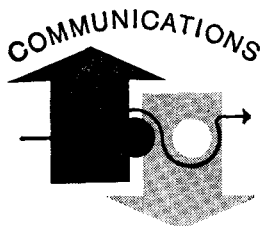


COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Editor: RICHARD L. TOBIN

The Winter of Discontent



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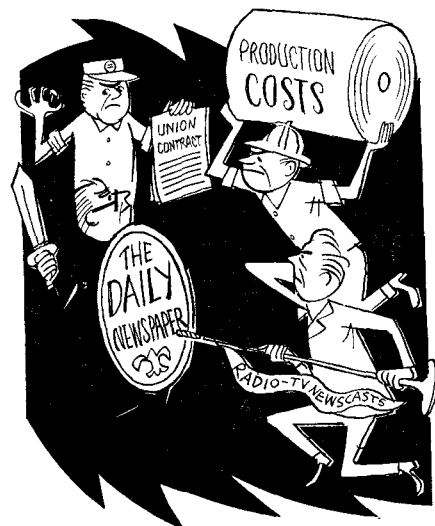
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A RECENT ISSUE of the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* reports from Bonn that the West German newspaper industry is, like its English-speaking cousins in Great Britain and America, in trouble, deep trouble. A very large number of small newspapers in West Germany are, according to the *Guardian's* Bonn correspondent, in danger of actually going out of business. Many of them have been fighting off closure by syndication groupings, mutual aid in editorial and advertising procedures, and pooling of foreign correspondents, something most European newspapers have always shied away from. Two newspapers, *Der Kurier* in West Berlin and the Hamburg *Abendecho*, recently ceased publication, and Axel Springer, the German press baron, recently forecast that the day is not far off when German cities as large as half a million will be unable to support more than one newspaper.

In Great Britain, where cities the size of Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham can support but one evening paper, this is by no means a new story. The British press has been having a thin time of it ever since the post-war surge in union demands and other rising costs. In both Great Britain and West Germany, press proprietors have been up in arms for years at the loss to radio and television stations of precious advertising revenues once solely theirs. In West Germany, where an economic recession has taken further toll of the newspapers' main source of income, many press lords are so hard up that they can scarcely afford to re-equip in the conventional manner, let alone install the marvelous labor-saving devices and inventions that have marked printing's technical explosion in the 1960s—advances that would help right the ship and keep it afloat.

In the United States, a recent American Newspaper Publishers Association survey shows that for the first time more than 1,000 daily newspapers are selling for 10 cents per copy. The actual number of dailies selling at 10 cents is 1,212, an increase of 261 over the number a year ago; only one U.S. newspaper sold for 10 cents at the end of World War II. Moreover, eight out of 10 Americans say in another survey that they would be willing to pay 15 cents for their daily newspaper, which is, as *Editor & Publisher* points out, "a sign of acceptability, a certificate of necessity, and a testimonial to performance." Yet, while it may be a demonstration of the basic appeal and strength of the American newspaper, it is also a sobering change in the philosophy of the daily press, once built on the premise that mass circulation at a penny or two per copy was essential to American democracy. This mass communication function has now largely been taken over by radio and television, especially radio in a transistor age. Ten years ago, a Gallup poll asked the question: "Would you be willing to get a daily newspaper if the price went up to 15 cents?"—and only 45 per cent answered yes. In December of 1966 the response was close to 80 per cent affirmative, a far cry from the penny press principle.

This is, then, a winter of deep discontent within the newspaper business on both sides of the Atlantic. As we have said before in these columns, we believe the time will come when the newspaper will be very much like the

local electric light and power company or the local telephone company or the local gas works. One to each average town is essential but more than one is not only uneconomic but impractical in the long run. With the New York papers assaulted as they apparently will be this spring by new demands of the Newspaper Guild and other craft unions for a four-day week, it does not seem likely that the newspaper business as we have known it in our lifetime will ever be the same again, and will, indeed, be lucky to maintain itself even at its present shaky level.

The above intelligence has appeared within the past few weeks at the same time that all manner of new electronic devices have been announced for the printing market—production aids sure to reduce the cost of printing something on a sheet of paper. Harris-Inter-type Corporation has just announced a photographic typesetter which uses a cathode ray tube and micro-electronic circuitry to produce up to 1,000 type characters per second. The first production unit is scheduled for delivery to one of the South's largest printing firms in mid-'67 and will produce "instant pages" for such frequently revised publications as telephone directories, magazines, and newspapers. This Harris-Inter-type ultrahigh-speed unit is built around a cathode ray tube on which type characters to be photographed are flashed in somewhat the same manner as pictures appear on a television tube. Input and printout operations are then put under computer control, and the company claims that its device generates type characters of "graphic arts quality" even at top speed. Since the price of one of these units is around a quarter of a million dollars not every printing shop and newspaper in the country can place an order tomorrow, but if the claims are justified this does mean one more giant step toward a totally automated press and, perhaps, some lessening of the economic pressures killing newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic in these hard times.

