

Editorials And Comments

THE BLACK PRESS: A SAVING GRACE

By LARRY D. REVELLE
Editor-In-Chief

Freedom of the press can certainly be seen as an inalienable right of people in a free society. It carries with it the freedom and responsibility to discuss, question, and challenge actions and utterances of our government and of our public and private institutions.

But from the earliest days of the nation, the concept of a free press was meaningless to Black America. Most Blacks were slaves and the principal interest of the press in their condition was to support their continued enslavement. The press ignored those Blacks who were free, except when it had the opportunity to condone them.

The constant encouraging of slavery and denouncing of freedom for the enslaved prompted John Russwurm, America's first Black college graduate to launch America's first Black-owned newspaper-*Freedom's Journal*.

"We wish to plead our own cause," Russwurm

wrote. "Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations in things which concern us dearly."

Thus began the life of the Black press which has stood the test of time.

But just as the future of historically Black schools is now in question, so may be the future of the Black press.

It all began several years ago when the white press, as a direct result of the civil rights movement and the changes it was producing, began to give more attention to Black affairs.

No longer was the Black press the only medium telling the story of Black people. The White media, had joined in reporting the Black experience. But with the end of its monopoly came a new challenge for the Black press. It had a new competitor. The White media which previously closed its doors to Black journalists now welcomed

them.

Obviously the Black press soon began to lose many of its top people to other media. Better working conditions, higher salaries and professional recognition were the lure.

But we must continue to support the Black press because we still need it. We need a press that speaks to our needs, and will report our births, triumphs, failures, deaths, and all the other events that make up our lives.

Even if the majority press wanted to expand its coverage of Black affairs, there is a limit beyond which it logically cannot go. It is questionable whether it's general readership, which is predominantly white would tolerate such a policy.

Currently the majority press is evidencing a declining interest in Black affairs, an attitude induced by the absence of demonstrations and confrontations

regarded as newsworthy a few years ago.

Many white presses constantly attack the Black schools and promote the negative side of Black communities. This is the case in Durham.

Less than 5% of the personnel in the mass communication media are Black, with the lowest percentage in the Metropolitan daily press.

In creating the Black press, Black Americans created a needed and valuable dimension to the concept of a free press in America. It provided a forum for which unpopular ideas were aired unifying an oppressed minority and in the finest spir-

it of the first amendment petitioning to government to redress those wrongs. The Black press has been a sentinel against injustice loudly and fearlessly decrying the evils of our society despite efforts to silence them.

Let's continue to support the Black press. Subscribe to Black papers and magazines and use them for advertising means.

It is claimed by some that the Black press is on the decline and on its way out. NO WAY! The Black press has been and intends to remain a torch lighting the road to freedom waging a continuing struggle against both overt and covert racism.

CONVOLUTED REASONING

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In the December 12th issue of the *Campus Echo*, the official student newspaper of North Carolina Central University, a survey was conducted to elicit the pros and cons of the proposal to require compulsory class attendance next September.

The question was put before a student from each class. Such a minuscule sampling can hardly be considered as representative of the majority opinion on the campus, but we think it is. The opinions were three-to-one against compulsory class attendance.

More interesting than the sampling results were the erratic flight of logic that the students used to express their objection to compulsory class attendance. The most convoluted reasoning was that "we're mature adults." Another student objected because "compulsory class attendance was required in high school." It was even suggested that students had the right to "blow their own money if they wanted." This reasoning was empirical evidence of the depth of the problem.

It is clear that achieving maturity is confused with reaching a majority and continuing education is thought to be the same as staying in school. Public education costs the taxpayers one hundred and sixty billion dollars annually. Nine out of every ten students at NCCU receive some tax supported aid.

This money is an investment. Colleges do not make education happen; at best they can only make it possible. Colleges provide the opportunity to get an education and tax dollars make it possible to take advantage of this opportunity. A good education today is an economic necessity. The opportunity that is "blown" is the students' but the money squandered is largely the taxpayers'.

There must be accountability for the spending of state and federal tax dollars. That obligation does not end when a student receives a grant-that is when it begins. To accept money for an education and then refuse to attend class is fraudulent. The punishment should be expulsion. "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." Education is serious and expensive. Black schools must not become a

haven and refuge for the indolent.

A word about maturity-one does not achieve maturity by just becoming 21 years of age, or by beating one's chest and shouting "I'm mature." Maturity isn't judged by the number of "joints" one can smoke or by the number of beers one can guzzle. Boisterous obscenities are no indication of maturity.

When a person is standing on his own feet and has passed from the dependence of adolescence to the responsibility of adult citizenship, he can claim maturity. He is able to say, "I am paying my way in the human scene." A person is not mature so long as he continues to try to solve adult problems in childish ways or to satisfy his ego with adolescent experiences. One simple objective is to become all that one can become, to progress from what is passable to what is excellent and from what youth yearned to what maturity fulfills. Responsibility is the inevitable price one has to pay for independent maturity.

The answer to the question "Should Central return to compulsory class attendance," is inherent in the question.

THE CAMPUS ECHO

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