

*Who's Watching the Watchers?*

The creation of press councils in accordance with the seven points outlined could do much to ensure their success and would do even more to restore public's confidence in news reporting. Leadership in this reform, however, will be difficult to find because of the media's hostility. Government, though large enough and powerful enough, is barred from the undertaking. Who then will step forward? Someone must, for we can no longer be consoled by the industry's assurance that they can police themselves. They have become too involved in the course of human events to be without a vested interest. As a nation, as a people, we must ask ourselves how long we can remain strong without some check and balance upon this agent of power.

There are those, of course, who will counter that the notion of a monolithic "industry" intent upon controlling our thoughts is absurd and in part, they would be right. I offer here no theories of conspiracy. I acknowledge that the media speaks with many

voices—though at times they seem to run in packs. But in the hurly-burly of daily life, people have little time to shop and compare. Instead, they ought to be assured that the one paper they buy, or the one report they hear is measurable according to some standard of fairness and that for any abuse, there is an avenue of appeal. That is no less than what we should demand; no less than what we deserve.

**Comment**

*The press has recently made much of the public expense attached to these reports, even though their publication represents a tradition that goes as far back as the Confederate Papers. However, in defense of these works, I have researched the prior practices of other county commissioners and found nothing untoward in these expenditures. Others have spent as much or more per publication. The only thing extraordinary is that the press has chosen now to raise the issue—a splendid*

*example of selective reporting. For my own part, I have tried to offset the cost of these policy papers, approximately \$4,000 per edition, with frugality in other areas of my budget. Last year alone, I returned \$67,000 to the public. The expense of publishing is miniscule compared to these savings.*

*Further, the papers represent only a difference in degree, not in kind, of money spent to facilitate communication with constituents—phones, letters, postage, etc. I believe these papers have served a public purpose. Apparently many others think likewise for literally hundreds of additional copies have been requested through my office. Discussing public issues with the public and seeking their thoughts is what I believe a political figure is obligated to do.*



CAROLINE MILLER, Commissioner  
Multnomah County, Oregon  
County Courthouse  
Portland, Oregon 97204