
PRESS

On the Importance of Being Free

WE ALL KNOW that the opportunity to speak and to print with even a modicum of freedom is by itself a satisfying and enjoyable thing to do. But the fundamental principle of a free press cannot be merely that men have a right to express themselves. No journalist can be satisfied to print a newspaper that has no readers. Journalism must be something more than singing in the shower bath or uttering soliloquies, however magnificent, to the desert air. For while philosophers may argue whether a painting exists if no human eye beholds it, there can be no argument that journalists write in order to be read, and that they are like Nietzsche who exclaimed that he had to have ears.

Thus, journalism is not a soliloquy without an audience. Moreover, and this has some practical bearing in the world as it is today, free journalism is not a monologue delivered to a captive audience which must at least pretend to be listening. As a matter of fact, since journalists and editors and publishers are men, and therefore human, and therefore liable to error and prejudice and to stupidity, a free press exists only where newspaper readers have access to other newspapers which are competitors and rivals, so that editorial comment and news reports can regularly and promptly be compared, verified, and validated. A press monopoly is incompatible with a free press, and one can proceed with this principle, if there is a monopoly of the means of communication—of radio, television, magazines, books, public meetings—it follows that this society is by definition and in fact deprived of freedom.

A free press is not a privilege but an organic necessity in a great society. I use the term "great society" in its original sense, as it was used in passing by Adam Smith himself and made current in this century by Graham Wallas, who taught in this city at the London School of Economics. As Wallas used the term, a great society is not necessarily the good society which President Johnson, for example, hopes to make it. A great society is simply a big and complicated urban society.

WALTER LIPPMANN's remarks were made to the International Press Institute's conference in London recently. Mr. Lippmann is the distinguished American journalist and political analyst, whose books include *The Method of Freedom* (1934), *The Good Society* (1937) and *The Public Philosophy* (1955).

In such a great society the environment in which individuals act and react is not the visible world of their homes and their neighbourhoods and their communities. It is an invisible environment which has to be reported to them. For this reason, a great society cannot be governed, its inhabitants cannot conduct the business of their lives, unless they have access to the services of information and of argument and of criticism which are provided by a free press.

Without criticism and reliable and intelligible reporting, the government cannot govern. For there is no adequate way in which it can keep itself informed about what the people of the country are thinking and doing and wanting. The most elaborate government intelligence service is an insufficient provider of the knowledge which the government must have in order to legislate well and to administer public affairs.

Where there is a turbulent, pluralistic electorate, the rulers, the official bureaucracy, and the legislature will be in the dark, they will not know where they are and what they are doing, if they are deprived of the competitive reporting and the competing editorial commentaries and also the forum in which the spokesman of the various shades of opinion can say their say. This is what a free press is supposed to provide.

In a great society, controversial laws cannot be enforced successfully, innovating policy cannot be administered, unless and until the government can find among the people of the country a reasonably high degree of consent. No government is able for long, except under the extreme, abnormal pressures of war, to impose its rule and its opinions and its policies without public consent.

IN MY COUNTRY WE use a rough rule of thumb. It is that for controversial measures, the government should aim to rally a consensus, which in practical terms means a majority big enough to include from 60 to 75 per cent of the voters. Only then will those who observe the law willingly and support the policy actively be numerous enough to persuade and induce the recalcitrant and dissident minority, leaving only a marginal minimum where legal coercion is needed.

To create such a consensus requires a considerable period of public education and debate. The consensus must not be confused with the plebiscites conducted by tyrannical governments where the government majority is 99.9 per cent of the voters. In a society where there is such a superficial appearance of unanimity and conformity, there will always be at least a minority, it may even be a majority, who, though silenced, remain unconverted and unconvinced. The government of the tyrannical state will be forced to rely on secret agents who, because they operate in the dark, can never be wholly relied

upon, being subject to intrigue and corruption and other hidden influences. Thus, there is raised up between the people and the government an impenetrable curtain through which there is no dependable communication.

