
Does Wall Street dictate to the newspapers? The Morrow candidacy, Mr. Hearst's "prosperity" policy, and other salient activities of the nation's press are cited by one of the keenest analysts of American journalism to show the true relationship between Big Business and the papers.

Newspaper Truth

BY SILAS BENT

SIX months after the stock-market collapse William Randolph Hearst sent instructions to the editors of all his dailies to "make the Hearst newspapers prosperity papers." He directed that each of them display prominently on the first page a two-column box calling attention to stories of business advances, and suggested the caption: "Good News of Good Times."

Mr. Hearst has made large loans on his properties, and his bankers have required him to lop off some of those which were making heavy drains on dividends; but it would be a mistake to suppose that Wall Street bankers dictated this manœuvre. We may rest assured that he did it of his own accord, and that he was motivated by the same impulse which governed other newspaper owners and publishers, although the others gave no such explicit orders, so far as I know. The Hearst dictum, couched in affirmative terms, had yet the value and effect of a negation, a censorship. He did not say, for example, that the unemployment situation should be shoved as far out of sight as possible, but his papers and the others did this.

What is the explanation of an editorial unanimity so singular? How does it happen that Mr. Hearst, subject to the constant reproof and reprobation of his con-

temporaries (although I can't find that he has ever done anything journalistically worse than most of them), is found cuddling up in the same bed with them?

The explanation is to be found in a community of interests between metropolitan dailies and Big Business. The newspapers do not take orders from Wall Street, as is commonly supposed. Theirs is not the relation of servant and master, for they are copartners. They do an annual business of more than a billion dollars, and are our sixth industry in size. They want pretty much the same sort of thing as other big businesses. They have the same ambitions. They exploit the same people, that 95 per cent of the American public who, according to Andrew Mellon, are "supported" by the remaining 5 per cent.

In certain respects this is good ground for congratulation. Our press is now too well-to-do for any need of individual or political subsidy, and it can thumb its nose at persons who attempt, for selfish purposes, to procure the suppression or distortion of news. One paper spent \$1,500,000 in a single year for "exclusive" or "canned" stories of stunt aviation. There is money aplenty for the purchase of feature material and for the employment of comic artists, columnists, and other entertainers. But three-fourths of

the average daily's revenue (in the case of the average Hearst daily, two-thirds) is derived from advertising. And this revenue flows from our industrial dynasty, its satellites and parasites. Thus the community of interests between the press and Big Business becomes an identity of purpose.

A conspicuous example of this was the newspaper attitude toward the candidacy of Dwight W. Morrow for the Republican nomination to the Senate from New Jersey. Mr. Morrow is an able and distinguished man, with an unsmirched record of public service, and I think it safe to say that he stood head and shoulders above his opponents in the race. But it was noteworthy that his plan for repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment, although by no means novel, got even greater news display and more glowing editorial approval from Democratic newspapers than from so staunch a Republican organ as the New York *Herald Tribune*. In the metropolis the principal Democratic newspapers are *The World* and *The Times*, and they vied with each other in praise and defense of Mr. Morrow. Some may have supposed that this was because Mr. Morrow came out against prohibition. Well, former Senator Frelinghuysen, his principal opponent, ran as a wet; he is a man of ability, with long Senatorial experience, and he comes of a family distinguished for many generations in public office. Yet hear *The World*, in its issue of June 13:

"In this campaign Mr. Frelinghuysen is a wet, a trust buster and a great enemy of the political bosses. *Question*: When did Mr. Frelinghuysen become a wet? *Answer*: When he had twice been defeated as a dry. . . . *Question*: When did Mr. Frelinghuysen become a trust buster deeply concerned about regulating public utilities? *Answer*: A few months ago, when the business interests

of New Jersey abandoned him. . . .

Question: Does Mr. Frelinghuysen repudiate the bosses who are supporting him? *Answer*: He loves these bosses.

. . . *Question*: How much is he entitled to call himself the champion of the people against the bosses? *Answer*: About as much as the fox who would not eat sour grapes."

