

Public Oblivious as Censors Move to Steal Basic Rights

While attention of the nation is being diverted by international crises that appear to have no ending, the people who know better than you what is good for you are taking every advantage.

The movement is called by various names, but they all add up to censorship—the right of people without authority to decide what is best for every American to see and read.

Already there is a movement in the Congress to regulate TV and radio to a greater extent than at present. If the government can control a TV station's choice of programming, how much time remains till it can tell the nation's press what to print?

Already Washington has denied the taxpayer the right to know about many of its blunders by stamping the data "confidential," thus making a traitor of anyone who tries to insist on his right to know what's being done with the money.

The nation's press largely is falling in line with the censors, stupidly digging their own graves—and the graves of everyone doomed to live in ignorance through suppression of information.

In 1799, John Ward Fenno, a leading newspaper editor, called the papers "base, servile, venal, polluted foundations of society—the most ignorant, mercenary, and vulgar automations that ever were moved by the continual rusting wires of sordid mercantile avarice . . ."

The majority of the nation's press has done little to prove him wrong. The people sit idly by, content in working a full week for half a check, serene in their delusion that "they wouldn't be in Washington if they didn't know what they were doing."

And they're not there, as Mort Sahl ingeniously has pointed out.

The newspapers that go along with suppression of printed material—no matter what the content—are proving Fenno was right. Who is going to pay for a paper after prohibition of the publisher's right to decide on the truth of what he prints?

It always starts innocently. Every dictator has begun with quite logical reasons for suppressing certain kinds of publications. Once the law is passed (remember the income tax), it is a simple matter to extend it to cover any subject the censor considers unprintable.

Under censorship being planned for TV and radio, a beautiful and moving drama such as last week's Playhouse 90 could be censored off the air just because its theme was rape.

Under censorship being put into effect here in Torrance, magazines are being banned from newsstands because the censor believes they are objectionable. The censor, curiously, never is affected by these publications. Only some hypothetical psychopathic child is imperiled, they say, trying to ban the books from one and all.

There is not one scintilla of evidence that there is a relationship between so-called indecent literature and any criminal tendency. To the contrary, the best psychiatric opinion is that so-called indecent magazines are beneficial—especially for the potential offender, since they give him a harmless outlet for his inclinations.

Still the censors vainly grope for evidence that there is a link between indecency and crime. But there is none. If the censors, through this or any other type of gimmick, get the first law passed to suppress any type of publication, look out for the next step.

The next step will be death of your freedom to be informed on any subject whatever.

The censors can give no definition of obscenity, of decency, or morals. There is a definition for a censor: traitor, enemy of freedom.

Who is best able to decide what you should see and hear? Unquestionably, YOU are.

Engineers' Wives Plan Business Meeting Today

Members of the Engineers' Wives Club will review club rules and discuss past events at a meeting today at 8 p.m. in the home of Mrs. Eddie G. Cope, 3430 W. 228th St. Refreshments will be served.



THE ZENGER CASE

Freedom to Read Belongs to Those Who Fight for It

The court was tense and silent. "Step forward, John Peter Zenger!" said the judge. Zenger felt his throat go dry. Alone, he stepped to the bar to learn his fate.

Most of the audience knew him—New York wasn't very big in 1735. Some didn't like him—he was short-tempered and stubborn—but that didn't matter now. When the brave little printer stepped to the bar, most people in the courtroom were sympathetic.

The New York colonial government had asked him to tone down the critical editorials he was running in his newspaper. They wanted no criticism of their decisions. Adverse comment on their ordinances was forbidden.

"Get out of my shop!" Zenger had roared to the government representatives who told him to behave.

"It would have been so much easier if I had agreed," he said later. "They wanted to cut out things here and there. But I couldn't. I just couldn't."

John Peter Zenger had come to America from Prussia so he could think for himself. As it turned out, he did something precious for every American then—and later.

The colonial government had thrown him in jail and held him incommunicado 10 months. But they couldn't break his will. Now he was on trial.

"Mr. Foreman," said the judge to the jury, "what is your verdict?"

"Our verdict," said the foreman, "is innocent!" Zenger had proven that the people had a right to a free press!

In 1791, when the Bill of Rights was added to our Constitution, the words were carefully spelled out in the First Amendment . . .

"Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech or of the press . . ."

This is essential to freedom. There are no ifs, no ands, no buts. The Supreme Court has decreed that these words . . . "shall make no law" . . . apply equally to the federal government and to every state in the union.

These words . . . "shall make no law" . . . were bold words and in their day unprecedented. They were written by men who understood that democracy has risks, but that it is the only way of life worth living.

And these words for free speech, free press, henceforward sustained men in their darkest hours, inspired men to break chains of tyranny, to endure unimaginable hardships. They, in fact, were the birthright of freedom.

What is it that democracy imposes on us all? It is at the same time a right and a privilege and an opportunity—and that is freedom of choice.

Here is the ultimate control in our society—the freedom to accept or reject . . . to take or turn down . . . to approve or disapprove. And this most meaningful freedom belongs to all of our people—to adults, to parents, and children.

"Who," asked Zeno, the Greek philosopher, "is in a position to say: 'Only my way is right?'"

Like Zenger and the Greeks before him, we are constantly struck by differences—and changes—in customs and opinions. Intelligent people have always been wary of the censor who says with finality, "My ways are right!"

Take a simple matter like women's bathing suits. In 1910 it was a misdemeanor for a woman in a bathing suit to show her knees.

Take liquor. "Though shalt not" didn't go over very well with Americans—even those who didn't drink.

Look at books. In 1930 you could have gone to jail for owning a copy of Ulysses or Lady Chatterley's Lover.

In 1921, indiscriminate and conflicting state and local censorship almost forced the motion-picture industry out of business. In several states, for example, it was regarded unlawful in films to show a woman smoking a cigarette.

An inland state prohibited the display of girls in bathing suits, while a seacoast state, boasting one of the finest beaches in America, saw no impropriety in such scenes.

Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, has suggested the answer most Americans would probably approve—voluntary and reasonable controls by free men themselves! Censorship by decree, by fiat—whether by government or pressure groups—is something else.

"The only worth-while censorship is self-discipline," said Johnston. "It's the only doctrine free people find acceptable."

The idea seems appropriate for the press, films, TV, radio, and magazines and books—all areas where the precious freedoms in the Bill of Rights are at stake.

KC Expands Committee

James Grady of Rollingstone Paul Hogan, Joe Bonchon-Hills, chairman of Los Crusas-sky, Albert Cyr, Stan Jakudis council Rancho San An-bowski, Frank McMonagle, tonio money-raising drive, Robert Reuter, Dick Wurm, this week announced the cur-Dick Hoyt, Bill Suchy, Joe rent campaign will close on Rles, and Frank Moreno.

June 3 and added new mem- A final group effort has bers to his committee in anbeen scheduled for the Re-attempt to top last year's rec-dondo Pier during the Mer-ord-breaking drive. morial Day weekend.

The project will end with Money solicited during the presentation of the 11th an-campaign will be used to nual benefit ball at the Hol-maintain and increase the fa-lywood Palladium, June 10, cilities at Rancho San An-Sara Jane Sargent of Tor-tonio, known as the "Boys rance will be Los CrusadosTown of the West."

council candidate for queen of the ball.

Use classified ads for quick New committee members results. Phone DA 5-1515.

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