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The American Press, 1924.

"THE AMERICAN PRESS."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

NOVEMBER 30, 1924, CLEVELAND.



JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
Reporter
CLEVELAND

Among the social forces which influence American life there is none more pervasive or more continuous or stronger in its cumulative effect than the press. The American public is a reading public. The American does not always read intelligently or discriminatingly, but he reads voraciously. I understand that there are in this land some 2,300 dailies, and some 14,000 weeklies, and numerous other periodicals which are rushed from our printing presses to meet this great demand for reading matter on the part of the American public.

The census shows that the daily circulation of the big newspapers in the large cities only exceeds forty million. The newspaper is the 'vado mecum'--the daily companion of the American citizen. He reads it in the morning, he reads it in the evening, he reads it on Sunday. In fact, in the vast majority of cases the newspaper is the only reading matter of the average American, supplemented from time to time by some popular weekly or monthly.

To the newspaper the American turns for all his information--local, national, international. It is his window upon life. All the events of his own community are served up to him daily in all their variety and colorfulness, vividly and dramatically. Every department of life is caused to pass before his inquisitive eye. The social life, the business activities, the political occurrences, crime, sport, amusement--everything is presented to him through the

medium of his newspaper. The events of other cities and of other lands are brought to him through the register and record of his paper.

In other words, the newspaper touches the mind at almost every point, and it would be amazing, therefore, if this omnipresent, persistent, circumambient agency did not very forcibly influence the thought, the life of the American people. However lightly one may hold a newspaper, no one, in the long run, can escape its influence. The newspaper is the greatest agency which we have for the dissemination of information, true or false; for the setting up of standards, right or wrong; for the correction or perversion of public taste, and for the molding of public opinion. And in a democracy the newspaper is paramount. It is not the fourth estate; it is the first estate. In a democracy whose political institutions are ultimately in the control of the people; in a democracy where issues and candidates and legislation and things of vital moment are presented annually for the judgment and the decision of the electorate,--issues which sometimes reach down to the very roots of the people's life,--in a democracy where the success of the whole experiment of government depends upon the judgment, the enlightenment, the sound and sane thinking of the people,--in a democracy the kind of newspaper which a city, or the kind of newspapers which a country has, is a matter of life and death seriousness.

This agency, therefore, can become a great

national asset or a great national liability. This agency can become a force for great good or a force for great evil. This agency should be welcomed, but we should guard ourselves against it in proportion to its beneficent influence or its malevolent influence.

Now, which is it? The American press--is it helpful or harmful? Well, there seems to be a decided difference of opinion on this subject. Professor Ross, of Wisconsin, calls the press of our great metropolitan cities our "reptile press." In books like that of Sinclair--"The Brass Check," our newspapers are weighed in the balance and found wanting on every score and on every count. The newspaper is accused of mendacity, of vulgarity, of the perversion of the truth, of the suppression of truth, of the dissemination of half-truths or whole lies. The newspaper is pointed to as the greatest single menace in American life today.

Professor Lloyd, a disinterested scientist, writing in the American Journal of Sociology about newspaper conscience, says: "Today, when business and leisure, political parties and society, are all in their several ways dependent on the press, does the press occupy a position of real respect? It is accepted. It is quietly, almost insidiously influential. But is it trusted? Is it suspected of high purposes, of honesty and independence, of devotion to truth and justice, of anything suggesting moral aggression or adventure? We have to answer," he concludes, "on the whole, negatively."

Clearly, then, the American press is not beyond reproach. What are its faults? And in speaking of the faults and deficiencies of the American press, let me say at the outstart that it is far superior, in almost every respect, to the English press, to the French press, or to any Continental press. It is, in the main, more upright, more honest, less subservient to extraneous influences than the press of Europe.

The first indictment which is frequently made against the American press is its commercialism. Frankly, I do not regard this as a serious indictment. I have long accepted the fact--most thinking men have--that a newspaper is a business enterprise, just like any other business enterprise; that a newspaper is in business for what any other business is in business--for profit. It can serve the public in the performance of its business duties and enterprises the better, but its primary concern is a business concern.

There are, of course, here and there, rare spirits, great souls who go into newspaper work for the sake of a great ideal, who want to expound or champion some great cause. These people are, of course, the salt of the earth. They are the leaders and the social prophets. But the average newspaper man--and they are average--does not seek the crown of martyrdom and does not enter this economic enterprise chiefly, principally or primarily for the sake of expounding an ideal or championing a cause, but for the sake

of making money.

This being the case, the owner--I speak now of the owner because the editor does not count. There were days when the editor was the newspaper; there were days when men turned to a newspaper to read what Horace Greeley had to say, or Charles Dana had to say, or Colonel Watterson had to say. The newspaper was a personality. Those days are gone. The editor is a non-entity, an employed drudge assigned to certain duties in the great, vast enterprise which a great metropolitan is today. The determining factor in a newspaper today is the owner or owners and not the editor. I do not think there are a dozen people here this morning who can give me the name of the editors of the four Cleveland daily newspapers. I say, the owner is interested primarily in increasing his circulation so as to increase the number of advertisers in a newspaper. His chief concern is to want to hold an increasingly large number of advertisers, because the life of his paper depends upon them and not upon the reading public.

No paper depends for its existence upon its circulation directly. It may have hundreds of thousands or millions of readers. They do not support the paper. It is the advertiser who supports the paper. The statistics of the last year give us some interesting figures. The income of the American newspapers from subscriptions or sale of copies was 192 millions of dollars. The income of these same papers from advertisements was 373 millions of dollars.

There is the story; there is the fact beyond which you cannot go, and there is the fact which determines the character of the American newspaper.

