

THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE PRESS

If one is to talk sensibly about this subject it seems necessary, first, to establish a frame-work of what one believes to be the functions and responsibilities of the Press. Unless one believes - and I do not - that the Press has special functions and responsibilities as far as the labor movement is concerned, then those of us within the movement should judge our treatment by the Press in terms of its adherence to, or divergence from, these general concepts of functions and responsibilities.

Two introductory observations before considering those general standards, each to do with the exactness of language - the meaning of the phrase "the Press". If I may don my economist's hat, the observations relate to problems of vertical and horizontal integration. First, the vertical question. While the Press is universally acknowledged as the 4th Estate, the subdivision of the Estate is all too infrequently recognised. Proprietors of newspapers in Australia are, in general, conservatives - in the fields of politics and economics they are not the radical exponents of change. This is not surprising, is indeed in the nature of things to be expected - altogether far too much time is wasted by many of my colleagues deploring the obvious. Editors tend to reflect the prejudices of proprietors, but the exceptions have been noble and frequent enough to put the statement no higher. But what do we say of journalists, *the main core, the founders of the press*

Speaking from considerable personal experience, I can say that the overwhelming majority of journalists are well disposed towards giving a fair and extensive coverage of the activities and aspirations of the labor movement.

This springs, I believe, not merely from an adherence to the ethics of their profession but, in many instances, from a personal inclination towards our policies and perspectives. And so, a statement about the villainy (or the virtue) of "the Press" is rarely even within the one newspaper going to do justice in attributing blame or praise between these various components of the 4th Estate. Second, the horizontal aspect of the problem. Who in his right mind within the labor movement would suggest that the one statement could properly describe the treatment we receive on the one hand from 'The Australian' and on the other 'The Daily Telegraph'. Our Chairman for the evening (and I am not implying that you Sir Robert are yet within the labor movement - although with the extent of the current swing towards us nothing would surprise me) would, I am sure, dip into quite different sections of his eloquent vocabulary to describe the treatment he has received from the Melbourne 'Sun' and his favorite newspaper 'The Sydney Morning Herald'. In sum, my two introductory observations are intended to do no more than give the warning I believe should be clearly stated ^{and} at the outset of almost any discussion in the socio-political field, i.e. compendious phrases may be useful ^{only} for ascribing brief titles to lectures, but they serve normally to ^{only} disguise the complications and contradictions that mark our affairs in this field.

What then are the functions and responsibilities of the Press?

What are the functions of the press? What are its responsibilities

The functions listed by newspaper owners in response to questions by the 1949 Royal Commission on the Press in Britain were :

1. To report current events and interpret them to its readers.
2. To comment on matters of public interest for the guidance of the public.
3. To inform, educate, entertain and enlighten its readers.
4. To provide a forum for the expression and exchange of opinion.
5. To express its own opinion.
6. To publish news - serious or otherwise - of interest to its readers.

Obviously this is only a general ~~indication~~ indication of what the press ought to be doing. And even if we are to assume that newspaper proprietors are imbued with the highest ideals they must be judged on results rather than good intentions. If they newspapers report current events inaccurately or if they wrongly interpret them ^{clearly} clearly they are not carrying out one of their prime functions. Their ideas about what are matters of public interest may differ radically from those held by their readers. They may decide that it is better to entertain their readers rather than to seriously educate or inform them. ~~the~~

It depends on their sense of priorities. ~~the~~ We may feel that too often newspapers get their priorities wrong, that they highlight the trivial, pander to the tastes of the lowest common denominator and underestimate the importance of events in which we are particularly interested. We should remember, however, that what ^{is} seems trivial, ~~to~~ others might consider important and what ^{is} boring ~~to~~ others might find intensely interesting. Very little research has been done by newspapers ~~in~~ or, for that matter, anyone else, into what ~~the~~ readers consider important or interesting. The function of entertaining need not necessarily clash with the function of educating. A news or feature article can be entertaining and educational. Information can be presented in serious, satirical, ironic or simply in an amusing way without being inaccurate. It can raise a horse-laugh, a chuckle or a frown

or It can be important and interesting, interesting but unimportant, important but uninteresting in its presentation. ~~But~~

