

Washington Digest

U. S. Official Denies Plan For Censorship of Press

Presidential Assistant Mellett Opposed to Any Type of Central News Bureau Or Propaganda Drive.



By BAUKHAGE

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WASHINGTON.—If you want to start a heated argument among the members of that Washington institution which is often called "the third house of congress," but whose official name is the National Press club, just mention "government censorship."

Those are fighting words to the men of press and radio and—well, did you ever try to put a muzzle on a real healthy airedale?

Just to keep the fun going, I dropped in the other day to have a chat with the man whose name has been more closely associated with censorship of late than any other in the capital—and how he hates it!

He is soft-spoken, gray-haired Lowell Mellett, a keen-minded, middle-aged newspaper acquaintance of mine over many years and one of the best-liked and most highly respected of all of those who have now deserted the fourth estate to work for the New Deal.

Mellett left the Washington Daily News to become head of the National Emergency council in 1938. (The "emergency" in this sense refers to the 1933 variety and not the "limited" one we are enjoying at present.) The NEC, as the council appeared in the New Deal "alphabet" in those days, has since become the office of Government Reports, a less pretentious institution. Mr. Mellett is its head and is also one of the President's administrative assistants. These latter are the men who, according to official pronouncement, must have a "passion for anonymity." The functions of these assistants differ widely as does the degree of their intimacy with the President, but of all his advisers, Lowell Mellett is one of those in whom the President places his deepest confidence.

There is a reason why this former newspaper man's name has been associated with a possible censorship of news. When the President asked congress recently for funds to make the office on government reports permanent, the house of representatives committee on appropriations called Mellett before it to ask him, among other things, what, if any, plans the administration has for curtailing or regulating what should and should not be printed about defense or other matters, according to the government's way of thinking. Mellett told the congressmen that the administration has no such plan at all.

The word "plan" is used in the concrete sense for it is well known that several specific programs for regulating what would or would not be permitted to be made public by press and radio have been drawn up by various officials, who would like to tie a muzzle on the news hounds in case of war or even in case a full emergency is officially proclaimed, or perhaps even before.

Mellett's answer satisfied the committee and the lower house agreed to the measure.

Nevertheless, the rumor lingers on that a man with scissors is lurking behind the White House hedge ready to clip the reporters' wings the moment they spread them too widely.

I called upon Mr. Mellett in his businesslike office in a building in "downtown" Washington. Although he had no official statement for me (which I didn't want anyhow) we had a frank, friendly, informal chat. As a result, I can confirm what he has told me before concerning his sentiments on censorship, sentiments which I believe it is safe to say are those of the President, too, at this writing. This is the way Mr. Mellett expresses himself on the subject:

"Even in case of war I don't believe in a propaganda drive," he said to me, referring to any artificial effort to mold public opinion in favor of government policy. "I have constantly opposed a central press bureau when I have heard it discussed, because it is impractical. It is impossible to get the news of government through one bottleneck. 'My idea,' he went on, 'is simply to see to it that the press information bureau of the army and the navy and possibly the defense agencies, which now exist, are made as efficient as possible.'"

To the newsman, this means that these bureaus would have at their

fingertips information which the press ordinarily obtains from individual officials. In an emergency, war and navy chiefs feel these individuals might inadvertently reveal information which should be kept confidential.

"If this method doesn't work," Mr. Mellett declared, "my idea would be to have representatives of the press and radio come here to Washington and offer their own plan for handling emergency news. They wouldn't offer a plan which the government could refuse. They want the news and the government wants to get it out."

He explained that what he meant was that he believed the newsmen would agree on what was sheer good sense and patriotism to print. Such facts would be given out which did not injure national defense or give aid and comfort to the enemy, and the papers would be left perfectly free, as he put it, to raise the devil with the way things were being done and to criticize the government.

Finally, I reminded Mr. Mellett that in the last war there was criticism of the Creel committee on public information because it not only withheld much news that the public had a right to have, but also it gave out information that was pure propaganda. Therefore, I asked, wasn't it natural to expect that any restriction on government news might be looked upon with suspicion by the press, radio and public?

Mr. Mellett came back to his original thesis. He reiterated that he did not believe in a propaganda drive—such a drive as the Creel committee indulged in. Secondly, he said, if the information bureaus of the various government agencies were efficient, the facts would be available. It was because the Creel committee was a central news bureau (which he opposes) that it became a bottleneck, holding back facts that could have been made available to the press and radio even in war time.

Statue Troubles In Nation's Capitol

It is easier to revise a statute in Washington than to move a statue. That is why Sixteenth street, the avenue that runs almost up to the front door of the White House, is torn up these days. The excavating is taking place at Scott circle.