Irving Fisher, of Yale, a famous economist and student of social questions, certainly no less able and no less distinguished than Mr. Morrow, volunteered his services to Representative Franklin Fort, who ran on a dry platform in the triangular primary contest. He said that Mr. Morrow was being used as an instrument of the brewers "and the millionaire wets." Hear then the New York *Times*, in an editorial headed "O Heinous Conspiracy!" Elaborating Professor Fisher's charge into a secret cabal, the editor writes in part:

"The caitiffs pretend that they want to let the workingman have his glass of beer, do they? Ah, my friends, why and at what a price? . . . It is to be three cents a glass. A trifle high; but these malefactors of great wealth are familiar with the well-known economic principle: The higher the tax, the greater the yield and the wilder the rush to pay. . . . The thirst that had such insufficient means of quenching itself under the unsleeping eye of prohibition has accumulated vast arrears, for the receipts from the beer and liquor taxes are to be great enough to wipe out 'all the corporation and income taxes.' Unvexed, almost untaxed—for they are winebibbers—the conspirators will chortle in their purple palaces, while the consumers of that which profiteth not guzzle and drudge and pay. A blacker story has seldom been told. No wonder all the cocks of Jersey are crowing, all the bulls of Jersey bellying, continuously."

Although I have been a persistent reader of *The Times* for twenty years, I have never before known it to rush with such bitter irony to the rescue of a Republican candidate.

Further quotations, not so striking, might be given from the columns of the *Baltimore Sun* and other Democratic journals. Why, then, if prohibition is not the explanation, are they so ardent in their championship of a Republican's candidacy? The explanation lies, I venture to assert, in the fact that Mr. Morrow is a former partner in the banking house of J. P. Morgan and Company, and is still on intimate terms with Wall Street magnates. He did not resign his official connections there until 1927.

This is not intended to belittle the preoccupation of metropolitan dailies generally with the wet cause. Their bias in this respect is not due so much to the attitude of many captains of industry—although they are of lesser stature financially than John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Henry Ford, who are dry—as to the fact that urban audiences are preponderantly wet. Thus, when the Senate Lobby Committee procured correspondence regarding the speculations of Bishop James Cannon, Jr., through a New York bucket-shop, it was not surprising to find big newspapers devoting from three to nine columns to the story, and reprinting much of the private letters—the Senate committee would not put them into its record, but gave them to the press—inasmuch as the Bishop is a prohibition mogul. The story had the added value, from the newspaper standpoint, that it revealed the gulf between the prelate's professions and his practices. It is an editorial truism that the public always gloats over the discovery of a flaw in a vessel of the Lord.

Prejudice against prohibition is manifested in the press by the overplay of un-

important but sensational casualties of enforcement. The larger issues of personal liberty and State rights receive but little attention.

Another and final example of the manner in which finance and politics combine to sway news reports and editorial comment was to be found in the delay of Senators Grundy and Reed of Pennsylvania in making known their attitude toward the tariff bill. No discerning Washington correspondent, I am assured, was deceived for a moment by the posturing of these two high protectionists over a bill imposing the highest rates in our history; certainly Elliott Thurston of *The World's* Washington bureau was never in doubt, and did not leave his readers in doubt. But the "mystery" as to where the two men would stand had good selling points, from the journalistic view: It emphasized the faults in the bill, which even Republican newspapers opposed; and it had the priceless quality of suspense, which always excites those who are susceptible of newspaper practices. Thus nearly all our metropolitan dailies professed, to the very hour of speeches by Senators Grundy and Reed, to be totally in the dark about the forthcoming position of two Republican Senators from an unshaken and impregnable citadel of high tariffs—one of them, Mr. Reed, the acknowledged spokesman on the floor for Secretary Mellon—even though *The World* had been saying for days, not as a conjecture but as a fact, that the two would vote for the measure.