That the newspaper is primarily a business is evidenced also by the fact of the increasing number of mergers of newspapers,--the circulation of a whole chain of newspapers under one control in the hands of a few: the Hearst syndicate, the Scripps-McRae syndicate, the Munsey syndicate. It is much more efficient in the newspaper world, as in the business world, to concentrate power. You eliminate waste; you give the business man a better medium for his advertisements. Frank Munsey bought up quite a number of old New York newspapers, killed off most of them, merged the others, and is now in position to dominate the newspaper field in the city, and to offer his customers a better medium for the advertisement of their wares.

Now, there is nothing wrong in that. That is the normal process of business development; but it at once shows the definite limitations and the implied and possible dangers in the newspaper. Concerning the concentration of newspapers in the hands of a few, Mr. Gardner, who was for eighteen years the editor of the London Daily News, (I am speaking of the English newspapers now) has this to say: "I think the greatest of all evils is the concentration of many newspapers in comparatively few hands. Lord Northcliffe and his brother own one-half of the papers of England. The opinions of millions are made by this man, who has had very

little public life. The press are, in many cases, poisoning the wells of public opinion and deliberately garbling the news with subtle intention to bring about certain opinions in the minds of the people and certain actions on the part of the government."

A newspaper which depends for its subsistence upon a business element will ultimately, consciously or unconsciously, serve that class and that element. Now, when the interest of that class does not conflict with that of the public, the newspaper of course will serve business and public alike, but when, as it sometimes happens, the interest of the business public, or more specifically, the particular advertising business public, conflicts with the interest of the public at large, there is a great temptation to serve the clientele which supports the newspaper directly rather than to serve the public. Some newspapers have conscience enough and power enough to withstand that temptation, and they do serve the public in spite of that element, but most newspapers, unfortunately, have neither the vigorous conscience nor the power and independence to withstand this temptation.

I came across this significant statement from the hands of a newspaper man concerning the great steel strike of a few years ago. In the New York Nation of January, 1921, Mr. Charles G. Miller, formerly editor of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, exposes the lies of the Pittsburgh papers during the steel strike. "In two weeks the Pittsburgh

papers published more than thirty pages of paid advertisements denouncing the leadership of the strike, invoking Americanism against radicalism and syndicalism. The news and editorial attitude of the papers coincided with the advertisements and gave the impression that the strikers were disloyal, un-American, bolshevik. They were silent on the real questions at issue--hours, pay, working conditions. And not only the Pittsburgh press, but the press of the entire country was poisoned. For the Associated Press and other news services are not independent organizations feeding news to their clients, but simply interrelated newspapers swapping each other's stories. The Denver newspapers control all the news that is read in Boston about the Colorado coal mines; the Boston newspapers control all the news that is read in San Francisco about the New England textile mills. The head of the local bureau of the Associated Press is not a reporter; he is merely a more or less skilful compiler and extractor. He sends to the nation, and to the whole world, matter which is furnished him by the papers of his district."

The American newspaper controlled as it is, directly and indirectly, by the American purchaser of advertising space, must therefore always be a conservative institution. Now, there is no harm in a newspaper being a conservative institution. Every newspaper is justified in determining its own editorial policy. Conservatism has as much a place in American life as progressivism or liberalism; but when that conservatism becomes propaganda, and when the

editorial policy leaves the editorial page and invades and permeates and colors the news, the facts, then that conservatism becomes mendacious, and that newspaper becomes a corrupter of public morals and public thought.

Now, this compulsory conservatism of the American people is not limited to things of local or national concern, but it is also international in its scope. You take the case of Russia. In the last seven years Russia was the scene of catastrophic, revolutionary change. The things which transpired there were of vital and momentary concern to every thinking man and woman in this land and in any other land. In order to form a sound judgment, so as to act intelligently, the American people stood in dire need of accurate, authoritative, sound, impartial information about what is transpiring and what did transpire in Russia.

Two great newspaper men, Mr. Lipman and Mr. Mertz, made an analysis of the reports concerning events in Russia, which appeared in the New York Times over a period of a year or two or three. They picked the New York Times not because it was most culpable, but because it was, as they said, one of the really great papers of the world. To their dismay they discovered that the amount of misinformation, misstatements, errors and untruths was so vast as to be staggering. It seemed as if a perverted ingenuity was at work distorting, confusing, deliberately misleading the reading public; not on matters of policy, mind you; not on editorial judgments, but on matters of fact. The sources

from which the information came to the New York Times--the newspaper agencies abroad--were found to have been in the employ of those people hostile to the new Russian regime.

The --the so-called staff correspondents, cabled the most unwarranted assumptions and wildest kinds of rumors, and the local editors embellished these rumors in such a way as to give that impression which the editor wished to give to his readers concerning what is actually transpiring in Russia.

Now, a newspaper that wishes to mislead, that wishes to editorialize its news, has a vast latitude and a great field in which to do it without actually being a prevaricator. They will display things in head lines which are not at all found in the body of the report; they will use words to suggest things which the speaker never meant to convey, or which the report never meant to convey; they will refuse to publish some news items and print others; they will elide, suppress, subvert, change; they will publish one report in great head lines, and then retract later on in small point type somewhere inside of the newspaper, next to a patent medicine ad.

Newspapers have great latitude to carry out their policy of editorializing their news. And then again today even newspapers are hoodwinked. Frank Cobb, the great editor of the New York World, made the statement that in the United States alone there are twelve hundred press agencies, newspaper agencies, who are there to manufacture news for

their clients. Every great bank, every great railroad, every great political party has its own press agent, who manufactures facts to serve the interest of that particular institution which hired him. And then uncensored, unanalyzed news is served up to the reading public as fact. Governments have such press agencies. What you read about international events you must always read with a great deal of caution and care, for what you get is not unbiased truth but definitely biased propaganda.

