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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
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VOL. VIII

JANUARY, 1942

NO. 2

UNDERSTANDING THE NEWS

WALTER SPEARMAN



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS  
CHAPEL HILL

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
LIBRARY EXTENSION PUBLICATION

VOL. VIII

JANUARY, 1942

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UNDERSTANDING THE NEWS

WALTER SPEARMAN

*Of the Department of Journalism*



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- 3. April, 1937. *Literary Backgrounds of Present Day Germany*. A. E. Zucker and W. P. Friederich.
- 4. May, 1937. *India in Revolution*. E. E. and E. E. Ericson.
- \*5. June, 1937. *Adventures in Reading, Tenth Series*. A. B. Adams.
- 6. July, 1937. *The Theatre Today*. M. G. Holmes.

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\* Out of print. Available only as loan.

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4. May, 1938. *Building and Furnishing a Home.* E. C. Baity.
- \*5. June, 1938. *Adventures in Reading, Eleventh Series.* A. B. Adams.
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5. June, 1939. *Adventures Around the World, Second Series.* Lucile Kelling.
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3. April, 1942. *Adventures in Reading, Fifteenth Series.* A. B. Adams.
4. May, 1942. *Other People's Lives, Eighth Series.* C. S. Love.
5. June, 1942. To be announced later.
6. July, 1942. To be announced later.

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## FOREWORD

There are some who say: "You can't believe what you see in the papers." There are others who say: "It's so, because I saw it in print."

But the intelligent individual neither believes everything he reads nor automatically discounts what he does read. He tries to understand the news, whether he finds it in his daily newspaper or in his weekly magazine or his radio or the latest book upon his shelf.

Today more news is pouring in upon our eye and ear than ever before in the history of the world. And today more than ever before it is important for us to understand this news, to recognize its truth, and to appraise its significance among the world-shaking events of the twentieth century.

Do you understand that news? Have you examined your own newspapers as to their impartiality, their fairness, their intelligence, their honesty in presenting news? Do you know the men who write your local news and what their problems are in giving you an accurate account of what is happening? Do you recognize the by-lines of the best foreign correspondents and can you distinguish their signed stories from the propaganda press releases of foreign government-controlled news agencies?

Do you rely upon the news interpretations of your favorite editors and columnists? When you listen to the radio, do you understand the personal backgrounds of the various commentators? Do you know the difficulties imposed by censorship?

Getting the news is the privilege of citizens in a democracy. Understanding that news is their duty.

## WHAT IS A NEWSPAPER?

Millions of Americans start their days with a newspaper just as surely as with bacon and eggs or coffee. In the 12,000 papers of this country Father may read the headlines and the market page, Mother the society items and the ads, Junior the adventures of Popeye and Dick Tracy; but each member of the family is daily forming his opinions about life and the world from the pages of his newspaper.

What is this newspaper? Let us turn its pages carefully and analyze their contents. Let us understand where our news comes from, how it is gathered, why it is printed, what effect it will have upon our ideas and our actions.

Arthur T. Robb, editor of *Editor and Publisher*, the journalistic trade magazine, has said: "As free Americans you pay nearly \$1,000,000,000 a year for the right to read and use in your daily affairs the services of a free press. What do you get for your billion dollars?

"First, you get the news about Yourself and Your neighbors—a topic of universal human interest since prehistoric times.

"Second, you get the news of how you are being governed, the daily performances of the men and women you send to City Hall, to the Council, to the Legislature, to the Governor's mansion, to the Congress, the Presidency, and the many branches you have set up for your own comfort and protection.

"Third, you learn of the daily tides of business, commerce, fashion.

"Fourth, and fearsomely dominant in these days, news of what is happening in the rest of the world.

"Fifth, you can read, if you wish, the opinions of men trained to observe and interpret all these events in terms of your own experience.

"Sixth, you have a wide choice of information only indirectly associated with the daily parade of news events—on health, education, selection of food and its preparation, social conduct, affairs of the heart, the care of children, the management of a household or a garden, the attractions of the stage and screen, the popular sports in their seasons.

"Finally, because this catalog has to be closed sometime, you

have a limitless range of amusement and diversion within the pages of your daily newspaper—short stories, serial stories, serious and comic cartoons, photographic and artistic tales of fun, adventure, romance.”

It was in 1787 that Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter: “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter.”

Today when the value of democracies is being tested and even their very lives are at stake in a whirling world, it is well to study the newspapers of America, for their existence is evidence of the freedom of expression we enjoy in this country just as their merit is proof that our freedom is worth defending.

### 1. READING A NEWSPAPER

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale, pp. 19-28

What should a reader expect his newspaper to do for him? Check through your own daily paper and note what part of it interests you most. What do you read first when you pick up a paper? Why?

Mr. Dale suggests six jobs that a good newspaper should do. How well do the newspapers in your own community fill these requirements?

Notice that the author calls a newspaper “democracy’s textbook.” What does he mean by this description? Discuss how the careful reading of a newspaper every day might make a better citizen of the reader.

### 2. IMPROVE YOUR RATING!

*The News and How to Understand It*, by Quincy Howe, pp. 1-22, 200-217

Quincy Howe and Edgar Dale agree that there could very well be improvement in the caliber of newspaper readers as well as in newspapers themselves. What definite advice does Howe give in his chapters on “Know Yourself” and “And How to Understand It”? Do you think that the reason for most reading is “profit, pleasure or escape”? Is his suggestion that each reader develop his own prejudices a valid idea?

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale, pp. 53-61

“Reading a newspaper intelligently is a part of the whole problem of intelligent living,” says Author Dale. Give yourself the quiz he offers as preparation for intelligent reading (p. 53). What methods does he recommend for improving your reading?

*How to Understand Current Events*, by Leon Whipple

Bertrand Russell said that the art of reading a newspaper should be taught. What helpful advice does Leon Whipple give? (pp. 1-75)

## HISTORY OF JOURNALISM IN THE U. S.

After taking a look at the contemporary American newspaper with its many pages and its numerous columns of news, comment, pictures and features, one should turn back and examine the development of this institution from the earliest news sheets of the American colonies.

