

Truth on the Press

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION. By Herbert Brucker. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1949. 307 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by DON HOLLENBECK

PEOPLE keep talking and writing about what is wrong with our media of information, saying that something ought to be done about it, but nothing much ever seems to happen, constructively, anyway. What does happen is that the press goes on its majestic way, sometimes blindfolded, it would seem, and almost always deaf to the repeated comments that its slips are showing. If it does answer, it is usually that it knows its own business better than any high-brow theorists do, and that it would like to see them handle the problem of meeting edition times. It can't very well snoot Mr. Brucker that easily; he has had experience of journalism not only as a member of the journalism faculty at Columbia, but as a working newspaperman; he is presently editor of the *Hartford Courant*, where they meet edition times seven days a week.

"Freedom of Information" is a history of journalism as well as a critique, and it endeavors to demonstrate that while we have made a lot of progress toward a truly free press, there yet remains much to be done, to which one would add a hearty amen. Mr. Brucker would make no change in the position the press occupies in our economic system; he discusses and discards for adequate reasons such substitutes as a municipal press, a professionalized press, a yardstick press, a press without advertising, an endowed press, a church press, a labor press. What, then, would Mr. Brucker have the press do to mend its ways and to get more in touch with the people? He says there must be a sharp change of purpose and direction by corporations that operate our newspapers, radio, moving pictures, and other means of mass communication. We shall not, Mr. Brucker says, have freedom of information until we make a courageous leap into the future by broadening the tradition of objectivity to include not only news but the interpretation of news. Briefly, he'd have all editorial opinion, columnist punditing, cartooning, features, commentaries done in what he describes as a spirit of scientific inquiry to the search for truth. He'd have publishers and controllers of other media of communications cut all political and economic ties; sponsor no partisan doctrine, no cause at all but that of independent

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creatures, they must become devoted, almost in the religious sense of the term.

But devoted also means doomed, in one sense, and while it would indeed be almost the millennium if our information were served up to us and interpreted for us by a group of un-earthly Galahads without an axe in the world to grind, on the basis of things as they are and as they seem destined to be for a long time, Mr Brucker's hopes would seem to be doomed. He has more than likely read an excellent story by J. Howard Rutledge in a recent edition of *The Wall Street Journal*; that story appeared under the headline: "Newspaper income lags behind soaring costs; battle for readers on." And Mr. Rutledge then proceeds to detail the plight of the press in terms which leave no doubt that a publisher's life these days is not a happy one. The realist (and the newspaper business is notable for the hard-headedness of its practitioners) will set Mr. Brucker's hopes and dreams against the cold print of the facts, and come pretty quickly to the conclusion that just as long as the business of information is so inextricably bound up in the economic system, just that long will the entre-

preneurs of the information business continue to think in the light of their own self-interest.

Mr. Brucker does suggest a possible way out—one which would seem deserving of more attention. That's the plan under which the employees of a newspaper run it—really run it because they own its stock. That's been tried a time or two, but not to the extent where it can be said to have exerted much influence generally, and, as Mr. Brucker points out, some of these plans leave control in the hands of one or two top employees who are so free from a check on their decisions by the rest of the employees that they are just as conservative as if they owned the newspaper outright.

On the day the city editor and the police reporter and the editorial writer have a definite voice in making the policy of a newspaper, we may be said to have made some real progress in the direction of freedom of information—and that goes of course for other media of information and the men who have the job of saying what is to be said, and showing what is to be shown. That will be a wonderful day. Maybe some of us will live to see it.

Don Hollenbeck conducts the weekly program "CBS Views the Press."

The Promised Land

SHALOM MEANS PEACE. By Robert St. John. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1949. 335 pp. \$2.95.


Reviewed by BARTLEY C. CRUM

ROBERT ST. JOHN has here written a thoroughly needed, enjoyable, and moving account of the people of the new state of Israel. It is a stirring continuation—with a pleasant ending—of the stories of the survivors of Dachau, Buchenwald, and the human abattoirs of Rumania. And it tells, in addition, many tales of the Sabras, those native Palestinians who did so much to save the Middle East from Nazi invasion. Mr St. John, indeed, tells quite literally hundreds of stories about the people in that corner of the world. They include those of Irish-Americans, French Catholics, and boys of many other non-Jewish groups who helped in Israel's bitter fight for freedom.

Mr. St. John flew to Israel last May, shortly after the withdrawal of British forces and the dramatic establishment of the new state with David Ben-Gurion as Premier and Dr. Chaim Weizmann as President. He had decided to witness the birth of a nation and to watch its struggles to keep

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Citizen Saint

By John Holmes

OME ghosts, they say, deplore their ghostliness,
Wail and complain and weary of their haunting.

Hard fate, to wander always at a loss,
To want and not know how to tell their wanting.

So saints are sad of the world and wonder why,
Tired after two miles with him who asked for one,
Bruised by the rain of I, I, and me, and my,
Torn between possible and the little done.

Let thieves, chemists, ships, and shouldering boys
Be doomed to stretch and move as they were meant.
Who suffers his weather, savors jails and joys,
If not the saint when told he is a saint?

That innocence of heart in which he moves,
That effortless patience carrying the day,
That selfless grief of those he loves,
Dooms him to sainthood, and no need to pray.

This is a most serious occupation, rare
The man who makes it his. Rigor without rules,
Daring in doubt, no pay, and endless care,
And sufferance not gladly of himself and fools—

Who'd waste his love the crazy way the world
Wears, murders, spoils, and rubs itself to dust?
The born saint, for so his unborn body curled.
The family, citizen saint, because he must.

The Saturday Review