Newspapers have even undertaken to censor one another, as when they burst forth with pharisaical piety against the misdemeanors of the Hearst chain. *The Herald Tribune* turned its guns against its fellows in both parties when the tariff bill was passed, vowing that even "reputable newspapers" were guilty of lack of

"vigilance in respect to the segregation of news and editorial opinion" because they combined the stories about Mr. Hoover's signing of the "Grundy" tariff bill and the concurrent relapse of the stock-market. This, *The Herald Tribune* said, was a "regrettable and none too subtle practice."

To which the rock-ribbed Republican *Evening Post* retorted:

"It would not be at all criticisable to connect the two were they actually connected in fact or in the belief of Wall Street. If they are so connected it seems to us bad ethics to separate them *for political ends*; just as bad as it would be to connect them *for political ends* were they not connected in fact.

"It doubtless would interest the *Herald Tribune* to know that it has itself been under criticism in newspaper offices for its ostentatious separation of tariff and stock market. In our judgment, if it so believes, it is entirely justified in making the separation, but it is not justified in impugning the motives of newspapers (of which the *Post* is one) which made the combination in the belief of its actual existence."

II

Not only do our newspapers share the interests and purposes of Big Business; they ape its methods. This is indicated by mergers, chains, standardization, and mass production from a cheap and ephemeral material, with which we need not deal here, and by selling methods. It is the common belief of newspaper owners and editors that emotional patterns of news bring more customers than patterns which are informative and mentally exciting. Every publication manifests a voluntary censorship, of course, in the selection and display of its context. What interests *The American Mercury*, for example, would not be likely to interest

SCRIBNER'S or *The Yale Review*—if it is not bad taste to name names in the magazine field. But in the case of newspapers, which are more directly charged with a public interest—which are public utilities, that is to say, and function under the explicit protection of the Constitution—complaint may justly be lodged against them if their censorship results in a disproportionate view of the world they are supposed to mirror.

Let us take a current example, and turn again to the *New York Times*, because it is this country's premier newspaper and presents, according to its own advertisements, the best balanced and most competent news reports; I myself do not know of any other journal anywhere which offers such volume and variety. On June 11 *The Times* printed a special despatch about a treaty of friendship which ended "one hundred years of armed enmity" between Greece and Turkey. Excepting the treaty of Lausanne, we were informed, the only covenant both countries had signed in years was that ending the Balkan War of 1912-13; and it was further stated, in an Associated Press despatch, that the Turkish press hailed the treaty "as making the Turkish horizon more peaceful than it had been for six centuries." On the following day, in an editorial, *The Times* declared: "A friendly accord between Greece and Turkey makes all other international reconciliations seem possible, for one would have said that this 'pact of friendship' was the least likely to be achieved."

To this news event, of authentic international significance (since the Balkans are traditionally the powder-magazine of Europe), *The Times* gave fourteen column inches on page 13. On the same day, in its sport pages, it gave sixty-eight column inches to an approaching encounter between two second-rate pug-

lists. Nothing had happened. The prospect of a fight between two obscure bruisers was worth, in the judgment of that daily's editors, six times as much space as a compact between two European powers.

In other journals the disparity was even more marked. I need cite but two. *The Herald Tribune* gave but four inches to the treaty; *The Evening World* that day gave nothing, but devoted 160 inches to the forthcoming prize-fight—eight columns of sound and fury—with an eight-column banner to rivet the reader's attention.

According to the conventions of news, of which I have spoken, conflict is always better-selling stuff than mere amity, which does not excite the mob; and the inflation of coming fistic exchanges, to whet an artificial appetite and so create a bigger market for the paper after the event, is an established newspaper practice. Plainly it is a matter of salesmanship and showmanship. A fair question may be asked, however, as to whether college undergraduates and high-school students, noting the difference of display given here to an international treaty and a mere future sporting event, might not have been somewhat confused as to values.

