

Letters to the Communications Editor



All Newspapers Are Local

JOHN TEBBEL, in "The Little Giant of Nassau County" [SR, Feb. 13], should have pointed out that the suburban papers are in a position to walk away from the city papers with the honors for good-quality color photos of local people and events—and advertising. Surveys show that three-color photos in local newspapers have more pull than TV commercials. And newspaper color can be done economically by running preprinted color photos on web offset and inserting them in regular newspaper runs. A good example is the *Peoria Journal Star*. The *Corning Leader* and one of the Gannett papers have also successfully used the preprint method. All of these papers have used preprinted photos prepared by the Graphic Arts Research Department of the Rochester Institute of Technology. Believe me, the suburban papers are easily the winner; they're local. Magazines will carry the national audience.

SELAH BOND.

Ontario, N.Y.

Radio's FM Problems

JOHN TEBBEL'S ARTICLE "FM: Radio's Problem Child" [SR, Jan. 9] was very perceptive in its analysis of the future of FM broadcasting in the light of the new FCC ruling. Mr. Tebbel's article did, however, contain some misleading information and some factual errors that I think merit correction.

Commenting on the live stereo broadcasts by station WABC-FM (New York), Mr. Tebbel states that WABC is "the only New York station to do so." This is not true. Several college radio stations broadcast live concerts, and WKCR-FM does so in stereo, and has been doing so since even before WABC began its evening stereophonic transmissions. WKCR's "Concert Series" has been broadcasting live recitals to the New York area since 1958, stereophonically since early in 1964. Concerning WABC's own string quartet, this is no novelty, either. For many years WQXR maintained a resident quartet, but disbanded it in 1963 for financial reasons (the live quartet was a greater expense than recordings). Prompted by the dearth of live music on the air created by the discontinuation of the WQXR series, WKCR attempted to fill the near-vacuum by organizing the "WKCR Sinfonietta," a chamber orchestra of about twenty-five players. The Sinfonietta programs are designed specifically for broadcast purposes, although public attendance at the concerts is welcomed. The WKCR Sinfonietta is, in effect, WKCR's orchestra in residence. The Sinfonietta continues to perform today, over a year and a half after its inception—a tribute to the public's appreciation of noncommercial FM radio.

Mr. Tebbel's statements that FM sound can be "no better than the tuners and am-

plifiers that capture it and the speakers that reproduce it" and that "true high-fidelity equipment will reproduce from 20,000 to 25,000 cycles per second" are, in essence, true. There are other factors involved, though, that tend to nullify the fine technological advances made in FM reception. Besides the fact that a frequency of 25,000 cycles is well beyond the range of even the most acute human ear, I think that Mr. Tebbel would be hard pressed to find an FM tuner capable of reproducing such a frequency, even if he were to look among the best of professional equipment. Also, all sound sources in a radio studio must pass through a console, and few radio stations are equipped with consoles that will pass frequencies above 18,000 cycles or so. Even the finest Ampex professional tape recorders will reproduce only 17,000 cycles with a tolerable amount of distortion at high speed. Also, rare is the transmitter that will radiate much above 15,000 cps. So even "FM gold" is not so golden as one might wish—not yet, at least.

The FM situation has developed to the point where, as Mr. Tebbel points out, commercial stations are finding it less and less profitable to provide the programing for which FM is best suited, and they are therefore decaying to the popular taste demanded by the pocketbook. The future of good educational programing, including well-balanced and intelligently programed serious music, lies with those stations that are not dependent on commercial support. Private institutions such as our universities and churches (WKCR and WVRV in New York are good examples) aid to a certain extent, but they are ultimately bound to other goals. Private foundations provide little financial support to sustain the expenses necessary for the successful operation of a good educational station. An organized program of government support seems to be the best solution to this dilemma. The government (city, state, or federal) could establish its own network of stations or it

could give much-needed financial support to existent educational, nonprofit FM radio stations.

It is discouraging to see what was once a fine station, such as WQXR, degenerating over the past few years to a nauseating level of mediocrity and commerciality. Unfortunately the FCC's new ruling contains too many loopholes to be of great significance, but at least it is a step in the right direction. One may optimistically hope the FCC will come up with some more forceful, more effective rulings aimed at salvaging FM radio programing from the pathetic rut into which commercialism has dug it.

STEPHEN LIEBER,

Director of Classical Music, Emeritus,
WKCR-FM.

Pawling, N.Y.

Blueprint for Clichés

HERE'S ANOTHER small gripe for the cliché department: The proliferating and indiscriminate use of the word "blueprint" annoys me because usually the word "plan" is what is meant and would be more descriptive as well as shorter. Usually people who use "blueprint" are non-engineers trying to sound like engineers. Actually, blueprints are hardly ever used any more, since other methods of reproducing engineering and architectural drawings are more effective. I always hate to see laymen in any field trying to sound like professionals of that field. Let them stick to their own jargon, and then perhaps they'll be more likely to get it right.

