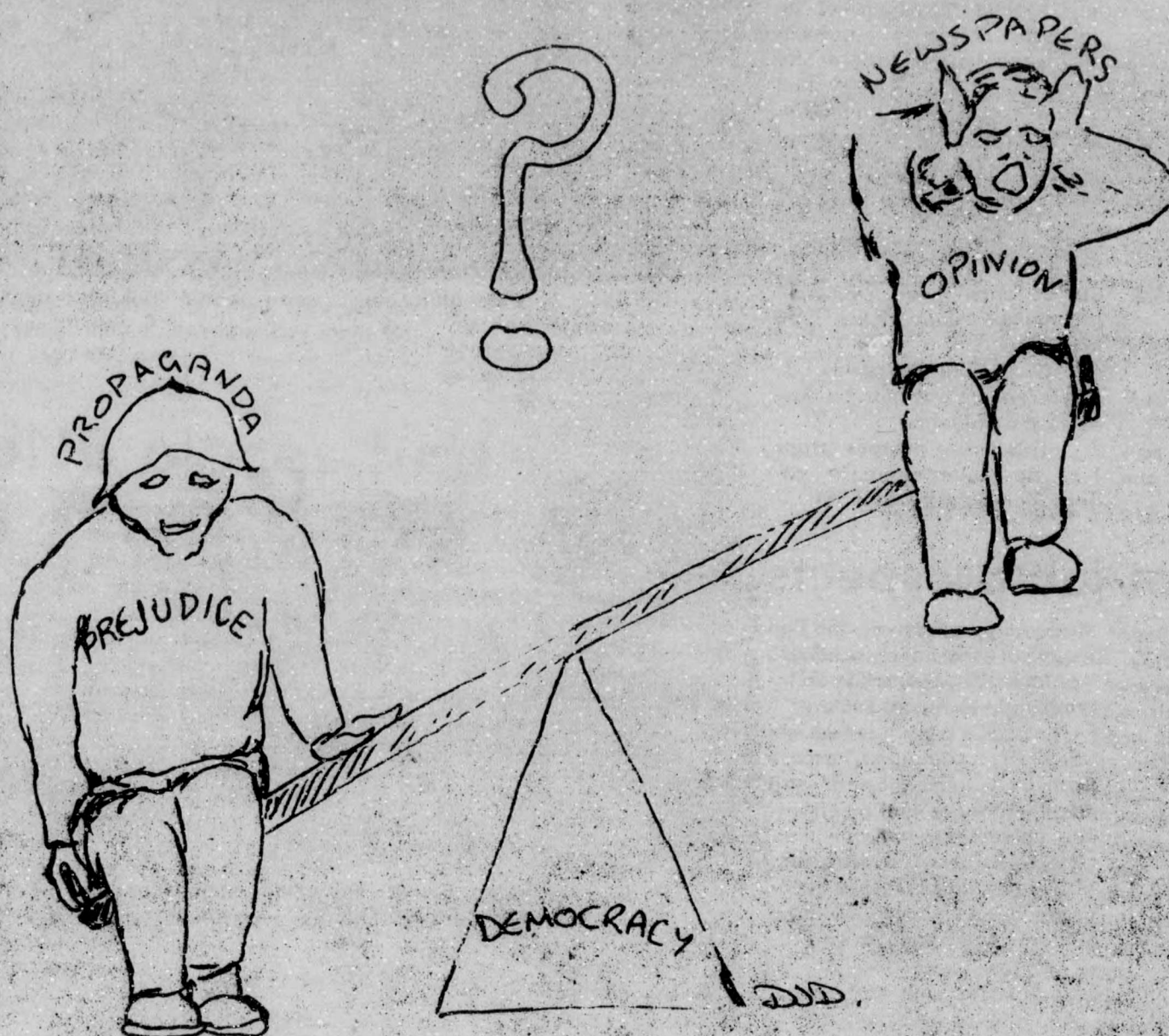


Bias: not just another four letter word



"It is no longer enough to report that fact truthfully. It is now necessary to report the truth about the fact" - Federal Communications Commission.

Recently there have been allegations surrounding the *Brunswickan* as to the bias of certain articles. Often in the pursuit of journalistic accuracy and fairness, the differentiation between "bias" and "opinion" disappears. This at times is difficult to ascertain.

The true definition of "bias" is, "a prejudice, influence, inclination, predisposition towards." On the other hand opinion reads as "What one thinks on a particular question: a belief, a conviction." Certainly one can note a similarity between the two definitions but their characteristics are vastly different.

Opinion is the basis upon which the entire Western concept of journalism is based. The post World War

II period introduced the Social Responsibility Theory of journalism which since that time each and every democratic newspaper in North America has advocated. The *Brunswickan* follows this same premise and is responsible to the students for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication.

Politically speaking the democratic newspaper services the political system by providing information, discussion and perhaps most importantly debate on public affairs. Its vote is to enlighten the public so as to make it capable of self-government. Essentially, the newspaper safeguards the rights of the individual by serving as a watchdog against government. Broadly speaking then, its purpose is to yes, inform and yes, sell, however ultimately the newspaper raises conflict to the mode of discussion.

It is at this point that opinion comes in. Regulations require that the press be accurate; it must not lie. Fact must be identified as fact and opinion as opinion. It is this "opinion" however, that initiates the very rise of debate and characterizes a "good" newspaper. It is the "opinion" that is thought-provoking; that startles; that alerts one to possible controversies.

Without "opinion" in the press there is nothing but what is referred to as authoritarian or totalitarian press which exists solely as an arm of the state.

The potential power of a free press such as we have in our country is tremendous. Along with this potential power or responsibility lies a deeper responsibility to the people; the students.

We then are not the "state's" weapon; we are your weapon.