4-18-1972

'No' to Press Councils

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Recommended Citation
Martin S. Hayden, 'No' to Press Councils (1972).
Available at: http://repository.uchastings.edu/publicity/78

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I would not propose that hearings, like cases in the U. S. courts, be available to a higher jurisdiction. Review boards should not be confused with the legal machinery.

Membership of the media review boards poses sticky problems. Entirely civilian groups lost much thrust because they just did not know how news is gathered, yet too many newsmen on a board could bias decisions. Community leaders could at least initial supportive recognition from the Establishment. Article (June 30) noted the general support, not too abrasive) representatives of non-establishment viewpoints as well as visible minority groups should be included.

When the media do a good job, let them feel credit where all can see--as they would with, the open and full reporting of media review board findings. And when they do a poor job, they would receive public attention comparable to that said editorial writers and other commentators have given publishers, private citizens, corporations and social groups for several centuries.

Hiller Kriegbaum is a professor in The University department of journalism.

**No To Press Councils**

By MARTIN S. HAYDEN

DE T R O I T — "Who will keep the media's conscience," asked Prof. Hiller Kriegbaum in a recent article on this page.

On the apparent premise that the media—broadcast and print—lack capacity to judge between fairness and unfairness, right and wrong, responsibility versus responsibility, the New York University journalism professor noted what would be wrong with a structure of local and national councils to evaluate and police the press.

As one editor, I find three faults with the proposal: It is unnecessary, unworkable and unconstitutional.

Few would debate the Kriegbaum opinion that "the media are not above criticism." But some would question his assumption of a media monopoly of editors and broadcasters joining the American Medical Association in a closed front against outsiders so profane as to question their professional judgments.

Has Professor Kriegbaum never read and heard media accounts of Spiro Agnew's blasts against N.A.C.C., C.S.S., and The New York Times? Is he too young to remember reports on Franklin Roosevelt assailing the "one-party press." Does he ignore broadcasting's role in criticism of newspapers, editor's Johns at the broadcast conscience and the role of news magazines in blending fact and fiction to adjust the integrity of both the electronic and newspaper media?

And does the professor forget, with the Pentagon Papers publishers, that newsmen went to court allegedly to speak for the First Amendment rights of the whole press, some of us in the newspaper field, who took the contrary view that a few more such courts "victorious" could produce legislation abridging everyone's First Amendment privilege?

In short, it would seem that natural media conscience, the right of the public to critical and the back and the wide philosophical variations between individual editors assure that the media conscience will be kept. One would wish, in fact, that similar checks prevailed in the professor's own academic work where recent trends fail from the campus the teacher or speaker who would violate academic's single opinion line.

The unworkability of the Kriegbaum plan seems obvious. He would have a national board to police media complaints that cross state lines, local ones to take care of the "national" front. A "valid" complaint would bring an "investigator" who would refer the "most flagrant cases" for hearings.

Who would police the boards of the investigator? Who defines flagrant? Who pays for this new bureaucracy? When going beyond the media, Kriegbaum and others are sticky problems but feel sure representative boards could be formed to constitute a public conscience. One can have doubts.

Recall, for example, the case of folding Carter Jr., of Greenville, Miss. His recent editorial notes that the Mississippi Legislature resolved him to be anti-Southern, that legislative investigators found him in a "hot seat," that he was publicly denounced by leading public figures as "unfit to mingle with decent and honest society." Would a representative Mississippi citizens' council of Carter's earlier days have held similar hearings? Or Professor Kriegbaum has referred that local complaint to a Brooklyn panel?

And again, consider last month's "irresponsibility" charges against The Manchester Union-Leader that drove Senator Muskie to tears in New Hampshire, Under Kriegbaum, that necessarily would have been a "national" case since the final target was a Union Leader reprint of a Newsweek feature critical of Mr. Muskie.

What a trial that would make—outside Pentagon Papers publishers, with William Loeb, Graham Graham shoulder to shoulder in the dock defending their respective publications against charges of conscience violation.

Voluntary and privately financed newspapers local councils established since the Hutchinson Commission first advanced the idea in 1947 have fallen flat. The only obvious alternative is the British Press Council established by national legislation.

But Britain operates without those trusted First Amendment Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom . . . of the press." Let us remember that newspapers and editors never find a way to distort that peculiarly American mandate.

Martin S. Hayden is editor of The Detroit News.