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MARCH 18, 1954

## We Call It Freedom

(Excerpts from a talk by the editor to the Ahooskie, N. C. Rotary Club, March 11.)

Secrecy in the conduct of public affairs is just one phase of the purely negative side of a big question. The real issue in America today is the thing we call freedom.

We in North Carolina should be peculiarly interested in freedom, because North Carolina has an extraordinary tradition of freedom.

It was North Carolinians (and South Carolinians), many of them back-woodsmen who weren't even enlisted in the army, who gathered at Kings Mountain, and there broke the back of Toryism, and turned the tide of the American Revolution.

It was North Carolina (along with Rhode Island) that refused to ratify the Constitution of the United States, until the first ten amendments, which we know as the Bill of Rights, had actually been written into the Constitution.

And it was North Carolinians, remembering the tyrannical rule of some of the Colonial governors, who carefully limited the power of their executive. They refused to give him the power to veto legislation. North Carolina still is unique in that respect. In the federal government, and in the government of each of the other 47 states, the chief executive may veto a piece of legislation, may force a second look at it, a reconsideration of it, by the legislators, who then can enact it only by a vote greater than a bare majority. This executive power of veto also has the effect of forcefully calling public attention to a piece of doubtful legislation. But in North Carolina there is no such check on the legislative branch; in this state, when the two houses of the General Assembly approve a bill, it becomes law. For that reason, legislative secrecy, always bad, obviously is more dangerous in North Carolina than anywhere else in this country.

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The freedoms those early North Carolinians demanded be written into the Constitution—freedom of religion, of speech and the press, and of assembly; freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures; and the right to a fair trial by a jury—are fundamental. But today there is a disturbingly large body of evidence that these basic freedoms are in danger.

The point can be made without referring to Senator McCarthy and his methods.

Aren't our basic freedoms in danger when another United States senator, hiding behind his Congressional immunity, can publicly make preposterous charges, without a shred of evidence, against a man like Earl Warren? Walter Lippmann, one of the most intelligent, one of the most careful and responsible, one of the most scholarly commentators in the world today, points out that Senator Langer's charges against Warren were unsupported and unexamined. Yet seven of the ten charges, made publicly, if they were proved would call for prison terms. Lippmann commented:

"We have gone as far as we can go without endangering profoundly the peace and order of this country. . . . This is an intolerable outrage. It violates the first principles of our law. . . . This lawlessness on the part of a senator is a threat against the power of the law to protect the liberties of our people."

And remember—it was only Earl Warren's reputation and stature that kept the charges from harming him; a lesser man would have been destroyed.

Aren't our basic freedoms in danger when the United States government seriously considers legalizing what it already is doing without legal authority—wire tapping? For if wire tapping is not an invasion of the freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, without a warrant, what would constitute such an invasion?

Aren't our basic freedoms in danger when there

is plainly to be seen a growing trend among Americans to spy on their neighbors, and report every conceivably suspicious word or deed to the F.B.I.? Does that sound like America—or Soviet Russia?

Aren't our basic freedoms in danger when you and I—plain, average citizens—find ourselves stopping to think, before we voice an opinion, if that opinion by any stretch of the imagination could be interpreted by someone as subversive? Ask yourself: "Do I think and speak with as complete freedom as I did ten years ago?" And if you are in doubt about the answer, ask yourself this question: "Would I be as quick today, as I would have been back in 1944, to insist a Communist on trial be given all his Constitutional rights?" Would you not hesitate for fear of what someone might say about you?

And what is perhaps the greatest danger of all is the fact we are becoming accustomed to these things, coming to accept them.

\* \* \*

Why are some of us so frantic in our search for Communists, real and imagined? Why are so many Americans ready to toss overboard the safeguards that are basic in the American tradition of freedom? There is an ancient Anglo-Saxon axiom that it is better that nine guilty men go free than one innocent suffer. Why are we reversing that axiom today? Why do so few of us stop to ask ourselves: What shall it profit America to win the contest with Soviet Russia, if, in so doing, we lose the one vital thing that differentiates America from Russia?

Isn't it because we are afraid? afraid of the military might of Soviet Russia? afraid of her spies? afraid, most of all, of Communist ideas?

And isn't our fear, in the last analysis, a confession that we have lost faith in America—that we are afraid the American tradition and the American way and the American system are too weak to stand up against Communism?

\* \* \*

This American freedom of ours is indivisible. If we surrender any one of these basic rights, we shall soon lose the others.

How long, for example, do you think we would keep the other freedoms if freedom of religion were taken away—for democracy basically is a religious concept.

How long would we keep the others—and how much would they mean?—if we lost freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, and the right to a fair trial by a jury?