Not only do the conventions of news salesmanship produce lopsided reports such as this; they result in the ignoring of large areas of public interest. Where in the newspapers, for example, will we find anything about the better side, conceding that there is a better side, of the Younger Generation? Henrietta Ad-dington of New York came to its defense, for instance, at a National Social Conference in Boston. She vowed that instead of being a restless, cigarette-smoking, cocktail-drinking and somewhat unmoral person, as portrayed in motion-pictures and the press, the girl of

to-day was a surprisingly sane individual. This statement she based on questionnaires submitted to 1,800 Brooklyn girls. Her speech, if noted at all in the newspapers, so far as my examination went, got no more than a paragraph in the latter part of the report. The suggestion of Miss Miriam Van Waters, president of the National Conference of Social Service, that children be permitted to read Rabelais, was good for head-lines and a lengthy account. What she was pleading for was robust literature. Cervantes, Rabelais and Voltaire, she said, "furnish the soul with the strong food it needs." How much better calculated to shock the reader, this considered proposal that the young be permitted to read Rabelaisian jokes, than a mild corrective of the newspaper picture of pocket-flasks and "necking"! The shocker, not the corrective, got the head-lines because it gave promise of selling more papers, or of binding the reader more closely as a customer.

"Editors spending additional millions every year for information from an ever-widening range," says *Editor and Publisher*, that penetrating and outspoken magazine of the craft, "have deepened the river of news without widening its banks." This is to say, in effect, that the stereotypes formulated by the elder James Gordon Bennett remain unchanged, which is true. So rigidly does the press cling to them that it has refused to cast new moulds for the new life unfolding around us. Lee A. White told the Inland Daily Press Association not long ago that conservation of natural resources was big news when Theodore Roosevelt wielded the Big Stick; he wanted to know why it wasn't news any longer. The answer was patent: conservation is no longer advocated by a picturesque and forceful personality amid the turbulence of political plots, such as

might engage the attention even of fourteen-year-old minds.

Mr. White thought that the mechanization of industry was too much ignored by the press, but on this point I cannot quite agree with him. Our newspapers tell us pretty fully about new inventions and new conquests of physical forces, when they are novel, startling, and congruous with superlatives. What they do not tell us is the origin of the evils which have arisen during the Machine Age. One does not learn from them that the mental attitudes both of capitalists and of workers were as fully responsible for untoward conditions as the material displacements and social maladjustments; nor do they tell us that processes were often hurried forward, and are now being driven on, ruthlessly in many instances, in others without due thought of the human factors involved. The press has believed it more profitable to display the obvious and emotionally exciting, without bothering itself as to causes.

Business outside Wall Street's active participation, and agricultural problems outside Congressional mouthings, politics in its graver and institutional aspects, and vital controversial subjects one side of which are distinctly unpopular, are other neglected areas of news and editorial comment. Large areas of educational news are minimized or ignored, although many dailies give space to reports about school and college activities. Doctor Belmont Mercer Farley of Teachers College, Columbia University, questioned more than 5,000 persons interested as parents or otherwise in education, including the school-board presidents of thirty States, and residents of thirteen cities. His findings as to what they thought of newspaper educational departments and "spot" news may be summarized as follows:

On analysis of nearly 40,000 column

inches of newspaper space, in relation to what the public wanted to read, Doctor Farley found that extracurricular activities, last in interest to the readers he questioned, occupied 47 per cent of the space, ranking first, whereas readers put them last in thirteen categories. The six classifications standing at the head received a total of less than one-fourth of the space. Editors, he concluded, were "over-emphasizing the time devoted to what many people call 'fads and frills,' without properly informing the public of what the school courses consist, what results are achieved, and what is being done for the physical welfare of the children. Such neglect of the use of the strongest interest appeals must be held due only to a faulty conception of the relative strength of the interest appeals in the various topics of school news."

