is but a part of the total world revolution in which we live. Since the press has become a business, it is subject to all the phenomena which determine the development of very large and monopolistic corporations the world over. It is a far cry from the day when a Horace Greeley could come to New York and, with a few hundred dollars, found and develop through the strength of his personality, the power of his language and the righteousness of his cause a great organ of public opinion and profoundly affect the fate of his country. No longer can a William Lloyd Garrison, who, when he published the first issue of *The Liberator* had only a few dollars and not a single subscriber, start his own little weekly to mold the sentiment of his time.

Today the American press as a whole is not making money. It is reliably stated that, despite the enormous amount of advertising carried by the leading newspapers, only two in New York City today are really prosperous, so great is the increase in wages and costs, notably of paper. Indeed, there is great anxiety in newspaper circles lest there should be a severe recession, in which case a number of journals will undoubtedly go on the rocks. But for the United States, further losses of newspapers, good, bad, or indifferent, will be a serious, anti-democratic event. It will compel the public to rely more and more upon the radio which has come in the nick of time, if only to carry news to far distant regions where communication is difficult and people are

cut off from urban contact and the spread of opinion and news by word of mouth.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, HOWEVER, to believe that some means of circulating the printed word will not be found, to attack evil, to uphold the truth, to spring to the rescue of the weak, the oppressed and the unfortunate, to assail those entrenched in privilege, to tear from faithless servants of the people their garments of hypocrisy or unrighteousness, to set forth what is actually going on in this suddenly shrunken world in which we live. Years ago I prophesied that the day might come when we should return to pamphleteering, if necessary, as did the American patriots in the years leading up to the Revolution—with Alexander Hamilton, as a boy of 18, prominent among them. *Human Events* itself has borne me out, and so have the numerous small services, like the *Worldover Press*, and the varied list of weekly letters from Washington and elsewhere, some of them purely commercial, others inspired by a sense of injustice or of the danger of the race toward war, but all trying to give to their readers the news and background to the news that are not to be found in our press of today. These and the really liberal weeklies, like the *Progressive*, and the *New Leader* to great extent, give us genuine hope that despite all obstacles a means of getting the truth to at least a considerable portion of the thinking population will prevail.

We may have such hope, however, only if those who conduct our publications are men and women of conscience and ethical responsibility. The press is what its owners make it. *PM* and the *Chicago Sun* betray the lack of vision of Marshall Field. The Hearst dailies have for fifty years portrayed the character of their owner. The shortcomings of the once liberal and outstanding Scripps-Howard chain reflect the limitations of its present director. The *Chicago Tribune* reveals the personality and the vigor of Colonel McCormick. The weak and narrow Boston dailies, barring only the *Christian Science Monitor*, are still the poor-farm of American journalism. In this business or occupation, as elsewhere, it is character which is essential. Character and civic courage honor the profession, safeguard the Republic, and are indispensable in upholding free institutions through the printed word.



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