

Editorial

Freedom Means Responsibility

It would be sophomoric to explain why freedom of the press is an essential in a democracy. It would be equally superfluous to note that every freedom has its attendant responsibility.

So though freedom of the press is ours it must be remembered that to abuse it is to weaken it.

That is why the action of two college newspapers in recent weeks is reprehensible. One, at Canisius College in a neighboring diocese, ran a nude cartoon of its president, Father James M. Demske, in its centerfold. Another, the Observation Post at City College of New York, exceeded even that silly obscenity by running a lewd drawing of a nun on its front page.

Of course if you are going to insist on a freedom you also must tolerate certain excesses of that freedom. But in these cases there are no valid grounds under this protection.

Conformity long has been a characteristic of young people; there is nothing new in that. However, the norms these two newspapers have copied should raise concern. For instance there is nothing innovative about a nude centerfold; there is nothing imaginative about ridiculing a religious person. Would that such neophytes focus their developing sensibilities on the New York Times or the Christian Science Monitor.

There should be room for satire in our publications, particularly on campus where fresh and iconoclastic criticism is to be expected and hoped for. But these two examples offer nothing in that vein. Rather they are examples of un-disciplined and small minds run rampant over valuable space.

Probably the cartoon in the Canisius paper merely represents an insane and shallow shot at authority by some young minds which should have been more concerned with voicing the opinions of a very valid segment of our society than with promoting giggles. At CCNY the offense may be more serious. The president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews termed the action of that so-called newspaper as "inhuman, uncivilized and disgusting."

According to Religious News Service, the NCCJ president Dr. David Hyatt stated:

"In this country, in this enlightened time, where Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, for the most part, now live in harmony and mutual respect despite their differences and where anti-Catholic, anti-Protestant and anti-Semitic statements and actions are now considered un-American and uncivilized, to have a cartoon as outrageous as the one which the City College Observation Post prominently featured recalls the Nazis and KKK and other relics of mankind's barbaric past."

The "editor" who ran the cartoon admitted that it was done as a "statement on the Catholic Church and organized religion in general." Rather it is a statement on the unprofessionalism and bigotry of its perpetrator and if nothing else will reveal to some the reason of limiting freedom of the press and of the necessity of bringing the cool light of objectivity to campus practitioners of the skill of journalism.

Nothing can erase the cartoon itself or the effect it has engendered. Hopefully something can be done about those who defend such scurrility in the name of journalism. If nothing else they should be exposed to the public and made to explain in open forum their reasons for debasing a precious freedom.

TV Also Must 'Package' News

Editor:

Although I am grateful for even left-handed compliments from what has become not only his forum but George Beahon's personal cheering section, I nevertheless take issue with the Costa column of March 6. While I do not claim the length of experience of George (after all, he is a lot older than I am), I still have rather extensive experience in sports, including service as a sports director at two radio stations and play-by-play experience on the collegiate level. Thus I consider my interest in sports to be somewhat more intense than that of the average housewife.

If we at Channel 10 devote less time to sports on our newscasts than does Channel 13, it is not the result of diffidence on my part but rather a conscious decision to treat the games that people play with the attention that they merit — no more, no less.

The affinity of print journalists for George's on-air work, and disdain for the polish of a professional broadcaster smacks of the belief that the message is all, and the method of presentation on-air is inconsequential. I suspect that the concession to my "credibility" by Costa is based more on the rough edges of my own on-camera delivery than anything else, since as far as I know Costa has no first-hand knowledge of my competence as a newsmen. But modern newspaper people should certainly be aware and appreciative of the techniques of packaging news. The Courier-Journal, for instance, is not a gray mass, but a colorful publication that banks heavily on layout and photography to convey the message. Broadcasters are entitled to the same techniques in their own medium: technical devices and polished reader-reporters. While technical advances in print journalism may lead to some typos and transpositions, so too in broadcasting can they lead to on-air fluffs.

Newspapers do have one advantage in the competition between the two media: they can devote whole columns to criticism or banal praise of broadcasting. We broadcasters do not have time to return the favor.

Ron Robitaille
Channel 10

Costa replies Robitaille's modest disclaimer as to his own talents and otherwise fine indignation leads one to suspect that being singled out for his "credibility" placed him in an awkward position with his

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WHATAYA MEAN, 'MAYBE WE SHOULD GIVE OURSELVES UP DURING LENT?'

colleagues. Yet, the fact remains, Robitaille is one of the very few Rochester TV newsmen who appears to understand, and even more important, care what he's reading. If that observation is banal, so be it.

Sisters Back Farm Workers

Editor:

We believe that farm workers have the right to organize and to have free and open elections to determine which union — if any — will represent them, and we know that this right is presently denied many farm workers.

We also believe that we are responsible as Christians and as religious women to "disapprove publicly of a particular injustice" (Article 14 of the Interim Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester).

Therefore, we strongly support the non-violent United Farm Workers' effort to secure just legislation for the oppressed farm workers who are struggling for their human right of self-determination.

Accordingly, we are not purchasing or consuming iceberg lettuce, table grapes or grape products produced on those California or Arizona farms where the growers suppress their workers' right to choose unions freely, and we are publicly urging others to study the facts of the United Farm Workers' boycott and then to make a conscious decision to support this resistance to injustice.

Sisters of Andrew's Center
81 Barbary Terr.
Rochester, N.Y. 14621

Terri Bolha, Sue Dunford, Gaye Moorhead, Judith Morgan, Mary Fran Wegman, Rachel Parlavocchio, Therese Richardson, Kathryn Wahl.

Xavier Society Asks for Help

Editor:

A little more than a year ago, the Xavier Society for the Blind called upon you to help in our search for the Deafblind of the U.S. and Canada in order to extend to these most disadvantaged persons our various free Braille services.

The response of editors like yourself and of their concerned readers was most effective. Through that help, we are now sending free reading materials offering comfort and encouragement to a far greater number of Deafblind persons.

To reach this type of handicapped person, it is essential to

have the help of the sighted person. So, again we ask your subscribers to assist us in this difficult but most important task — locating and serving the Deafblind throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Especially, we would like to offer to them our free weekly newsletter — the Deafblind Weekly — the only current religious brailled publication of its kind. It affords the Deafblind the opportunity to read inspirational, as well as informative articles of current interest. (One Deafblind reader told us that he did not know for two weeks about the war in Israel until he read it in our weekly publication!)

May we, therefore, ask your readers to send us the name of any Deafblind person they feel might be interested in the above weekly publication or in any of our other free Braille services. Simply write to: Xavier Society for the Blind, 154 E. 23rd St., New York, N.Y. 10010.

Thank you for helping us reach the Deafblind persons with our free public service.

[Miss] Betty J. Dodd
public relations director
Xavier Society for the Blind

Where's the Slotman?

Editor:

Re Slotman's Column and whereabouts.

MISSING

The Slotman's column hits a blank. Is the demon around with invisible prank? Is Carmen ill, vacation bent, Or merely not jotting during Lent!?

Whatever is keeping him out of touch, Please tell him not to give up so much!

Florence Catherine Young Hatch
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Editors Note: Let's blame it all on the energy crisis.

Opinions to the editor should be addressed: Letter to the Editor, Courier-Journal, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.