It is evident that the interests of a great society extend far beyond the business of governing it. An essential characteristic of a great society is that it is not monolithic and cannot be planned or directed centrally. It is too complex for that. It has too many functions. Its needs are too varied, and there are no men who have the minds, even if they are assisted by computers, capable of grasping all the data and all the variables which are needed for the central planning and direction of a great society.

Inevitably, therefore, by the very nature of things, a great society is a pluralist society, with local and regional interests and activities and organisations. They are bound to have a certain autonomy, and some degree of self-determination, and in some significant sense they are bound to have freedom of initiative and of enterprise.

In order for such a pluralist society to work, there must be available a great mass of data: the current state of the markets for labour, for goods, for services, for money—what is and was for sale and at what price—what can be seen in the theatre, what is coming on radio and television, what games are being played and how they were played and who won them, what is visible in the art shows, where one can go to church and what was preached there, and what is in the lecture halls, in the shops and department stores, where one can travel and enjoy life, who has been born, who has been married, and who has died. The list is as endless as the activities of a great society. Experience shows, too, that the naked data are not enough. The naked data are unintelligible and so have to be interpreted and cross-interpreted by political analysts, financial analysts, drama critics, book reviewers, and the like. There has to be criticism of plays and books and concerts and television and magazines and newspapers themselves. There has to be advocacy and there has to be rebuttal.

I MUST NOW talk about some of the key problems which present themselves when the freedom of the press has been established by law and when sufficient private financial resources have become available to support the publication of separate and competing newspapers. These are the preliminary problems. They consist of getting rid of the censor and the domination of the advertiser and of financial groups. Then come the problems of maturity. They become crucial when the preliminary problems have in some substantial measure been solved.

I have in mind, to begin with, the conflict between, on the one hand, the public's right to know, or it may be the public's curiosity to know, and, on the other hand, the right and the need of the government to be able to deliberate confidentially before announcing a conclusion, and in certain circumstances, especially in its foreign relations, the government's right to a measure of secrecy and dispatch.

This conflict is, I am inclined to believe, perennial in the sense that there is no abstract principle which resolves it. The right of the press to know and the right of the responsible authority to withhold must coexist. In my country, we have a continual tension between public officials and reporters about the disclosure of coming events, what is going to be announced, what policy is going to be adopted, who is going to be appointed, what will be said to a foreign government. There is also a conflict about what has happened and why it happened and who was responsible for its happening.

The tension is between vigilant, ingenious, and suspicious reporters who haunt and pursue officials, causing these officials never to be allowed to forget that they are withholding information at their peril, at the risk of being scalped in the newspapers. It is not a neat or an elegant relationship, but a *modus vivendi* which works tolerably well, at least in time of peace.

An important aspect of this problem is in the field of crime and punishment. Here the press is often in conflict with those whose business it is to catch the guilty man and to spare the innocent man, and then to give the man who has been arrested a fair trial. The trouble with crime and punishment as it concerns the press is that it is too interesting and too absorbing, and too convincing because it comes out of real life. Thus, the reporting of the news of crime and punishment often runs athwart the administration of justice.

This conflict is nowhere near to being resolved, and consequently, we should at least avoid the sin of complacency when we contemplate the real achievements of even the greatest of our newspapers.

AS THE FUNCTION of a free press in a great society becomes more and more demanding, we are moving towards professionalisation. A few generations ago journalism was a minor craft which could be learned by serving an apprenticeship to a practising newspaper editor. Journalism is still far behind established professions like medicine and law in that there does not exist an organised body of knowledge and a discipline which must be learned and absorbed before the young journalist can prac-

tise. There are, moreover, only the first beginnings of the equivalent of bar associations and medical societies which set intellectual and ethical standards for the practice of the profession.