~~Some~~ Newspapers which present information that is neither important nor interesting are lucky to survive. No newspaper worth its salt is all stodge and no soufle. Even the comic strip, like the cartoon, can have a message. If we don't like the page one story about a murder or a sexual assault we can always turn to the foreign ~~page~~ or the sports pages. If we object to the ~~sexual~~ ~~confessions~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~Hollywood~~ ~~starlet~~ or a defrocked vicar we should change our newspaper. This, at any rate, is the cynical, myopic view of some newspaper executives who claim to be giving the public what they want. We may here ask: Do the newspapers truly give us what we want or what they think we ought to want? It is ~~xxx~~ both audacious and an insult to readers to assume that because sex sells it is all that people want. The fact that all pr most people populate and procreate does not mean they want to read about nothing else. Nor can it be assumed that because a ~~xxxxxxx~~ reader's main interest is in politics he simply wants ~~xxxxxxx~~ his newspaper ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~filled~~ ~~with~~ ~~parliamentary~~ debates, a Daily Hansard. He may ~~xxxxxxx~~ interested in seeing pictures of the body beautiful and is there anything wrong with showing it to him occasionally. Doesn't it depend on the motive. We may disagree with the executive of ~~one~~ ~~mass~~ ~~circulation~~ ~~London~~ ~~daily~~ whose sole justification for filling his pages with decollete was "Buxom bodies boost business". Let's give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that he is not guided simply by the profit motive. Then isn't he being selfish if, because of prudishness, he refuses to share with his readers a picture ready to hand of a beautiful girl modelling a bikini which women might want to buy.

Even if it is true that the press is giving the public what the public wants hasn't it a higher obligation to fulfil? ~~xxxxxx~~ If life is a gutter that is surely no reason for a gutter press. The press is not there merely to reflect life but to state what life could be. ~~xxxxxx~~ Its role is not simply to show the bad but also the good in society. People want to be aware, not merely ~~xxx~~ that brothels ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~violence~~ ~~and~~ ~~mental~~ ~~sickness~~ ~~exist~~ ~~but~~ ~~why~~ ~~they~~ ~~exist~~ ~~and~~ ~~what~~ ~~can~~ ~~be~~ ~~done~~ ~~to~~ eradicate or minimise their ill-effects.

4. But does it. The profit motive inspires all sorts of greedy people to sell ~~inferior~~ shoddy or inferior products. ~~But~~ If a newspaper is ~~inferior~~ a bad product it may still sell like hot cakes but are its buyers getting real value for their money? Obviously many of them think so or are they unacquainted with or unable to appreciate the alternatives. And are the alternatives getting fewer, both in number and in kind?

Lord Beaverbrook, proprietor of the British Daily Express, had another motive. He stated: "I run the papers purely for the purpose of making propaganda and with no other motive" Even so Beaverbrook kept his eye on the commercial position of his empire, so that it was not only a powerful propaganda medium but also a very profitable one. His editors were given the primary role of making the paper ~~more~~ appealing and therefore saleable to a very representative cross-section of the public. Millions bought it though many of them might not have liked his brand of propaganda. As a propagandist Beaverbrook wanted to feel he was shaping history and human destiny. This power is probably coveted by other press barons. It suggests that they do not simply want to be rich. They might even be richer if they occasionally did not have pang of conscience about what ~~they~~ their newspapers were doing and old fashioned, liberal ideas about serving the community.

Rupert Murdoch, proprietor of The Australian, once stated "Unless we can return to the principles of public service we will lose our claim to be the fourth estate. What right have we to speak in the public interest when, too often, we are motivated by personal gain". We must assume that Mr. Murdoch, the proprietor of the mass circulation "Truth" and the quality national daily, The Australian, has mixed motives. Is The Australian perhaps his conscience, The Truth his bank balance. From the profits of one - or partly so - the other quality product was spawned. And were it not for the fact that the profits of a large group of successful newspapers like the Murdoch chain were able to off-set the temporary or permanent losses made by their quality publications the Australian press scene would be more depressing than it now appears.

6. own way, good quality productions, ~~and~~ and the processes of education and opinion forming could be said to be among ~~the~~ their principal objectives. Even so they contain more light, pithy articles than either The Times or The Guardian. They have also run stunts and gimmicks and competitions of the kind ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ normally seen in the populars ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~, and have indulged in the give-away game, making available to readers ~~at~~ low price pictures of moon landings or reproductions of modern paintings. Their lay-out is also more attractive than that of The Times or The Guardian, especially that of The Australian, and they are, as a result, easier to read.

