

EDITORIAL Weimar Jones Editor

1787 And 1957

Nobody ever can read the U. S. Constitution without being struck by a remarkable safeguard that is woven all through it—its system of checks and delicate balances. That, indeed, always has been recognized as the very genius of the American Constitution.

First of all, there was a careful balancing of state against federal powers, each a check against the other. Then the three branches of the federal government were given approximately equal powers, and those powers so distributed that no one branch could become dominant.

Now that is not the way to build the most efficient form of government. What, then, was the purpose of this system? It could have had only one purpose—and the constitutional convention debates clearly reveal that that was its purpose. It grew out of the conviction, based on the colonies' sad experience, that the greatest enemy to the citizen's personal freedom is likely to be his own government.

And nobody, today, can read the Constitution without wondering about the effects of the trends in recent decades.

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In the first place, each of the three branches of the federal government has acquired more and more power, at the expense of the states. They have been aided and abetted in that by the states themselves, as they have more and more looked to Washington for both money and leadership. And they have been aided and abetted by public opinion. How many people today ever refer to "states' rights" except with a sneer? It does not seem to occur to them that use of the phrase by occasional demagogues in no way affects the value of the idea itself. Even so enlightened a commentator as The Christian Science Monitor, in a recent reference to the way Little Rock has "revived the states' rights issue", remarks that "this too will pass", thus lumping states' rights along with segregation, violence, and other evils.

And what about the federal courts' constant enhancement of their own powers? Is there still a delicate balance between the three branches of the federal government? Is there, in fact, any check on the judiciary? The school segregation decision is only the most spectacular of a number of rulings that make that question timely.

What is there, today, to keep the U. S. Supreme Court from drastically limiting the basic American freedom, freedom of the mind? In recent years, the Court has come perilously close to limiting a closely related freedom, that of speech. What is there, to use an extreme example, to prevent the Court's ruling that all children must attend Catholic schools? — or that no child may attend such a school? What stands in the way of the Court's making any ruling it sees fit?

There seems to be one thing, and only one—the character and consciences of the justices.

It is quite possible, of course, that the justices always will be men of character and conscience. But it also is possible that, one day, we could have five men on the Court—and it takes a majority of just one—with neither character nor conscience.

The Court's power has grown enormously; but there has been no corresponding check on that power.

Can we batter down the system of checks and balances and keep the freedoms they were erected to protect?

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Now it may be that a government that worked in 1787 won't work in 1957. It may be that states, as political entities, are out-of-date. It may be that we need and want a government with all power concentrated in Washington; and with final authority vested in an oligarchy of nine men who are not answerable to the people. It may be that personal freedom is incompatible with mid-twentieth century life.

The point is: Is it wise to assume these things, to move in these directions, to totally change the form of our government, without first asking ourselves:

Is this what we want? Or, not wanting it, is it what we must accept? Is there no alternative?

The men who wrote the Constitution knew exactly what they wanted, where they were heading. Have we an equally clear idea today?

While Bernard Smith was putting on his shirt over his head last Sunday prior to going to church, a pet dog belonging to the family rushed in, biting him eight times between the chin and the front hall.—Mt. Carmel, Ill., Republican.

Might Try It

Starting in 1959, the Extension Service of the University of North Carolina must be self-supporting, the state Legislature has decreed.

The Extension Service does for people who cannot attend the University the same thing, except in a more limited way, the University does for students in residence at Chapel Hill; makes education available to them. The resident students pay only a portion of the cost of educating them. Just why, then, should non-residents be expected to pay their way in full?

In a case like this, we're tempted to suggest, in fact, that if it is such a good thing for an agency to pay its own way, it might be desirable for the Legislature itself to try it.

Others' Opinions

(Opinions expressed in this space are not necessarily those of The Press. Editorials selected for reprinting here, in fact, are chosen with a view to presenting a variety of viewpoints. They are, that is, just what the caption says—OTHERS' Opinions.)

Gravy-tation

(Crawfordville, Ga., Advocate-Democrat)

Nothing attracts gravy like a necktie.