The first American printing press was set up at Cambridge, Mass., in 1638 to produce almanacs, sermons, law-books, broadsides; but it was not until 1690 that Benjamin Harris published in Boston the first American newspaper under the title of "Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick." This paper was to be "furnished once a moneth (or if any Glut of Occurrences happen, oftener)." But the Massachusetts Governor and Council thought a newspaper was a dangerous thing and that this particular one contained "sundry doubtful and uncertain Reports," so it was suppressed after one issue. John Campbell had better luck with his "News-Letter" a few years later and although his news items from Europe were sometimes six-months-stale, his account of fights with pirates were up-to-date and thrilling.

John Peter Zenger is the hero of early American journalism, attacking William Cosby, tyrannical royal Governor of New York, getting arrested and then editing his newspaper "thro' the Hole of the Door of the Prison." His trial and vindication (1735) were a triumph for freedom of the press.

During the Revolution newspapers in America were divided in their loyalties and fought as bitterly as the battling armies. Ardent political propaganda carried over into after-the-war years and papers lined up behind the Federalists or the Republicans. Influential editors emerged from the anonymity of the old news sheets. National news became more and more important. The number of newspapers increased from about 200 in 1800 to 1,200 in 1833.

The advent of the penny paper and the great increase in number of readers marked the history of journalism before the Civil War. In this period come the famous names of Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, Benjamin H. Day (who incidentally was the father of Clarence S. Day, hero of *Life With Father*.)

Creed of these penny papers, according to Frank Luther

Mott, may be summarized as follows: (1) The great common people should have a realistic view of the contemporary scene, and this in spite of taboos; (2) abuses in churches, courts, banks, stockmarkets, etc. should be exposed; (3) the newspaper's first duty is to give its readers the news, and not to support a party or a mercantile class; and (4) local and human-interest news is important.

The Civil War gave American newspapers a splendid opportunity to do first-hand reporting. After the war came the phenomenal rise of Joseph Pulitzer with his *New York World*, the growing sensationalism in news handling, a concern for crusades and stunts (such as Nellie Bly's famous trip around the world), and finally near the turn of the century a rising yellow journalism carried to its heights by Hearst.

After World War I came the tabloid newspapers, smaller in size, more lurid in content, full of pictures and headlines. Then also came today's rivals of the newspapers—radio and the news magazines.

### 1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER

*American Journalism*, by Frank Luther Mott

Trace the growth of newspapers from the earliest Philadelphia and New York papers to the modern appearance of your own daily paper. Notice changes in size and format of papers, contents, editorial pages, handling of news, purposes of the papers, business success or failure, political influences, reception by the American public.

Discuss some of the famous stunts and hoaxes which increased circulation for newspapers. Note the moon hoax of Richard Adams Locke on the *N. Y. Sun*, the search of the *N. Y. Herald* and Henry M. Stanley for Livingstone in Africa, the Nellie Bly trip around the world.

### 2. SENSATIONAL JOURNALISM

*My Last Million Readers*, by Emile Gauvreau

*Hearst, Lord of San Simeon*, by Oliver Carlson and Ernest S. Bates

Describe the rise of "yellow journalism" in America. Illustrate with stories told by Emile Gauvreau in his frank autobiography of newspaper experiences. What is the role of Hearst in this development?

### 3. NEWSPAPER PERSONALITIES

*American Journalism*, by Frank Luther Mott

Study the careers of great American journalists and evaluate their

contributions to the history of American journalism. Note such names as John Peter Zenger, Benjamin Franklin, Tom Paine, Thomas Nast, Horace Greeley, James Gordon Bennett, Charles A. Dana, Henry W. Grady, Henry Watterson, James E. Scripps, Joseph Pulitzer, William Randolph Hearst.

What was the place of women in the development of the American press? Who were Cornelia Walter, Margaret Fuller, Mrs. Anne Royal, Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, Nellie Bly, Dorothy Dix, Dorothy Dare?

## COLLECTING THE NEWS

Before you as a reader can understand the news in your daily paper you must understand how that news is collected, then how it is assembled in the form of the paper which comes to your door every morning or afternoon. You cannot intelligently judge the accuracy and the trustworthiness of the news you read unless you understand how and by whom that news was written.

The best way to get an idea of how news is handled would be to visit a newspaper office and follow some story through the entire process. You would go with a reporter out on his "beat" about the city, watch him secure the story from the City Hall or the County Jail or the Mayor's office or the hospitals or the streets, then return to the office with him and watch him pound out the story on his typewriter.

You would then follow the story over to the city editor's desk and observe the headline he puts upon it, then out into the composing room where it is set up in type, to the proof desk where it is corrected, the make-up table where long galleys of type are fitted together to make a page, to the stereotyper where a *papier-maché* imprint is taken and a circular plate molded from that, then to the printing presses where these plates are affixed—and you will see the newspaper coming out in its final form ready to be delivered to the reader.

But thus far you have learned only how the local stories are handled. You must also see the stories from other cities and other countries all over the world coming in over the teletype machines at the rate of about forty words a minute — wars, deaths, disasters, wrecks, weddings, earthquakes, fires, murders—all the items of everyday life which we call "news."

At the same time stories are coming in by telephone from reporters out on their beats or from other persons who have news to tell. And each mail brings in fat envelopes of news from correspondents in other parts of the state.

With such a vast influx of news pouring into the newspaper office every day, and day after day, a large and efficient staff is required to select the items to be printed, to read the copy carefully in order to prevent mistakes and inaccuracies, to headline the stories so clearly that the casual reader may see at a glance

just what is happening throughout the world. It has been estimated that the *New York Times* receives about 500,000 words daily from all sources—and is able to use only 200,000. Enough copy to make six full-length novels every day comes to the office.

### 1. A REPORTER'S JOB

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale, pp. 9-17

If you number a newspaper reporter among your friends, get him to trace the course of one of his own stories from the moment he learned the facts to the time it appeared in a paper on the streets. Better still, get him to show you through his newspaper office and explain the course of any news story.

Read carefully Mr. Dale's explanation of how a story is written, examine his sketches of a newspaper office and compare this with your own experiences in a local newspaper office.