HAROLD H. PERRY.

Yardley, Pa.

Shortchanged Ingenue

THE ARTICLE on the teen-age market in the MADISON AVENUE column, by Theodore Peterson [SR, Feb. 13], was timely and interesting. I do, however, want to call your attention to the sales figure of 625,000 you quoted for *Ingenue*. *Ingenue's* guarantee is 700,000, and actually we average over 725,000 copies per issue.

HELEN MEYER,
President,
Dell Publishing Co.

New York, N.Y.

Changing Business Press

THE ARTICLE BY Norman Cahnerns ("There's No Business Like Business") in the Jan-
(Continued on page 151)



"Why do you follow me? Haven't I told you I don't know anything?"

In the Crusading Tradition

By JONATHAN DANIELS, editor of the *Raleigh (N.C.) News and Observer*, whose new book, *"They Will be Heard,"* is due soon from McGraw-Hill.

IN A BIG cluttered room in the Columbia University school of journalism a few years ago, Lee Hills of the Knight Newspapers, Scott Newhall of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and I served as the Pulitzer Prize judges of editorial writing in America. Some of the entries had come in the form of elaborate presentations by newspaper promotion departments. Others were just pieces clipped out and stuck into envelopes. We read the whole mass. Most were competent. All were righteous. But in the whole pile we did not find one we felt was worthy of the prize. Certainly, we agreed, there were none through which came the brilliance or militancy of the old, blind, domineering Joseph Pulitzer, who was a personality in the press even when he was off in a soundproof cabin on a guarded yacht.

We so reported. Evidently, however, the august Pulitzer board above us was appalled by our negative position. At their meeting they called for the pile of clippings. They went through the big folios and the tattered sheets. And they found, as we had not been able to do, a prize-winner. They were probably right. Certainly by making the award they did not give aid or comfort to the dolorously repeated dictum that old-time crusading "personal journalism" has disappeared.

Possibly that was a bad year. Perhaps in this age of proliferating prizes the cantankerous characters who make personal journalism would scorn to gather their yesterday yells and hope for a solemn annual award. Perhaps it has always been true that the editorial that raises the hair of its readers and shows

the hair on the chest of its writer seems comparatively pallid when read much later out of context and out of its circulation area. But of a couple of things I am confident: In American history personal journalism and crusading editors have both always seemed about to disappear. And in terms of the patterns for journalists set by many schools of journalism today, we would not always like them if we found them.

Horace Greeley had some notion about the disappearance of such editors as early as 1841, when he was only beginning, as editor of the *Tribune* ("The Great Moral Organ"), to set the model for crusading personal journalism. And by 1855, *Putnam's Monthly* was confidently declaring that "the great journals are now rather corporate institutions than individual organs; and hence the former autocratic influence of men like Horace Greeley is on the decline." Then, of course, many were sure when Greeley died in 1872 "that the day for personal journalism is gone by, and that impersonal journalism will take its place."

"A great deal of twaddle," said Charles A. Dana, editor of the *New York Sun*, who could be both charming and caustic—and in his own lifetime changed from idealistic socialist to extreme conservative.

"Whenever in the newspaper profession," said Dana, "a man rises up who is original, strong, and bold enough to make his opinions a matter of consequence to the public, there will be personal journalism; and whenever newspapers are conducted only by commonplace individuals whose views are of no consequence to anybody, there will be nothing but impersonal journalism. And this is the essence of the whole question."

Dana certainly did not end the debate about the demise or the indestructibility of punch-packing personal journalism

or the editors who made it. Before he died in 1921, Henry Watterson, the much-quoted "Marse Henry" of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, had announced the disappearance of such papers and editors with rhetorical finality: "The soul of Bombastes has departed, and journalism is no longer irradiated by the flash of arms."

When Watterson himself put down his pen forever, the equally quoted William Allen White wrote sadly to the same effect in his *Emporia Gazette*. White had watched the consolidation of many independent papers and the resulting unemployment, for a time at least, of many newspapermen. He had seen too much of a journalism "that floats complacently, securely, witlessly in the serene pool of our American finance-capital structure!" Watterson's death moved him to say that the newspaper business was developing no more individualistic editors like "Marse Henry," who sometimes seemed Bombastes himself.

YET, fortunately, there have been clear evidences that crusading editors are a durable breed, even in an age of change and the growth of news-vending as a commodity industry. The appearance of chain newspapers did not necessarily mean that a tactful pursuit of profit by pleasing everybody had made obsolete men ready with the editorial cat-o'-nine-tails for those they regarded as malefactors. Often a roaring sense of responsibility remains even when all the papers in a town are under the same ownership. Men do still take risks for civic virtue. And often prize-givers, schools of journalism, and press organizations do find editors in whom to take both pride and comfort. (Other such editors are probably overlooked in a nation in which even the greatest papers are largely local in their leadership.)

There is not now and never has been



—© United Features, reprinted with permission.