

It is not exactly that your children now seem ungrateful that they fail to show what you think they should for your efforts on their behalf; they will, some day.

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The Birmingham Eccentric

PART THREE

An Open Letter to Mr. Ickes

Is the American Press "Controlled"?

Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes recently invited newspapers to comment on his latest criticism of newspapers, uttered just after the re-election of President Roosevelt. Frank E. Tripp, vice-president and general manager of the Gannett Newspapers, and a newspaperman for 40 years, wrote the following open letter to Mr. Ickes which was printed in the Gannett papers:

Dear Harold: This is sort of long but it's worth reading.

I keep on seeing by the papers that you don't like the American press, particularly the newspaper section of it, but that the radio is swell. Both by a newspaper and a radio man I thought I would take pen in hand and drop you a line. Every time you blast newspapers, and you're a honey at it, the press, which you say doesn't give both sides, prints what you say. That doesn't jell.

"Won't Take It Lying Down"

A lot of your boy-friends don't like the press either. There is little reason why they should and that's their right, but when you say that the press of America is not free and is controlled you tread on the toes of a free American institution in which the American people are pretty well vested, and you tickle the corns of a crew who will not take it lying down.

I was hoping everybody was going to get out the smear stuff and settle down to do a job for the country, but when you keep right on saying that American newspapers are hamstringing you must expect a word from folks who know better.

You lately observe that about 80% of the press opposed Mr. Roosevelt and that still he was re-elected. That very fact tends your argument that the press is not free. Can't he that your idea of a free press, one that you would like, is a press that the government could control as it does your pal, the radio?

"Independent Enough to Disagree" Now you know that radio is licensed by the government and must obtain renewals of its right to exist at stated intervals. You know it is restricted by rules from expressing any opinion. Newspapers can have opinions, so far anyway; can express them, and do.

What you mean is that you don't like the kind of opinion they express. That's O. K. They don't like yours either and they are free and independent enough to say so. They are even independent enough to disagree with the most powerful man in the world. Some 80% of them did. But if birds like you will shut up they would like to get in and pick for the good of old USA, now that the team has been picked.

Newspapers are published by thousands of different individuals in thousands of different cities and villages in America. They are licensed by nobody except their readers. That's a pretty good old-fashioned American licensing bureau of itself. Think it over. The newspaper license comes from service to the people. This service causes 42 million people every day to pay cash for newspapers. And they get your fairhanded radio free. Many papers get a third of their revenue from their readers. The rest of their income comes from advertising. Newspapers are controlled. You're right, except you picked the wrong controller. They are controlled by their readers. If they were not they would have no readers and the adver-

tisers who you think control them would run out like sheep. Radio Is Controlled Anybody, anywhere, can start a newspaper. He can do it on a shoestring. But if a man wishes to own and operate a radio station he must at great expense prove the necessity for it and show uncontroverted financial ability to operate it before the government will let him start. Then he is circumscribed by rules which prevent him from talking to his listeners like a newspaper does on its editorial page. Controversial programs are either barred or censored to dull drab.

Right away the fellow discovers that he is not in the radio business at all. He is in the advertising business 100% and right up to his neck. So far as keeping the other full, that's the only business he is in. He can't get a third of his income from listeners, like the newspaper does. He is dependent absolutely on advertising.

How come that the wicked advertisers give a couple hundred millions of business to radio and take it away from the newspapers which you think they control? The truth is that neither newspapers nor radio are controlled or influenced by advertisers. Advertisers seek to control them. Advertisers don't patronize folks because they like them or like what they say. Newspapers don't accept all the advertising that comes floating along and none but the scabs among them would change a word of what they print because somebody advertised with them.

Liquor Ads Barred

For example, the Committee to Preserve Constitutional Government is a large and influential group. The Daily New York Daily News, not because they loved the News but because they wanted to reach the readers, the Gannett Newspapers, dry from the wire, pass up a cool half million a year because they don't run liquor advertising. Scores of other papers do the same, pass up their share of the 34 millions of newspaper liquor advertising for a principle, but if they would accept it they would get their share, perhaps more. Not because brewers and distillers like Gannett and the rest of them but because of the thousands of potential customers, good old two-lasted drinkers, who read these newspapers even if they are dry.

The New York Times, the Hartford Times, the Nashville Banner and scores of newspapers which supported a Republican candidate for the first time this year didn't get any advertising awards for it and again for a principle they risked their bright, the favor of their Democratic readers. I suppose that isn't a free press. I'm putting this political slant on it because it wasn't until the press went anti-New Deal that you began complaining about it. When your first went in the Cabinet you slobbered all over us. And, by the way, you sit pretty close in the Cabinet to a couple of great big newspaper publishers, Jesse Jones and Frank Knox. What about them? Probably Jesse is all right and Frank all wrong.

