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Is There Danger in Freedom?

What were called press controls and "news blackouts" were very common in World War II. Such controls, whether directed at the Press or prices, are directives from authority and government which are justified in the strife of war on security reasons. The question of national emergency is not as clearly defined as imagined. A word from the government will turn a time of peace to a time of war and make it possible to impose the controls of which we speak. Today there is no national emergency, comparably speaking, and yet we see today the ominous danger of censorship arising. It is not so much a question of necessity, nor of justification, but rather, this: how are we to main on constitutional paper the pride of our freedoms when in fact that freedom begins more and more to look like licence?

The question is not a new one. Perhaps the most eloquent of all appeals was that made by John Milton to the authorities in question under the iron reign of John Cromwell in England. Milton was the champion for true freedom of the press in a country where this freedom is guarded with great jealousy. The problem today is the same. Just where is that nebulous line of demarcation between liberty and licence? In the one case there is but a freedom by restriction—in the other, an uncensored, uncontrolled right to do as one pleases?

It is obvious there are difficulties. For instance, who is to be allowed to wield this unbridled freedom? what will be the consequences thereof? Is there much injury done to democracy if restrictions are imposed? Who will use and for what reasons, will the power of censorship be applied? As is too the case to answer these questions results in endless argument and at last, exhausted, the debaters resign themselves to an old generality: Good men make good government, and let it go at that.

We must go at the problem from a theoretical point of view for the practical aspects are too bewildering. First of all, given sane censors and just journalists, is there a need then for restrictions? No. But this assumes a uniform discretion that does not exist. Then when can freedom justly be suppressed and most important, how far? The answer apparently is: when the danger of the nation would be jeopardized by the writings of a few. The only difficulty here is, just when is this determinable and how flexible is the distinction. Unfortunately here we go awry, for too often the power of control, far out-reaches the limits of its justification and is reduced to bold-faced suppression of a basic right by an arbitrary power which is itself, despite its duly elected or delegated members, no more discreet than the rest of us.

With the problem before us let us look at the state of world censorship, and see how it reflects our basic recognition of the problem. The hottest political issue, and the most recent, was the damning of certain U. S. columnists by the military (and men) in Korea by way of justification for news blackouts. Said the fighters in effect, people like Aslop and Pearson sit back in Washington and talk of cowards and a defeated U.N. army but if they were here they would see it differently. Of course the responsibility of this piece of writing can be questioned just as the referred-to writers were classed as irresponsible. Not long ago we had the Oatis incident in Prague. Or the Argentina's La Prensa affair. There is the obvious and daily suppression by Moscow in all Communist countries which affords the best example of just what danger lies in the tampering of the freedom of speech. At home we have a "padlock" law in Quebec with its devastating application; in South Africa there is a similar threat in existence.

It can be then seen that we neither have to look far (or have we reason to feel secure), to see the problem is both basic and a present one. At the same we have to recognize that though it is a part of the constitution of many countries, and although it has been proclaimed in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, this freedom is but a liberty so qualified that it has become a licence.

There is an acillary evil attached and that is the suppression of information which, in the light of half-truths and partially revealed facts, tends to confuse and falsify actuality in an unintentional manner, thus arriving at the same falsity that Communism engenders deliberately. The freedom of information is of growing concern to various Editors and as can be seen it is a losing battle if journalism clings to irresponsible sensationalism. For in the choice of two evils, abuse of absolute freedom or security through application of licence, the latter must be the choice in the interest of the whole country.

The duty of the Press is one that must be realized. The Press is the main connection, the control, of a government by its people. The government's duty is to protect basic freedoms. If one cannot be trusted by the other the freedom degenerates. This is the state today. This is the irreconcilable position of censorship that calls itself freedom.

Campus Cynic

How Not To Win Friends

Many pages of modern literature are devoted to learned treatises on, to borrow the title of one of the more famous of these efforts, "How to Win Friends and Influence People". The principal advice given in most of them is to be interested in others and in the world around you. Innumerable hardy souls, a great number of them university students, choose completely to ignore this advice.

"Individualists"

They are pleased to call themselves "individualists", "cynics", "realists"; people who do not seem to conform to their non-conformist pattern are termed as "rah rah boys", "popularity types". The latter are considered extremely amusing, young, gauche, by their supposedly mature, intellectual "superiors". We do not agree. One can be mature and intellectual and still not scoff at others. But let us examine some of these "types" as they occur in our society.

