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NEWSPAPERS excite curiosity. Everyone lays hold on the paper with eagerness while the ink is still wet; no one puts it aside without a feeling of disappointment. Everything that one wants is never in it. There seems to be a great deal about something someone else may be interested in, and not enough about one's own pet interests.

The newspaper is up to the minute. Editors think in terms of today, with a fleeting glance at tomorrow, but never of yesterday except as a sketchy background. It is a wonder that out of all the scurrying around newsmen must do, we obtain as much benefit as we do from the newspaper press. To give us this service requires, as Lord Hewart put it: "amazing ability, diligence, care and learning, wit, humour, skill, versatility, dutifulness, courage and sheer hard work."

Most persons in cities think of dailies when newspapers are mentioned, but there are nearly 1½ million persons in Canada who subscribe to 750 weeklies. These weekly newspapers, which move at a slower and more sedate pace than the dailies, make up an important part of community life. They print items about residents and about local events; like their subscribers, they say "hello" to everybody.

Whether it is a weekly or a daily, the newspaper is made by men who are much alike. Editors have been described as cub reporters who have grown up and settled down. They have overcome their urge to participate in every event, to ride on the fire reels and mix with the police in tracking criminals. Their new duty is to see the whole show, and to do that they must stay in their seats. The great editors are not speech-making crusaders, but people who know how to get the news, get it right, get it first, get it into print, and comment on it intelligently.

Before discussing what they put into their newspapers, it would be well to make a courtesy reference to the business departments. Circulations have increased greatly in recent years, indicating that editorial departments are filling a public need in their presentation of news and views.

Circulation and Advertising

In February this year the President of the Canadian Daily Newspapers Association said combined circulation of Canadian dailies had reached a total of 2,860,000, actually higher than the number of families in the Dominion. This was an increase of 733,000 since 1938.

Advertising departments, too, report themselves in healthy condition. Total expenditures by Canada's 100 biggest advertisers in 1946 in 90 dailies, 4 week-end papers, 15 magazines and 14 farm papers, amounted to \$13.3 million, an increase of 8.4 per cent over 1945, according to the magazine Marketing.

This may be the place to comment on a statement sometimes heard to the effect that advertisers "support" newspapers. Advertising is a business, and the support is not a subsidy, but payment for a service. "That is why", said the New York Times editorially, "there is so little point or truth in most accusations that newspapers are 'dominated' by the political views of their advertisers. A paper's advertisers, like its readers, are a numerous and heterogeneous group, of many diverse opinions. The newspaper has no way of knowing what the political and economic views of its advertisers are."

All kinds of people buy newspapers, people of all ages, creeds, callings and tastes. **The Editor Has Problems** They bring to bear upon the editor varying amounts of suggestion, advice and demands. It takes just as much courage for an editor to start publishing a new feature today as it did to start Daniel Defoe's revolutionary "Robinson Crusoe" as a 165-week serial in the Saturday Post 200 years ago. But that is nothing compared with the courage needed to *discard* a feature. Crossword puzzles show a readership value of only 8 to 12 per cent, but editors have given up attempts to drop them because the complaining letters from a vocal minority carry greater weight than any statistical survey.

Editors are always short of space. They have to be drastic about cutting down some things in order to give representation to many things, though sponsors or writers of the mutilated articles may cry to high

heaven against the sacrilege. As Philip Gibbs made one of his characters say in "Street of Adventure": "If there was an earthquake at Tooting Bec, and if all the animals at the zoo broke loose and dined off the population round Regent's Park, you can't get more than 56 columns in an 8-page paper. That's simple arithmetic."

A complaint heard now and then is that the quantity of advertising over-shadows the space given to news and features. An examination of two weeks' issues of newspapers published in Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax and Calgary shows the recent average to be pretty nearly the standard of many years: 42 per cent news to 58 per cent advertising. The accepted proportion, according to the textbooks, was 40 per cent news and 60 per cent advertising.