Journalism, we might say, is still an underdeveloped profession, and, accordingly, newspapermen are quite often regarded, as were surgeons and musicians a hundred years ago, as having the rank, roughly speaking, of barbers and riding masters. But the concept of a free press today has evolved far beyond the rather simple abstractions of the 18th century. We recognise to-day that the press as a whole must be capable of reporting and explaining, interpreting and criticising, all the activities of mankind. To be sure, not every reader of every newspaper cares to know about or could understand all the activities of mankind. But there are some readers, specialised in some subject, who have to be alerted to important new developments of even the most specialised activities, be it in the remote reaches of astrophysics, or microbiology or paleontology, or in the game of chess.

For this, the profession of journalism is becoming specialised, and the editor who presides over large staffs of local and national and international specialists, of political, commercial, financial, legal, medical, theatrical, musical, and cooking specialists, art critics and fashion writers, has to meet the specifications, which were current when I was at college, that an educated man should know everything about something and something about everything.

Just as the profession of journalism is the consequence of the organic need for it in a great society, so a direct consequence follows from this professionalisation. The journalist is becoming subject to the compulsion to respect and observe the intellectual disciplines and the organised body of knowledge which the specialist in any field possesses.

THIS GROWING PROFESSIONALISM IS, I believe, the most radical innovation since the press became free of government control and censorship. For it introduces into the conscience of the working journalist a commitment to seek the truth which is independent of and superior to all his other commitments—his commitment to publish newspapers that will sell, his commitment to his political party, his commitment even to promote the policies of his government.

As the press becomes securely free because it is increasingly indispensable in a great society, the crude forms of corruption which belonged to the infancy of journalism tend to give way to the temptations of maturity and power. It is with these temptations that the modern journalist has to wrestle, and the unending conflicts be-

tween his duty to seek the truth and his human desire to get on in the world are the inner drama of the modern journalist's experience.

THE FIRST and most evident of the conflicts is that between choosing, on the one hand, to publish whatever most easily interests the largest number of readers most quickly—that is to say, yellow journalism—and, on the other hand, to provide, even at a commercial loss, an adequate supply of what the public will in the longer run need to know. This is responsible journalism. It is journalism responsible in the last analysis to the editor's own conviction of what, whether interesting or only important, is in the public interest.

A second drama, in which contemporary journalists are involved, consists in the conflict between their pursuit of the truth and their need and their desire to be on good terms with the powerful. For the powerful are perhaps the chief source of the news. They are also the dispensers of many kinds of favour, privilege, honour and self-esteem. The most important forms of corruption in the modern journalist's world are the many guises and disguises of social-climbing on the pyramids of power. The temptations are many; some are simple, some are refined, and often they are yielded to without the consciousness of yielding. Only a constant awareness of them offers protection.

Another drama arises in foreign affairs from the conflict between the journalist's duty to seek the truth and his loyalty to his country's government—between his duty to report and explain the truth as he sees it and his natural and human desire to say "my country right or wrong." These conflicts are trying, and for the journalist striving to do his work there are two rules which can help him. One is to remember President Truman's advice that if you do not like the heat, stay out of the kitchen. It is always possible to retreat into less hotly contested subject matter. The other rule is that if you believe you must go into the kitchen, keep an eye on yourself, keep asking yourself: are you sure you are still seeking the truth and not merely trying to win the argument?

This brings me to my final point which is that as the free press develops, as the great society evolves, the paramount point is whether, like a scientist or a scholar, the journalist puts truth in the first place or in the second. If he puts it in the second place, he is a worshipper of the bitch goddess Success. Or he is a conceited man trying to win an argument.

In so far as he puts truth in the first place, he rises towards—I will not say into, but towards—the company of those who taste and enjoy the best things in life.

Walter Lippmann

LETTERS

Galbraith & Economics

It will not require much comment on my part to convince anyone who has read my article [ENCOUNTER, May] that Professor Galbraith's reply [June] indicates a pridefulness which appears to relieve him of responsibility to read or reflect upon what has been said about his views, to meet the standards of intelligent discussion in contrast with name-calling, or to evidence a fair regard for the discernment of the readership of ENCOUNTER.