I venture to say there is not today a single item of important international news which you get through the medium of your newspapers which is not in some manner or another garnished; not by your newspaper always, but by those agencies at the other end of the cable. Take Egypt today. Take the news which emanates from Egypt. Here is England, in 1924, carrying out cynically a bit of political piracy. Here is a nation, sanctimonious, always serving humanity, which, under the cloak of a political assassination, is imposing terms upon a people such as Austria tried to impose upon Serbia--terms which precipitated the Great War. Here is a nation which is imposing terms of a political character utterly unrelated to the crime of assassination which took place; terms which would reduce Egypt to a crown colony of Great Britain; terms in direct contravention of international agreements, and in a cynical disregard of the League of Nations, of which this nation--England--is a principal member.

Now, what news comes to us from Cairo or London concerning the events which are transpiring there? The Egyptian patriot is represented as a fanatic. The English cause, which is violently imperialistic, is represented as a humanitarian service. And even that bogey of bolshevism has been called to service again. Moscow is now directing the Egyptian revolutionary forces in Cairo! And that information and its insidious and invidious propaganda is sent through the American newspapers, and 2300 dailies publish that and serve it up as fact.

So that in the whole of the city of New York there was but one newspaper, the New York World, that dared to speak courageously about this newest international trial. Governments control news. If you do not know that you certainly should have learned that during the war. I quote Mr. Cobb again, because I wish to quote only newspaper men who are close to the work. Mr. Cobb, of the New York World, perhaps the greatest American paper today, said: "In the war the governments conscripted public opinion, put it in charge of drill sergeants, goose-stepped it and made it salute. Then it was molded by two molds--censorship and propaganda. Censorship was obviously to prevent the giving of information to the enemy. The result was that it suppressed all information. It was stupid and ineffective. Propaganda was, as it inevitably developed, directed to air planes and tanks."

Public opinion now is being made by private

propaganda. Direct channels are closed and public opinion is molded through press agents, whose work is not to proclaim the truth but to manipulate the news. Now, this, to my mind--the editorializing of news--is the most serious charge which can be brought against the American newspaper. It has frequently been said that the American newspaper is "yellow" and sensational. The American newspaper caters to quantity and to masses. It cannot live if it caters to the elite, to the few. And the average intelligence of the American people is low, and the average reader has no more than a public school education. And so that the newspaper is compelled to work down to the lower level of the mass rather than to the high level of the exceptionally educated or cultured.

It is sensational because American life is sensational. If the American people want that sort of thing, not alone in their newspapers but in their fictions, in their plays, in their movies, in their life, the newspaper can only mirror and reflect the life of the people. It would, of course, be highly desirable if the newspaper, instead of catering to the taste, would try to mold and refine and purify taste. But that would really be asking too much of a business institution. Principally, that must be done by the schools and the church and the home, and ultimately the newspaper will reflect this improvement of taste and morals in its columns.

It can be blamed on these two scores: when it

deliberately panders to the lust and the vicious instincts and passions of people for purposes of circulation. Then it is culpable; then it becomes a morally leprous thing, and it can be censured--censured on the ground of editorializing news, tampering with fact. Now, there is a certain sanctity about a fact which no one has a right to desecrate. There can be no two opinions concerning the facts, and the least, and perhaps the most, which a newspaper can do is to present to us accurate information concerning all things of interest. It can well leave the interpretation of these facts either to the newspaper reader himself or to its own editorial columns; for the newspaper column must be held inviolate from the intrusion of subjectivism, of personal bias. News must not be interpreted or played up in such a way as to result in a biased and in a partial presentation of the fact.

Constructively, what are the remedies for these facts? I can see but two. First of all, a better reading public. The public cannot pass, and should not be permitted to pass the blame onto the newspaper. If the American public will demand a more conscientious newspaper, it will get it. If the American reader will demand news untainted, even as he demands milk untainted, he will get it. The American public today is indifferent concerning the quality of the news which he gets. An educated, critical public opinion, fashioned in the school and in the church and in the literature hall and in the home, will ultimately

refine our press. And, secondly, the training of journalists, the building up of great schools of journalism, the raising of the entire industry to the level of a profession. We must train the people who see for us; we must train the witnesses of great national and international spectacles which concern us; the eye of the reporter must be trained to see accurately. And if you think this is a simple matter, let me recount to you a psychological experiment which was made not so very long ago.

Forty eminent psychologists were assembled in one place, and on the stage before them, in their full sight, and with electric lights playing upon the action, a simple bit of stage murder was carried out, and the forty professors were then asked each to write down the account of what transpired on that stage, in their presence, before their eyes, and when these forty accounts were ready, out of the forty only one had accurately represented the important thing in that incident presented to them.

A man with the best of intentions, witnessing a thing, will oftentimes fail to see it truthfully. We need schools to train the people who are going to be our news gatherers and our informants to see accurately; and then we must train them to report accurately,--the accurate use of the word, the sharpness of the definition of a phrase, the sanctity of a word. That, too, we must train in schools, even as we train our physicians and our lawyers and our ministers.

Then newspaper men must be paid more. It is one of the worst underpaid professions in the world, and it is a profession which brings a vast amount of drudgery and hard work with it. It is an uncertain profession. All that must be improved if the American people is to have in the days to come well trained, competent, independent reporters to report to them concerning the things of interest to them.

I believe in the progress of the American press, in spite of the many times which the public has been victimized. I still believe that in the main the men who are working in the various newspaper offices are honest men and earnest men, are endeavoring to do their best. With the aid of the public, that is critical and alert, demanding the best and only the best; with the aid of the public, which is ready to support great universities to develop journalists and reporters, the whole profession will be lifted up to greater heights, to greater service.

I came across this phrase last night in Proverbs, which particularly applies to the newspaper, as we vision it to be. "Wisdom crieth aloud in the street. She uttereth her voice in the broad places. She calleth at the head of the noisy street, at the entrance of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words."

That is the newspaper--a noisy, clamoring, insistent, pervasive, everpresent, subtle, influential agency; one that we should welcome, one that we should correct, and one against whose faults we should guard ourselves.