To squeeze into this limited space a selection of news and features that will be of service to his readers, the news editor needs a particularly well developed ability to go outside himself. In the course of a day he handles a great mass of copy that insofar as he is personally concerned is absolutely dead. He must, therefore, project himself into the place of his readers, decide what they wish to hear about, know what they are talking about, and weigh the relative importance of this and that desire.

Editors know they can't satisfy everyone. Away back in 51 B.C. Cicero complained that his professional news correspondent was giving him too much of sporting events and not enough about the political situation. People seem, as a rule, to prefer reading about a dog fight on their own street rather than about a war in the Gran Chaco. The day Mussolini became dictator of Italy, the news was crowded off United States front pages by the Halls Mills murder case. When Dempsey knocked out Firpo that was all the Spanish news America could stand, and it eclipsed the military coup in Spain under Primo de Rivera. The assassination of the Austrian Archduke, which set alight the first world war, was given only an inch space in most newspapers. "Interesting" news, which probably means news that touches their personal lives or experiences or knowledge, attracts the mass audience, while, regrettable as it may appear in this enlightened age, the merely important is addressed to small publics.

In view of the necessity of having an adequate news supply from which to select what the editor thinks will best fill the needs of his readers, it is essential that a newspaper should have good sources. All newspapers have their own reporters, some of whom cover general "beats" while others specialize in sports, municipal affairs, courts, and social events. In addition, practically all daily newspapers and many weeklies take a service from The Canadian Press, a co-operative enterprise organized about 30 years ago. Its General Manager, Gillis Purcell, wrote for this survey:

The Canadian Press

"Canadian newspapers present a news-picture of the world as complete as that presented in any country. In many ways, it is more accurately drawn.

"If you regard as the ideal a paper like The Times in London or the New York Times, Canadian newspapers as a whole rank closer to this conception than do newspapers generally in the United Kingdom or the United States. You find the news of the world reported broadly, objectively and fully in virtually every Canadian daily, large or small.

"News is handled 'straight' in virtually every case; editorial comment goes in the editorial columns. With no comparable concentrations of population, Canada hasn't the million-and-more-circulation papers whose news-handling in New York and London is aimed solely at circulation and opinion-making.

"In the Canadian West, there is no tendency to ditch world news as there is generally — with the exception of half-a-dozen outstanding papers — in the United States Middle West and West. Nor is there the concentration on local news that marks so many of the British provincial papers.

"It's the nature of the country and its people that makes Canada's papers so fair and open of mind in handling news. The country is small enough in point of population to have to look out on the world. Its people have learned to be friends of great nations sometimes not too friendly with one another.

"In its exchange of Canadian news across the Dominion, The Canadian Press has been one of the great factors in building national unity. But CP's balanced objectivity in handling world news is primarily a reflection of the nature of the Canadian people."

Foreign news is particularly important in these days when so much that happens at home is linked in some way with far-off events: There can be no One World, no effective United Nations, no final guarantee of peace, said the New York Times recently, until all the peoples of the earth have access to all the news they need. A programme was brought forward in May as an objective for the International Conference on Freedom of Information: to facilitate the gathering and transmission of news, to implement the right of all persons and peoples to accurate, comprehensive and representative information, to provide for organization in all principal news centres of a foreign correspondents' corps with strict, self-administered codes of ethics, and to provide continuing machinery to promote the free flow of true information.

This last provision is important. It may be said that in order to attract the maximum audience the press emphasizes the exceptional rather than the representative, the dramatic rather than the significant; but increasing attention needs to be paid to seeing that the resulting picture is true. More people today than ever before are interested in knowing not

only what is happening, but why it is happening. Newspapers aware of this trend have been attempting to provide interpretative material along with the news.

Such intelligent reporting should not be confused with editorializing. Every important paper has editorial writers to comment on the news. There was an ancient rule that the news columns should contain positively no editorializing, but this, particularly in regard to political matters, is not universally observed.

There are remarkable differences between the number of persons reading editorials in one paper and those reading editorials in another. An investigation reported in Mercury magazine said that out of 72 newspapers surveyed, the lowest editorial-readership score was 17 per cent men and 9 per cent women, while the newspaper with the highest score had as editorial readers 73 per cent men and 51 per cent women. The moral seems to be that editorial pages which offer genuinely worthwhile fare need not worry about reader appetite.

