

ADDRESS BY
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TO THE
EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA PRESS ASSOCIATION
KINSTON, NORTH CAROLINA
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Introductory Remarks:

I would like to ~~start my~~ ^{begin} remarks this evening with a quotation from the policy of the Detroit News and the Detroit News-Tribune made by E. G. Pipp, editor-in-chief.

The paper should be:

Vigorous, but not Vicious.

Interesting, but not Sensational.

Fearless, but Fair.

Accurate as far as human effort can obtain accuracy.

Striving ever to gain and impart information.

As bright as possible, but never sacrificing solid information for brilliancy.

Looking for the Uplifting rather than the Depraving things of Life.

We should work to have the word RELIABLE stamped all over every page of the paper.

With this in mind, I would call to your attention that the press and our political leaders have gone hand in hand

since long before the birth of our nation.

It just did not happen that James Davis, who set up the first newspaper: New Bern, "North Carolina Gazette," ~~was~~ also printed the first compilation of laws made in this State. It was to the people, at this time, the only way in which they could learn of decisions being made which affected them. For, as we all know, there could not have been any radio, any television, ~~and~~ ^{or} very many magazines.

We know that politicians have needed and used newspapers since the beginning of our country. While a member of President Washington's Cabinet, Jefferson led the opposition to Hamilton's Federalist, who had already established the Gazette of the United States at the new capital in Philadelphia. Eager to develop an editorial voice for anti-Federalism, Jefferson tried to enlist Philip Freneau, a talented journalist who had become famous as "The Poet of the Revolution." Freneau declined the first offer. Lamenting the rejection, Jefferson revealed in a letter to Madison how much favoritism he was ready to bestow on an editor who would echo Jefferson's views: "I would have given him the perusal of all my letters of foreign intelligence and all foreign newspapers, the publication of all proclamations and other public notices within my department, and the printing of all laws" *(Drop in a word about Pres. Johnson and others leaving a story to select members of the press.)*

Later, the itch for a newspaper that would speak for him led Jefferson to woo Freneau by letter again: "The clerkship for foreign languages in my office is vacant; the salary

indeed, is very low, being but two hundred and fifty dollars a year, but it also gives so little to do as not to interfere with any other office one might chose"

The offer lured Freneau. He established The National Gazette which immediately became the loudest anti-Federalist voice and the most incisive critic of President Washington. The attacks were "an outrage on common decency," President Washington protested.

Washington became so enraged that he once said: " by God he had rather be in his grave than in his present situation. That he had rather be on his farm than be emperor of the world and yet they were charging him with wanting to be king. That that rascal Freneau sent him three of his papers every day as if he thought he would become the distributor of his papers."

Jefferson seized the publicity initiative as soon as he became President-elect in 1800. The Nation's capitol was being moved from Philadelphia to Washington, and Jefferson persuaded young Samuel Harrison Smith to set up his newspaper shop there by luring him with printing contract patronage, *which, of course, is not done in this day.* Jefferson was, of course, opposed to the Sedition Act which had been passed during the previous administration. It is interesting to note that no action was taken under the Alien Act, a similar contemporary act of legislation, but a few Republican editors "were got out of the way under the Sedition Act." Among them was Thomas Cooper, later to become president of the University of South Carolina, who was fined \$400. and jailed for six months (Page 303, 304 March of Democracy).

These attempts by the Federal Government to surpress the press ultimately failed. That these attempts were unsuccessful ~~were~~ ^{was} due in no small measure to the demand by the entire American people that news be freely presented to the public on public affairs.

Many of our early leaders were as convinced as was Patrick Henry that the common routine of government business must be publicized. They believed that the survival of the new nation depended upon information that would, in Thomas Jefferson's phrase, "penetrate the whole mass of the people." Madison, the father of the Constitution, wrote:

and "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both."

Jefferson, who wrote the Bill of Rights, valued information above the federal structure itself:

"The basis of the government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right: and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

(your emphasis)

Clearly, the founders considered informing the people to be a function of democracy. But they carefully refrained from setting up an official information system. Instead, the informing function was turned over to the press. In effect, the

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press - privately owned beyond official control- was incorporated into the machinery of democratic government.

One of the recent leaders of the American press said: "The most valuable service of a good newspaper is to provide a constant check and restraint upon the power of government. Freedom of the press is liberty from the tyranny of government and nothing else. By publication of the daily doings of government officials and departments, holding them up to the critical examination of the people, newspapers scotch the natural drive of government toward tyranny before it can get started."

It would seem to me that informing people of the need for legislation should be a primary function of the press. The press should seek out the necessary progressions of the State and focus the attention of the people on these issues.

(Insert jail publicity --the fact that people have been unaware of the problem but are becoming more aware--th note editorials and mail support)

While this undoubtedly should be a main function of the press, it must also prevent officials from "covering with the veil of secrecy the common routine of business, for the liberties of the people never were, or never will be, secure when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them."

Nevertheless, as a legislator, it is my firm conviction that while the press must inform society, the press also has an obligation toward its elective representatives/

6 Foremost among these is that it must supply the facts, not as interpreted by those information sources which would seek to make opinion, rather than report the opinion of the people.

You know that I believe in home rule--this also applies to the press. Community papers, such as you represent, speak, as far as I am concerned, more nearly for the people than ~~do some~~ ^{must} of our larger metropolian dailies. It is interesting to me at least, that 80% of our cities in the entire nation have no opposition newspapers.

But this does not mean that as legislators we are asking for special favors. We only ask that you supply the facts. Your readers ask you none less.

Nor should you think of us as legislators "bold and ~~grazen~~" if we discuss matters. We do not necessarily seek publicity by raising public issues. We do not seek to force our opinion on the citizens of this State, but we sincerely feel that we have an obligation to present issues, as we see them, for full discussion and consideration by all our people.

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I can do no more than quote for you the words of Charles G. Ross, pioneer teacher of journalism who made his career with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch Washington bureau: "The news writer is the agent of the paper that employs him. As such, in a wider sense, he is the agent of the public, which relies on the newspaper to keep it informed on the day's happenings. The story is the all-important thing; the reader as a rule cares nothing about who wrote it or what the writer thinks of it. The viewpoint of the news writer must be that of the unprejudiced, but alert observer. He must approach his story with a mind open to the facts and he must record the facts unvarnished by his own preferences and opinion. Comment on the news of the day is the function of the editorial columns. It has no place in the news story. The writer who willfully injects his own likes and dislikes into the story breaks faith with his employer, whose space he is using, and with the public that buys the paper." (Social Responsibility of the Press Page 149-150)

With this in mind, I feel free to discuss with you what I consider to be three of the most important issues to confront ~~in~~ ^{the} current session of the North Carolina General Assembly

If at times, I look upon the press as a friend, a foe, or one who ignores my ^{stand} ~~position~~, I can only say that I rest in good company. Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson,

Thank you.