--o--

1. Among social forces in which influence Am. life the most pervasive, continuous and cumulative is the Press. The Am. public is a reading public. It does not always read intelligently or discriminately, but it reads - voraciously. Some 23 hundred dailies, some 14 thousand weeklies and numerous other periodicals, ^{are supplied} ~~come~~ from our printing presses to meet the Am. demand for reading matter. The daily circulation of newspapers in the big cities of the U.S. ^{alone} is over 40 million.

1. The newspaper is the vade mecum, the constant companion of the Am. citizen in his leisure hours. He reads it in the morning, in the evening, and on Sunday. In the vast majority of cases, it is his only reading matter, supplemented from time to time by a popular weekly or monthly. He turns to it for most of the information which he requires, local, national and international. It is his window upon the world. The ~~newspaper~~ events of his own community are but to him daily than the mediants of his newspaper, vividly, dramatically in all their variety and colorfulness. Every def't is caused to pass before his eyes. Its social life, its business activities, its political occurrences, its crime, sports, amusements, every thing is record up for the deliberation of ^{his} ~~the~~ unquenchable eye. Also, the more important happenings in the path of the land, and those of interest. The newspaper touches the mind of the Am. public at almost every point. ~~of it~~

2. It would be amazing if this circumambient and persistent force did not profoundly affect Am. life. ~~By all means~~ However lightly one may regard a newspaper, one cannot ~~do so~~ ^{escape it} in the long-run escape it.

2. It seemed as if a perverted ingenuity was at work, grotesquely distorting each Event — and claimed at a deliberate ~~conspicuous~~ misrepresentation. The mass of information abroad which were drawn upon ~~were~~ kept sterilized by ~~reactions~~ ^{reactions} hostile to the new regime, the ~~so-called~~ staff correspondents called the wildest rumors and the most unwarranted assumptions, the editors at home featured the news in a manner not calculated to discredit Russia and make it anathema —

3. Newspapers bent upon editorializing their news have great latitude for their exercise, that act without actually short, direct presentation. — They will use the headlines to suggest the not actually what the very spirit is, what is contained in ~~only~~ the report indicated — They will omit important parts, slide, content, substitute content. They will refuse to print certain things. They will print false reports, to headlines & retract in 12 point type — on an average pay text to 9¢ about including 4¢ — 100 per year — ① Engl. ② Amer. day. For C. & C.

4- This is not serious charge which can be met.

5. Sensational - yellow -

- ① Reflects taste & reaching public.

(2) Few newspapers are crusaders - to devel. public taste. They must cater to quantity. To masses - to a low level of educat. & intelligence.

③ It is unfortunate. It would be well if public had better taste. But news. cannot be controlled with blame. (4) A newspaper ought to be paid as a trial force - will ~~not~~ go to extremes. They can be blamed when they go to extremes & taking to lowest in touch & equal countries & men →

against a newspaper? Here & there - what I think ^{using the} newspaper as a vehicle for the propagation of a great cause, at personal and monetary sacrifice. They are sold for that - but it must be asking too much of human nature to expect average newspaper owners - & they are average - to sacrifice future - for the dubious advantage of serving the public & increasing the circulation & market value -

This being the case the owner (I speak of the owner, for the editor no longer counts - it is no longer the dem. personality of 40 years ago - there freely or a Charles Dava or even a Col. Watkinson. He is an army unit, an employee performing his chores - you then admit a dozen people here who can name the editors of the 4 local Cleveland daily newspapers) & by the owner must at all costs maintain their circulation in order to gain advertisement upon which they subsist - No newspaper can exist upon its sales and subscriptions, even if they numbered hundreds of thousands or millions. It is not the reader who supports the paper. It is the advertiser - Income 192 millions : 373 million. Hence a newspaper's first & foremost problem is to win and hold an ever increasing number of advertisers - by using whatever an ever moving mass of readers. It is a bus. proposition - pure & simple. And as such not at all culpable.

1. How attractive a business the newspaper has become and how logically it follows normal bus. devel.

subtle and influence.

3. It is the greatest single agency for the ~~molding~~ ^{modifying} of public dissemination of information, true or false, for the setting of public standards for the correction of ~~opinion~~ ^{opinion} ~~taste~~ ^{taste} and for the molding of public opinion in the world.
- (Mr) 4. It is evident, at once, that such an agency, more powerful than school, church or determining the that of our people, can become the most helpful & most harmful in a community. an asset or a liability, ~~an institution~~ ^{an agency} to

2. Which is it? Opinion is far from unanimous, far from answering in the affirmative - ^{equitable} to the press -

3. Prof. Lloyd, writing on the newspaper "Conscience" in the Amer. Jr. & Soc. (Frederic)

1. Prof. E. A. Ross ^{of Wisconsin} called our metropolitan press - "our reptile press".

2. In such books as the "Mass Check," the Am. Press has been weighed and found wanting on all counts - It is accused of venality, commercialization, suppression of truth, dissemination of half truths & whole lies, swiftness to pay business, unfair to labor - an enemy to society -

4. Clearly this pattern. institution is not without its faults - & great faults - What are they.

3. The first indictment - Commercialization. Frankly I do not regard this as an indictment. It is a fact what most thinking men do, that a newspaper is a bus. venture, like any other bus. venture, and is in the game to make money. I would not hold this against a bus. or a circus. Why

It is not the of Estate - It is the ^{First} ^{In a sense}
In a sense. Its influence is paramount, ^{people} when the ~~masses~~
is the control their ^{pol.} institutions, and where annually
they are called upon to pass judgement upon issues,
candidates, legislation, the most vital moment,
reaching down to the very roots of their corporate
existence, it is where the future success of their
pol. experiments depends upon their judgement
and their decision, then the ^{kind} ^{matter of} newspaper
a sense has, become a life and death
necessity. It has been truly said "that
the administration of public affairs. Towards
greater accuracy and more successful analysis
is the highway of liberty."



