

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Editor: RICHARD L. TOBIN

COMMUNICATIONS



News Is Where You Find It

OUR GOOD FRIEND and neighbor *Editor & Publisher* ran a lead editorial in a recent issue pooh-poohing a Trendex survey, just announced by the Radio Advertising Bureau, that claims that radio is the leading news medium, not only as a first news source but for continuing coverage. Said *Editor & Publisher*: "Broadcasters are now fighting among themselves as to which is the 'dominant source of news.' On the basis of an Elmo Roper survey, television has claimed that it took the laurels in this area away from newspapers in 1964. Now, radio, by way of the Radio Advertising Bureau and a Trendex study, claims there was something wrong with the Roper study (which is what newspapermen have been saying all along) and that radio is the public's major daytime source of news. RAB concedes the lead to television after 6 P.M. but adds that even then radio outranks newspapers."

The *Editor & Publisher* editorial goes on to berate both the Roper and Trendex findings because they were based on fewer than 1,500 interviews, which, says *E&P*, is two-and-one-half-thousandths of 1 per cent of daily newspaper buyers. Certainly, says the *E&P* editorial, "there is no doubt that radio and television are able to broadcast news bulletins before they are printed in a newspaper. But to claim on the basis of such a limited sample that they are the 'major' or 'dominant' source of all the important worldwide, national, state, and local news occurring every day is to prey on the gullibility of the public, especially advertisers."

We've had a feeling for quite a while now that in the trade press, particularly in communications where truth needs to be recognized with quick candor, the traditionally partisan editorial posture is old-fashioned and outdated. We've noticed that if anyone takes any sort of a crack at advertising, regardless of facts or critical justification, trade publications like *Printers' Ink* quickly editorialize against the accuser in a blanket pattern wholly foreseeable and, therefore, of not much importance. Though radio and television trade papers are less inclined to belittle their competition, probably because they are younger media and less set in the defensive mold of trade clichés, they do discount the printed word to the distress of logic. Practically all trade-paper editorials make a point of seeing the world of communications from one point of view only, often *ad nauseam*. It was not too many years ago that some daily newspapers in this country refused to publish radio program listings on grounds that there was no sense in giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Eventually, of course, their readership insisted on such nominal services and it is a brave publisher indeed who nowadays ignores TV program listings in full.

Fortunately, the recent *E&P* editorial admits that "there is no doubt that radio and television are able to broadcast news bulletins before they are printed in a newspaper," a fact established and wholly apparent to anyone with a vague connection with news handling since World War II. The newspaper is, on the other hand, something without which the average American cannot get along if he is in any way informed. Walter Cronkite recently pointed out that CBS's entire early-evening telecast could be

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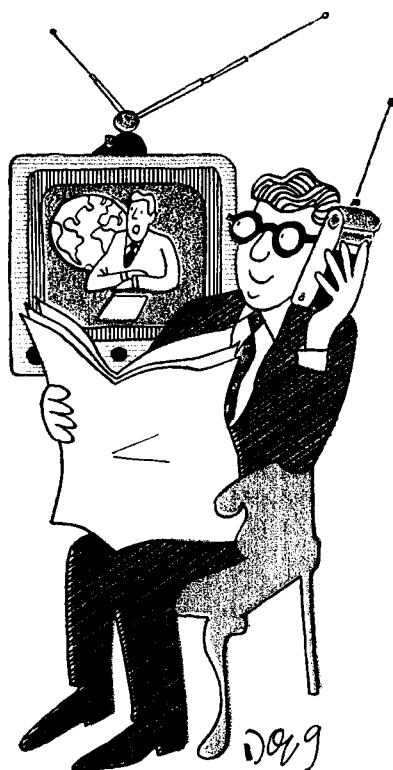
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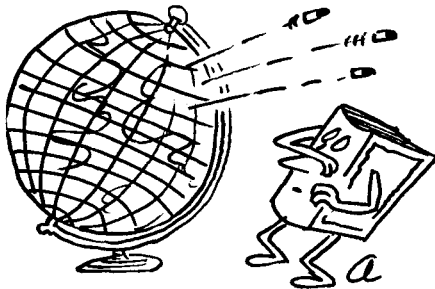
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contained in less than a page of newsprint. What remains of the news is where the newspaper is and will ever be invaluable, for news, particularly the local and regional event, is but accumulated minutiae for which radio and television have neither the time nor the audience. Theirs is, for the most part, headline stuff, with and without pictures, but something that comes and goes quickly, unrecorded. The printed page, on the other hand, is here to stay, it is for the record, it can supply hundreds of tiny facts electronic news misses or avoids, and there is simply no substitute for it, which makes sarcastic editorials in the newspaper trade press unnecessarily defensive.