Among the populars we would include the mass circulation Sydney and Melbourne papers, the Sun and Evening Herald in Melbourne and the Mirror, Sun and Telegraph in Sydney. They include ~~great~~ great gluts of light news on personalities, ~~make~~ ^{usually} make a special point of ~~presenting~~ presenting the news brightly and ~~sometimes~~ ^{sometimes} give more emphasis to entertainment than to education. ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ Cheese-cake and cleavage are constantly in, in depth articles on important social issues often out. Footy is king and regularly finds the front page of the Melbourne Herald and Sun. The Sun calls itself the people's paper and it gives the people plenty of pics, police court copy, footy thrills and entertainment razmatzazz on the assumption that ~~these~~ are what the people mainly want. The truth specialises in exposures, mysteries, shocks, tragedies, villainies, real or imagined, atrocities and of course sex. It has a big circulation. It is ~~not~~ clearly a principal among the pop papers. ~~Yet~~ Yet for a long time the Herald had a bigger proportion of foreign news and less police court news than the Age and carried about the same volume of features on the arts. Its commercial and financial news was less than the Age. ~~]~~ Newspapers compete in nearly all ~~xxxxxx~~ departments though the style of their presentation and the content of their articles may be radically different.

Main capital city dailies - Sydney

Daily Telegraph

Sydney Morning Herald

The Sun (evening)

Daily Mirror (Evening)

The Australian.

Intense competition here between dailies and evenings.

7.

Melbourne
The Australian
Sun News Pictorial.

The Age
The Herald (evening)
Newsday (evening)

intense competition here, between the dailies and impetus to competition provided by the recent appearance of Newsday in the Age group.

Queensland

Courier Mail.

Evening Telegraph.

The Australian.

Very little competition here. Courier mail and telegraph both in same group. Telegraph has no evening rival. The Australian has been rapidly picking up circulation and making a dent in the influence of the courier mail.

Adelst Australia

The West Australian

Daily News (evening)

The Australian.

no real competition here. ^{STH. NOST} Morning advertiser versus evening news. They jointly produce a Sunday mail and are in Saturday competition with Truth.

~~Perth~~

~~No competition among dailies. Morning "West Australian" and~~

~~evening "Daily News".~~

Hobart. The Mercury (morning) in competition only with Launceston Examiner and weekly Truth.

Sundays .

Telegraph.

In Sydney competition between Sydney ~~Mirror~~, Sydney Mirror and Sydney Sun-Herald. In Melbourne only one Sunday, the Sunday Observer, recently started by Gordon Barton of Ipec. Its immediate predecessor, the Sunday Post, went out of publication after only a few weeks ~~and~~ a *ford* *article* *of* *mine* *would* *surprise* *no* *one*.

8. Perth - Sunday Times and The Independent in competition.
Adelaide - Only the Sunday Mail in competition with Saturday Truth.

Hobart No Sunday newspaper.

Brisbane - Sunday Mail in competition with Truth.

Concentration of the press in a few hands ;

The Herald and Weekly Times Group owns the ~~Melbourne~~^{Ad} Melbourne Herald, Melbourne Sun News Pictorial, Adelaide Advertiser, Brisbane Courier Mail, Brisbane Telegraph, Brisbane Sunday Mail. Investment in or control of Hobart Mercury. TV, radio stations and magazines.

John Fairfax group - One morning, one evening and one Sunday - all in Sydney. The Sydney Morning Herald, the Sydney Sun and the Sunday Sun-Herald. Four major magazines and a financial paper, the Financial Review. TV and radio interests and country papers.

Consolidated Press - the Frank Packer group - The Sydney Daily Telegraph and Sydney Sunday Telegraph. TV and magazine interests.

Rupert Murdoch Group. The Australian, the Sydney Mirror, the Sunday Mirror, the Sunday Times and Daily News (evening) in Perth tv and radio and magazine interests. Papers in Darwin and Broken Hill.

Some show how more delinked organizations of the press. There's no dearth of them. *of the*

The press is accused of bias, inaccuracy, abuse of power, sensationalism, irresponsibility, invasion of privacy, distortion, debasement of standards, dilution of culture etc etc.

These criticisms are not new. way back in 1807 Thomas Jefferson wrote "It is a melancholy truth that a suppression of the Press could not more completely deprive the nation of its benefits than is done by its abandoned prostitution to falsehood".

He went on to say "Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper. Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle." He suggested that an editor might begin a reformation by dividing his newspaper into four chapters headed Truths, probabilities, possibilities and lies. The first chapter truths, would, he declared, be extremely brief.