① Or when they deliberately present fact. There is a sanct. abt a fact which we can have a right debate. to disseminate, at least for personal fair. -

6. Newspapers are victimized.

1. 1200 press agents who manufacture news.
① ~~Cybernetics~~ ② ~~Bank~~ ③ ~~railroads~~ ④ ~~Id.~~ parties etc.
2. Govt. Propaganda. ① ~~Egypt~~ ② ~~America~~ F. Cobb.

7. Remedies.

1. A more discriminating public. Alexander Stupperting a Free Press. | "Daily Herald" - paper sheet ① ~~propaganda~~
2. Trained journalists. (4 mill. books in it)
 1. Trained to see. (40 psychology)
 2. " to writ.
 3. both photographic + interpretation. | Enlightened in liat.
3. Better pay - profession. undeclassified, freeter affairs
4. With better devt & profession will come higher standards - a more vigorous newspaper conscience; code & ethics, the profession.

8. Newspapers better & free in France.

1. admitted from us.
2. Chen & Blum
- 3.

is evidence of the trend of building up ^{so-called} newspaper trusts - & concentrating ^{chains of} newspapers in a few hands - & centralizing them. Efficiency dictates this in the newspaper world as in the Bus. world. Witness the Reast Syndicate Scudder Macgo, Murray - Frank Murray bought up a handful, & sold them N.Y. newspapers, killed off a few, then, merged them & now has a new Econ. management, and better adverts. modern - perfectly logical.

4. Trusts - Ken. Progressives Note Gardner Am. Press & Op. Ed.

Q will seek Bus. interests, but when they conflict with ~~the~~ public interest, ~~tempta.~~ is great still to resist Bus. interests - The advertisers will exercise most of the time an indirect influence, by implication, as it were, but at critical times, a very direct & telling influence.

- Charles Miller, Note Stark.

③ will be Conservative, serving needs of one class, while is terrible catering to the entire public.

no quarrel if limited to editorial - as studies but briefs } will color news. It is well for newspapers to be conservative, if they so choose - but when that Conservat. turns to propaganda & invades the news column & distorts & colors facts - it becomes mendacious ~~and~~ ~~misleading~~.

④ Russia - Has much on a th. hole defended upon accurate, impartial ~~the~~ foreign facts - 1. Lippman and Meyer - N.Y. Times - The amount of false informant. was appalling.

England is perpetrating an act of piracy in Egypt.
to-day. ~~to-day~~ ^{to-day} ~~hence~~ ^{comes} a pol. assassination she
is exacting terms from Egypt which Austria tried
to exact from Serbia & which ^{59 pol. nations} ~~promptly~~ would
war - Concessions which would reduce Egypt
to a British crown colony - which have nothing
to do with the punishment of the guilty & the
matters of custom - amends - are being
forced from Egypt at point of bayonet, with
a cynical disregard of Int. Agreements and
of the League of Nations - England whose
record of pol. crime in the last few
generations would ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~hardly~~ ^{hardly} ~~in any~~
nat. ~~conscience~~ ^{conscience} is emboldened after another
act of char. Br. imperialism -

1. But ~~what~~ ^{how} the news comes here.
English special are on the other end of
the cable - Prop. ~~marked~~ ^{marked} ~~news~~ ^{news} is that
we - Egypt. patriots are described as
fanatics - Egypt. rights as ~~perpetrators~~
demands, English soldiers as crusaders &
servants of humanity - Bolsheviks -

2. In the ~~whole~~ ^{whole} ~~by~~ ^{by} there was but one
paper - "The Herald" - that ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~undest.~~ ^{undest.} ~~traveller.~~
to speak the truth - The same paper which ~~ranked~~
all self-decl. ~~imperialism~~ ^{imperialism} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~3 years ago~~

Frank L. Cobb | N. Y. Wald

"In the war, the government conscripted public opinion, put it in charge of drill-sergeants, goose-stepped it, and made it salute. — Then it was maddened by two methods — censorship and propaganda. Censorship was to prevent the giving of information to the enemy. The result was that it suppressed all information. It was rapid and ineffective. —

Propaganda was as unmettable a development as airplanes & tanks. Public opinion ^{now} is being made by private propaganda — almost channels are closed and public opinion is maddened then press-agents whose work is not to proclaim the truth, but to manipulate the news. "all the liberties that we hold to-day were won by resistance to

Brailsford,
Gibbs,
Lawrence,
Sturges,
Hand,

Ackerman,
Ray Stannard Battle
Frank Cobb

Profession - underpaid, insecure
everywhere from budgeting -

A report is the social
eye - must see
accurately & report carefully
care, and
Role of public opinion in
morality

③ disinterested reporting - like
doctor - analyze case -

England is in danger of being upon
bread-lines but that is not the
worst. The press are in many
cases poisoning the wells of
public opinion, deliberately per-
verting the news with the subtle
intention to bring about certain
opinion in the minds of the
people & certain actions on the
part of the Govt. —

Truth

Protect news sources

Unchained witnesses —

and chained journalists —
with "code" like other papers

governments - E, the the people are
fit to govern or they are not - If they
are, they need no protection against
revolutionary propaganda. If they
are not - they need a revolution

English Press, Alfred G. Sackville
18 yrs. Editor of "London Weekly
News" -

"I think the greatest of the evils is
the concentration of many newspapers
in comparatively few hands. Lord
Northcliffe & his brother own 1/2 of
the papers of England. The power
of millions are made by this man
who has had very little public
life -

"I feel that the position of the
press in Eng. is one of grave
misfortune. The tendency there is
rather to depend on an appeal to
passion than an appeal to reason

Wisdom crieth aloud in the street
She uttereth her voice in the broad places;
She calleth at the head of the noisy streets
At the entrances of the gates, in the city, she
uttereth her words -

"THE AMERICAN PRESS"

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

NOV. 30, 1924

Among the social forces which influence American life there is none more pervasive or more continuous or stronger in its cumulative effect than the press. The American public is a reading public. The American does not always read intelligently or discriminatingly, but he reads voraciously. I understand that there are in this land some 2300 dailies, and some 14000 weeklies, and numerous other periodicals which are rushed from our printing presses to meet this great demand for reading matter on the part of the American public.