Editorial writers, like news editors, are up against the problem of selection of topics and treatment. Readers are no longer satisfied with Jovian thunder unless it is accompanied by some illumination. The editorial writer with a sense of responsibility will try to give his readers a balanced presentation of basic facts, suggest alternatives, tell the purposes of proposed action, and illuminate the whole matter by his skillful thought and observation. Merely to make statements, however portentous, is to be as ineffective in moving the public as was the little girl who reported to her teacher: "I told my brother that when you die you cannot breathe and he did not say a word. He just kept on playing."

When thundering is indulged in it must be sincere. A neutral policy on important public issues, a middle-of-the-road course: these are safest but hardly stimulating. On the other hand, editorial pages which fulminate on international affairs and things of long ago and far away, fearlessly attacking man-eating sharks while ignoring local breaches of peace, order and good government, these are not giving satisfaction to thinking readers. Saturday Night (which asks editorially that people who quote it should not call it "The Saturday Night" or "Toronto Saturday Night" but just "Saturday Night") had an article in June a year ago which remarked: "The politicians could do a much better job if the papers did their own job properly, instead of taking a strong stand on everything on which they are sure that all their readers agree with them, and saying nothing about all the questions on which there is disagreement and uncertainty."

To find out what Canadian editorial writers believe is good for their readers, we made an analysis of two weeks' editorials in each of six daily newspapers. Of the 305 editorials examined, there were 94 on inter-

national topics; 76 on national; 22 on provincial and 24 on municipal subjects. The balance was made up of welfare, health and social subjects 22; economics and labour 27; obituaries, congratulations, and other personal references 21; religion 5; comments on science 2, and odds-and-ends 12.

There are several points on which newspapers are criticized. Criticism is a good thing. As was remarked in an article in the Montreal Gazette this spring: "Serious, searching and regular criticism of the press is the ultimate safeguard of its freedom. The lack of it deprives the press itself of the benefits of the very principle of which the press is, in relation to everything else, the chief exponent."

Probably the charge most often heard is that the press is sensational. Reporters on a good story are reluctant to prick the bubble that reflects the world in brilliant colours and turn it to a little soap and water. Editors know that their circulation is largely determined by the brightness of their copy; some persons mistake this brightness for sensationalism. There are editors, of course, who lapse into catch-penny huckstering, but it must be admitted there are not many such in Canada.

Canadian papers are not, as a rule, given to exaggeration, though they do sometimes slip into gibberish about miracle drugs and electronic brains. Bad popularizing of scientific subjects may do great harm, not alone by giving wrong information but by destroying faith in the newspapers which print it. Readers should bear in mind that most popularizers are writing to sell, and are not, as a general rule, principally exercised about spreading good. Their statements and judgments, particularly in health matters, should be checked with a professional man.

A criticism levelled against some newspapers is that they are organs of "propaganda." Propaganda is anything you read that makes you feel some action should be taken, and it would be a poor news sheet whose articles and editorials never gave that feeling. The kind of propaganda to beware of is the insidious kind that is more often met with in "organs of opinion" than in Canadian newspapers—the kind that uses "colour" or "weasel" words, mostly adjectives such as "ruthless, confused, bureaucratic, grasping." It would be well, when you come upon an article loaded with adjectives, to go back and read it with the adjectives left out, in order to make an unbiased judgment.

Another criticism, one that is too widely merited for comfort, is that newspapers colour reports, particularly of political events and speeches. Some of us are prompted to inquire whether newspapers have kept up with the broadening education they have had so large a part in making available to the public. This education has taught people to think for themselves, to recognize that there are at least two sides to every story, and to suspect oracles. Yet some

newspapers continue to spoon-feed their readers. They attempt to lead them, openly as in editorials or by subtlety in coloured articles (or, as newspapermen call them, articles that are "slanted" or have particular "angles" played up).