How important is speed in the preparation of a daily newspaper? What effect does this necessity of "making the deadline" have on the possible accuracy of newspaper stories?

### 2. NEWS AND THE MAN

*Yankee Reporter*, by S. Burton Heath

From a Vermont farm-boy to Pulitzer-prize-winning-journalist is the story of S. Burton Heath, "Yankee reporter." Read his accounts of newspaper life. What is his opinion of the American press? (pp. 351-384) Note his experiences with Franklin Roosevelt, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, Thomas Dewey. (pp. 153-242)

### 3. NEWS AND THE MACHINE

*AP, The Story of News*, by Oliver Gramling

News not written locally comes to a newspaper office via machines. How and for what purpose was the Associated Press organized? How does it supplement the work of individual reporters in collecting news?

For interesting sidelights on the workings of the AP read the accounts of the Johnstown Flood (pp. 104-108), the death of Pope Leo XIII (p. 169), the San Francisco Earthquake (pp. 194-198), the False Armistice (pp. 277-283), the Lindbergh Kidnapping (pp. 364-373), the Hauptmann Verdict (pp. 398-406).

Note the final chapter which summarizes the work of the Associated Press and its growth since 1848.



## EDITORIALS — EXPRESSIONS OF OPINION

If news is the body of a newspaper, then the editorial page is its mind. On the front page of the paper and throughout its news columns, reporters present the facts about what is happening locally, nationally, internationally, with careful regard not to insert their own opinion of these events. The reader wants to know what is happening, not what the reporter thinks about what is happening.

But the editorial page is different. Here the editor comments, interprets, explains, educates. He takes the news from the front page and by his informative, intelligent analysis he interprets the real meaning behind the surface facts. He helps the reader make up his mind about what he should think and what he should do in a world that cries out for thoughtful actions and active thoughts.

A recent Gallup poll, studying the interest of men and women in various newspaper features, found that 96 per cent of women and 97 per cent of men read one or more news stories; that 76 per cent of women and 67 per cent of men read one or more comic strips; but only 10 per cent of women and 19 per cent of men read the lead editorial.

Despite the rise of the columnists and their usurpation of much of the power previously held by the editorial page, newspaper editors still give the personality and the heart to a newspaper. Down through the years in American journalism such editors as Horace Greeley, Joseph Pulitzer, Charles A. Dana, E. L. Godkin, Henry Watterson, William Allen White and others have made their editorials widely read and very influential.

Content of the editorial page differs from one paper to another. A recent survey of twelve newspapers in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore and Ohio showed that 28 per cent of the editorials dealt with local affairs, 10 per cent state, 48 per cent national, 13 per cent international. In another classification it was found that 17 per cent were concerned with economic problems, 35 per cent with political problems and 21 per cent with social problems.

"In the final analysis," says Neil MacNeil, "the editorial page must stand or fall on what goes into it. Its prestige, its reader

interest, its influence on public affairs, will be no greater than the intelligence, honesty, courage and sincerity of its editors. The American press remains one of the greatest vital critics in our democracy."

### 1. THE ROLE OF EDITOR

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale (pp. 90-100)

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 318-334)

*The Press in the Contemporary Scene*, edited by Willey and Casey (pp. 139-144)

What should an editor provide for his readers? How well do you think your local editors are fulfilling their functions? Discuss editorial trends of today. Is it true that the influence of the editorial page is waning in America? If so, why?

### 2. NEW YORK EDITOR

*Joseph Pulitzer and His World*, by James W. Barrett

Sketch the career of Joseph Pulitzer from Hungarian immigrant to "the blind statesman-editor who from his yacht in the Mediterranean could see more than politicians in London or Washington or financiers in Wall Street."

What was the abiding belief that underlay all of Pulitzer's journalistic endeavors? How did he apply this credo to his newspaper? Discuss some of the crusades which he staged. Why did he establish the Pulitzer prizes?

### 3. MID-WEST EDITOR

*William Allen White, the Man from Emporia*, by Everett Rich

Sketch the career of William Allen White. What are his principal characteristics as an editor? Why did he choose to remain in a small town? Would he have enjoyed greater influence in America if he had been a newspaper editor in some larger city? What role does White play in the civic affairs of his own community? Of the nation?

### 4. SOUTHERN EDITOR

*Editor in Politics*, by Josephus Daniels

In this second volume of memoirs by Josephus Daniels, "Tar Heel Editor" and former American Ambassador to Mexico, he describes the relationship between his editing the *Raleigh News and Observer* and his foray into politics with the Democratic Party. Sketch his life, note his personal characteristics. What were his contributions to his community as an editor? His contributions to the national scene?

## COLUMNISTS — THE PERSONALITY BOYS AND GIRLS

During the past decade newspaper columnists have encroached on the precincts of the editorial page and such names as Walter Lippmann, Dorothy Thompson, Walter Winchell and Pearson and Allen have become better known and more influential than individual editors of great papers. With their pictures heading their columns and their personal opinions on daily display, the columnists are a powerful force in contemporary journalism.

The intelligent reader should make a careful study of the columnists whose work he follows in order to judge them discriminatingly; he should be familiar with the backgrounds of the writers, know where they came from, what their particular interests and prejudices are, why they believe as they do.

For instance, you should know that Pearson and Allen, who write "Washington-Merry-Go-Round," are generally in favor of the New Deal, while Frank Kent and Mark Sullivan oppose it.

You should understand how Walter Winchell collects the facts for his gossip column and you should have some idea of what percentage of these "facts" are actually true.

You should familiarize yourself with the personal and political backgrounds of Dorothy Thompson, General Hugh Johnson, Westbrook Pegler, Walter Lippmann, the late Heywood Broun, in order to understand the individual and emotional slant they give to the special topics they discuss each day.

"Always keep in mind," warns Edgar Dale, "the fact that the columnist is usually writing his personal opinions. His column therefore is usually an editorial, not a news account. As with other newspaper material, we must be able to distinguish between the reporting of facts, the interpretation of facts, and personal opinions. Unfortunately, many careless readers prefer interesting but prejudiced opinions to less interesting but accurately presented facts.