The census shows that the daily circulation of the big newspapers in the large cities only exceeds forty million. The newspaper is the 'vado mecum' - the daily companion of the American citizen. He reads it in the morning, he reads it in the evening, he reads it on Sunday. In fact, in the vast majority of cases the newspaper is the only reading matter of the average American, supplemented from time to time by some popular weekly or monthly.

To the newspaper the American turns for all his information - local, national, international. It is his window upon life. All the events of his own community are served up to him daily in all their variety and colorfulness, vividly and dramatically. Every department of life is caused to pass before his inquisitive eye. The social life, the business activities, the political occurrences, crime, sport, amusement - everything is presented to him through the medium of his newspaper. The events of other cities and of other lands

are brought to him through the register and record of his paper.

In other words, the newspaper touches the mind at almost every point, and it would be amazing, therefore, if this omnipresent, persistent, circumambient agency did not very forcibly influence the thought, the life of the American people. However, lightly one may hold a newspaper, no one, in the long run, can escape its influence. The newspaper is the greatest agency which we have for the dissemination of information, true or false; for the setting up of standards, right or wrong; for the correction or perversion of public taste, and for the molding of public opinion. And in a democracy the newspaper is paramount. It is not the fourth estate; it is the first estate. In the democracy whose political institutions are ultimately in the control of the people; in a democracy where issues and candidates and legislation and things of vital moment are presented annually for the judgment and the decision of the electorate, - issues which sometimes reach down to the very roots of the people's life, - in a democracy where the success of the whole experiment of government depends upon the judgment, the enlightenment, the sound and sane thinking of the people, in a democracy the kind of newspaper which a city, or the kind of newspapers which a country has, is a matter of life and death seriousness.

This agency, therefore, can become a great national asset or a great national liability. This agency can become a force for great good or a force for great evil. This agency should be welcomed, but we should guard ourselves against it in proportion to its beneficent influence or its malevolent influence.

Now, which is it? The American press - is it helpful or harmful? Well, there seems to be a decided difference of opinion on this subject. Professor Ross, of Wisconsin, calls the press of our

great metropolitan cities our "reptile press." In books like that of Sinclair - "The Brass Check," our newspapers are weighed in the balance and found wanting on every score and on every count. The newspaper is accused of mendacity, of vulgarity, of the perversion of the truth, of the suppression of truth, of the dissemination of half-truths or whole lies. The newspaper is pointed to as the greatest single menace in American life today.

Professor Lloyd, a disinterested scientist, writing in the American Journal of Sociology about newspapers conscience, says: "Today when business and leisure, political parties and society, are all in their several ways dependent on the press, does the press occupy a position of real respect? It is accepted. It is quietly, almost insidiously influential. But is it trusted? Is it suspected of high purposes, of honesty and independence, of devotion to truth and justice, of anything suggesting moral aggression or adventure? We have to answer "he concludes, " on the whole, negatively."

Clearly, then, the American press is not beyond reproach. What are its faults? And in speaking of the faults and deficiencies of the American press, let me say at the outstart that it is far superior in almost every respect, to the English press, to the French press, or to any Continental press. It is, in the main, more upright, more honest, less subservient to extraneous influences than the press of Europe.

The first indictment which is frequently made against the American press is its commercialism. Frankly, I do not regard this as a serious indictment. I have long accepted the fact - most thinking men have - that a newspaper is a business enterprise, just like any other business enterprise; that a newspaper is in business for what any other business is in business for - for profit. It can serve the public in the performance of its business duties and enterprises the better, but its primary concern is a business concern.

There are, of course, here and there, rare spirits, great souls who go into newspaper work for the sake of a great ideal, who want to expound or champion some great cause. These people are, of course, the salt of the earth. They are the leaders and the social prophets. But the average newspaper man - and they are average - does not seek the crown of martyrdom and does not enter this economic enterprise chiefly, principally or primarily for the sake of expounding an ideal or championing a cause, but for the sake of making money.

This being the case, the owner - I speak now of the owner because the editor does not count. There were days when the editor was the newspaper; there were days when men turned to a newspaper to read what Horace Greeley had to say, or Charles Dana had to say or Colonel Watterson had to say. The newspaper was a personality. Those days are gone. The editor is a non-entity. An employed drudge assigned to certain duties in the great, vast enterprise which a great metropolitan is today. The determining factor in a newspaper today is the owner or owners and not the editor. I do not think there are a dozen people here this morning who can give me the name of the editors of the four Cleveland daily newspapers. I say, the owner is interested primarily in increasing his circulation so as to increase the number of advertisers in a newspaper. His chief concern is to want to hold an increasingly large number of advertisers, because the life of his paper depends upon them and not upon the reading public.

No paper depends for its existence upon its circulation directly. It may have hundreds of thousand or millions of readers. They do not support the paper. It is the advertiser who supports the paper. The statistics of the last year give us some interesting figures. The income of the American newspapers from subscriptions or sale of copies was 192 millions of dollars. The income of these same papers from advertisements was 373 millions of dollars. There is the

story; there is the fact beyond which you cannot go, and there is the fact which determines the character of the American newspaper.