9. People still make the same sweeping judgments that Jefferson did and probably with less justification.

SHERIDAN

Let's consider some of these criticisms. Firstly bias. It is argued that the news is not presented objectively and impartially, that too often it is slanted. The most strident allegation is that it is pro-capitalist or anti-working class and anti-Labour and what can you expect from big business. Firstly it should be remembered that working class people or Labour supporters form a large proportion of the readers of both the quality and popular press and to some extent newspapers must cater for their particular interests. Reports of trade union activities, of Labour rallies, of speeches by Labour parliamentarians regularly appear. If there is bias it usually appears in the editorial columns where the newspaper's own opinion is expressed. The influence of editorial comment may be overrated. People have ~~xxxx~~ voted in Labour governments even when the press has been apparently hostile. They voted against conscription when the press was for it. They may buy viciously anti-L about journals for information on sport, theatre or social gossip but still vote Labour. They may buy the more liberal papers sympathetic to the AIP but still vote capital L Liberal with consistency and by tradition. To suggest that the press is the wicked uncle is to ignore all the other influences on people's thinking - their education, their upbringing, their private prejudices, their personal regard for a particular prime minister or a particular candidate.

Nevertheless the press is a powerful opinion moulder and may sway the uncommitted and the uninvolved at election times. The press can - by disclosing the truth - bring about the downfall of a Cabinet minister and even the government. It was responsible in Britain for bringing to public light the Profumo affair. It may also - by distorting the truth - destroy the reputation of a responsible minister or undermine a responsible government.

Coloured language and misleading headlines can convey a totally misleading impression of a particular happening or ~~xx~~ a person's character. ~~xxxxxxx~~ They can make goodies out of baddies and baddies out of goodies.

10. News is dressed up to evoke approval or disapproval. What is a war of liberation to the communists is aggression to us. What one side calls patriot the other brands a terrorist. The police might be praised for firmness in dealing with a demonstration or brutality, of provoking violence or acting under provocation. It depends which side you're on. A person can be eulogised as a brilliant (an overused word) intellectual or an arrogant smartie. A newspaper might decide to interview those it likes or those who are universally popular and ignore those who it hates or who rebel against the sort of society ~~we~~ which they believe ought to exist. It may damn the rebel and praise the pillar of the community who might really be the pillar of the establishment. The word communist is a bad brand while moderate, whether ALP or Liberal, has the ring of respectability, if slightly dull respectability.

[The lack of a daily Labour newspaper is seen as a clear indication that the news content and comment of the capitalist press is generally slanted ~~against~~ labour.] The press is also accused of reporting parliament sparingly or frivolously, that it is constantly knocking politicians, if not all of them, then most. If it is anti-parliament it cannot simply be anti-Labour. If it knocks politicians, then that must include polities of all colours. It has been notable however that in recent years the press of Australia has highlighted rifts in the Labour Party (the 36 faceless men image stuck for a long time) and either played down or ignored ~~xxxxxxx~~ divisions within the Lib-CP coalition. The row between Mr. McEwan and Mr. Macmahon was an exception.

[The press has been attacked by extreme right wingers, the churches of all denominations, Rotarians, mothers clubs, women's organisations etc and not just by extreme left wing organisations.] Allegations of bias are usually made by people against newspapers which don't support their own views. In the 1940's when the Sydney Morning Herald and Daily Telegraph were critical of the government's war effort and especially of r.g. now sir robert menzies the late Doc Ewatt could say : "The great vote for Labour in NSW was assisted by the independent and weekly newspapers of Sydney. They fearlessly exposed administrative abuses for patriotic reasons, regardless of the political effect of their criticism".

11. In 1962 in the Daily Telegraph Senator Paltridge had another view of the Sydney Morning Herald. He said ~~xxxxxxx~~ that everybody knew it was as viciously and fanatically opposed to the Liberal-Country Party as the stupid Communist press is viciously and fanatically opposed to capitalism. As we were saying, it depends on one's political point of view.

Charges of bias don't only come from politicians. Catholics accuse it of being anti-Catholic, protestants of being pro-Catholic. The press is accused of kow-towing to advertisers and of withholding news that might offend advertisers, who are assumed to hold over editors' heads the threat of taking away revenue. It was only a few years ago that the News Weekly, organ of Mr. B.A. Santamaria's ~~xxxxxxx~~ National Civic Council, was accusing the press of bias.

Among the things it mentioned was that during the whole of the Spanish civil war in the thirties not a single article was published in the Melbourne daily press favourable to General Franco's Republican cause and that there had been no breach in the hostile front against South Africa or Portugal since the controversies over apartheid and Angola became of world significance. ^{within the C.M.} ^{More recently}

The most that the fierce ^{left} ~~left-wing~~ critics will concede is that the press gives occasional coverage to ALP events and occasional support for its policies but that at election times it mounts a concerted anti-Labour campaign designed to keep the alp out of office. There are variations on this theme, such as the oft-repeated claim that the press distorts ~~xxx~~ events at alp caucus meetings or meetings of its federal ~~xx~~ executive, held in private.

