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William J. Small

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The Press -- Its Failings And Struggle for Freedom

*This World (Sunday 29 October '72)
SF Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*

**POLITICAL POWER AND
THE PRESS.** By William
J. Small. Norton; 423 pp.;
\$8.95.

Reviewed by
Michael Harris

AFTER CBS aired "The Selling of the Pentagon," the documentary about the Defense Department's public relations machinery, William J. Small found it isn't only the networks who can attack.

Small, Washington bureau manager of CBS, watched the pressure that was imposed on television news by the Administration, the defense establishment, some members of Congress and such unlikely allies as Time magazine. He also observed the dismay of his colleagues as CBS issued new "guidelines" to avoid future criticism. He saw the development of an atmosphere in which CBS staff members hesitated to suggest controversial projects.

Startlingly Direct

Some of the critics seemed startlingly direct, according to Small's account. He recalls that Senator Clifford P. Hansen, Wyoming Republican, sponsored a showing of CBS news tapes in an effort to demonstrate bias by the network in its reporting of news from Vietnam.

"While stating his objective was to help the news media do a better, an unbiased job," Small writes "(this) was the same Senator Hansen who the previous June had urged executives of the gas and oil industry to use their advertising expenditures to convince pub-

'Painted Ladies'

MURIEL SEGAL has written a gossipy set of 26 portraits of artists' models in "Painted Ladies" (Stein & Day; \$7.95). The emphasis in each of the sketches is on sexy stories, so much so that they seem somewhat distorted. The book, entertaining and chatty, makes much use of direct quotes in modern language.

Ms. Segal freely sprinkles her own jokes into the anecdotes she retells. Beginning with Phryne, Praxiteles' model for Aphrodite in the Fourth Century, B.C., and ending with Kiki, Montparnasse model of the Twentieth Century, the sketches seem so pointedly written to be entertaining that they lose a feeling of depth.

lishers they should print the achievements of the industry rather than news about oil spills, oil pollution and oil depletion allowances.

"If the publishers are not persuaded, he (Hansen) suggested, 'then your advertising agency might get the message through more effectively.'"

Small claims that Time misinterpreted a statement

by an executive of a rival network in an article critical of "The Selling of the Pentagon." He quotes a reply from Time to the ABC executive who asked the magazine to print a correction in its letter to the editor column.

"Our correspondent did not hear you correctly and therefore we quoted you incorrectly," the magazine replied. "We entirely agree with you that the word 'context' changes the meaning of what you said . . . We're only sorry that we couldn't publish your letter."

Calm and Coherent

This example of journalism does not change Small's view that the press must be free. In "Political Power and the Press" Small reviews not only the history of efforts to intimidate and control the press but also the failings of the press. There is very little that is new in his book and even less that is startling; what Small provides is a calm, coherent account of the struggle over freedom of the press and a quiet restatement of the traditional arguments for keeping the press exempt from regulation — even when the press errs.

"The plain fact," Small writes, quoting Republican Congressman Clarence Brown of Ohio, "is that the First Amendment is not limited to the truth." The reason the freedom is so broad was expressed in 1968 by the London Observer: "You begin by suppressing witchcraft. You end by suppressing Galileo."

S. F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle

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