That the newspaper is primarily a business is evidenced also by the fact of the increasing number of mergers of newspapers - the circulation of a whole chain of newspapers under one control in the hands of a few; the Hearst syndicate, the Scripps-McRae syndicate, the Munsey syndicate. It is much more efficient in the newspaper world, as in the business world, to concentrate power. You eliminate waste; you give the business man a better medium for his advertisements. Frank Munsey bought up quite a number of old New York newspapers, killed off most of them, merged the others, and is now in position to dominate the newspaper field in the city, and to offer his customers a better medium for the advertisement of their wares.

Now, there is nothing wrong in that. That is the normal process of business development; but it at once shows the definite limitations and the implied and possible dangers in the newspaper. Concerning the concentration of newspapers in the hands of a few, Mr. Gardner, who was for eighteen years the editor of the London Daily News, (I am speaking of the English newspapers now) has this to say: "I think the greatest of all evils is the concentration of many newspapers in comparatively few hands. Lord Northcliffe and his brother own one-half of the papers of England. The opinions of millions are made by this man, who has had very little public life. The press are, in many cases, poisoning the wells of public opinion and deliberately garbling the news with subtle intention to bring about certain opinions in the minds of the people and certain actions on the part of the government."

A newspaper which depends for its subsistence upon

a business element will ultimately, consciously or unconsciously, serve that class and that element. Now, when the interest of that class does not conflict with that of the public, the newspaper of course will serve business and public alike, but when, as it sometimes happens, the interest of the business public, or more specifically, the particular advertising business public, conflicts with the interest of the public at large, there is a great temptation to serve the clientele which supports the newspaper directly rather than to serve the public. Some newspapers have conscience enough and power enough to withstand that temptation, and they do serve the public in spite of that element, but most newspapers unfortunately, have neither the vigorous conscience nor the power and independence to withstand this temptation.

I came across this significant statement from the hands of a newspaper man concerning the great steel strike of a few years ago. In the New York Nation of Jan. 1921, Mr. Charles G. Miller, formerly editor of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, exposes the lies of the Pittsburgh papers during the steel strike. "In two weeks the Pittsburgh papers published more than thirty pages of paid advertisements denouncing the leadership of the strike, invoking Americanism against radicalism and syndicalism. The news and editorial attitude of the papers coincided with the advertisements and gave the impression that the strikers were disloyal, un-American, bolshevik. They were silent on the real questions at issue - hours, pay, working conditions. And not only the Pittsburgh press, but the press of the entire country was poisoned. For the Associated Press and other news services are not independent organizations feeding news to their clients, but simply interrelated newspapers swapping each other's stories. The Denver newspapers control all the news that is read in Boston about the Colorado coal mines; the Boston newspapers control all the news that is read in San Francisco about the New England textile mills. The

head of the local bureau of the Associated Press is not a reporter; he is merely a more or less skillful compiler and extractor. He sends to the nation, and to the whole world, matter which is furnished him by the papers of his district."

The American newspaper controlled as it is, directly and indirectly, by the American purchaser of advertising space, must therefore always be a conservative institution. Now, there is no harm in a newspaper being a conservative institution. Every newspaper is justified in determining its own editorial policy. Conservatism has as much a place in American life as progressivism or liberalism; but when that conservatism becomes propaganda, and when the editorial policy leaves the editorial page and invades and permeates and colors the news, the facts, then that conservatism becomes mendacious, and that newspaper becomes a corrupter of public morals and public thought.

Now, this compulsory conservatism of the American people, is not limited to things of local or national concern, but it is also international in its scope. You take the case of Russia. In the last seven years Russia was the scene of catastrophic, revolutionary change. The things which transpired there were of vital and momentary concern to every thinking man and woman in this land and in any other land. In order to form a sound judgment, so as to act intelligently, the American people stood in dire need of accurate, authoritative, sound, impartial information about what is transpiring and what did transpire in Russia.

Two great newspaper men, Mr. Lipman and Mr. Mertz made an analysis of the reports concerning events in Russia, which appeared in the New York Times over a period of a year or two or three. They picked the New York Times not because it was most culpable, but because it was, as they said, one of the really great papers of the world

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To their dismay they discovered that the amount of misinformation, mis-statements, errors and untruths was so vast as to be staggering. It seemed as if a perverted ingenuity was at work distorting, confusing, deliberately misleading the reading public; not on matters of policy, mind you; not on editorial judgments, but on matters of fact. The sources from which the information came to the New York Times - the newspaper agencies abroad - were found to have been in the employ of those people hostile to the new Russian regime. The - so called staff correspondents, cabled the most unwarranted assumptions and wildest kinds of rumors, and the local editors embellished these rumors in such a way as to give that impression which the editor wished to give to his readers concerning what is actually transpiring in Russia.

4 Now, a newspaper that wishes to mislead, that wishes to editorialize its news, has a vast latitude and a great field in which to do it without actually being a prevaricator. They will display things in head lines which are not at all found in the body of the report; they will use words to suggest things which the speaker never meant to convey, or which the report never meant to convey; they will refuse to publish some news items and print others; they will elide, suppress, subvert, change; they will publish one report in great head lines, and then retract later on in small point type somewhere inside of the newspaper, next to a patent medicine ad.

Newspapers have great latitude to carry out their policy of editorializing their news. And then again today even newspapers are hoodwinked. Frank Cobb, the great editor of the New York World, made the statement that in the United States alone there are twelve hundred press agencies, newspaper agencies, who are there to manufacture news for

their clients. Every great bank, every great railroad, every ~~XX~~ great political party has its own press agent, who manufactures facts to serve the interest of that particular institution which hired him. And then uncensored, unanalyzed news is served up to the reading public as fact. Governments have such press agencies. What you read about international events you must always read with a great deal of caution and care, for what you get is not unbiased truth but definitely biased propaganda.

