

V Top

see also Ch. IV distressed depressed

The lack of credibility of the press deeply surfaced alarmingly and ~~depressed~~ ^{depressed} Mark in the middle thirties as it still does in the late seventies. ~~He considered it~~ ^{Mark.} ~~It was then and is now of the gravest importance.~~ However, he wasn't the only publisher aware of the danger; just one of the most outspoken.

update?

Roosevelt's victory over Alfred Landon for a second term in the White House in 1936 had sorely shaken newspapermen's confidence. Landon's dismal defeat ^{he} had carried only two states, Maine and Vermont (which, incidentally, led Roosevelt to paraphrase the old axiom, "as goes Maine ^{so} goes the nation" to "as goes Maine, ^{so} goes Vermont" ^{shattered} newspapermen's complacency. Between 80 and 90 percent of the press had ^{supported Landon} gone all-out, in some instances hysterically, ^{so his defeat} for Landon, ^{exploding} the legend of the invincibility of a candidate supported by a majority of newspapers.

no?

sp?

"What had happened to the influence they once had had?" editors and publishers were asking themselves.

"Where was the power they formerly enjoyed?" ^{in a} speech Mark made to the Georgia Press Association ^{in December, 1936} at Emory University, he pointed out this state of questioning, of unsureness, ^{saying;} "American newspapermen are now in a mood in which I have not seen them in my twenty-five years in newspaper work," ^{he said;}

See where? h. 174

178

"a mood of self-analysis, in which they are endeavoring to determine how much influence, how much prestige they have left. No trade publication that represents any branch of newspaper undertaking is without solemn analysis these days. The answers so far range from flat denial that the press has been singled in any way to the ^{dec.} ~~con.~~ declaration that the election itself was a rebuke to the 'arrogance, tyranny, greed, and scorn of fair play' of the majority of newspapers."

The press shouldn't have been too shocked at the public's lack of faith, Mark said. As early as April of that election year, Arthur Hays Sulzberger Sr., then publisher of The New York Times, told the American Newspaper Publishers Association:

"There is in my estimation a growing disposition on the part of the public to view with skepticism that which they read in their newspapers and to distrust newspaper motives. I detect certain doubts as to the accuracy of reporting... there is discernible a feeling among a considerable group of readers that the personal interests of publishers are often put ahead of public service....The failure to keep editorial opinion out of the news columns and, closely akin to it, the failure to present adequately

4.11.17
 OK
 kept?
 cap T?

both sides of most questions, are matters of growing concern."

Told the Georgia Press Association,

"In spite of that warning," Mark ~~said~~, "the campaign through which we have recently passed showed the American press, I think, at its worst. There are, of course, and there always will be, exceptions....But it is true as a whole that newspapers were never so unfaithful to their trust to present unbiased news, with editorial guidance free from selfish interest, as they were in this campaign. So great was the bitterness, so great the hatred toward the President, that there was disgraceful breaking out of bounds of the news columns to belabor him. One Chicago newspaper became so hysterical in its venom and so forgetful of the obligations of a free press, whose chief defender it pretends to be, as to have its telephone operators say to all who called, on whatever business, 'Good morning, you have five or twenty or thirteen days to save America.'

"...[✓]newspapers on both sides[†] and again with notable exceptions[†] abdicated their sense of decency and their sense of responsibility to the public....

"To me, the campaign and its climax, the election, ^{were} ~~was~~ a sad and mournful exhibition of a previously

~~wire~~
Told the Georgia Press Association
O.K. →
6/11/78
~~hand~~

✓
ncap?
were?

were?
?

172 137

trusted and admired friend.... However, it was
the logical denouement of a trend that started in
the last century and that now manifests itself in so many
many ways as to give publishers real concern."