Galbraith says that I believe that the increase in Gross National Product is the primary test of public policy, and that my preoccupation with this dulls my concern about unemployment, poverty, and a wide range of public needs, including education, etc. Aside from the impossibility of anyone reading my ENCOUNTER article and really reaching this conclusion about my views, I should point out that my concern about these other matters has been at the core of my public services, writings, and speeches for more than three decades. Only one other point should be mentioned: on page 190 of *The Affluent Society*, Galbraith cited one sentence from the summary of one of my published studies (1957) in support of his theme that I was preoccupied with production for its own sake. This study, in fact, was mostly a quantification of targets for the very types of programmes to which Galbraith claims devotion, and this very summary said:

The number of multiple-person families living in poverty at incomes of less than \$2,000 a year can be cut by 1960 by more than three-fourths, and single-person families barely subsisting on incomes below \$1,000 can be cut almost in half. . . . The consumption which flows directly from essential public programmes—education and health services, natural resource development and publicly-aided housing, public assistance, and social security—has failed grossly to measure up to our capabilities and needs. . . . We need also by 1960 to double total educational outlays from all sources, to expand health facilities and services greatly, to build an average of 2¼ million new homes a year, to lift natural resource development programmes to 50 per cent above the current level, to create a fully prosperous agriculture, and to expand greatly economic and technical assistance to strengthen the free world.

One of the three sub-titles of this study was "Basic Public Services."

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Marx & "Alienation"

PROFESSOR Richard Pipes is, of course, perfectly right in maintaining [ENCOUNTER, August] that it

was not Marx who had introduced "alienation" into social psychology and economic thought. He is, however, mistaken in attributing its introduction to the "True Socialists" in general and Moses Hess in particular.

The "True Socialists" did use the term, and Hess certainly used it a year or so before Marx wrote his *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*. But the term did not originate with the "True Socialists" any more than it originated with Marx. Both were drawing on the legacy of Hegel's philosophy.

It was Hegel who was the first to use this term in application to socio-psychological levels of discussion. In his *Phenomenology of Mind* (1806) Hegel devotes a whole section to "Spirit in self-estrangement" (*Selbstentfremdung*) (cf. pp. 507-610 of Baillie's English translation). It goes without saying that Hegel's philosophical position differs quite widely from that of Marx. Yet Marx worked out his own idea of "alienation" in arguing with the original Hegelian concept. This is mainly done in the last section of the *1844 Manuscripts*, and the crux of the philosophical argument is that Marx distinguishes between "Objectification" (*Vergegenständlichung*) and "Alienation" (*Entfremdung*), while Hegel in his *Phenomenology* considers both as identical. This may be a rather obscure point, but it shows that Marx actually started developing his own materialistic philosophy in the *1844 Manuscripts* by way of polemics against Hegel's view about "alienation."

Further, Hegel himself refers to the living conditions of the lower classes (*Pöbel*) in civil society in terms which are quite similar to the later Marxian description of the alienation of the worker in capitalist society (paragraphs 241-246 of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*).

It is clear that Marx considerably modified his position about alienation in his later writings; but he never actually went back on it. Professor Pipes himself refers to the chapter on the "Fetishism of Commodities" in Volume I of *Capital*; though I have to admit that I am completely at a loss to understand how Professor Pipes is able to call this a "rather special case." Can evidence which does not fit into a preconceived pattern be so easily dismissed?

The point is that this is not the only reference in Marx's later writings to alienation. Just two examples. In his *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie* (written by Marx during 1857-58 but published for the first time only in 1939), a whole chapter is entitled: "Alienation of the conditions of labour in the development of capital" (pp. 715-717 of Moscow's German edition). As this work has not yet been translated into any other language and is rather unknown, Professor Pipes might be unaware of the striking similarity between this passage and the *1844 Manuscripts*, and any notion about the "young" vs. the "older" Marx does not hold water when the *Grundrisse* are taken into account. It becomes quite clear from this manuscript that Marx never really thought that his analysis of "alienation" was *passé*.

Secondly, the description of communist society in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875),