I venture to say there is not today a single item of important international news which you get through the medium of your newspapers which is not in some manner or another garnished; not by your newspaper always, but by those agencies at the other end of the cable. Take Egypt today. Take the news which emanates from Egypt. Here is England, in 1924 carrying out cynically a bit of political piracy. Here is a nation, sanctimonious, always serving humanity, which, under the cloak of a political assassination, is imposing terms upon a people such as Austria tried to impose upon Serbia - terms which precipitated the Great War. Here is a nation which is imposing terms of a political character utterly unrelated to the crime of assassination which took place; terms which would reduce Egypt to a crown colony of Great Britain; terms in direct contravention of international agreements, and in a cynical disregard of the League of Nations, of which this nation - England is a principal member.

Now what news comes to us from Cairo or London concerning the events which are transpiring there? The Egyptian patriot is represented as a fanatic. The English cause, which is violently imperialistic is represented as a humanitarian service. And even that bogey of bolshevism has been called to service again. Moscow is now directing the Egyptian revolutionary forces in Cairo! And that information and its

insidious and invidious propaganda is sent through the American newspapers, and 2300 dailies publish that and serve it up as fact.

So that in the whole of the city of New York there was but one newspaper, the New York World, that dared to speak courageously about this newest international trial.

Governments control news. If you do not know that you certainly should have learned that during the war. I quote Mr. Cobb again, because I wish to quote only newspaper men who are close to the work. Mr. Cobb, of the New York World, perhaps the greatest American paper today, said: "In the war the governments conscripted public opinion, put it in charge of drill sergeants, goose-stepped it and made it salute. Then it was molded by two molds - censorship and propaganda. Censorship was obviously to prevent the giving of information to the enemy. The result was that it suppressed all information. It was stupid and ineffective. Propaganda was, as it inevitably developed, directed to air planes and tanks."

Public opinion now is being made by private propaganda. Direct channels are closed and public opinion is molded through press agents, whose work is not to proclaim the truth but to manipulate the news. Now, this, to my mind - the editorializing of news - is the most serious charge which can be brought against the American newspaper. It has frequently been said that the American newspaper is "yellow" and sensational. The American newspaper caters to quantity and to masses. It cannot live if it caters to the elite, to the few. And the average reader has no more than a public school education. And so that the newspaper is compelled to work down to the lower level of the mass rather than to the high level of the exceptionally educated or cultured.

It is sensational because American life is sensational.

If the American people want that sort of thing, not alone in their newspapers but in their fictions, in their plays, in their movies, in their life, the newspaper can only mirror and reflect the life of the people. It would, of course, be highly desirable if the newspaper, instead of catering to the taste, would try to mold and refine and purify taste. But that would really be asking too much of a business institution. Principally, that must be done by the schools and the church and the home, and ultimately the newspaper will reflect this improvement of taste and morals in its columns.

It can be blamed on these two scores: when it deliberately panders to the lust and the vicious instincts and passions of people for purposes of circulation. Then it is culpable; then it becomes a morally leprous thing, and it can be censured - censured on the ground of editorializing news, tampering with fact. Now, there is a certain sanctity about a fact which no one has a right to desecrate. There can be no two opinions concerning the facts, and the least, and perhaps the most, which a newspaper can do is to present to us accurate information concerning all things of interest. It can well leave the interpretation of these facts either to the newspaper reader himself or to its own editorial columns; for the newspaper column must be held inviolate from the intrusion of subjectivism, of personal bias. News must not be interpreted or played up in such a way as to result in a biased and impartial presentation of the fact.

Constructively, what are the remedies for these facts? I can see but two, First of all, a better reading public. The public cannot pass, and should not be permitted to pass the blame onto the newspaper. If the American public will demand a more conscientious newspaper, it will get it. If the American reader will demand news it will get it. If the American reader will demand news untainted, even as he demands milk untainted, he will get it. The American public

today is indifferent concerning the quality of the news which he gets. An educated, critical public opinion, fashioned in the school and in the church and in the literature hall and in the home, will ultimately refine our press. And, secondly, the training of journalists, the building up of great schools of journalism, the raising of the entire industry to the level of a profession. We must train the people who see for us; we must train ~~and~~^{the} witnesses of great national and international spectacles which concern us; the eye of the reporter must be trained to see accurately. And if you think this is a simple matter, let me recount to you a psychological experiment which was made not so very long ago.

Forty eminent psychologists were assembled in one place, and on the stage before them, in their full sight, and with electric lights playing upon the action, a simple bit of stage murder was carried out, and the forty professors were then asked each to write down the account of what transpired on that stage, in their presence, before their eyes, and when these forty accounts were ready, out of the forty only one had accurately represented the important thing in that incident presented to them.

A man with the best of intentions, witnessing a thing, will oftentimes fail to see it truthfully. We need schools to train the people who are going to be our news gatherers and our informants to see accurately; and then we must train them to report accurately, - the accurate use of the word, the sharpness of the definition of a phrase, the sanctity of a word. That, too, we must train in schools, even as we train our physicians and our lawyers and our ministers.

Then newspaper men must be paid more. It is one of the worst underpaid professions in the world and it is a profession which brings a vast amount of drudgery and hard work with it. It is an

uncertain profession. All that must be improved if the American people is to have in the days to come well trained, competent, independent reporters to report to them concerning the things of interest to them.

I believe in the progress of the American press, in spite of the many times which the public has been victimized. I still believe that in the main the men who are working in the various newspaper offices are honest men and earnest men, are endeavoring to do their best. With the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ aid of the public, that is critical and alert, demanding the best and only the best; with the aid of the public ~~XXXX~~ which is ready to support great universities to develop journalists and reporters, the whole profession will be lifted up to greater heights, to greater service

I came across this phrase last night in Proverbs, which particularly applies to the newspaper, as we vision it to be. "Wisdom crieth aloud in the street. She uttereth her voice in the broad places. She calleth at the head of the noisy street, at the entrance of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words."

That is the newspaper - a noisy, clamoring, insistent, pervasive, everpresent, subtile, influential agency; one that we should welcome, one that we would correct, and one against whose faults we should guard ourselves.