~~Then Mark briefly traced this trend.~~ [Until
the latter part of the last century, making a
paper was more or less a simple affair, ^{Mark} he explained.
Before that were the days of personal journalism,
but they were also days of very simple business and
mechanical structures. Papers were small because
they were hand-set; their wire news services were
little because there was manual transmission. Their
press capacities were exceedingly limited. They
did not have pictures and cartoons ^{on} and anything
approaching the scale they had by 1936, for the
processes of making them had not been devised. The
very limitations under which ~~the~~ newspapermen of
the early days labored tended to place the emphasis
of the entire newspaper upon its editorial and news
content.

The revolution wrought by the almost complete
mechanization of newspapers and the economic forces
and changes that had accompanied mechanization of
all industry and living conditions generally had
tended strongly to diminish that emphasis. ^{In addition,} Also,

✓
what is it?

it had completely transformed the ^{newspaper} business from
 one in which, ^{with} a small outlay of money, a man with
 a brain might establish his own newspaper. All
 this machinery, all the pressure to keep up with the
 procession, ~~had made the newspaper business one that~~
 required vast outlays of capital, ^{and} ~~it had~~ resulted
 in the introduction into newspaper ownership ^{of} men
 who ~~have~~ ^{had} only a genius for business. ^{Such} ~~These~~ business-
 minded men ~~had, and still have~~ many outside
 interests that distract ~~ed~~ them from their papers
 and their readers.

see
200

times
her?
petition
2 - and
will
fact -
large
dominate
some
of
the

It was perfectly natural that they should have
 been led into such obviously selfish measures as
 demanding special reservations for themselves under
 the NRA code, opposing the child-labor amendment
 because it affected their newsboys, even to adopting
 a resolution ^{about it} in the American Newspaper Publishers
 Association; ~~about it~~; opposing measures in Congress
 to safeguard the health of their readers because
 they feared such measures would tend to reduce
 their advertising revenues.

X

"What I propose for American newspaper publishers,"
 Mark said, "is a pilgrimage to Canossa with the people,
 rather than the pope, receiving their penance. That
 involves, in the future, putting as much emphasis on

1/4 -
reduces
how?
why?

2
suppl-
ence?

editorial content as they have put upon business in the past three decades. That involves printing better newspapers, fairer newspapers, more intelligent newspapers. It involves deliberate and sincere effort to win back the confidence they have lost; to shake off the superficiality that has become the hallmark of most American journals, and to become once again dignified, enlightened journals of interpretation, information, and opinion. ✓

"And ^{this} ~~that~~ very obviously presupposes better-
 educated material for the news staff, better-paid
 and educated editors. I have said it so much, but
 I must repeat it here, that there is no substitute
 for intelligence in the news and editorial rooms
 and there is no way of getting it without paying
 for it. Newspapers cannot go on paying advertising
 managers better salaries than managing editors;
 advertising and circulation solicitors better
 salaries than reporters from whom they require a
 higher degree of educational preparation, unless
 they expect to harvest an inferior product. ??

"With few exceptions we have been impotent to
 interpret or to guide the forces that are moving the
 world into a more acute social consciousness, to a
 more complete human justice and to a more adequate 44
 x

economic security. We cannot expect such interpretation or such guidance out of men who are not equipped by the endowment of intelligence to which must be added education, travel, research, and experience. And we can expect to have only a minimum of such men...until publishers themselves look for and demand professional standards in the news rooms rather than cheap payrolls...."

Mark ~~said~~ ^{declared} the American press as a whole had been upon a reactionary jag; then added in conclusion: "I believe it was Chancellor Hill of the University of Georgia who said philosophically that the world moves in zigs forward and zags backward, but the zigs of progress were always a little longer than the zags of reaction....I hope with all my heart that whoever speaks at Emory fifty years hence will reveal that it [the press] has substituted... a serious and dignified purpose for superficiality; and that it has become a great and powerful instrument for the preservation of a democracy that is predicated upon the literate expression of a free people, plus the recognition of the human being."