In community life these "cynics" are the ones who scoff at tag days, at service clubs, at relief organizations — at anything which might cause them personally some inconvenience or consume some of their precious time. As citizens, they usually can't be bothered to vote—"There's no one worthy voting for anyhow". They are everywhere—but as this is a college paper, the campus cynic and his attitude are our main concern.

The campus cynic usually believes that a complete lack of interest, especially in the Students' Council and its activities, is a mark of adulthood and intellectual prowess. Indeed, he does not even limit himself to mere disinterest but takes delight in ridiculing everything that the organization says or does. One of his most frequent objects of criticism is this very publication. He calls it "the Artsman's Gazette" if he is an Engineer, complains about the literary style if he is in Arts. He never realizes for a moment that he could, if he would, correct these faults. He merely shrugs, says "Who cares? I just won't bother reading the thing"—and leers at anyone who was so rash as to disagree with him as though he has made an uncommonly clever remark.

The campus cynic also loves to scoff at Council politics. "Who cares about the thing, anyhow?—we don't need it." He is the one who complains that his thirteen dollar student fees are completely wasted. He is not truly interested in himself alone when he makes this latter complaint, for, if he were, he would try to gain something from them. His usual reply to this argument is, "What's there to gain?" This he believes to be truly profound.

This strange creature, not so rare as we might wish, also delights in scoffing at his classmates. One is a "real campus Joe", another is an "eager beaver", another is a "big operator", and another a "drip". If their cultural backgrounds, their financial status, their choice of career are different from his own he does not think, "Perhaps I can learn something from this person", but merely, "Look at that queer".

None Escape

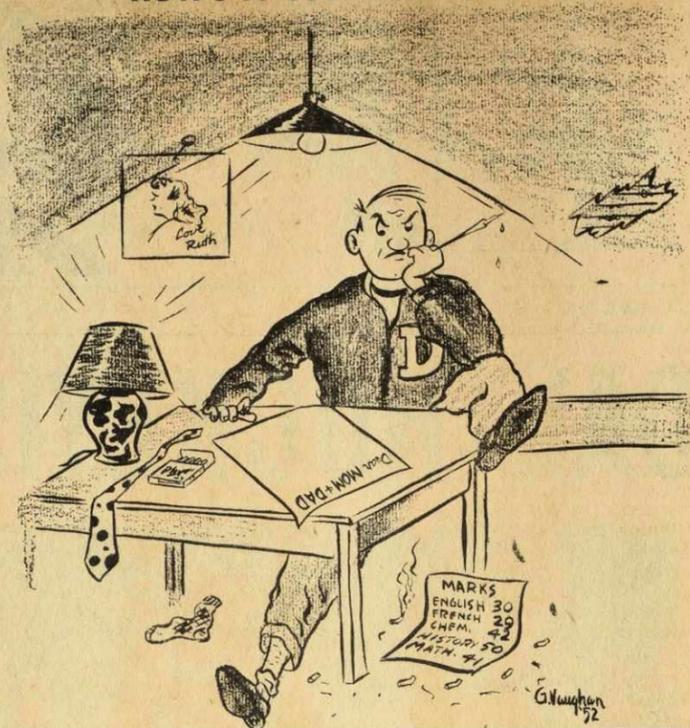
Neither do those who do not or did not attend university escape his bitter tongue. One "great intellectual" we know once said of a certain public figure, "He hasn't even got a B.A." The man in question had many years of experience in his particular field. His failure to hold a university degree did not make him any less competent. Granted, many who have not had the privilege of attending a university are inclined to scoff at the value of education, but perhaps that is because the attitude of some university graduates has made it almost a gesture of self-defense.

The campus cynic also loves to be a happy person. His only real joy lies in his own amazingly clever witticisms. He will find when he leaves university — especially if he goes to a strange city to live—that neither is he a very popular person. He may feel secure among his own little group of scoffers, but they will tire of him quickly and he may discover that his only true friends are those peculiar people who seem to take an interest in others—even in himself.

Notice

The first meeting of 1952 of the Second Year C.O.T.C. members will take place this evening in Room 234 of the new Arts and Administration Building.

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