"We need to balance our reading of one column against another column. Although most of us tend to read the columns with which we agree, it is smarter to break this routine from time to time and read a column we don't agree with. The columnist who makes us mad may also make us think. This doesn't

mean of course that we will necessarily accept his point of view. It does mean, however, that we may be forced to rethink our own position."

Arthur Brisbane and O. O. McIntyre were the most popular columnists of the country prior to their deaths; they were followed in popularity by Winchell, Pegler, Dorothy Dix, Lippmann. Several years ago the annual incomes of some of these columnists were made public: Brisbane, \$260,000; Winchell, \$60,000; Lippmann, \$60,000.

### 1. GETTING A LINE ON THE COLUMNISTS

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 281-299)

*The News and How to Understand It*, by Quincy Howe (pp. 77-84)

*Lords of the Press*, by George Seldes (pp. 294-302, 331-354)

*American Journalism*, by Frank Luther Mott (pp. 689-694)

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale (pp. 160-167)

*Putting "It" in the Column*, by Ben Arid (pp. 104-120)

Discuss the rise of the American columnist with attention to causes and results. Has the columnist weakened or strengthened the editorial page? Are your political and social opinions affected by the ideas of your favorite columnists? What contribution, if any, do you think the following columnists are making to contemporary American life—Walter Winchell, Dorothy Thompson, Pearson and Allen, Westbrook Pegler, Walter Lippmann, Dorothy Dix, Eleanor Roosevelt, Hugh Johnson?

### 2. SPREADING THE GOSSIP

*Gossip, the Life and Times of Walter Winchell*, by St. Clair McKelway

What is your opinion of the Winchell column? Does your greater knowledge of the man influence your opinion of his column? Discuss Winchell's home life, his relationship with gangsters, his contributions of slang, his patriotism, the truthfulness of his column.

### 3. WRITING ON POLITICS

*Lords of the Press*, by George Seldes (pp. 294-302)

*The Press in the Contemporary Scene*, edited by Willey and Casey (pp. 127-131)

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 146-166)

How is news from Washington secured? What advantages or disadvantages do special Washington columns have in comparison with regular news releases? Discuss leading Washington columnists.

From sources listed above and your own knowledge of the columnists'

appeal to readers, estimate the political influence of Walter Lippmann, Westbrook Pegler, Hugh Johnson, Mark Sullivan and Raymond Clapper.

#### 4. LOOKING AT THE LADIES

*Let the Record Speak*, by Dorothy Thompson

What role do such diverse personalities as Dorothy Thompson, Eleanor Roosevelt and Dorothy Dix play in the American journalistic scene? How successful was Dorothy Thompson in preparing the American public for war? Analyze the topics discussed by Mrs. Roosevelt in a week of "My Day." How do you account for the lasting popularity of Dorothy Dix's column?

## CHAPTER VI

### ENTERTAINMENT IN THE PAPER — FEATURES, CARTOONS, COMICS

News of world-shaking events or of what the man-next-door is doing do not take up all the space in a daily paper. There is plenty of room for entertainment of the lighter variety which does not necessarily inform or enlighten or educate.

"The editor planning or purchasing features," says Neil MacNeil, "makes certain that he caters to the women and children. They are his first, frequently his sole, consideration. He knows that women spend the major portion of the family income and influence the spending of the remainder. He strives to make the family order the delivery of the morning newspaper and to make Father bring home the evening newspaper so that Junior may not miss the next installment of the lurid adventure comic strip, so that his elder sister may read the succeeding chapters of the flaming serial novel, and so that Mother may have the woman's page with its recipes for personal charm and pumpkin pie and its gossip and comment on a hundred subjects dear to the feminine heart."

So-called "human interest" stories crept into the newspapers with the advent of the penny press, were played up in the sensation-mongering "yellow journals," and survive today to make the existing papers more readable and more entertaining. Human interest stories may concern a dog that mothers a kitten, a man that bites a dog, a lost child, a thwarted romance, an amnesia victim, an unusual profession or hobby. They may deal with places or people or pets. They may have no world significance as news, but they catch the interest of the average reader.

Cartoons have embellished the pages of newspapers since the famous "Join or Die" snake drawing in Benjamin Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* back in 1754. Thomas Nast, the great cartoonist who drew for *Harper's Weekly*, was given a large share of the credit for breaking up the "Boss" Tweed political ring in the 1870's. He also is credited with inventing the symbol of the tiger for Tammany and the elephant for the Republican Party.

Ever since Richard Outcault started drawing "The Yellow Kid" in 1894, the comic strips have been tremendously popular

with newspaper readers. They have also, with the movies and the radio, come in for strong criticism as wielding bad influences over the children who follow them from day to day. The latest survey made by *Fortune* magazine found that Little Orphan Annie, Popeye, Dick Tracy, Bringing Up Father and The Gumps were the most popular strips and were read by millions of children and adults throughout the country.

### 1. FEATURES IN THE NEWSPAPERS

*News and the Human Interest Story*, by Helen MacGill Hughes

Trace the rise of the "human interest story" as described by Mrs. Hughes. What is the difference between a "spot news" story and a "human interest" story?

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 281-299)

Describe various popular newspaper "features" as distinguished from front page news. What are the most popular features in your own home town paper? Why? Do these features primarily entertain or instruct?

*Low Man on a Totem Pole*, by H. Allen Smith

Interviews with famous and not-so-famous people provide entertaining features for papers. Read Mr. Smith's interviews with the hog-calling girl from Arkansas (pp. 105-108), Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom (pp. 113-119), Joan Bennett and the cab driver (pp. 155-160) and his chapter on newspaper work entitled "No Vaccination." Does he succeed in putting into words the personality of the individuals interviewed?

### 2. COMEDY AND TRUTH IN CARTOONS

*Low on the War*, by David Low

Study the history of newspaper cartoons and their influence on political and social questions. Read Low's introduction to his volume of cartoons. What does he conceive to be the function of a cartoonist? How effective do you consider his satiric drawings?

### 3. THE FUNNY PAPERS

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale (pp. 149-159)

Sketch the history of the comic strip. What are the most popular types at present? To what do you attribute the popularity of the funny papers? Do you consider their influence seriously pernicious? Why?

## FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS — THE TRAVELLING REPORTERS

To the beginning newspaper writer the foreign correspondents seem the most exciting and most glamorous members of his profession. They travel all over the world, they meet leaders who are mapping out the present and the future of mankind, they write fascinating accounts of what is happening in many capitals, their names appear on front page by-line stories of significant events.

There are about 300 men and women responsible for getting us our news from foreign countries and they are perhaps the best-trained newspapermen in the world. Describing them, the English journalist A. J. Cummings says:

"I have met many of the leading foreign correspondents in the U. S. A. and in the capitals of Europe. They are in the highest class in their profession. They are usually genuine students of affairs, they are well-informed, they have a proper self-respect which makes it difficult for them to write with tongue in cheek; and they are not men who would consent to the deliberate falsification of their messages in the offices of the newspapers they represent."

As sources for the information they get in foreign countries, the correspondents depend (1) upon the newspapers and press associations of the foreign countries, (2) upon official government releases, and (3) upon personal interviews with important personages and with their own group of informed friends and acquaintances.

Censorship is a very real problem for many of the foreign correspondents, especially in the dictator nations where all news is official propaganda and a free press is non-existent. There are innumerable stories of how sharp-witted correspondents managed to get across secret information through the censors to their home newspapers in America. And other correspondents have been ejected from foreign countries because of their insistence upon telling the truth about what they heard and saw.

Otto Tolischus was asked to leave Germany and when he returned to the United States he revealed many secrets in his book, *They Wanted War*, which could never have passed the censor had he remained in Germany. Dorothy Thompson was expelled from Germany, H. R. Ekins from Italy. When Edgar A. Mowrer wrote



his book, *Germany Sets the Clock Back*, shortly after Hitler came into power, he was requested to leave Berlin. Among other foreign correspondents with familiar names and excellent reputations behind those names are H. R. Knickerbocker, Leland Stowe, Walter Duranty, Edward W. Beattie, Jr., and the late Webb Miller, who was killed by a train in a London blackout early in 1940. Leading lives as exciting and as dangerous and unpredictable as a daily newspaper adventure strip, it is small wonder that their memoirs make fascinating reading.

### 1. ADVENTURES AND PROBLEMS OF CORRESPONDENTS

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale (pp. 79-89)

*The Press in the Contemporary Scene*, edited by Willey and Casey (pp. 132-138)

*The News and How to Understand It*, by Quincy Howe (pp. 85-126)

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 119-145)

*How to Understand Current Events*, by Leon Whipple (pp. 176-195)

Discuss the problems of foreign correspondents and how they meet those problems in collecting the news, writing up the news to meet deadlines, getting the truth out through the censors. What qualities would you deem necessary for a successful foreign correspondent? Can you depend upon the truth of the stories written by these correspondents?

### 2. GIRL REPORTERS

*Looking for Trouble*, by Virginia Cowles

*News Is My Job*, by Edna Lee Booker

Miss Cowles followed or preceded war throughout Europe. She covered the siege of Madrid, saw the Germans march into Poland, went to Finland for the Russian invasion, observed the Battle of Britain from London. Read and discuss her interviews with Churchill, Mussolini, Eden, Ciano, Balbo. What are her conclusions as to America's role in the war? Would you consider her an expert foreign correspondent? Why?

Miss Booker was busy in China and Japan while Miss Cowles was in Europe. Discuss her experiences gathering news in war-torn China. What were her conclusions about the Sino-Japanese War? What was her opinion of General and Madame Chiang Kai-shek?

### 3. TWO VIEWS OF GERMANY

*They Wanted War*, by Otto Tolischus

*Pattern of Conquest*, by Joseph C. Harsch

Otto Tolischus, foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, has the double distinction of winning the Pulitzer prize for his reporting and of being kicked out of Germany by Hitler. What he learned in Ger-

many as a correspondent he later incorporated in his book. What does Tolischus say as to how the German war machine was built, how strong Germany is from a military and an economic point of view? How does he analyze the psychology of Hitler, of the German people? What does he indicate concerning the Nazi control of speech, press, education, religion?

Joseph C. Harsch was foreign correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*. Summarize his analysis of German strength and weaknesses. What does he say of Germany's plans for the future? What are his conclusions?

#### 4. THE FALL OF FRANCE

*A Thousand Shall Fall*, by Hans Habe

A Hungarian journalist enlisted in the French Army, Hans Habe was violently anti-Nazi and was sentenced to death by the Gestapo. The story of his escape after the defeat of France is a thrilling human document. To what does he attribute the fall of France, lack of equipment, lack of confidence in leaders, lack of desire to fight?

## CHAPTER VIII

### PUBLICITY AND PROPAGANDA — RACKETS OF THE GAME?

News is the presentation of facts. Editorials are the expression of opinion. Just what do we mean by the words "publicity" and "propaganda" which we so constantly use?

When a welfare organization puts on a campaign it demands newspaper publicity. When a theater or movie aspirant is working her way to fame she seeks publicity. Publicity, in such cases, means securing more space and public attention than the newsworthiness of the person or event calls for. So was born the American press agent.

"In the majority of cases," writes Will Irwin, "the American press agent has no great social significance. The National Association of Carpet Tack Manufacturers is meeting in Cincinnati. The newspapers and the public in general wish to make their stay pleasant. However, the reporters assigned to the story know little about the problems, the aspirations and the Who's Who of tacks. The press agent furnishes all that. — A medical congress is meeting. Most of the reporters will know little about scientific medicine. The publicity agent interprets the proceedings, pointing out what revelations or discoveries have news value."

Propaganda—and in time of war the word "propaganda" fills the air—is news presented in such a way as to create public sympathy for some cause or country or belief.

"Our intellectual atmosphere is charged with propaganda," says Neil MacNeil. "Like radio waves in the physical atmosphere it penetrates every nook and cranny of the country. Like Spanish influenza it is highly infectious. It touches everybody; and nobody is quite the same afterwards. Much of it is legitimate; much is sinister and subversive. The average citizen is conscious only of the sinister propaganda, taking the good, or what he considers the good, for granted as being the plain facts or truth of the situation."