Washington is full of circles, most of them with their historic statues. They make for beauty and also traffic jams. Recently certain newcomers to the city suggested removing the statues instead of building million dollar underpasses such as the one now being constructed under the proud figure of General Winfield Scott. But these newcomers just didn't know Washington tradition.

One man who tried to break that tradition got into a terrific mess. It was John Russell Young, then a newspaper reporter, now District Commissioner Young, one of the three "mayors" of the city. It was in Harding's administration when public buildings and grounds were in charge of the engineer aide to the President, Colonel Sherrill.

Mr. Young conceived the idea that the statue of George Washington, located in a somewhat shabby neighborhood several blocks from the White House, ought to be in front of it where General Jackson sits astride his famous rearing charger in Lafayette park. He persuaded Colonel Sherrill to switch the two figures and proceeded to write a story of what was to happen.

Then came the deluge. President Harding was almost drowned in an avalanche of angry telegrams from ardent Jacksonians all over the country. The state of Tennessee not only legislated its fury over this insult to its famous son but announced it was sending a delegation to the President. It was reported that the Old Hickory Marching club, once a historically potent political organization, was to be brought to life to descend on the capital, possibly with their old long rifles loaded for more than bear.

Only a speedy denial of his intention to force General Jackson to trade places with General Washington saved Mr. Harding's scalp. No, we don't disturb our sculptured great in Washington. If we can't get around them we go under them.

GENERAL HUGH S. JOHNSON Says:

Washington, D. C.

REVOLT UNDER HITLER

Napoleon conquered a large part of Europe. Because he had some idea of a sort of United States of that continent, semi-sovereign states united in a loose league, he allowed the conquered countries a good deal of leeway. Perhaps his further idea of putting his own people, family or fellow soldiers, on the thrones of several of these states had something to do with his liberality.

Whatever the reason, he didn't exercise a close enough control to keep some of them conquered. In Prussia, Scharnhorst and Stein effectively evaded his disarmament decrees by using the permitted small Prussian army in a new concept, not as a fixed regular establishment but as a military training school through which they rushed yearly classes of recruits as rapidly as possible. In this way, they forged the forces which finally sent Napoleon first to Elba and later, after Waterloo, to St. Helena. Napoleon just wasn't tough enough.

We do a good deal of talking about our great liberal free union of semi-sovereign states, the United States of America. But we frequently forget that, so far as the States of the old Southern Confederacy are concerned, there was nothing free or liberal about it. We forced them to remain in the Union at the points of bayonets.

It is worth remembering because, after the Treaty of Versailles, the Allies, especially England and France, made exactly the same mistake that Napoleon had made and made it with exactly the same warlike people, the Germans.

There was never a time, up to 1936 at least, when with the controls at their command, they couldn't have stopped Hitler, as Winston Churchill continuously urged that they should do. They didn't. As Napoleon had done earlier, and as the North did not do after the Civil war, they permitted the conquered country to build up an overwhelming military superiority, under their very noses.

Now the situation is reversed. Hitler sits astride most of Europe. He has disarmed it and made its vast military booty part of his own forces. He, like Napoleon, also contemplates some kind of compulsory United States of Europe. Some observers, reverting to the Napoleonic failure, say that it can't be done—that his conquest will collapse through counter-revolution strains and stresses with outside pressure.

Will it? Napoleon, himself, frequently said that all empires of conquest die of indigestion from over-eating and referred to the crackups of the empires of Alexander, the Romans, Ghengis Khan, Charlemagne and the Caliphates of Baghdad and Cordova.

On all the evidence to date, Hitler is not likely to repeat the blunders of Napoleon and the Allies through any lack of toughness, efficiency or cold-blooded cruelty. Let's not kid ourselves too far from realism.

COLUMN AND NOSTALGIA
This column has been accused by some of its best customers of nostalgia or too much yearning toward World War precedents and experiences in mobilizing American industry and man-power for defense. Sometimes from the hostiles this criticism takes the angle that the "nostalgia" is for a government job on the defense front. More frequently it is from sincere and understanding personal friends, and is that too much emphasis is put on mobilization principles and experiences 23 years old and that, like "a quail a day for 30 days," it gets too monotonous for the readers' relish.

No, this column is not in rebuttal of any of these criticisms about nostalgia. It is just to talk some of them over.

As to nostalgia for a job. That isn't good sense. Any man would like again to have some active part in a great national effort in a crisis, but that natural wish was abandoned long ago. Quite understandably, this administration would not seek out a critic for any more important job than janitor in its dog-house. It is not to be blamed for that. Any other course would be bad. It wouldn't make for harmony.

On the other hand, the administration has shown great consideration and restraint. This column could have been silenced any day, without justifiable criticism from any source, by simply calling its conductor to active service as a reserve officer—a course which would also have put him in a considerable financial crimp and could have resulted in no more interesting employment than counting coconuts at San Juan de Bac Bac.