For the love of Mike, Harold, if the American press wanted to be kept by anybody, what a lot of suckers they'd be to be fooling around with advertisers when the pickin's is so good in Washington. If you could just sit in on some of the battles your "controlled press" goes through to get a teeny-weeny little bit of advertising out of the birds you think are "keeping" us you'd be as surprised as

John Lewis was on election night.

"Not A Bad Egg" You're not a bad egg, and I ought to be liking you, but you said something about newspapers needing to take inventory, think it over and reform, 'cause they took a beating along with Willie—that they ought to get themselves free or what have you.

Now I always thought that a free and independent citizen was a fellow who said what he thought whether or not it sounded good to his customers. I never dreamed that he was a fellow who always tried to be on the band wagon. I wonder if you really think that newspapers are so dumb that at least half of them did not see the handwriting on the wall at least as soon as you did. If you'll grant that much you'll have to admit that there's a symptom of freedom in fighting a lost cause when you feel sure that a majority of your customers are acin' you. I haven't seen politicians doing much of it lately, 'cept the Socialists and Prohs.

Then too, brother, if I were you I wouldn't lose much sleep about the waning influence of the press. Never in history has it been greater. What's bothering you is a receding influence of the independent press that WAS kept—by the boys in power. I know. I shudder. I shudder. It was all peaches when our gang was in, but we swapped subscriptions for potatoes when they were out.

Time Has Changed

'Taint like that now, Harold. George Gallup (and you know now what a square guy he is) can show you that less than a third of newspaper readers stop at the editorial page where the brains department "voiced its devilish power." Ninety-eight per cent of 'em read the newspapers where your stuff runs. The influence was there, Harold. It just looks like your boys did a better selling job, must have had a cuter copy in the papers, same as on the air. Even at that, a 10% shift would have made your resignation sick.

Truth is, old timer, that the newspapers have been acin' you but just the same they have been printing your stuff and that of all your pals. They haven't held any of it back, not even when you blast them. Most people are reading newspapers than any time in history. They are reading better, more free and more independent papers and they are getting both sides.

Just because they don't agree with a paper they don't get all hot and bothered like you do. Now that folks get both sides, unlike the old-time kept press you are thinking about, they decide for themselves. It just happens that right now your boys are cutting the capers they like and about 10% more of them went your way than went the other. If coming within 10% of being right is anything against newspapers then I'm the Mikado. Even Mr. Roosevelt only came within 56% of it.

Ballyhoo the Bunk

You are right about one thing however. That old time ballyhoo about the "power of the press" is the bunk. I hadn't heard of it for years. The power of the press is and always was nothing more than the delivery of a message. The power lies in the message. True advertising, true of news columns, Americans always have thought for themselves. They get the message. They vote for the man they like or they buy a can of beans the same way.

It is and always will be the newspaper which carries all of the messages, all of the news. Did you ever hear the radio, without charging for it, read an advertisement that appeared in a newspaper? Well Harold, old boy, the paid stuff your folks put on the air all was printed free by the newspapers. The newspapers even dug up the audience to listen to you. And now you say the press isn't free. Guess you didn't think it through.

Makes A Proposition

Getting back to that stuff about being controlled by advertisers I'll make a proposition. Have some advertiser (pick the biggest one you know) call any reputable leading newspaper and say that he has 10 pages of advertising—and that's something—which he will give the paper if it will let him dictate or even modify its news or editorial policy. If the paper (and don't pull any slyster sheets on me) falls for it that will give you another speech. I'll print it, buy you an Imperial crab dinner at Harzer's and agree to vote for a fourth term.

You can put this down in the book. If ever a man was made spoken for the freedom and independence of the American people that word will come from the last genuine issue of a newspaper and the imprisoned pen of a modern John Peter Zenger.

Anyway, Harold, why not make a plume out of the smear brush and fall in the parade with the rest of the folks behind America and the President. The newspapers are. You'll keep on talking this way for the first thing you know you'll believe it.

Hoping this finds you well. FRANK TRIPP.