News editors have become so accustomed to receiving publicity "handouts" and various types of "propaganda" that most of them have become experts at detecting the motives behind the stories and are adept at extracting the real news from the material offered. Much work has been done in recent years in the United

States by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in an effort to make the reading public conscious of propaganda and able to recognize it.

Several competent studies of the use of propaganda by both the English and the Germans in the United States prior to and during World War No. 1 have been made and widely read. Propaganda for World War No. 2 will doubtless be no less rampant but it will be more easily recognized.

### 1. USES OF PUBLICITY

*Propaganda and the News*, by Will Irwin (pp. 110-120)

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 300-317)

*The Public Accepts*, by I. E. Lambert

Discuss some examples of publicity stories secured by enterprising press agents. What is the general attitude of newspapers toward these stories? The attitude of the reading public?

I. E. Lambert has compiled a most interesting book on the stories behind famous trade-marks, names and slogans. Check through this and note the power of publicity. William Allen White, in his introduction to the book, says: "The people of the United States being suggestible are easily hypnotized. A big noise, big type, high pretense, mob clamor moves a considerable part of the American people. It is the price democracy pays for literacy." Discuss this statement made by an editor who has a deep understanding of the American public.

### 2. PROPAGANDA FOR WHAT?

Same references as above.

*Propaganda for War*, by H. C. Peterson

*The Press in the Contemporary Scene*, edited by Willey and Casey (pp. 66-75)

The German Minister of Information, Joseph Goebbels, has said: "Propaganda knows neither right nor wrong, neither truth nor falsehood, but only what it wants." Does the very meaning of the word propaganda question its truthfulness? What is propaganda? How can it be effective in influencing the public? If propaganda is recognized as such, does it lose its power? How can you recognize propaganda? What is the general attitude of American newspapers toward it?

Read carefully H. C. Peterson's analysis of English propaganda in the first World War. What are his conclusions? Does the fact of World War No. 2 nullify the points he makes? What is the role of propaganda in time of war? Note Professor Casey's rebuttal of the Peterson arguments.

What role do newsreels play in war-time propaganda?

## RADIO — NEWS BY EAR

Since the first scheduled news broadcast back in 1920 the radio has shared with the newspaper the vital role of keeping the world informed. Some newspapers have considered the radio a formidable rival and fought or ignored it. Others have considered radio a supplement and set up or bought stations. In the meanwhile the great American public has gone blithely along, eagerly reading newspapers and listening to the radio.

Through the Office of Radio Research, sponsored at Columbia University by the Rockefeller Foundation, serious studies have been made of radio programs, radio listeners, radio problems. Paul F. Lazarsfeld in his *Radio and the Printed Page* reveals many of these findings. One of his pronouncements is that people without college education listen to the radio more than those with college training.

"People on the higher cultural levels," he explains, "probably have more diversified interests and more money to pursue them so that they spend less time listening to the radio. Owing to the commercial set-up of broadcasting in this country, furthermore, radio programs are usually designed to match the tastes of the broad masses of the population, and therefore probably remain below the taste level of the upper cultural groups."

The Office of Radio Research has made an interesting comparison of the news offered by newspapers and radio, observing that the newspaper gives more attention to the economic and social aspects of life, the radio more to international, disaster and crime news.

With war raging over so large a portion of the world, foreign newscasts have taken on an increasing importance. Radio listeners are familiar with the names of Edward R. Murrow, William Shirer, Elmer Davis, H. V. Kaltenborn and others. Recent books by and about the radio newscasters have made the best seller lists and should be read for a more comprehensive understanding of radio news and how it is assembled and sent out over the air.

A. A. Schechter, director of news and special events for NBC, gives a revealing account of his work in *I Live on Air* and will take the reader backstage in the radio world. Murrow's *This Is London* and Shirer's *Berlin Diary* are important human and social documents of the war and the men who report it firsthand.

Any survey of the field of radio must not omit study of the educational and propaganda facilities of this medium. *Radio's Listening Groups* by Frank Ernest Hill and W. E. Williams gives a thoughtful report on the many facts of educational projects of the radio; and James R. Angell's brief pamphlet, *War Propaganda and the Radio*, is an illuminating discussion of propaganda possibilities.

### 1. RADIO VS. THE NEWSPAPER

*Radio and the Printed Page*, by Paul F. Lazarsfeld

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 403-408)

*The News and How to Understand It*, by Quincy Howe (pp. 157-199)

Trace the rivalry between the radio and the newspaper. What advantages does each have over the other? Discuss the difference in newspaper readers and radio listeners. Is there a place for both in the field of public information? Study carefully the analysis of news covered by radio and by newspaper (Lazarsfeld, pp. 211-213). What future developments may be expected in this rivalry?

### 2. LONDON, BERLIN AND THE WORLD

*This Is London*, by Edward R. Murrow

*Berlin Diary*, by William L. Shirer

*I Live on Air*, by A. A. Schechter with Edward Anthony

What are Edward R. Murrow's impressions of the British people in war-time? How effective is Murrow in getting his impressions over on the radio?

Why is Shirer's *Berlin Diary* such a popular book with the American public? How did he happen to become a newscaster? Read his account of his first broadcast. Note particularly Shirer's report on the German idea of right and wrong (p. 281), on German censorship (p. 510, 542), on the reasons Hitler did not invade England in the summer of 1940 (p. 550), his summary of the German situation (p. 576), of the German character (p. 584), of the future of America (p. 591).

"In the early 1930's," says Schechter, "radio was the prize exhibit in American journalism's doghouse." How did Schechter and other radio news men succeed in building up news sources for radio broadcasts? Illustrate with specific incidents. Read and discuss the radio accounts of the sinking of the *Graf Spee* and of the Munich conference.

### 3. FOR EDUCATION AND FOR PROPAGANDA

*Radio's Listening Groups*, by Frank Ernest Hill and W. E. Williams

*War Propaganda and the Radio*, by James R. Angell

What has radio contributed in the field of education? What are its potentialities as a medium for propaganda?

## CHAPTER X

### SMALL TOWN AND COUNTRY JOURNALISM

In the small towns and rural communities of the United States are over 10,000 weekly newspapers. These are no country cousins or poor relations of the great dailies—they are the backbone of American journalism and their news items and editorial comments and advertisements each week affect the lives of millions of people.