And how long would the other freedoms last, once we had lost freedom of speech and of the press? Without those two, we not only could not vote intelligently, on candidates and policies—in our ignorance, we could and almost certainly would be persuaded to vote away—to legally abolish—those other freedoms—without knowing what we did. . . . It has happened in other countries.

What do YOU have at stake in freedom of the press, you business men, you farmers, you professional men?

I suggest to you that that freedom—the freedom of information, and of the press to disseminate it—is the freedom that in a very special way undergirds and makes possible all the others. I suggest that your stake in a free press is far, far greater than that of newspapermen. For if freedom of the press were wiped out, all we would lose, as newspapermen, would be our businesses—and there are other businesses. But you, as citizens, would lose your freedom—and there is no substitute for that!

\* \* \*

What I have been trying to say is this: Our basic freedoms are in jeopardy today. Our freedom is indivisible; if we lose one, we lose all. Freedom of the press, is the weapon with which you, as citizens, can protect the others. And that freedom is endangered by secrecy; it is but a step from one to the other. Finally, the problem is not one for the press alone, but for all good citizens.

## Others' Opinions

**SIMILAR**  
(McDowell News)

The merchant who doesn't advertise has nothing on the man in jail. He isn't doing anything either.

**CENSORS AND SHAKESPEARE**  
(Washington Post)

Since Eve's day we have known that censors stir more interest in the forbidden fruit than all the world's press agents combined. But the thought has seldom been so well expressed as by Henry Percy Boynton in a letter to the editor of the Atlantic Monthly. Mr. Boynton's father owned many sets of Shakespeare and could recite many scenes from memory. "I once asked him about the background of his Shakespearean

interest," Mr. Boynton wrote. "He answered that at Oberlin College, in his day, reading of Shakespeare was strictly prohibited, as tending to incline the youthful mind toward the stage and its iniquities. The result was that he departed from college knowing most of Shakespeare's plays by heart."

**WHISTLE vs. HORN**  
(Winston-Salem Journal)

News that two more railroads have abandoned the honking horns of diesel-electric locomotives and have re-installed other warning devices recalls that year before last the Southern Railway started to substituting the old type of whistle for the blast of the new locomotive horns. Southern has experimented with several types of whistles and has adopted one which sounds much more like the traditional whistle of the steam engine.

Changes are being made from the horns to whistles for two reasons:

1. The loud horns grate on peoples' nerves, so people say.
2. Yet, contradictorily, the horns don't have the carrying power that the old-style whistle possessed. You could hear the shriek of the whistle for miles. That means better warning for motorists, pedestrians and cows on the track.

Perhaps psychologists could profitably explore the real reasons why some people prefer the whistle to the horn. Maybe it's a yearning for traditions, reluctance to part with the memories of long ago. About the only thing left of the old wood-burning locomotive, with billowing puffs of smoke from the stack and steam hissing and sizzling from the boiler, is the whistle. And that was lost at first and had to be retrieved from the dieselizers. Perhaps in another generation people will forget their nostalgia for whistles and then the railroads can experiment purely on the basis of the most appropriate sounds for warning purposes.

It is difficult to accept the premise that the shriek of a whistle actually is preferable to the honk of a horn. If that were so, we would find that automobile manufacturers would find it expedient to install whistles rather than horns on new cars.

It must be remembered that the car can become accustomed to almost any kind of noise. In railroad towns, the jingle, the rumble, the roar and the shriek of locomotives don't bother people. In fact, such noises are music. The story is told that one man, who lived near the place where a fast passenger train passed each night at 2:36 a. m. and sounded the whistle as it roared down the tracks, was able to sleep right through all the noise. But one night the train was late. No shrieking. No lumbering. The man sat upright in bed and broke the silence. He said, "What was that?"

The whole difference between construction and creation is exactly this: That a thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed; but a thing created is loved before it exists.

—Gilbert K. Chesterson.

Babblin' About

## Chain Letter 'N Courting

J. P. Brady

Boy! the things that wind up on a newsman's desk . . . reams and reams of literature, publicity, and just plain hokum from all over the world. Most of it is given a hasty once-over (happened to toss a check in the wastebasket one time) and promptly pitched into the office catch-all, good ol' FILE 13 (64 cent word for wastebasket).

While pouring over this kind of stuff this week, I happened across a letter, addressed to me, and mailed in Franklin. At first glance it seemed destined for a just and timely death in FILE 13—but wait! Let's look at this again, we say to ourselves.

It's a chain letter, but undoubtedly one of the most unusual and surely the most unique I have ever encountered. Now, I'm just as glib as the next person when it comes to a chain letter, and, although they are in violation of the law, I have never been able to resist one since, when in college, I was fortunate enough to receive 1,204 pairs of ladies panties—all silk yet. I never did find out who put me in the chain. Come to think of it, I never did question it. After all, 1,204 pairs of panties weren't to be sneezed at back in the post-war years and I rolled along on a wave of popularity for several weeks.

