

# SCOPE OF U. S. JOURNALISM WIDENING

E. L. James, New Managing Editor of New York Times, Believes Broadening Tendency and Retention of Objective Viewpoint Encouraging Sign that Newspapers Are Progressing

By JOHN W. PERRY

THE continually broadening scope of American journalism in its enterprising coverage of the news of the world and its co-ordination of that foreign news with the news at home is the most apparent and encouraging sign that the American newspaper as an institution is progressing naturally and wholesomely, Edwin L. James, the new managing editor of the *New York Times*, told EDITOR & PUBLISHER this week.

And still more indicative of the newspaper's inherent soundness, in Mr. James's opinion, is the fact that while striving for a comprehensive foreign report the American press generally has not lost its objective viewpoint, its emphasis on news as differentiated from opinion, its honest attempt to draw the line between interpretation and partisanship. With the present complexity of the international situation, and the gravity of affairs both at home and abroad, Mr. James feels that impersonality and completeness of news presentation, should now, as it has in the past, maintain its inviolable status. The demands of readers for unbiased news has remained unchanged, increasing, even, numerically in the face of universal economic depression.

Mr. James has come by his great esteem for news, not from watching circulations, as have many managing editors, but from a 22-year distinguished career as a reporter. Since the early days of the World War he has filed a steady and amazingly voluminous stream of copy from all sections of Europe to the *Times*, representing news of the great political changes that took place there in nearly every country, doings of world-known personalities, and all the other events that come under the definition of news. The authenticity of his foreign report had become a standard element in American journalism. His executive ability he had demonstrated in building up the *Times*' European news service which, together with the service from other parts of the globe, represents the largest foreign news service of any American paper. Although for more than a year he has been acting as assistant to his predecessor, F. T. Birchall, the former acting managing editor, who is now in Europe, it is safe to surmise that the new *Times* editorial executive is a reporter above everything else, one whose knowledge of news has come from intimate contact with events of world-wide significance, and whose ability as an editor has grown naturally with his appreciation of news values.

The emergence of the United States as a great world power since the war and the increasing interest of the American public in European and world affairs, together with the expansion in size of the American newspaper, have been the main factors in the increase of foreign news in the press of the United States, Mr. James said.

"Nowhere else," he said, "has the completeness of the foreign news presentation been so well accomplished as in the United States. The scope of some London papers may be even greater than our own, but they do not print nearly the amount of foreign news matter. Some German papers emulate the American method, but outside of these, Continental journalism is something rather different from what we are accustomed to.

"But there are several attractive features of journalism on the Continent. In some cases writers on European papers have attained international recognition for the manner in which they can interpret political happenings. Some of them—such as Pertinax of *L'Echo de Paris*—have become so expert that their views are of great importance and are reprinted everywhere. Their job is to take the facts and to tell what they mean—not merely to

present the news for what it is worth, as we most often do here.

"One of the most heard criticisms of foreign news writers for American papers is that they put their own inter-

pretation on certain news events. I think, generally speaking, that the criticism is not merited. Not, understand, that American writers are free from doing so. There is a great deal of personal interpretation in dispatches to American newspapers. But I feel that in some cases it is quite necessary in order to explain the situation for the American reader. The plain unadorned news from a foreign country may mean little to many readers unless the background and other salient data are supplied. Of course there is a great deal of difference between the kind of interpretation I am referring to, and that other kind that uses the facts to further the personal interests of the reporter or what he represents. I mean honest interpretation of facts, not partisanship."



Edwin L. James

Mr. James is of the opinion that the current wide-spread criticisms of the press do not indicate a growing disrespect for the profession among the public.

"I noticed in the papers this week," he said, "that nearly every newspaper in New York showed a gain in circulation over the past six months. And this, remember, is a time of depression. People are giving up other necessities, but they are not foregoing their daily newspapers. To me that clearly indicates an established demand for news. If the people of this country are still buying newspapers in increasing numbers, can anyone say that they are disrespectful of the institution that furnishes it to them?"

"I do believe, however, that the newspaper in broadening its scope so efficiently has scattered the interests of its readers so widely that there are fewer blind followers of the newspaper camp than there used to be, fewer who are willing to go all the way along on certain 'campaigns' or 'drives' of newspapers. With the news so well diversified, readers want to make up their own minds about things."