It is true that the Australian press is capitalist owned. It is a profit making industry, reliant largely on revenue from advertisers who are also out to make a profit. Its owners are extremely wealthy and generally mix socially with other wealthy capitalists. Newspaper owners, like any other private owners, will defend themselves against attacks on their interests. It is because ~~xxxxxxx~~ of these facts that the press as a whole is branded anti-labour, which, in its constitution and sometimes in practice, is anti-capitalist and for public ~~x~~ rather than private ownership.

image of their proprietors. They are seen as helpless hirelings compelled to write untruths ~~what they write~~ ^{at the proprietor's bidding or as opportunists who don't care} as long as they're making money. It so happens that while they often do a very professional job they are not paid nearly as well as other professionals like doctors, dentists or architects or lawyers. They don't all sell their souls. They have principles and are prepared to fight for them. Some have resigned rather than dip their pens in vitriol or mislead the public. They have gone to gaol rather than betray the sources of their information. They have shown individual initiative in exposing ~~some of the ills of~~ society and have often been assiduous in defending ~~the rights of~~ and upholding the rights of minorities. They have attacked and been attacked by bureaucracies. As individuals they have often sought and found the truth against deliberate attempts by ~~the~~ governments, government departments, private companies and the police to suppress it. ~~They often err because of the~~ haste in which they write tomorrow's news. They help people to comprehend the obscure, translating ~~the~~ the jargon of the scientist ~~into the language of the politician.~~ the pedantry of the academic, the gobbledegook of the politician. Chasing the news they go without meals and get ulcers. They get caught in the worst weather in pursuit of the story. The story like the show must go on. They are often separated from long suffering wives. They listen to cranks, ~~and~~ hypocrites and liars, fools, finks and fanatics, people with real problems and others with hard luck stories, and somehow they keep their sanity. They strive for objectivity and sometimes remind themselves of the newspaper rhyme :

It is a sole mn thought to think
 When you sit down to splatter ink,
 That what you write in prose or verse
 May be a blessing - or a curse.

So - the moral goes - be kind to the press, even if they're nasty to you.

13. Let's face it. The ideas about bias are grossly oversimplified. It's no good indulging in cliches. We don't nail the real culprits by generalising. We must be specific in our complaints about the press. When necessary we must name the newspaper responsible for bias, for debasement of moral or ethical standards, for invasion of privacy, for inaccuracy, for distortion and ~~must be prepared to back up our criticisms~~ ^{INTEGRITY} with facts. ^{There will be many occasions when we cannot} push to the courts with a libel writ in our hot hands. We can write letters of protest and if they are not printed send a deputation to the ~~press~~ editor. We can use the columns of other newspapers to put over our point of view. We can complain to the ethics committee of the Australian Journalists Association. ~~we~~ ^{can} campaign and urge others to campaign for a Press Council, something on the lines of the British body, but with teeth, a council which will have lay members, not simply representatives of the press, and which will have power to order publication of its findings, of apologies and if necessary to fine the newspaper involved.

— Is only the capitalist press guilty of bias. Labour newspapers themselves have been accused of bias against some sections of the party, often on the specious ground that a group is not truly socialist. And non labour newspapers such as the Sydney Morning

[←] Herald, the Sydney Mirror etc have sometimes supported Labour. [—] In England the Daily Herald, a national newspaper, was run jointly by trade union and business interests. From 1929 to 1957 49 per cent of the shares were held by the trade union congress and 51 per cent by Odhams press. The unions had four directors, the capitalists of Odhams had five. It was agreed that the political policy of the newspaper would closely follow the resolutions of the national conference of the Labour party ~~and~~ industrial policy of the time while commercial policy would be controlled by Odhams. In only six of the 30 years it operated as a joint venture did it make a profit. Eventually Odhams took control but the newspaper continued to lose money even when it was taken over by the Mirror Group. Cecil Harmsworth King's mirror group, it should be noted, ran the largest circulating english daily, the mirror, as a pro-labour organ.

14. Bias may be intentional or unintentional. There is a need to distinguish between unintentional inaccuracy and deliberate distortion of the facts and between blatant prejudice and a genuine difference of opinion about what constitutes news. Because one politician has ~~been~~ not seen his speech in print and another has it does not mean the newspaper has left one out for political reasons. The one might have made a more newsworthy comment than the other.

A newspaper's pages are usually filled with what its executives believe the public want to read about and what they believe the public ought to read about. The executive concerned might make bad judgements about what is wanted and ought to be read but he is not necessarily showing bias.