Test Television for Help in Battle

Army Figures Possibilities For Directing Soldiers In Warfare.

PHILADELPHIA.—The magic of television soon may be harnessed to flash running picture stories of troop movements and actual battles from observation planes to general staff headquarters, the American Institute of Electrical Engineers was told here.

"We do not have to let the imagination run wild to picture the possibility of an airplane equipped with television flying over the battlefields while the troop commander and his general staff gather about the viewing screen at general headquarters and have instantaneous and accurate information of events in the front line," said Dean Joseph W. Barker of Columbia university school of engineering.

"That is all I can say, because the war and navy departments forbid me to discuss the possibilities in any detail," he concluded.

Aid in Defense.

Experimental television broadcasts from airplanes to land stations have been made successfully, they said, although the screen pictures are not as clear as those produced in studio broadcasts.

Dr. Barker discussed the new development in television at a round-table forum. He explained that he was not free to say more about it because he had been enlisted in national defense research and training projects.

Leading engineers attending the session pointed out that with the aid of television, the commanding general would know instantly not only what his own troops were doing, but also what the enemy was doing. He could flash orders to the front to strike at weaknesses developing in the enemy's lines or rush reinforcements to points in his own lines which were cracking.

Electric Power Cited.
During the same forum, N. E. Funk, vice president of the Philadelphia electric company, said that

the nation's electric generating capacity was 42,000,000 kilowatts, while the nation was using only 28,000,000 kilowatts. By 1942, he said, the capacity will have been increased to 47,000,000 kilowatts to provide a huge reserve for any defense emergency which may develop.

At another meeting, delegates were told of a new invention which would protect America's power supply if high voltage lines were destroyed by lightning or bombing. It is a new type of circuit breaker, and it not only automatically switches off power in the damaged lines, but also blows out fires that often break out.

The breaker can store air for years until such an emergency arises and then blast out the flames with a 1,000-mile-an-hour puff of wind. The speakers were Robert C. Dickinson and P. H. Nau of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing company, who have worked 10 years on the invention.

Army Trains Radio Operators



Fully cognizant of the importance of rapid communication, the U. S. Army is training radio operators for the tasks before them. Here is a line of student operators at Ft. Monmouth, N. J., as they listen to the automatic code signals. A graduate operator must be able to send and receive 35 words a minute.

Sammy Wishes He Hadn't Been So Hasty

by Thornton W. Burgess

Never be like Sammy Jay. Because, you know, it doesn't pay. Go ask him if it isn't true. And hear what Sammy'll say to you.

WITH all his might Sammy Jay wished that he hadn't been so hasty in making up his mind that Old Man Coyote had gone away, and especially that he hadn't been in such a hurry to tell everybody. He felt that he didn't want to meet anyone now, for everyone knew by this time that Old Man Coyote hadn't gone away. Either they would laugh at him for being so easily fooled or else they would think that he had told a wrong story purposely, and you know Sammy hasn't the best name in the world, anyway.

So he sat in a big hemlock tree in the Green Forest, not knowing what to do with himself, until at last he grew so hungry that he just had to go out to look for something to eat. Sammy, like the rest of the little feathered people, cannot go very long without food. Hardly had he started forth when he saw Chatterer the Red Squirrel. He tried to dodge out of sight, but Chatterer's eyes are very bright and quick. He saw Sammy almost as soon as Sammy saw him.

"Ho! ho! ho!" shouted Chatterer. "If Old Man Coyote has gone away why didn't he take his voice with him? Tell me that, Sammy Jay."

Sammy didn't say a word. He couldn't, because he hadn't anything to say. He just hurried on. As he passed the corner of the Old Orchard where should spy him but Johnny Chuck.

"What did Old Man Coyote promise you to tell us that he had gone away?" shrilled Johnny angrily. "He didn't promise me anything. I made a mistake, that's all!" snapped Sammy, and hurried on. Pretty soon Peter Rabbit caught sight of him.

"Story teller! Story teller!" called Peter.

"I'm not either!" screamed Sammy. "I really thought that Old Man Coyote had gone."

"Better know and not merely think next time," advised Peter.

Danny Meadow Mouse was the next to see him, but Sammy didn't wait to hear what Danny had to say. It was just as well. He wouldn't have felt any more comfortable if he had. You see, Danny is one of the very little people who has to al-

ways be on the watch to keep out of the way of Old Man Coyote, and something very terrible might have happened to him as a result of Sammy's story the day before. Down in his heart Sammy was glad that nothing had happened.

