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Evolution of the Fourth Estate

Richard A. Haste Speaks of the Editors Now and As They Used To Be.

During the formation of that most intangible of all important things, the British Constitution, the Lords, the Clergy and the Commons were the three pillars that were supposed to sustain the structure of British liberty. They were known as the three estates. Here was a trinity second only to the Godhead. Combined they constituted parliament—and parliament was omnipotent.

The lords and the clergy having mutual interests sat together, but the commons sat apart as was seemly for the commons. As time wore on jealousies sprang up among these estates over their respective prerogatives and powers. Thus it came about that Edmund Burke in the house of commons, commenting on the comparative influence of the three estates, admonished his hearers not to overlook the fourth estate—the press—represented in the reporters' gallery.

And so it came about that the press was known and recognized as the Fourth Estate, not by any constitution or any law of the land, for it had no place in the machinery of government—its members had no seat in parliament and no votes; they did not answer to roll call nor take part in the divisions, but they made and unmade ministries.

From the time of the inception of the printing press, through the age of pamphleteering to the present—the newspaper age—the evolution of the fourth estate in England has been uninterrupted along the lines of social and political progress. This increased power has been gained at the expense of the clergy and the lords.

The aristocracy of the church and the aristocracy of birth have had to make room for the aristocracy of brains. For more than a century the fourth estate has been the medium through which the intelligence of the British empire has been—the forum where economics and education have been discussed for the benefit of the people. Here the press has retained its influence because, right or wrong, it has stood for something vital, and the fourth estate still represented by the daily press exerts its pristine power. Not so in the United States.

The course of evolution has been checked and diverted from its original channel. The daily press no longer represents the fourth estate. This fact as well as the reasons therefor, are well worth noting.

We of America inherit our dominant tastes and tendencies from England. We inherit, willingly or otherwise, the principles of British government and, to a large extent, the common law. It is true that in the formation of our national government we did not recognize the clergy as a government unit, but we did honor the house of lords by the creation of a senate to represent the aristocracy of the states, and which by a natural evolution has become the representative of the aristocracy of wealth.

The fourth estate we inherit entire. As in England it was not recognized in the scheme of government but nevertheless it had much to do with determining the scheme of government. Here in America during the formative period, the press was the guiding power—it was the dominant estate. The men who reached the top of the public through the press were the real leaders of opinion.

Ben Franklin was the first noble representative of the fourth estate in the new born American commonwealth—the first great newspaper editor. He represented as no one had before and as few have since, the aristocracy of brains. He had opinions to express, and he expressed them. He put his personality into the discussion of public questions. It was Franklin speaking and not a mere machine, and therein lies the secret. He has had some worthy successors during the last century—real men, editors whose personalities dominated the fourth estate. America's moral as well as its political power; but today that race is well nigh extinct. The great editor—the leader of public thought—has been pushed from his throne and in his place sits a nameless thing, a spiritless, soulless corporation—a publishing company.

It was near the middle of the century just passed that the fourth estate in America reached high tide as a factor in the problems of government and as a moulder of public opinion. The editorial page was then the heart and brains of the paper. Here it was that the editor discussed fearlessly the moral and political questions of the day with no thought of the effect his position may have on the business department of the publication. The editors of the then great newspapers were known by name, not only to the American people, but also overseas. They were men of culture, of brains, of experience, and, above all, of character. They were leaders whom the public delighted to follow. They were characters with reputations to sustain. They were responsible to the world, and they knew and felt their responsibility.

It was not the New York Tribune high prerogatives and left it without influence among the thinking. The rise of commercialism marked the beginning of the decline of the fourth estate in the United States. Corporations and individuals for that matter, desiring special privileges needed special legislation, and it was soon discovered that it was cheaper to buy newspapers and with them control legislation, than to buy legislators direct. Besides newspapers when once bought stayed bought. It is not an uncommon thing for a great industrial or transportation corporation to own outright, either directly or indirectly, a dozen big newspapers and control a hundred others. The Hill roads, for instance, have a string of newspapers from St. Paul to Puget Sound. And the very telegraphic news that appears in nine-tenths of the daily papers of the United States is controlled absolutely by a well known trust that openly defies the laws, while the man at its head with his ill-gotten millions founds universities. To what extent this news is colored is difficult to determine. I have no doubt that in all matters affecting the Standard Oil or any of its interests, the news bears the taint of its origin. The writer for a number of years was the "editor" (?) (the interrogation mark is mine) of a certain well known metropolitan daily the policy of which was determined in the office of a railway magnate, while the detailed instructions as to editorial expression came from his private secretary.