Thousands of events are reported each day and because of space ~~xxxx~~problems newspapers have to suppress or curtail many items. This of course leads to criticism by those who~~xxx~~ have told the news to the newspapers, only to see it end in the wastepaper basket. In 1950 the New York Times received a million words a day but could use only 145,000. Obviously something has to go. The cable services like AAP and Reuters go out millions of words every day and only a few of them usually find their way into any one newspaper unless there is the assassination of an American president or a slack news period at home.

Conflict between advertisers and editorial *Intermediates by 10% of*
Do advertisers threaten to withhold their revenue and does the fear that they will prevent newspapers publishing stories that are in the public interest but against the private interest?
Some Labour MP's have suggested that a threat by the big private interests - shipping, aviation, pastoral ~~xxxx~~ motor car manufacturers etc - will bring the editorial dogs to their master's heel. Another suggestion is that the interests ~~of~~ of both are identical and that ~~xxxx~~ there is little friction. The lack of criticism of business interests in the newspapers, especially those which lean heavily on advertising, suggest that ~~it is not always~~ *ways of suppression may be subtle, financial* ~~ways of suppression may be subtle, financial~~ *ways of commercial interests*
~~and the men who write or want to write the news.~~ Assuming that advertisers do have to o much say is this preferable to domination by government or party subsidy or to being the mouthpiece for one

Without advertising of course we would have to pay three, perhaps three times as much for our newspapers. Are we prepared to do so to be assured full knowledge of what big and little business interests are doing, to be able to expose price rackets and price rings and harmful share deals? Or do we hope for a government subsidy in which case there is a danger that the government will attempt to make newspapers a subsidiary arm of government and not an independent voice.

The newspapers may not always be accurate but they are often challenging and they are able to lampoon politicians who would in other circumstances like to control them. Newspapers can and sometimes do promote politicians. Rupert Murdoch's father, the late Keith Murdoch, is said to have pushed J.A. Lyons and given him the support of his whole publishing organisation. [One journalist recalls how, when a copy boy on the Herald in 1955, he saw Lyons with hat in hand standing before Murdoch's desk and saying "Yes sir".] Politicians physical disabilities and their peculiar traits are grist to the mill of every cartoonist and why not.

Newspapers may sometimes conduct vendettas against a particular interest that has offended them. It will run campaigns against child cruelty, animal cruelty, police corruption and for conservation of nature and against pollution of air or water. These campaigns do not last long and they don't really get under the skins of the people responsible for society's ills. The arrows are blunted

~~xxxxxxx~~ - the articles are badly researched - and the impact on the public is minimal. They do, however, run campaigns against ~~xxxx~~ capital punishment and, though their motives may be questioned they start blanket funds for the poor and sick at Christmas.

The occasional charity of the press is at least more than that shown by most people who are pretty indifferent about the rights, liberties and happiness of others. There has been sustained publicity on the other hand about birth control and the harmful effects of cigarette smoking - two subjects that might once have been taboo. Of course the interest of the press often develops because of the moral protestations of such people as the Pope against birth control *and medical scientists on the eve of the coming of the 60's.*

The Royal Commission on the press of 1949 said
 "So long as newspapers do not pay without advertising revenue
 a newspaper may well think twice before it adopts any policy
 likely to reduce advertisers' demands for its space. "

A paper's commitment to a cause or policy
 could result in a reduction of advertising.

It is possible therefore that a newspaper may be inhibited
 from adopting a cause or policy which could be unpopular with
 advertisers.

On the other hand the unashamedly capitalist oriented
 newspapers do at least offer the opportunity, however, limited,
 of giving space to opposing points of view and of having them
 circulated to a wide audience.

frankly partisan journals, e.g. the Victorian a.l.p.
 central executive official organ, fact, and in the extreme,
 the peking communist party's vanguard, must be regarded as
 such and read only in the context of acknowledged bias.

Would the trade union movement be prepared to finance
 a paper similar to the London Sun, formerly the Daily Herald,
 and if so on what terms.

Would it ~~be~~ expect it to be just a trade union propaganda
 sheet with scant hope of appealing to a diverse audience.

If the editorial board of such a newspaper contained too many
 union politicians who were not prepared to give reasonable
 latitude to the editorial team would it not die the same death
~~as~~ or make the same sort of losses.

MONOPOLY

The dwindling number of Australian newspaper proprietors
 must be a cause of concern in the community generally and
 particularly to those who work in the industry. A journalist
 with limited job mobility must almost by definition be more
 subservient to the policy of his current employer, more fearful
 of resisting unprincipled actions or directions.