Birmingham Retail Merchants Association

Christmas

GOODWILL PROGRAM

Presenting

A Giant Children's Christmas Party

(Date To Be Announced)

\$100⁰⁰ In Prizes for Best Decorated Homes

Mis-Placed Article Contest Entry Blank

- MERCHANTS COOPERATING Mis-Placed Article
- JOHN BALDWIN, INC., 190 W. Maple
 - BECK CLEANERS, 332 N. Woodward
 - BIRMINGHAM FRUIT CO., 124 N. Woodward
 - BODINE NEWS, 172 N. Woodward
 - CHEER SHOP, 191 So. Woodward
 - CUNNINGHAM DRUG CO., Woodward at Maple
 - DICKINSON'S, 272 W. Maple
 - HAYMAN'S MARKET, 121 So. Woodward
 - HI-WAY FURNITURE MART, 1532 S. Woodward
 - HUSTON HARDWARE, N. Woodward
 - INDIAN CRAFT SHOP, 116 S. Woodward
 - KAY BAUM SHOP, Hanna Bldg.
 - KRESGE'S, No. Woodward
 - LA BELLE'S, West Maple
 - LEONARD ELECTRICAL CO., W. Maple
 - MCBRIDE TEA ROOM, 124 W. Maple
 - MCBRIDE HARDWARE, 128 S. Woodward
 - MCKEE'S SERVICE, 264 N. Woodward
 - MILK'S AUTO SUPPLY, Woodward at Merrill
 - MORTIMER'S, 136 N. Woodward
 - MULHOLLAND'S, 233 N. Woodward
 - OLSEN'S MARKET, 120 S. Woodward
 - PARMENTER, FLOREST, 159 W. Maple
 - PECK'S, 108 S. Woodward
 - R. B. HOSE SHOP, 133 N. Woodward
 - SELLS ELECTRIC, 288 W. Maple
 - SPIRE BROS. MARKET, 180 W. Maple
 - SHAIN'S MARKET, 105 W. Maple
 - SERNAL'S AUTO SUPPLY, 408 S. Woodward
 - STROUP'S MARKET, Wabek Bldg., W. Maple
 - TWIN SHOP, West Maple Ave.
 - VAUGHAN HATS, 153 W. Maple
 - WABEEK PHARMACY, 296 W. Maple
 - WALTON JEWELRY, West Maple Ave.
 - WILLIAM'S BOOT SHOP, W. Maple Ave.
 - WILSON DRUG CO., 101 N. Woodward
 - WOOLWORTH, 5 and 10, S. Woodward Near Maple

AND A BIG, NEW, EXCITING

"Mis-Placed Article"

CONTEST

\$3 or More in Trade Weekly

For Finding the most "Mis-Placed Articles" in BIRMINGHAM STORE WINDOWS

- CONTEST \$15.00—First Prize
 \$10.00—Second Prize
 STARTS TODAY \$ 5.00—Third Prize
 AND ENDS
 SATURDAY NIGHT \$ 3.00—Fourth Prize
 DECEMBER 21st \$ 2.00—Fifth Prize

Birmingham Merchants Will Give Prizes to Have You Inspect Their Windows During the Holiday Season!

HERE ARE THE CONTEST RULES:

- Any person may enter contest—no age limit.
- Contestants must "see" all windows of stores cooperating in the contest. List not more than one "mis-placed article" in the space opposite the name of each store printed in the contest entry blank. (There will be just ONE "mis-placed article" in each store window.)
- A "mis-placed article" is any article of merchandise in the window which is obviously not sold by a store displaying it. For instance, a shoe in a Jeweler's window, a man's tie in a Ladies' Ready to Wear store, a bottle of ketchup in a 5 and 10c store. If you find no such article, mark in the space "none." Merchants have the right to simulate the sale of the article to further mislead contestants.
- "Mis-Placed Articles" will be displayed in these store windows each week from Thursday morning, November 28th, to Saturday night, December 21st, and will be changed every Wednesday.
- All answers must be PRINTED in the space in the entry blank.
- All contest entry blanks must be brought or mailed to the Birmingham Eccentric office not later than Tuesday, 5 P. M. Entry blanks post marked after that time of each week, or brought in, will not be considered. However, get your entry blank in as early as possible—for, in case of tie, the first entry blank with the least number of errors submitted to The Eccentric wins First Prize.
- The name and address of each contestant must be PRINTED on each entry blank in the space provided at the bottom.
- The decision of the judges will be final. Winners will be announced in The Eccentric each week. Winners must call for prizes within two weeks after being notified or prizes are void.
- There are 5 prizes; they will be awarded to those contestants whose entry blanks record the most "mis-placed articles" of merchandise correctly. There are no duplicate prizes—in case of tie the first entry blank submitted with the least number of errors wins First Prize. The entry blank with the next least number of errors wins Second Prize, etc. LET'S GO!

PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS HERE

NAME _____ AGE _____
 ADDRESS _____

Bring or Mail to Eccentric Office Before 5 P. M. Tuesday

A VERY FEW DOLLARS PER MONTH

Will Fix Up Your Home

Why put up with crowded living conditions—why put off needed repairs—when only a few dollars a month will pay for a complete remodeling job on your home?

We will gladly cooperate with you and your contractor in helping you with plans and ideas that will bring new beauty and new comfort into your home.

LAWSON & SON

484 FOREST PHONE 111
 Lumber . Fuel . Builders' Supplies