What we are trying to say is that all three media of news communication—newspapers, radio, and television—are here to stay and indeed complement one another, particularly in times of strike and stress. Each has its place in the sum total of democratic communication. Looking at the fascinating longer film documentaries, the news magazines, and high-level nonfiction on the printed page in all of its forms from newspapers through magazines to books, we observe a sort of road map of a com-



modity called information. It is as saleable as bread and as necessary to the working of a democratic society.

In recent months, particularly since the dramatic blackout in New York when the transistor came of age, we have been increasingly aware of portable radio as a conveyer of news and we are inclined to agree with Trendex and Miles David, RAB president, that, at least during the daylight hours, radio is now truly the leading news medium—for wide and quick dissemination of headline facts. But we would be as lost without our morning, evening, and Sunday paper as we would be without our on-the-spot TV sports coverage. We like all three news sources, and for different reasons. Having seen our favorite athlete in an event on television, we are more than ever inclined to read about it the next day in the paper, and we are perfectly sure that the all-time high in newspaper readership established last year was a direct result of greatly widened interest in news attributable largely to the electronic media. *Editor & Publisher* seems so needlessly afraid of.

—R.L.T.

Letters to the Communications Editor



Arbitration & Communicators

I FIND Richard L. Tobin's editorial entitled "Compulsory Arbitration in Communications" [SR, Feb. 12] very sensible indeed. Making arbitration a prerequisite of any paralyzing strike dealing with the most vital forms of communications and transportation makes good sense. The recognition of differences on the part of the executives and the employees is the greatest means of labor communication ever. This exchange serves not only for the benefit of the employer and his laborers but also for the benefit of the populace since the services performed can continue uninterrupted.

Looking closely, the proposed court, similar to a court of law . . . may add to the feeling of making any contract a necessity. I feel that more can be accomplished in a cordial and mutual atmosphere. It seems only fitting to have a random selection of the employees as witnesses to express themselves accordingly. This idea of compulsory arbitration is for the betterment of business in general.

I have agreed with everything in the editorial except for the mention of compulsory arbitration for only a distinct number. I can't blame you for your interest in this medium but you have to agree that radio is still the most frequently used means of communication in time of disaster. . . . The radio has become very portable and is a most necessary means of communication. A strike in this medium, even though it does provide entertainment, would be tragedy especially in the wake of an emergency. I do find the editorial very well written in respect to the means of arbitration and I hope that such negotiations would be successful in every way.

DAVID STUKENBERG.

Belleville, Ill.

Chapter & Verse from Thoreau

THE QUOTATION which Fanchon Hamilton credits to Thoreau is almost correct but not quite. In the first chapter of *Walden*, Thoreau said: "We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough."

RALPH CHAPMAN.

Brattleboro, Vt.

Flat Fees for Best-Sellers?

JOHN TEBBEL's excellent report on mail-order bookselling in your issue of February 12 omitted one interesting fact which Time-Life Books and American Heritage Books have in common, and wherein they differ from old-line publishers. That is that the authors of these best-selling books do not

share in the sales bonanza—they are paid outright, a flat sum, no matter how well their books do. This can hardly be called an innovation; like their selling and production techniques, it is rather a reversion to an older and sadder day before authors managed to establish their right to a stake in a book's profits.

MARIE RODELL,
Literary Agent.

New York, N.Y.

FROM READING John Tebbel's article on mail-order books, I was pleased to learn that a few publishers actually want to sell books so much that they will make it easy for the customer to buy. Here in the hinterlands fifty miles from Manhattan I find it almost impossible to buy anything but best-sellers and the current paperback pre-pack selections. I can only hope that many more publishers will initiate mail-order sales.

The problems of obtaining books are not the fault of the local bookstore owner. Either the publishers ignore his orders entirely or the paperback jobber is not interested in supplying single copies from houses like Avon, Ballantine, Dell and Signet. Books from these houses, ordered after being mentioned in SR paperback articles, require six to eight weeks for delivery, if they ever arrive at all. Cash orders for technical books placed with Benjamin and Macmillan are ignored completely, as are the follow-up letters. One Benjamin order was finally filled when the bookseller drove to Manhattan and personally collected the book at the Park Avenue office, after ordering it by phone earlier in the day. The original order is still lost somewhere in a paper-shuffling limbo.

On the average my husband and I try to order about twenty books a month, mostly paperbacks and technical books, and we are just one family in an area where extensive built-in bookcases are a real-estate selling point. Our hardcover purchases are already made by mail through book clubs. It would be wonderful if we had available something like the defunct Harper & Row *Paperback Sampler* which we could use as a mail order catalogue. I am sure authors and the top managements of publishing houses want to sell books, but somewhere between the sources and the would-be buyers is a giant bottleneck that keeps them locked in stockrooms. Perhaps mail order on a large scale is a solution.

JUDITH M. BRADOW.

Beacon, N.Y.

The More Exciting Weeklies

ALFRED BALK's article "Where Are Tomorrow's Journalists?" [SR, Jan. 8] is most illuminating. This journalist agrees emphatically with the author's perfectly couched statement that "never before has the im-

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