Even the press barons have expressed concern about monopoly. although the reasons for their concern are somewhat different from those who believe in variety of opinion. Cecil King, former chief of the Mirror group, expressing alarm at the trend toward monopoly in London's Fleet St., said that the day could come when there could be only three national newspapers. But he consoled himself by remarking; "I'll have one of the three."

Roy Thomson said: "I think monopoly is a bad thing for the public. I like it for myself. I always like monopolies when I'm operating them because obviously it is very profitable."

But does the trend toward monopoly ownership of Australian newspapers necessarily suggest absolute uniformity in editorial policy. The Murdoch group for example permits the coexistence of papers as widely divergent in character as Truth which would come into the pop, some would say scurrilous, category, and the Australian which has much higher editorial aspirations. Again the Fairfax stable houses the fairly superficial Sydney Sun and the Financial Review, aiming at a more specialist readership. Of ~~the~~ the Big 4 groups in Australia the only publication which directly reflects the political, social ^{and FERGUSON'S} ~~and~~ ^{and} to some extent personal beliefs of its proprietor, is the Daily Telegraph.

In the event of a takeover would the new proprietor necessarily consider it worthwhile to change the character of his new acquisition. Or would he decide there was a need only to make minor modifications to increase its profit ~~potential~~ potential. Papers in different States are not generally competitive. The tendency is for State papers to stick to their own territory and their interstate sales are negligible. However, the exceptions to this are such papers as the Australian and the Financial Review, which cut across State boundaries, and the Sydney Sunday papers, which fill a vacuum in Victoria.

A Labour government would not put itself at the hazard of opposing freedom of the press by doing much about the present structure of Australian newspapers. Even in welfare state England, where a Labour government felt itself strong enough to nationalise essential industries, it did not tamper with ownership of the press or do anything to restrict the right of the press to criticise the government.

The Australian press should listen to suggestions for reform and not assume it is the best judge and jury of its own imperfections. On the other hand reformers never seem to specify how much control over the press they want to be exercised and whether it should be through Government intervention, by the readers, by a commission on the lines of the a.b.c. or by the press exercising self discipline through an agency such as the British Press Council. Boycotts of papers by readers have been tried with mixed success. They have ~~never~~ succeeded in achieving higher standards. There have been bans on reporters but this has not prevented the news from being obtained through other avenues including the banned reporters own "rivals".

newspaper

Supposing people concerned about standards ~~wfx~~ decided to form a "watchdog" committee, would they be an effective pressure group and anyway are enough readers interested. ~~EM~~ A group which might be assumed to have some concern about newspaper standards and some power to influence them is the Australian Journalists Association ~~Ethics~~ Ethics Committees in each State. Unfortunately there are few, if any, recorded instances of the committees taking ~~prop~~ proprietors to task.

The A.J.A. has favoured for many years the creation of a Press Council. The N.S.W. branch ~~has~~ even sought legislation to implement the policy. It proposed that a body should be established ~~to~~ along these lines:

- to preserve the established freedom of the press
- to sustain the character of the n.s.w. press in accordance with the highest professional and commercial standards.
- keep under review any development likely to restrict or influence the supply of information of public interest and importance.
- publish reports recording its work and reviewing developments in the press.

The council, unlike the British model, was to include lay members and an independent chairman. The 15 members were to comprise five management nominees, two from N.S.W. Trades and Labour Council, two from the A.J.A., one from the Sydney University Senate, one from N.S.W. women's organisations, one State government member *and one opposition member.*

*Meeting in Perth
on 11/12/51
H. S. W. h.s.w.
H. S. W. h.s.w.
H. S. W. h.s.w.
Council of Press*

The full time secretary was to be seconded from the Public Service, perhaps from the Attorney General's Department. The Council would hear complaints and prompt statements of its decisions would be issued for compulsory publication in the journal or journals concerned and voluntary publication elsewhere. The main objection is that it opens the columns of the ~~press~~ privately owned press to government and that this tendency is a half-way house to government control of the press.

Again the government in power could stack the council with its own appointees and exercise a form of political censorship. ^{and finally} The A.L.P.'s proposal has been the establishment of a newspaper commission on the lines of the a.b.c. which would establish newspapers in any State. The editors would be appointed by the commission and would have security of tenure. These newspapers would be subsidised by the public and might run at a loss, but would introduce an additional element of competition. They might be dull in some respects but they would possibly give more space to important issues of public concern and perform an educative rather than an entertainment function.