Newspapers should, in their own interests, be their own chief critics, because it is an inescapable fact that if they fail in self-control and come to regard freedom of the press as license, the time will come when the public will demand outside control. Then, should the government be persuaded to step in to control the newspapers, our chief guard against totalitarianism would be lost. The newspapers in Canada must realize their responsibility to protect freedom, and that they can do their part by avoiding error, bias, carelessness, prejudice, and false colour. As F. I. Ker said in his address as President of The Canadian Press last April: "The press holds a mirror to the happenings of the day. Unless the mirror is as flawless as it is humanly possible to make it, its reflections will be distorted. When distortion occurs in one newspaper, The Canadian Press and all who print its news may suffer."

Censorship of the press is not an immediate menace in Canada. Outside the democracies the coverage of news is much less complete than it is in this country.

Whole populations are denied news, while such newspapers as there are obey governmental dictates by publishing only material which will further the government's aims. As Herbert Brucker, widely-experienced newspaperman and a professor at Columbia, puts it: "This public-opinion technique of . . . trying to make the real world conform to an artificial mental one, is an inherent part of the totalitarian method. The results in terms of the wreckage of things past now strewn about the world, indicate that the method is effective, *in its way*."

That way is a way of destruction, the suicide of personal freedom, and the smothering of intelligent thought. Canada has no peace-time censorship, puts no embargo on the import or export of news, and does not tell editors what to print, what opinions to express, what "causes" to support. The policy of public criticism is understood and accepted. Such criticism as there was of the Hong Kong or Dieppe expeditions could never have been made in dictator countries.

Few safeguards of public welfare have been more hardly won, says Wickham Steed, than freedom of the press. Where men cannot without fear convey their thoughts to one another, no other liberty is secure. A free press must be free from compulsions from any source, governmental or social. As Milton pointed out in his great plea for freedom to publish: it is impossible to determine whose judgment shall decide what is good or worthy for the public to read. Only public support can be accepted as a safe criterion: the unworthy publications will find few readers who derive benefit from them and will soon cease to exist.

Canadian newspapers are in the fight for world-wide freedom of news, and all political leaders in Canada have expressed approval of the movement. George V. Ferguson, editor of the Montreal Star, has been elected a member of the Freedom of Information Subcommittee of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The need for this commission is a warning against the complacency with which Canadians accept their freedoms. Practically all countries now entangled in the web of controlled information were once free from it, and had the feeling: "it can't happen here."

Freedom of speech and of the press are not ends in themselves. They merely enable people to express freely their thoughts on events so as to bring forth the best possible decision out of all shades of opinion. In other words, this is not merely "freedom from" but "freedom for." A person may cause evil not only by his actions but by his inactions. As Andrew Hamilton said at the trial of a printer in New York away back in 1735: ". . . I beg leave to lay it down as a rule that the *suppressing* of evidence ought to be taken for the *strongest* evidence." Knowledge and civilization are advanced by positive actions, not by merely refraining from other actions, or by retaining unquestioningly the existing state of things. Newspapers need to use fully the freedom that is theirs. They need to keep on challenging the sacred cows which occasionally stand in the streets blocking progress.

Besides rights, the newspaper has duties. It must be independent. It cannot serve the public which supports it if it is the tail to anyone's kite. To be independent it must stand on its own feet, earning a profit without subsidies. It should be regarded as a major transgression of ethics and good taste to communicate with the editorial department through the business department.

The newspaper needs to take a long view. A policy which gains circulation this year by means which tend to weaken the newspaper as an institution is a bad policy.

The newspaper must be fair. Perhaps absolute fairness is too much to expect of ordinary mortals doing their day's work, but the newspaper can avoid intentional partiality.

The newspaper must be decent, not only in the language and pictures it uses, but in the way it goes about obtaining its news. There are situations occurring in human life into which no newspaper can decently justify intrusion.

Current pessimism about the press should not be over-estimated. There has been similar pessimism in the past. If reforms are needed, they will not be shaped by legislation, except with the destruction of values civilization needs. They can be brought about by public opinion which supports the right kind of newspaper and makes its wishes known to publishers and editors.