Nothing Like It

(Eaton, Colo., Herald)

There's nothing like a good old fashioned home-cooked meal—not in most homes, at least.

Cause For Tooth Gnashing

(Greeley, Colo., Booster)

Greeley dentist who has some slow-paying customers says it is mighty trying to have people smile at him on the street with his own teeth.

Dignity Of Simplicity

(Enfield Progress)

Most small-town people, or rural folk, have a sort of dignity of simplicity which is both wholesome and refreshing, and which is one of the characteristic traits of the typical American. The city slicker is not smarter than he is, merely slicker.

A People's Right

(Asheville Times)

Freedom of the legitimate press is a basic freedom. It is the mainstay of all the other legitimate freedoms. Yet there has been a growing fear that this freedom is in danger, because of governmental restrictions on the movement of the press to sources of information both in this country and abroad, and because of the withholding of information to which the public and the press which serves it have an entirely proper and legal right to possess.

In view of the recent sensational libel suits involving scandal magazines it should be explained here that America's traditional "freedom of the press" has nothing whatsoever to do with deliberate scandal publications which seek to cash in on shameful and morbid interest in sex, obscenity and immorality. Laws of libel and common decency attempt to deal with such scandal sheets which have never been dignified by any association with legitimate news coverage of government, courts, public affairs and the like.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors has issued a Declaration of Principles. This states: "The American people have the right to know, as the heirs of Magna Charta, the inheritors of the privileges and immunities of the English Common Law and the beneficiaries of the freedoms and liberties guaranteed them by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights of the United States.

"To exercise this right citizens must be able to gather information at home or abroad, except where military necessity plainly prevents; they must find it possible to publish or relate otherwise the information thus acquired without prior restraint or censorship by government; they must be free to declare or print it without fear of punishment not in accord with due process; they must possess the means of using or acquiring implements of publication; they should have freedom to distribute and disseminate without obstruction by government or by their fellow citizens."

The Society has pledged itself to resist by every appropriate means every encroachment upon the people's legal and legitimate right to know the facts about government, public affairs and international relations.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Looking Backward Through the Files of The Press

65 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK
(1892)

Mr. A. P. Munday is building a new smoke-house. Misses Hattie and Carrie Sloan gave our office a pleasant call yesterday.

Mr. Riley Hooper, of Cashlers Valley, was in town cracking jokes Saturday.

Mr. Thos. Sisk has opened a shop for making and repairing boots and shoes and will soon have a nice advertisement in The Press.

25 YEARS AGO
(1932)

The W. M. Ritter Lumber Company is planning to resume operation of its large band mill at Rainbow Springs, suspended last July, early next month.

Macon County's new board of commissioners, composed of three Democrats—Walter Gibson (re-elected), Gus Leach, and E. W. Long—assumed office Monday, and began their organization with the election of Mr. Gibson as chairman. George Patton was appointed county attorney.

Miss Sallie Taylor, one of the head nurses in Angel Brothers' hospital, and Dr. Frank M. Killian were married December 1.

10 YEARS AGO

Larry Cabe and Harley Stewart were recently selected to play on the Western team in the Optimist bowl football game in Asheville December 13.

Two young persons from Macon County—Manuel Holland and Miss Juanita Allen—were elected to district offices in the Methodist Youth Fellowship, at a meeting at Sylva Monday.

"Goodness! Everything Seems T'Be Speeded Up Now"



Strictly Personal By WEIMAR JONES

As this issue of The Press reaches the reader, I may be the sea-sickest man alive; because I'll be on the ocean... taking my first boat trip.

How come?

Well, it's a long story.

Part of it goes back to that promise I made myself, in this column last August. I said then that, once I got caught up here at The Press, I was going home, park myself in a rocking chair, and do a lot of rockin'. Well, it's a funny thing, but somehow I never quite got caught up; and now, in December, it's a little cool for front porch rocking.

Part of it goes back many months, to some sage advice I had from a friend:

"You ought to take a long trip", he said. Then he added, with emphasis: "Weimar, it's time for you to waste a little money."