Continuing his deep concern over the direction in which newspaper publishers and their papers were headed, Mark spoke again on the subject in May 1939, at

the University of Missouri. He mourned the decline of the number of newspapers in the past two decades, citing statistics and naming the many prominent dailies that had folded. "Why," he asked, "such an appalling mortality rate?"

Radio at that time was, of course, the stiffest competition, he answered. (Television would come ten years later, but what he said about radio that day would also apply to television when it came.)

"Radio has taken the edge off top news stories," he admitted. "Our newspapers haven't issued an extra in several years. Radio has deprived us of our entertainment value. Serial stories, for instance, are declining in popularity, according to surveys I have seen. I believe, moreover, we have reached a peak, or at least a level, of comic-strip popularity."

But there were weaknesses in radio, he pointed out. ~~They~~ could never, for instance, be successful in selling price ^{items} ~~items~~ or mass ^{items} ~~items~~ such as news papers carried in full pages. They could never be, therefore, the local advertising medium newspapers could be.

Radio would always be a medium of entertainment. In handling news it inevitably had to ^{use} ~~give it in~~

See -
earlier
p. 161

bulletin form because audiences simply would not listen to long news stories over the air, unless they were of the utmost importance. It would be impossible for a radio announcer to read the contents of a metropolitan newspaper over the air in less than five or six hours. Newspapers had to be relied on for the elaboration and detail that radio could never supply. Radio could never be the recorded permanent history ~~and record~~ of the moment in which we live. Radio could never have a personality because, it was the instrument of a thousand personalities.

The graphic magazines had also made serious inroads into ^(newspaper) circulation and advertising. The graphic magazines, mastering within a few months the technique of high-speed printing on magazine paper, ^{they} had surpassed ^{newspapers} us in the handling of photographic stories. "We have lost ground," Mark said, "because we have doggedly held on to old methods. There have been advances, it is true, but on the whole the newspaper business has been fighting a rear-guard action for ten years, a losing action, at that. But I see no reason to despair if we employ our intelligence to the remedy as strongly as we have our lungs to shouting about freedom of the press. The circulation of national magazines can never

11

X

vt

ok in " or "apply" ?

see ? p. 181 ?

subject noun
circulation
singular
their breadth
plural?

become regional in their breadth; newspapers can and should, because the tendency of the country is to decentralize and to regionalize. Newspapers should make themselves indispensable in their communities and in their region."

He did not discuss that May day the paramount cause, to his mind, of the drop in the number of newspapers, since he had talked about it several times before; but he believed the press was still out of step with the people. In spite of the soul-searching ^{that} following ^{ed} Mr. Roosevelt's landslide victory, most newspaper leaders were still bitching about the reforms of the New Deal. So in his closing remarks ^{Mark} he did his best to drive home the necessity of newspaper management changing its reactionary attitude.

"The future of the American press does not lie in the working of some mysterious miracle by an alchemist of the profession. It is wholly bound up in the character and the intelligence of the men who own and run newspapers. If the publishers of America go on blindly resisting the demands for change in the social order; if they go on interpreting these changes in terms of out-of-pocket costs to themselves, regardless of the general

Apr 17 1938
Significant
of "May
Day"
SOS
Call?
Not
made
here

??

+ 100 164

welfare; if they go on trying to pull America back into a world she will never know again, then news papers are doomed to continued retreat.

"But if the publishers of this country have the intelligence to use the freedom they have so long enjoyed; if they have the prescience to see that ^{they} lost their leadership and their influence when they deserted the marching army of democracy, and if they realize they can regain it only when they know again what the poor as well as the rich are thinking; if they have the humility to listen to the real voice that is America ^{the} voice of the agricultural plains and the factories; if they have the determination, as Lincoln had, to hunt the hidden purpose ^{up} the winds of justice; if they have, above everything else, the determination to make some contribution toward the advancement of democracy, then they need not fear either for their economic welfare or their freedom."

up?