The new managing editor of the *Times* is a short, solidly built man, with dark hair and eyes and explosive speech. There is little formality in his manner, and no guff and ostentation in his make-up. With the multifarious duties attending the considerable job

that he holds, he talks readily and easily, without pomposity or fanfare. He was born in 1890 in Irvington, Va., and educated at Randolph-Macon College at Ashland, Va., graduating in

1909. The following year he went to work as a reporter on the *Baltimore Sun*. In 1912 he was assistant news editor of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, leaving there in 1914 to become copy reader on the *Albany (N. Y.) Knickerbocker Press*. The following year he joined the *New York Times*, first as a copy reader and then as a reporter. In what regard his work was held at the *Times* is indicated by the fact that in 1918, three years later, he was sent to Europe as chief correspondent with the American Army.

His work as war correspondent was brilliant and exciting and intelligent, and his dispatches became a permanent feature on the *Times*' front page. After the Armistice he went with the American Army of Occupation to Coblenz, Germany, and from there to Paris, where he helped cover the last few months of the peace conference. From 1919 to 1925 he was the Paris correspondent of the *Times*, during which time he worked in building up the *Times*' European news organization. He became European correspondent in 1925, travelling throughout the Continent. He came to New York as Mr. Birchall's assistant in December, 1930.

Mr. James is a prolific writer. Going back over the *Times*' files of the years he was abroad reveals an unending stream of copy, day after day, covering nearly every important political event that occurred in that time, talking to statesmen, and finding important news everywhere he turned. There are many news stories written concisely, understandingly, authoritatively. There are innumerable feature articles on all phases of Continental life. For a number of years he has had a regular department in the *Sunday Times* where he interpreted the news of the week. It would be difficult to compute how many thousands of words he has written on armaments and reparations, the League of Nations, and other international problems. In one year, 1930, the *Times* carried dispatches from him filed from Berlin, London, Moscow, Paris, The Hague, Vienna, Warsaw, and other places.

At one time Mr. James came into the public notice as a part of what nearly

turned out to be an "international incident." That was when William B. Shearer, the big-navy propagandist, made the accusation in a letter, made public in September, 1929, that his jingo views on the Geneva Naval Conference in 1927 had been made public through Mr. James, Wythe Williams, Drew Pearson, and other correspondents. Mr. Shearer's boastful charges, made to those in the United States who were employing him, were completely discredited in the Senatorial investigation of the matter, and Mr. James' denial of the propagandist's irresponsible charges was printed in the Congressional Record.

One of Mr. James' most spectacular stories, and one that was read the country over, was his account of Colonel Lindbergh's arrival in Paris after his miraculous flight from New York. In telling how he tried to follow the *Times*' instructions to "isolate Lindbergh," he managed to pack in all the hysterical excitement and confusion of the event, and the story was widely reprinted. EDITOR & PUBLISHER carried it in full May 27, 1927. Mr. James said this week that that had been a "routine" assignment; the war and its political repercussions were to him his most engrossing work.

Mr. James closed the interview with a word on newspaper training. Although he is slow to give general advice to beginners, feeling that in some cases it would not be applicable, he believes that experience on a small newspaper is valuable. "On a large newspaper," he said, "reporters are liable to get in a 'rut'—I do not say 'rut'—and they cannot climb up in the organization as fast as they might if they understood newspaper work from the press room, composing room, circulation, and other angles. On a small paper they can learn type and make-up, and then can learn how to talk to printers. Knowing this they have greater chances of advancement."

## URGE CUT FOR MAILERS

Printers Ask Union to Follow Others—Big Six Sustains Hewson

Mailers' Union No. Six of New York has been requested by the New York Employing Printers' Association to arrange a supplemental agreement on wages similar to that undertaken by four other unions in the printing industry. In a letter to Charles Gallagher, president of the union, M. F. Hurley of the employers' conference committee said the other four unions had agreed to a temporary seven per cent reduction on all basic wage scales and to rotate the men on a basis of four days a week.

Typographical Union No. Six remains opposed to any suggestions of wage cuts from the printers' group, according to a general vote taken at a meeting of members April 3.

## COCA COLA IN DAILIES

(By telegraph to EDITOR & PUBLISHER)

CHICAGO, April 7—First copy of the \$500,000 Coca Cola newspaper advertising test campaign in more than 50 dailies was released this week. The schedule totals 1,080,000 lines and is appearing in six large cities and surrounding community trading areas. The major cities on the list are Boston, Columbus, Atlanta, Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Salt Lake City. Eighteen newspapers in the six metropolitan centers will be used and 34 dailies in 32 surrounding towns are on the list. After an absence from newspapers for seven years with the exception of occasional local ads in cities where distributors are located, Coca Cola Company sees the need of stimulating sales in certain strategic points. The D'Arcy Advertising Agency, St. Louis, is releasing the campaign.