Well, Mrs. Jones and I are doing exactly that. By all the rules, we can't afford it. But I suspect what we're doing will bring us more satisfaction and pleasant memories than any money we ever spent wisely.

And part of it goes back to my schoolboy days, when I dreamed of steering my own ship across raging seas and through majestic storms. I won't exactly be steering this ship, and I doubt if there'll be either raging seas or majestic storms; fact is, we picked a time for our trip when we hoped the storm season would be over. But at least it'll be a cruise on the ocean.

We've been planning this cruise for many months; and I can honestly say that if the trip itself is a flop, we've already had our money's worth, in pleasant anticipation.

We decided, first of all, it was time for us to take that wedding trip we never yet had found the time and money for. We decided, second, we'd get more relaxation on a boat trip than any other way. Then we decided we didn't want to be in the midst of a lot of people or have to dress for dinner or otherwise "put on the dog"; so we ruled out a passenger ship and picked a freighter, instead. Finally, we decided it didn't make much difference where we went, so long as we got there over the ocean.

Having settled all those points, we set out to find the cruise that would give us the most time on the water, for the amount of money we had to spend.

We wrote everybody we knew and many we didn't, seeking information and literature. We studied maps and timetables and boat arrangements until we feel we are qualified to operate a travel agency. And at last we found just what the doctor seemed to have ordered — a cruise, from New Orleans to Puerto Rico, and back to Mobile, 12 days in all.

That, of course, is no freedom at all. And it won't work.

For how long would you and I be free to speak our piece unless the other fellow had the same right? Our freedom of speech would last only until the other side, the people who disagree with us, the people we'd like to silence, got control of the government. Then it would be their turn to force us to say nothing they didn't agree with.

We can't have liberty unless we give it to others. We must all be equally free, or none of us can be free at all.

We decided to spend a couple of days in New Orleans, to see if it really is as fabulous a city as it is reported. That'll be doubly pleasant and instructive and easy, because as soon as Dr. and Mrs. Cecil W. Mann, who live in New Orleans but spend their summers in Wayah Valley, learned of our plans, they invited us to stay with them. That means we can learn what to see, from somebody who knows New Orleans, in addition to having the long-anticipated pleasure of a visit with these good friends.

And if you think we aren't the lucky ones, consider this second stroke of good fortune:

In a conversation with Mr. H. W. Rollman, of Waynesville, some time ago, I casually mentioned our plans to visit Puerto Rico. The next thing I knew, he'd written the manager of a shoe factory he owns there, asking her (his Puerto Rico manager is a Haywood County woman) to show us over the island. And we've had cordial letters and a wealth of literature about Puerto Rico from her.

Those two things, plus the expressed interest of scores of people, prove to me, all over again, what I've more and more come to realize: This world is full of people who delight to do the kind, the thoughtful thing for others.

Well, we spent weeks getting ready. And if you think that didn't take some doing on my part, then you don't know the people who try to write. They are the most perversely persistent procrastinators possible! Not only will they never write anything until they have to; they won't even think about what they're going to write until the deadline is right on top of them. Imagine, then, the will power it took for me to get the material ready, before I left, not for one, but three editorial pages!

I finally did it, though; and for three whole weeks, there'll be no more writing to do.

And when I get back, I'll undoubtedly have something to write about. For, next to traveling, I like to tell about it; so there is likely to be a lot about our trip in this column, a little later.

Make Men Of Them

(Burlington, Wisc., Standard-Press)

We don't want to start something that would harm anybody, but we feel the boys at our high schools should be required to wear shirts, dress pants, and have a shine on their shoes. We feel that training along this line is more important than some of the subjects taught today, mainly because it prepares the man of tomorrow for tomorrow.

That's the idea of school in the first place. It's a place where the youngster is required to learn the fundamentals of life. Let's start teaching them.

The Rochester (Wisc.) basketball team of 1956-57 was the talk of the tournament because they wore street suits.

Boys will be boys, but prepare them to be men. They might find themselves as boys too late in life if we don't push them a little.