Here we have a specific and statistical instance of what I have more than once contended, that the press of the United States does not give the public what it wants. The stereotype censorship works against reader interest. As to the other areas of news, it is useless to contend that the newspaper readers of this country are not intellectually and culturally prepared for news of such character. It is useless to say this so long as the experiment remains untested, and it has never been tested by a major newspaper property in this country. *The Christian Science Monitor*, it is true, has fashioned for itself some fresh moulds, interesting even to the casual reader; but *The Monitor* is of minor circulation among big-city papers, it is subsidized by a church, and it exercises over its columns a severer censorship than most journals. Depending upon it alone for a picture of the world, one might suppose that there was no crime, no scandal nor divorce, no tea, coffee nor tobacco. Yet it must be said that as between *The Moni-*

tor's censorship and that exercised by a Hearst daily, intelligent persons are likely to prefer *The Monitor*.

III

Vigilantly censoring their own columns in the ways I have indicated, our dailies are often loud in protest at interference through judicial, legislative, executive and other channels. It is true that the Delaware press has not manifested the courage to take to the Supreme Court a protest against the statute forbidding publication in that State of divorce proceedings; but the Minnesota law depriving newspaper editors of trial by jury and setting up a censorship by injunction has stirred up a deal of pother; the action of Texas prosecutors and jurists in demanding the suppression of criminal news has been widely denounced; and the action of Judge F. P. Walther in sentencing two editors of the *Cleveland Press* to \$500 fines and thirty days in jail for criticising him—sentences subsequently reversed by the Ohio Appellate Court—was roundly upbraided. In that case Judge Walther acted as complainant, jury, and judge. Robert R. McCormick, part owner of the *Chicago Tribune* and the tabloid *Daily News* in New York, two of the biggest, vulgarest, and most sensational papers tolerated in this country, said of the Ohio case:

"It would take many words to outline the various ways in which representatives of predatory industries and hypocritical reformers have developed the process of contempt of court in order to void the civic rights guarantees of the State and Federal constitutions.

"By statute and by judicial decision we have been rapidly approaching the point where the Constitution furnished no protection against the rapacity of ex-

ploiters and the tyranny of organized minorities."

This was the tone generally of editorial comment and of statements by newspaper editors. Yet when Harry F. Sinclair was serving a ninety-day sentence in Washington for contempt of court, the multimillionaire oil operator was protected from newspaper reporters, and the press found no recourse. Senator Heflin of Alabama, who customarily refers to the Washington correspondents as "squirrel heads," said on the floor: "The press will not be permitted to go to his cell and write about him, but a poor boy would have no such protection." The newspapers, however, took their medicine, just as they did when their reporters and photographers were barred by the Mayor of Englewood, N. J., even from congregating near the home of Dwight W. Morrow before Miss Morrow's marriage to Colonel Charles Lindbergh. And Secretary of State Stimson, who did not hesitate to censor at the source the news developing during the London Conference, did not hesitate, either, to issue a public rebuke to the *Washington Post* on account of an editorial which displeased him.

The system of propaganda and suppression which prevails at Washington should be too familiar by now to require recapitulation here. The Postmaster-General exercises an arbitrary censorship after publication, and may exercise that power as drastically in time of peace as in war, to judge by the Supreme Court decision in the case of the *Philadelphia Tageblatt*. Herbert Hoover, during his pre-inauguration good-will trip to South America, arranged, or permitted others to arrange, that all news despatches sent from the battle-ship on which he travelled should be censored, and Calvin Coolidge, when President, thrice said publicly that no paper had

the right to criticise unfavorably his foreign policy.

Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan, former editor of the Grand Rapids *Herald*, has introduced a bill which would define and limit the rights of judges in cases of indirect contempt, and has promise of the support of Senator Arthur Capper, publisher of a group of newspapers and farm magazines, as well as of Senator Henry J. Allen of Kansas, former editor of the Wichita *Beacon*. Whether the attempt to stem the tide of censorship by legislative fiat can succeed is extremely doubtful. The press itself, as we have seen, is not in an invulnerable position as to censorship on its own initiative.