Such is the condition of the fourth estate. From the country weekly to the city daily we find few free moral agents. Those who are not owned, stock and bonds, body and soul, by corporations with interests to protect, are rendered helpless and opinionless by the fear of losing their advertising patronage. If the System cannot reach the owner of the paper directly—if he be proof against its moral suasion, it can reach the advertiser, and under our modern methods no matter how independent a publication may be it has one vulnerable point—the business office.

During the fight recently made by the railroads against national legislative control, the fourth estate became the battle-ground. A large sum of money, estimated at not less than \$2,000,000 was raised for the campaign by a pool of the railroad interests. One effort to influence the public through the country press. Over a million copies of a "Magazine Section" were sent out weekly to all who would use them, free and with express paid. But the bulk of the work was done through a publicity bureau that card-indexed every editor and publisher of a paper in the United States. If he yielded to gentle influence, all right—he was sent proper copy to use, but if he was incorrigible or stiff-necked, his record was looked up, and if weak spots were found in his personal or financial armor, he was promptly put on the rack.

The result of this campaign demonstrated the weakness of the fourth estate as a factor in moulding public opinion—people have little or no confidence in the opinions of the average newspaper.

This characterization of the press must not be considered as universal. There are a few great newspapers that are still true to the best traditions of the fourth estate—but they are not money makers, and it requires money to run a great newspaper. Unless a reaction towards sane and honest journalism sets in soon, they, too, will be compelled to join the great majority.

This evolutionary struggle for survival within the fourth estate has brought forth a new type of journalism, the type represented by the Pulitzer and Hearst papers. Here we have the finest of yellow journalism coupled with fearless editorial expression; news columns filled with the most sensational claptrap side by side with editorials expressing the loftiest sentiment. The excuse offered for this unholy marriage of virtue and vice is that the times demand it—that the sensation is necessary to secure the circulation—and circulation is essential to a hearing—the masses must be reached if they are to be influenced.

Mr. Pulitzer himself is said to prefer the New York Evening Post to all other American newspapers. When asked why he did not publish such a paper, he replied, "I want to talk to a nation, not to a select committee."

The decline of the newspaper as a guiding force, left the great field of the fourth estate open to the magazines. These publications were for many years regarded as a means of recreation only, and once came to the front as forums for the discussion of something to say could, through this media, reach the public without running foul of the business office. Here crimes could be exposed—great crimes as well as crimes of the great. A few magazine editors with their ear to the ground heard the rumble of a coming storm, and boldly pre-empted the estate abandoned by the daily press. Their reward was great—the people hailed them as deliverers, and their circulation and their revenue grew apace. At last the high obligations of the Fourth Estate were to be shouldered by the great national weeklies and the militant monthlies.

That was three years ago. The public is now much wiser regarding the methods of millionaires than it once was. A few of the mailed knights remain in the list, avowed champions of honest business, a square deal and clean government, but some of the foremost in the lists of three years ago seem to have grown weary of the contest. Have they been made to feel the pressure of the thumbcrew, or has public approval been outbid by private interest? Why this silence and inactivity where there was once the shout of battle and the clash of arms? Is the magazine to go the way of the daily press? Is the fourth estate to sink again to the level of the American House of Lords? It has been demonstrated that a magazine may give the truth to the world and live. It must be expected however, that any publication which challenges the existing order will feel the heavy hand of secret and persistent opposition. Publish to the world social or financial rottenness, and you are a "muckraker." But in this crisis the "muckraker" is as essential to our economic and moral sanitation as is the "drain man."

This is not a preachment on the duties of the public press and its moral obligations to organized society, but the following observation is so axiomatic that it may not be out of place in this connection. Whenever a newspaper, posing as a member of the fourth estate, is run purely by a business proposition or as a special advocate, and in the chase after dollars or in its efforts to accomplish other things, suppresses or garbles the news and devotes its editorial influence to selfish ends alone, it becomes a public menace, worse than a venal public servant—worse than a pirate on the high seas.—Richard A. Haste.

Asquith on Conference. (Continued from page 1.) as unanimous. The Daily Graphic observes that autonomy and standardization are the leading principles. The Mail proclaims it one more proof of the large patriotism and imperial spirit of the British people. The Morning Post says it is the foundation of a great imperial system of defence.