Farmers read crop reports and weather conditions; housewives discover the best local bargains, find out what the neighbors are doing, and keep up with their civic responsibilities; residents of the small towns and the countryside learn the news of the world and of their main street and develop a genuine pride in their home communities.

Large daily papers tend to become impersonal in their handling of news. Weekly papers are just the opposite—the editor knows his subscribers and advertisers personally, he lends his aid to every worthy civic enterprise, he walks down the street of his home town and knows practically every man, woman and dog he meets.

Through running columns of personal items such as “Mrs. Sam Jenkins and daughters, Rose and Anne, spent yesterday in town doing their Christmas shopping” or “John Jackson reports an unusually fine crop of sweet potatoes this year,” the weekly editor keeps in close touch with his readers and also keeps his readers in touch with each other. Such small-town editors as William Allen White and Ed Howe in Kansas or Louis Graves with his *Chapel Hill Weekly* and the late W. O. Saunders in Elizabeth City made their papers known throughout the country, but never lost their folksy, local color.

Recently three books have been written about small-town editors and the towns which they served. Henry Beetle Hough in *Country Editor* describes his work in Martha's Vineyard, an island off the New England coast.

“A great many people,” he says, “are not only unable to imagine what a small weekly newspaper and a small town are like, but they do not even try, because they assume that anything small is simply an early and imperfect version of something big. I doubt if there are many who know that these particular small things, and of course others, are more different in kind than in size. They

are not underdeveloped. They are mature, complete specimens of what they have always been and will always be."

William Allen White calls Victor Holmes's *Salt of the Earth* "a husky book." It is the story of a country town in the Middle West, written by a country editor with a sense of humor and an abiding love for his fellow men.

In *Father and His Town*, Richard Barry tells of his father's newspaper experiences in California.

"This is my father's story," says the author, "but if it had been up to him it would not be written. For sixty years he edited a small-town newspaper, and one of his few rules was that neither the editor nor any member of his family ever should be mentioned in public print. When he died and the boys in the office came to look in the files which they called their 'morgue' for his obituary, they found none. Everybody in town was there, except the editor."

### 1. LET'S LEAVE THE CITIES!

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale, (pp. 30-39)

Discuss the differences between large city daily papers and small town or country weeklies. Evaluate the influences of each in the life of the nation.

Why are the weeklies considered more personal? What role does the newspaper editor usually play in the life of a small town? What makes a good country weekly?

### 2. WORKING ON AN ISLAND

*Country Editor*, by Henry Beetle Hough

Why did Editor Hough decide to come to a small town? Read and comment upon his descriptions of small-town life (pp. 1-16, 312-316).

For a vivid picture of small-town customs and people note particularly his account of the town meeting (pp. 98-102), of Miss Lydia Price (pp. 156-162), of the trial of Louis Selm (pp. 162-177), of the "errors and protests" (pp. 219-231).

### 3. JUST PLAIN FOLKS

*Salt of the Earth*, by Victor Holmes

Notice Victor Holmes's account of how he happened to become a small-town editor. Compare it with the reasons given by Henry Beetle Hough. How did Holmes secure the cooperation of his fellow townsmen in publishing his paper?

Do you note an abiding interest in human beings which seems to char-



acterize these country editors? How much of Holmes's success as an editor depends upon his understanding of such "characters" as Freida Rassmussen and the McGuire sisters (pp. 93-108), of Jules Christiansen and his tombstones (pp. 128-151), of old Doc Hayes (pp. 278-288), of "Spindle" Thomas and his write-up of the Grace Galloway wedding (pp. 295-311)?

#### 4. A CALIFORNIA TOWN

*Father and His Town*, by Richard Barry

This time the setting is California. Do the stories and the characters of *Father and His Town* seem familiar? Read the stories of Tony Dietz and his funeral record (pp. 86-91), of Mrs. Dalrymple and the town's social distinctions (pp. 140-166), of the Rivers shooting (pp. 179-218).

## CHAPTER XI

### REVIEWING — "WE LIKE IT"

While the reporter seeks to inform the reader about what is happening and the editorial writer tries to interpret these news events, the critic on the newspaper not only gives information on the latest news of art, music, theater and motion pictures, but he tries to evaluate artistic events for his reader.

"We are all critics of a sort," declares Edgar Dale. "But usually most of us stop at the level of liking or not liking. To do so without probing into the reasons for our likes or dislikes, without comparing our own with other people's opinions, is to forego complete enjoyment and understanding of what we have seen, read, or heard."

The best critics bring to their work a background of knowledge and understanding in their respective fields. They do not stop with the statement "I like this" but are able to explain why they like a painting or a play or a movie. The good art critic is not only familiar with the masters of contemporary art but he knows the history of art and the masterpieces of the past. The good movie critic not only judges box office appeal of a new picture but he also knows the achievements of past movies and he can analyze the work of actor, director, writer, photographer, and others whose efforts go into the making of a picture.

"The work of the critic is never easy," points out Neil MacNeil, "and never a complete joy. No matter what his field he must deal with a vast amount of mediocrity. The more cultivated his personal taste the more painful his experience can be. The music critic must listen to never-ending scrapings of violins and pounding of pianos by youths with more ambition than talent. The drama critic must see so many bad and indifferent plays that he despairs of ever seeing a good one. The book critic must wade through an ocean of twaddle. The movie critic must see all the inanities of Hollywood. Small wonder that when they meet something good they are inclined to overpraise."

Metropolitan critics are given entire freedom of expression in their reviewing. If they think a new play is bad, they do not hesitate to say so. If they consider a new book a waste of reading time, they pass on their findings to their readers. On smaller papers, however, critics are sometimes asked to pull their punches and

either to say kind things of local amateur singers and actors or else to say nothing.

There also arises the question of to whom the critic owes his allegiance. Is he writing his criticism to encourage the performers and the authors and the artists? Or is he writing his criticism as an honest piece of work for the benefit of his readers?

### 1. WHY IS A CRITIC?

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 220-237)

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale (pp. 168-172)

*The Press in the Contemporary Scene*, edited by Willey and Casey (pp. 145-150)

Discuss the responsibilities of a critic to (a) his reading public, (b) the artists whose work he criticizes, and (c) his newspaper.