But it seems to me that the L.M
 of it in view is supporting that can
 interest on significantly ~~not~~ by the
 attitude of the press & generally ~~as~~ the media
 to go further than this

3. If the press will not print our point of view or distorts it then we must make our own organs of communication or make greater use of the means already available to us. We could improve the quality of the message now being put across radio stations already owned by Labour in several states. We could also re-examine the possibility of establishing ~~our~~ ^{our} own daily national Labour newspaper. The idea has not been thoroughly looked at before. We should not be discouraged simply because the Daily Herald failed in England. The Herald was at no stage under the control of the unions though it had at one stage a 49 per cent share interest.

The ALP and the unions together have the resources to establish a newspaper of ~~their~~ ^{our} own. ~~But~~ ^{But} are we sufficiently interested? The unions - the workers who belong to them - and the political arm of the movement, the ALP are responsible for their lack of press representation. If ~~they~~ ^{we} want ~~proper~~ ^{completely adequate} press representation ~~they~~ ^{we} must establish ~~their~~ ^{our} own media. ~~They~~ ^{We} must vote the funds for the purpose and have a clear idea what kind of newspaper ~~they~~ ^{we} want. It should be a newspaper ~~they~~ ^{we} can criticise, too, ~~they~~ ^{we} need not always agree with the ideas put forward by its contributors ~~xx~~ but it should be run on the basis of certain well-defined, ~~immutable socialist~~ ^{clearly} principles. It should not simply preach to the converted but to those whom it hopes will be converted to ~~socialist~~ ^{our} ideas. Therefore it should not be simply a propaganda organ but ~~a~~ ^a medium for the expression of ideas that are not necessarily ~~socialist~~ ^{our own}. It must allow for minorities to have their say. It should not silence them. It should not pander to the baser instincts of people. It need not print all the details of a rape or a bank robbery. But it could usefully research the causes of rape and robbery and discuss the means of eliminating them. ~~It~~ ^{We} ~~should~~ ^{not} simply hold up a mirror to society, showing what is good and bad. It should explain why certain behavioural patterns are good or bad - or at least ~~should~~ ^{make} the attempt. A Labour newspaper should not be the mouthpiece of a section of the party or a group of unions. There should be space for points of view from all sections of the movement. One group should not hope to silence the views of its opponents. It should make allowances for the so-called eccentrics who, with time, have in many cases proved to be right. We should remember the words of John Stuart Mill on liberty of expression: "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion and only one person

4. were of the contrary opinion mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. The evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation, those who dissent from the opinion still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth. ~~If wrong they lose~~ If wrong they lose what is almost as great a benefit - the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. So we must consider whether we want a Labour paper which will allow free expression to minorities who, even if they are wrong, will, by stating their case, show our truths in sharper outline.

If we do not want our own Labour paper then we must ask how serious the ALP is about its policy of establishing an Australian newspaper commission to publish newspapers in Canberra and other state capitals. If such a commission did exist and meant business we could no longer complain that there were no responsible newspapers in the community.

Possible introductory remarks in light vein.

A Sydney journalist once compared the effects of a newspaper on the brain with that of alcohol. He argued for the prohibition of both. He said that by watching two men, one reading a paper, the other drinking, one would note the exactly similar stages passed through by each. There was the initial eagerness to partake, followed by the light of gratification in the eye as the liquor hit the palate or the shrieking headline hit the eye. Then the nervous derangement set in, marked by a rising excitability of manner and the desire to talk and argue. This generally gave way as the poison completed its work to the delusion that the drinker or reader was one of the few men in the world to have any knowledge. The last stage was the craving for sleep and the after effect was that the drinker went for a drink the first thing the next day and the reader for a paper. Each day of the curse generated an appetite for further ~~drinking~~ doses.

6. Journalists, like the ~~RM~~ 17th century English essayist, Thomas Addison, are spectators, ~~FMX~~ Like Addison some of them see the world as a theatre and they are attempting merely to form the right judgements of those who appear on the world stage. They write for ~~whxxx~~ those people whom Addison called the blanks, who are unfurnished with ideas and cram their minds with what the newspapers say. But they also write for people ~~wixxx~~ who think for themselves. They could do worse than attempting, like Addison, constantly to make instruction agreeable and the diversion of others useful - enlivening with ~~w~~ with morality and tempering morality with wit. Sometimes they will damn us with faint praise. But we should always ~~xxxxxxx~~ console ourselves with the dictum that it is perhaps better ~~xxx~~ to be damned or praised as long as we're never ignored.

~~end.~~

~~There~~ There thing we do for the future. ~~is~~
~~It~~ I come back to the present
 make sense