The Standard says the scheme will secure the outlying portions of the Empire against any attack, but that of a first class fleet and hopes the highest posts in the Imperial navy will be open to colonial sailors. The Daily Telegraph thinks the statement is "the most epoch making announcement of our time," but adds respecting the Canadian scheme that a few isolated ships of that sort count for practically nothing. The important point, however, is that a start is to be made and the end no one can presume to tell.

As is perhaps natural the Liberal press takes advantage of the occasion. The Chronicle declares that the result of the conference is another Liberal triumph. The Leader remarks that the new scheme is animated throughout by the same zeal for the freedom of local liberties which has marked in the past, the great triumphs of the Liberal colonial policy. The News makes one criticism remarking that there is no reason to modify the views of all "competent English authorities" that such scattered forces will be of very little use and argues that if the empire be imperilled it will be in European waters. The News adds that the older colonies have really become independent. The Times says that broadly reviewed, the conclusions of the conference justify high expectations. It welcomes particularly the creation of the Pacific squadron and concludes that the proposals open a new period of Imperial history.

RECIPROCIITY FOR DOCTORS

Canadian Medical Association Are in Favor of Having Inter-Provincial Registration and Are Taking Steps to Have It Carried Out.

At the meeting of the Canadian Medical Association held in Winnipeg last week, a resolution was passed favoring reciprocity between the different provinces.

Toronto will be the next meeting place of the association, and following the usual custom, a Toronto man was elected president for the ensuing year, Dr. Adam H. Wright, a veteran practitioner of that city and professor of obstetrics in Toronto university since 1897, was chosen for the high honor. The finance committee which will also act as the publishing committee and have charge of the new medical journal to be launched shortly by the association, is composed of Doctors J. T. Potheringay, S. J. Turnstall, Murray MacLaren, F. N. G. Starr and James Bell. Dr. George Elliott of Toronto was re-elected general secretary, and Dr. H. B. Small of Ottawa was elected treasurer. As a testimony of his very valuable work at different meetings of the association, Dr. W. J. Mayo, of Rochester, Minn., was elected to honorary membership.

The discussion on interprovincial registration was long and animated but all the speakers were agreed on the general principles, however, much they differed in their opinions as to the best course to pursue to arrive at the desired goal. After the opening addresses of the mover and second order of the resolution, accredited representatives from each of the provinces took the platform. So great was the interest and so many of the members were desirous of speaking that the chairman was finally forced to call a halt in order to get on with other business. The resolution was as follows:

Moved by R. D. Powell, Ottawa, seconded by Dr. R. S. Thornton, Delpraine:

That the Canadian Medical Association now in session urge upon Dr. Roddick the great importance of impressing upon the government and parliament of Canada the desirability of so amending the Canada Medical Act of 1902 that when five or more provinces agree to the provisions and pass the necessary legislation to make it effective, the bill may become law and apply to those provinces which have so legislated.

That in order to strengthen Dr. Roddick's hands a committee be formed from representatives of each of the provinces to consult with him on the provisions of the bill and as to the amendments necessary or desirable, and finally that the various colleges of physicians and surgeons or provincial licensing boards in the Dominion be respectfully invited to nominate at least one of their number to serve on such committee.

Owing to the protracted discussion on inter-provincial or Dominion registration, and the fact that the great majority of the visitors wished to take advantage of the trip on the Red River there was but a very small attendance when Dr. Hastings of Toronto, read the report on the "Milk Problem." The ground covered by the report was similar to that of papers read during the early sessions of the convention. Dominion Analyst Anthony McGill and Dominion Veterinary Surgeon Rutherford were present and both addressed the meeting.

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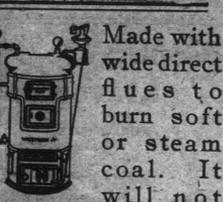
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and Frederick Lieb; The New Hamburg Manufacturing Company, Limited; Parsons-Hawkeye Manufacturing Company, Limited; Balcovski & Woodinger; D. A. McDonald; The American-Abell Engine & Thresher Company, Limited, and the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company, Defendants,

There will be offered for sale at the Office of Sheriff Cook, in the City of Regina, at Twelve o'clock noon, on SATURDAY, SEPT. 11, A.D. 1909 The following lands, namely: The East Half of Section Fourteen (14), and the North-West Quarter of Section Three (3), all in Township Nineteen (19), in Range Eighteen (18), West of the Second Meridian, in the Province of Saskatchewan.

TERMS: Twenty-five per cent. of the purchase money to be paid at the time of sale and the balance upon delivery of transfer, duly confirmed, and subject to further conditions approved therein.

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