In the long run, anything that helps produce a newspaper through mechanical rather than human efforts means a better chance of survival for the press, cold-blooded as this sounds. There will always be reporters to collect the news and there will always be editors to judge, correct, and illustrate it. These all-too-human occupations can never be replaced because they require fresh judgment with each issue, and creative judgment and reporting of the news from original sources are things the computer is and always will be incapable of through its very nature. Meanwhile, though, it will take a hardy species of newsprint to survive, here or abroad.

—R. L. T.

Letters to the Communications Editor



It Happens Every Spring

R. L. T.'S RECENT comments on baseball rules and the changes they have undergone over the years [COMMUNICATIONS EDITORIAL, Feb. 11] were read with much interest. I believe the sacrifice fly rule was invoked to reward the batter who was skillful enough to get the ball out of the infield in a crucial situation. By the time it was revoked, such skill had long gone and the long fly was obviously a short home run gone wrong.

I would suggest as a possible amendment to the current code that a foul third strike be put in the "out" category, whether caught or not. Think of how much this would shorten the average game, as well as lengthen the active life of the average pitcher. If it's good enough for softball, why not for hardball?

IRVING KOLODIN.

New York, N.Y.

R. L. T.'S ANIMADVERSIONS on baseball were of great interest to me. Not because I sided with him right down the line. But when so august and highfalutin' a publication as SR discusses baseball it deserves a thorough hearing.

First, about the concern re bases on balls ordered by the manager. The official records now make provision for intentional passes. Too bad that they are left out of career records.

The Baseball Rule Book is not changed "forever," as R. L. T. puts it. Action on the code comes ever so seldom. I had a lot to do with the rule which forces a pitcher to go at least five innings to be eligible for credit for a victory. This appeared to be the only solution for a messy situation in which hurlers could receive victory credit if they were injured or became ill before the five innings were completed. Managers were in the habit of favoring pitchers with phony certifications of injury. Koufax never beefed about the rules. He knew that those things even themselves out.

As for the suggestion that the official scorer be permitted to go into such things as team errors for mental lapses, please leave us not throw the game into a situation in which a scorer might find himself in too deep a quandary mentally.

On the whole, the Rules Committee's action for 1967 rates from fair to middling. For one thing in particular it deserves great praise: It did not yield to the holler guys who want the spitter restored to legality.

DAN DANIEL.

Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Another Part of the Forest

I AM SURE that it seemed very appropriate in New York to put the heading "Ally of the Right to Know" over the letter from David Tennant Bryan, chairman and pub-

lisher of the *Times-Dispatch* and *News-Leader* in Richmond [SR, Feb. 11]. I can only say that here in Virginia this brings a laugh, rather a hollow one to be sure.

Last November there assembled in Richmond, under the title of "People, Religion, and a Changing Virginia," the first interfaith conference held in the state. I say the first because for the first time Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders gave their sponsorship and took part personally in such an affair; well over a thousand people took part, coming from all over the state, from laymen to half a dozen bishops, by far the largest such gathering ever to be held in Virginia; racially the group was thoroughly integrated, in itself a notable achievement. (In the elevator of the John Marshall Hotel a not-very-sympathetic guest commented that a former owner of the hotel would turn over in his grave if he could see what was happening.)

Agree or not with our purposes, I cannot see how any objective observer could say that this event was not newsworthy, or that the newspaper-reading public should be kept in ignorance of what went on there for three days. Yet the news columns of the *News-Leader* were absolutely closed to the slightest bit of information. (The *Times-Dispatch* did carry some stories on inside pages.) TV thought enough of it to carry nightly stories at some length. And after it was all over, the *News-Leader* did come forth with an editorial. That it was contemptuous of our efforts was its right, and was to be expected. That it offered a few lines from each of two speeches, taken out of context, without having given its readers any chance to form their own intelligent opinions or to appraise the editorial impartially, is not at all consistent with the idea of a responsible free press its publisher so piously espouses.

DAVID H. SCULL,

Immediate Past President.

The Virginia Council on

Human Relations.

Richmond, Va.

IN THE COURSE of some less than complimentary observations on America's press, your letter contributor, Peter Pollak [SR, Feb. 11], compares attitudes toward reporters on the part of President Lyndon Johnson and Premier Fidel Castro. His remarks bring to mind the recent survey undertaken by the University of Missouri's Freedom of Information Center. The United States, according to its findings, ranks sixth among the world's nations in the relative independence of its reporting.

Upon coming across the results of the Missouri study, as conveyed by the press services at the beginning of 1967, my initial reaction was one of discouragement and regret. Further examination, though, soon aroused a certain skepticism. For, occupying third place in the standings was none