What is the role of a music, dramatic, art, literary or dance critic in contemporary American life? What contribution does a critic make to the cultural life of his age? What qualifications should a critic possess if he is to evaluate the work of the artist? How are critics trained for their work?

### 2. THE CRITIC AT WORK

*Broadway in Review*, by John Mason Brown

Read several reviews of recent Broadway successes in this volume by the eminent dramatic critic, John Mason Brown. What does he consider that his role as a critic demands of him? What background does he appear to bring to his criticism? Do his reviews make you want to see the play? Do they seem to be written primarily for the people who saw the play or for those who did not see the play?

Discuss the status of local criticism in your home-town papers. What function do the local critics or reviewers perform? How successfully do they fulfill their roles?

## CHAPTER XII

### FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

In totalitarian states today the government dictates what goes into a newspaper. There is no free press, only government-controlled propaganda.

But in the United States the first article of the Bill of Rights added to the Constitution declares: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Why should the press have been singled out for assurance of freedom by the Bill of Rights? Because, says Neil MacNeil, "it has a national function. The ownership of a newspaper carries a responsibility beyond the ordinary conduct of business. It is charged with the national duty of providing full and accurate information to the American people, a duty that should be fulfilled without fear or favor and without consideration for its own profits. Many of its publishers and thousands of its editorial workers take this responsibility seriously. There are some who do not; they should be digging sewers or selling neckties."

Secretary Harold L. Ickes has charged that the press is not carrying out its responsibilities to the people which gave it the right to freedom. Supporting this statement, he pointed out that in the election of 1940 Roosevelt was supported by less than 23 per cent of the daily press. "Our democracy needs," he said, "more than ever before, a truly free press that represents no class or economic group and one that will rewin the confidence of our citizens because it is worthy of rewinning that confidence."

The brilliant Louisville editor, Herbert Agar, says: "First, the freedom of the press is not a license but a fearful responsibility. Second, the responsibility is not being assumed. Third, a reason for the failure is that the press has acquired the timidity and the moral shortcomings of the biblical rich man. Fourth, because of these facts the press is losing the freedom which it does not deserve."

What are the forces which threaten a free press? There are critics of the newspapers who say that powerful advertisers prevent the press from telling the truth. There are those who say that

tastes of the readers, indicated through circulation, prevent the press from telling the truth. There are those who say that the personal and private capitalistic interests of the newspaper owners prevent their papers from telling the truth. And there is always the danger looming ahead of government control which might muzzle the freedom of the press.

"In a democracy," says Edgar Dale, "you may—in fact, must—do your own thinking. If you are going to think for yourself, you must have freedom to speak, to listen, to write, to look, to read; you must have freedom of the press—a democratic privilege and responsibility—making it possible to print anything that isn't treasonable, indecent, or libelous. In a democracy, where the common man must think for himself, he must be able to read what he wishes and write what he wishes."

### 1. IS THE PRESS FREE IN AMERICA?

*Freedom of the Press Today*, edited by Harold L. Ickes

*Lords of the Press*, by George Seldes

*How to Read a Newspaper*, by Edgar Dale (pp. 117-130)

*Without Fear or Favor*, by Neil MacNeil (pp. 356-377)

Why was freedom of the press expressly granted in the Bill of Rights? Trace the history of efforts to keep the press free in America. Contrast this with the controlled press of dictator nations.

What are the chief enemies of a free press? Does the American press need to fear pressure from special social and economic groups? From advertisers? From subscribers? From its owners? From the government?

### 2. FREE PRESS FOR WHAT?

Same references as above.

What is the chief value of a free press in a democratic nation? What can the individual citizen do to help retain freedom of the press?

How do you account for the blast Secretary Ickes made upon the American press? Do you think his charges were justified?

Study the answers to these charges made by prominent newspaper editors and publishers. How successfully do they refute the charges?

What effect does war have upon the freedom of the press? Discuss the censorship measures taken in the United States since the outbreak of war.

*The Press in the Contemporary Scene*, edited by Willey and Casey (pp. 169-175)

What does the American press have to expect in the future? Discuss possible improvements in the newspapers of the future. In the influence of the press.

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1. Reading a Newspaper
2. Improve Your Rating!

### *Second Meeting:* HISTORY OF JOURNALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

1. Development of the American Newspaper
2. Sensational Journalism
3. Newspaper Personalities

### *Third Meeting:* COLLECTING THE NEWS

1. A Reporter's Job
2. News and the Man
3. News and the Machine

### *Fourth Meeting:* EDITORIALS—EXPRESSIONS OF OPINION

1. The Role of Editor
2. New York Editor
3. Mid-West Editor
4. Southern Editor

### *Fifth Meeting:* COLUMNISTS—THE PERSONALITY BOYS AND GIRLS

1. Getting a Line on the Columnists
2. Spreading the Gossip
3. Writing on Politics
4. Looking at the Ladies

### *Sixth Meeting:* ENTERTAINMENT IN THE PAPER—FEATURES, CARTOONS, COMICS

1. Features in the Newspapers
2. Comedy and Truth in Cartoons
3. The Funny Papers

### *Seventh Meeting:* FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS—TRAVELLING REPORTERS

1. Adventures and Problems of Correspondents
2. Girl Reporters
3. Two Views of Germany
4. The Fall of France

### *Eighth Meeting:* PUBLICITY AND PROPAGANDA—RACKETS OF THE GAME?

1. Uses of Publicity
2. Propaganda for What?



*Ninth Meeting: RADIO—NEWS BY EAR*

1. Radio versus the Newspaper
2. London, Berlin and the World
3. For Education and Propaganda

*Tenth Meeting: SMALL TOWN AND COUNTRY JOURNALISM*

1. Let's Leave the Cities!
2. Working on an Island
3. Just Plain Folks
4. A California Town

*Eleventh Meeting: REVIEWING—"WE LIKE IT"*

1. Why Is a Critic?
2. The Critic at Work

*Twelfth Meeting: FREEDOM OF THE PRESS*

1. Is the Press Free in America?
2. Free Press for What?