But back to this new chain letter. Here 'tis:  
Dear Friend:  
This chain letter was started by a man like yourself, in the hope that it might bring relief and happiness to tired businessmen.

Unlike most chain letters, this does not cost anything. Simply send a copy of this letter to 5 of your businessmen friends who are equally tired. Then, bundle up your wife and send her to the man whose name is at the top of the list, and add your name to the bottom of it.

When your name comes to the top of the list, you will receive 16,478 women — some of them will be dandies.  
HAVE FAITH . . . DO NOT BREAK THE CHAIN.  
One man broke the chain and got his old lady back.

Sincerely,  
A Tired Businessman  
P. S. As of this writing, a friend of mine received 183

women. They buried him yesterday and everyone said he had a smile on his face for the first time in years.

Well, that's it . . . and if anyone can come up with one better I would like to see it.

Unfortunately though, I must break the chain.

I checked with the income tax boys; 16,478 women can't be listed as dependents.

To use a little of this atomic-age lingo, things were "real gone and crazy" over at Franklin High School this past week.

The young ladies over there have been indulging in some brand of "reverse courting". They call it "Twirl Season" (what ever that is) and I frankly watched with mouth ajar.

Now get this: the girls were asking the boys for dates; were promising to cover the cost of said dates; were opening doors for the smug males; and some girls even carried their boy friend's books to and from school.

Naturally I was intrigued by the idea.  
"Times do change, don't they?" I remarked to Principal Ralph L. Smith.

A look of futility and a resigned shrug of his shoulders gave me the answer.  
Anyone for chess??

## News Making As It Looks To A Maconite

• By BOB SLOAN

The other day I heard a man comment that signing your name could be either the most pleasant or unpleasant thing that you do. If you are endorsing a check payable to you, he said, it was the most pleasant, but if you were signing a check for some one else it was the most unpleasant.

I said that I felt that there was one exception at least to that. When you sign the check to pay your income tax it should be listed among your most pleasant duties. Certainly you get more for your tax money than any other money you spend—and I think that applies whether you have a Democratic or Republican administration! Also it is one of the times that you have the chance to take an active part in the government we live under—with all its faults the greatest government on earth. No other government is doing as good a job of rendering service to its people and we should all feel proud to have a part in its support. I know that it is fashionable to cuss the government and to consider it some antagonistic body that we are in a constant struggle with, but I don't believe that deep down inside many people feel that way despite the many propaganda forces that try to sell that line. THIS IS OUR GOVERNMENT.

Our forefathers fought that we might be a part of it. When we regard it in another light I am reminded of a man who is in a struggle with his own conscious. Such actions bring up the sight, for example of a man demanding better schools, better roads, better police protection, better public health serv-

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## Do You Remember?

(Looking backward through the files of The Press)

### 50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Franklin is now connected with Waynesville by telephone, the Waynesville Telephone Company having completed connections last week.

The Nantahala Company sent a case of locust pins of their manufacture to Raleigh last Monday to go with the North Carolina Exhibit to the St. Louis Fair.

There was an old time quilting at Mrs. Susie Leach's last Friday. It was the occasion of Mrs. L's fifty-ninth birthday. None were invited except elderly ladies. They met and stitched and quilted, and talked of settlement affairs, and ate a fine dinner. It was a reminder of "ye olden times".

We learn that Mr. E. D. Franks has been appointed carrier on the Rural Free Delivery route to commence April 1st.

### 25 YEARS AGO

The town board last week advertised for bids for the town hall to be erected on the city's lot just north of the Baptist church. The hall will be 38 by 70 feet and will face on Iotia street.

Airplane models are tested in a wind tunnel. They might get a dandy tryout in the N. C. senate chamber.

The first week in April has been suggested as Clean-Up Week. If the citizens of Franklin have any pride in the town they will cooperate with all concerned in making Franklin spotless.

It is understood that the county commissioners have assigned the ladies' rest room at the court house to the county agent for an office. The fact that Mr. Sloan is single probably had nothing to do with this assignment.

### 10 YEARS AGO

Mr. James L. Young, of Hickory Knoll, who has been a faithful Sunday School superintendent of Hickory Knoll church, left last Friday for a six-months' vacation with his brother, John, in the state of Washington.

Rev. and Mrs. J. F. Marchman, Mrs. Sam Gibson, Mrs. F. E. Brown and Miss Jarvis Ledford, spent three days last week in Charlotte attending the H.M.U. Convention.

Members of the Christian Endeavor recently enjoyed a picnic supper and song service on Sunset Rocks, with the Rev. L. H. Smith as program leader. (Highlands Highlights).