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54/09/10 Seltzer Outlines Main Duties of Newspaper

Cleveland Press

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Seltzer Outlines Main Duties of Newspaper

Primary duties of a good newspaper are to cover the news, to serve the public directly, and to help build the city.

So said Louis B. Seltzer, editor of The Press, when he spoke last night at a meeting sponsored by the Couples Club at Plymouth Church of Shaker Heights.

Following is the partial text of his talk:

As I see it, a good newspaper has three important duties to perform. The first and most important is to cover the news; promptly, vigorously and fairly.

This means covering not just

the stories that are easy to get, but the ones hard to get. It means printing what happens openly in City Council, and what happens secretly in Probate Court.

It means writing about what the police are doing to solve a murder, and also writing about what they are failing to do, resulting in special privilege for a murder suspect.

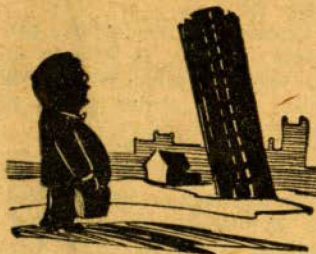
Finding the News

The Press has a staff of 180 people, and the majority of these are reporters and writers, working at the endless task of finding the news and presenting it to you accurately and

interestingly.

Not all of them are on the local scene. While the wire services are pouring thousands of words into our office every hour of the day and night, many events call for Press reporters to attend in person.

The church editor, for example, spent two weeks last month in Evanston, Illinois, at a meeting of the World Council of Churches. Their previous meeting was in Amsterdam, Holland, and he was there.



Theodore Andrica goes to Europe each year for several months to write about the homelands of Cleveland foreign-born, and to carry messages back and forth between the folks here and their friends and relatives there.

Serving the Public

This assignment of Andrica's brings us to the second important responsibility of a good newspaper: Serving the public directly, outside the channels of important news developments.

Such service goes on in a thousand ways, many of them never showing in the columns of the newspaper. Every month a new booklet goes out to more than 12,000 mothers of babies up to age 3, giving them advice on child care. It costs them nothing.

Clear at the other end of the age span, each October The Press plays host to more than 1400 persons married 50 years or more: A full evening of fun.

The paper sponsors a Children's Book Fair, a school Science Fair, a giant Do-It-Yourself show in Public Hall, a series of speeches on health by leading Cleveland doctors, the largest pen-pal organization in the world, fishing derbies and junior aviator shows—an unceasing round of publications and promotions designed to be helpful.

Readers Aided Tommy

Sometimes the helpfulness develops spontaneously, as when little Tommy Herbert lost both hands under a train, and Press readers without being asked, poured thousands of dollars in the newspaper office for a "Tommy Herbert Fund."

Or when an aged and poor woman died in a near-downtown rooming house, and left a note saying "My only possession is my dog, and would you take it to The Press to find a home for it, because I know any home they find will be a good one." We found the home.

The third responsibility, and in many ways this should be first, is to help build the city. We believe firmly that what is good for Cleveland is good for The Cleveland Press. Not immediately in circulation or advertising revenue, but in the long view that a healthy, attractive, progressive and prosperous area means a stronger and better newspaper.

Lake Front Project

We launched a campaign some years ago to open up the east shore lake front and put a road where industrial dumps barred even a view of the water.

A Press reporter's name is in bronze in the Main Avenue Bridge for the part he played in getting the bridge built. The lake front parking lot grew from a Press writer's urging after he had seen similar projects in other cities.



Last spring the paper sent the first reporters from the United States to view the great Labrador ore fields, and then sent other reporters to study ship channels in Houston, Texas and Los Angeles, Calif.

The display the paper gave to the story of the need for the St. Lawrence Seaway, to bring ore to Cleveland steel plants, played a large part in approval of the seaway by the U. S. Congress.

Help Make City Great

The first Labrador ore arrived here last Saturday in a gala event which The Press

proposed and civic leaders carried out.

The stories could go on forever of a newspaper's encouragement of civic improvements which have helped make the city great. We do not believe, as many newspapers do, that editors and staff should stay in their offices, "uncontaminated" by mixing with the community, its people and its problems.

A good newspaper is part of the community, its staff members are active in every phase of the city's improvement and development.

It is ready to listen, and to speak out, for every worthy cause.

* * *

Asked about the Sheppard murder case, and the Press' part in it, the editor said:

"The circumstances immediately surrounding the murder of Mrs. Sheppard convinced us that unless the 'protective shield' placed around the case was broken there was no possibility of its ever being solved, or anyone being brought to trial in connection with it.

"In each instance that the law enforcement machinery of even a small municipality breaks down, it ultimately affects law and order for everybody. We believed that The Press' larger obligation in this case was to the whole community."