When he visited the Smiling Pool no one would have anything to do with him. They just turned their backs on him and pretended not to see him at all. So it was wherever he went. Sammy spent a miserable day. It wasn't of the least bit of use to try to explain. No one believed him. He flew sadly to the Green Forest to hide in the thick

hemlock tree where he had his home. And as he sat there thinking it all over he sighed. He was wishing that he had not so often given his neighbors cause to think ill of him. Then quite suddenly he thought of a way to regain his lost place in the regard of his friends. None of them knew that Farmer Brown's Boy had taken up his traps which he had set for Old Man Coyote. Tomorrow he would go over to the Smiling Pool and tell how he had seen Farmer Brown's Boy throw those cruel traps into a corner as if he didn't mean ever to use them again. Then Jerry Muskrat and Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter would be so glad that they would no longer turn their backs on him. Sammy brightened up wonderfully at the thought and tucked his head under his wing in very good spirits.

(Associated Newspapers—WNU Service.)

They Let Coeds Knit; Why? Keeps 'Em Quiet
CHATTANOOGA, TENN.—Knitting needles click in classes at the University of Chattanooga. The coeds are knitting war relief garments and besides, says Dr. Frank Prescott, head of the department of government: "I would much rather have the girls knitting than talking—or criticizing my lecture."

Don't take my WORD for it!
FRANK COLBY

INQUIRY
Noun. A question; a query; investigation.

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Inquiry is the Surprise Word of the Week.

The prevalent American pronunciation—"IN-queer-ee"—is not to be found in any of these accepted dictionaries: Funk and Wagnall's, Century, Macmillan's, Winston's, Oxford, Hempl, Jones, Wyld. However, it does appear as second choice in the New Webster's.

The correct pronunciation, with the accent on the second syllable, and with the "i" long as in **quite** and **quire**, is not a "new" pronunciation by any means, but has been well established by generations of speech authorities.

To pronounce **inquiry** correctly, simply place an "ee" sound at the end of the word **inquire**. Do not accent the first syllable. Correct Pronunciation: in-KWY-ree. (Capitals indicate syllables to be accented.) (Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

Chester the Pup

By GEORGE O'HALLORAN



CLARA puts on her gym suit early every morning and turns on the radio, and some klunkeroo explains just how to roll around the floor and keep fit to music. This morning Pebblepuss thought he'd try a few calisthenics. He said that these exercises that Clara was doing were just kindergarten stuff. Nothing like he used to do in college when he ran five miles every morning before breakfast, after which he walked around the block twice on his hands and then chinned himself 100 times. But either Clara's been doing them all wrong or else he doesn't understand English. The music started and the count began and by that time Pebblepuss had thrown both knees out of joint and got himself all wound up with his legs around his neck. He couldn't untangle himself so Clara rolled him into the bedroom and called a doctor to come up and unscramble him. (Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Minute Make-Ups

By V. V.



JUST because you prefer a brisk shower instead of a tub bath occasionally, don't give up using your pet bath oil. Pour a bit of the scented oil into your palm. Slosh it soothingly over your skin. Then stand under your warm spray and enjoy the delicious fragrance. (Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Dog Sled Derby



The International Dog Sled derby held in February, near Quebec City, Canada, recalled travel in the icy wastes of the Far North. A team is shown racing at full speed across a snow covered field.

ONE 'FLYING FORTRESS' COMPLETED EVERY TWO DAYS

SEATTLE.—The Boeing Aircraft company, builders of the world's first four-motored bombing planes, the army air corps' famous "flying fortresses," has entered its most significant year in the quarter-century history of the company. It is rapidly expanding its vast facilities to meet demands of America's defense program.

With employment at a record level of 9,000 men, the company is preparing space for more than 15,000 workers who will be on the job by summer. The Boeing company employed less than 3,000 men two years ago.

The plant operates 24 hours a day and turns out one "flying fortress" every two days. The production rate was one every four days a year ago. By the latter part of the year Boeing hopes to be delivering five or six bombers a day.

The plant soon will start delivering smaller twin-engine bombers for under a license agreement with the Douglas Aircraft company of Los Angeles.

To effect the production increase plant expansion has been under way almost continually the last seven months. A year ago plant 2 had a total floor space of 160,000 square feet. Early last fall this was increased to 832,000. Still too small,

it will be increased to more than 1,000,000 square feet this spring. The total floor space of three plants will then comprise nearly 2,500,000 square feet.

The enlarged plant 2 will be a continuous structure approximately one-fourth of a mile long and one-fifth of a mile wide, making it one of the most impressive production layouts of any manufacturing industry in the United States.

BRIEFS . . . By Baukhage

For weeks Washington reporters tried to find out the total airplane production of the United States. But somehow the figures were not available in national defense offices. It was not that the information was considered exactly confidential, but like much of the defense news, assembling the details involved the work of different government agen-

cies, different divisions of the same agency. Officials fearing to embarrass another division or department, have become close-mouthed.

But one reporter did get the plane figures. He got them at a cocktail party, along with a detailed breakdown. He published the totals but withheld the details for fear of embarrassing his source.