The objections to censorship, even when self-imposed, and even when the processes of selection and display result in warping news, are obvious. Harold J. Laski, commenting on the process of journalistic selection, has said that the President of this country "is only too often the product of a series of accidents in which what is most important is not his possession of quality or of ideas, but public ignorance about him." The press keeps us in ignorance of many useful facts, while befouling its pages with murders, scandals, night-club hostesses and the filth of the courts, and belittling itself with trivia. Doctor John W. Cunliffe, director of the Pulitzer School of Journalism, has proposed formally that it be left to the discretion of judges sitting in cases, what testimony shall be published, rather than to the sensation-hungry reporter. The "duty of selection," he says, is of great importance to "the profession of journalism."

Louis I. Jaffe, editor of the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, holds that the press should "subject to new and critical scrutiny the seductive doctrine that it is the paramount duty of the newspaper to

give the public what it wants. It ought to be the ambition of a press conscious of its highest mission to give the public not what is relished and smirked over by its readers of lowest mentality, but what is enjoyed and welcomed by those of its readers who represent a degree of intelligence and discrimination that is above the average. . . .

"The same cult of shoddiness that is vulgarizing our news and feature pages is extending its influence to our editorial pages, and breeding a race of commentators who specialize on Mother's Day and the natal anniversaries of Washington, Lincoln and Lee; and who, during political campaigns, strike out vigorously for the candidates of the party to which the paper yields allegiance, but who avoid as dangerous or indelicate the formation of focussed, unequivocal news of issues concerning which their mass circulations are sharply divided."

Editors of Mr. Jaffe's stripe may be found more often in the South, I have observed, than in the eastern and western cities. They are rare enough. The Chattanooga *News* announced in advance of a sensational and nasty murder trial that it would print no salacious details, and stuck to the announcement. Newspapers subject to severer competition are sometimes unable to do things of this sort even if they would. They must torture and censor their news columns in accordance with the standards of Big Business and in consonance with outworn news patterns. "You," said Demosthenes to his rival Æschines, "make them say, 'How well he speaks!' I make them say, 'Let us march against Philip.'" The *News* editor makes them say, "How interesting, how thrilling, how risqué!" He seldom attempts to make them march against official malfeasance or social evil.

*A story by the author of
"The Wave"*

The Lover

BY EVELYN SCOTT

EFFIE, sitting by her window, trying to relax in this most peaceful hour of day, said to herself that the delicate riot of the bed of phlox, just behind her, satisfied her affection for color, merely—blocks, masses, misty bulk—and confirmed the judgment of her Fred had made when he had said that she cared nothing for form and proportion. *When* would she leave off feeling? At fifty-three, she ought to be able to find some interest more congruous with the prospect of a solitary old age than was expressed by pottering in her lavish, overburdened garden. The neighbors told her that she kept remarkably young. Probably that was only the confirmation of the childishness she had always abused in herself. She was ashamed that it had appeared to survive sorrow and bereavement. The abundant desire to please her friends, she still retained; though perhaps that ceaseless pursuit of ecstasies—distrusted by Fred when he had quoted to her, "Love me little, love me long, is the burden of my song"—was modified. She hoped so. No ravishing youth excused it now, when she would look into her mirror—how she hated that mirror—and was faced by a slightness that would soon be scrawny, and by the indefinite coloring of a blonde just going gray.

Why was it she had always seemed to herself to be guiltily demanding something of Fred, when her whole intention toward him really had been unselfish? She never had been able to make him understand that she really *did* set him on a pedestal away above her, and would have been glad to put herself under his feet for any use he could make of her. He had often been vexed with her too-worshipping attitude because he had thought it false; and never had been able, with his natural reticence and modesty about himself, to see exactly what it did mean to a woman of her timidity and openness to hurt, to know that he cared more for her than for anything else in the world. She had been so grateful that Fred allowed her to do for him. He couldn't well avoid it in his invalid state; that he had struggled against without becoming embittered—which she admired more than anything on earth. She had had her own taste of being ill, and dependent, and, as it were, condescended to by everybody during those awful years of her teens. But Fred was such a marvellous person that poor indeed would have been the spirit of the woman who could have looked only at his deformity without appraising the soul within, and that mighty intellect that was so little appreciated even yet.