Reporters and “Willing Propagandists”: AEF Correspondents Define Their Roles

By Michael S. Sweeney

World War I occurred at a pivotal time in the development of journalistic norms and press-military relations. Correspondents accredited to the American Expeditionary Force and the army officers who censored them entered the war in 1917 without clear guidelines on reporters’ roles. Early clashes over censorship dissolved after a few months as reporters demonstrated they could be trusted with sensitive information and the army liberalized regulations. Still, correspondents grappled with whether they should report independently about all newsworthy events, regardless of whether they might be perceived as critical, or act as “propagandists” deliberately producing stories to support the war effort. This article, drawing from AEF correspondents’ letters in the National Archives, argues that reporters sought to maximize access and minimize censorship in order to report freely stories that would be both accurate and patriotic. Among those who sought propagandistic roles were Westbrook Pegler and Heywood Broun.

United Press correspondent Westbrook Pegler, at twenty-three the youngest journalist accredited to the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in World War I, felt he could not keep quiet about the inept administration of publicity and censorship. In November 1917, he complained in a letter to his boss, UP President Roy Howard:

Headquarters has shown itself to be ruled by reactionary ideas about publicity. Headquarters and notably the Chief of Intelligence profess to appreciate the value of correct publicity. It is not my intention to question their sincerity but the fact is that they have repeatedly dulled the edge of splendid propaganda. . . . I am convinced that the Intelligence Section is bungling the
Little Magazines and Little Wanderers: Building Advocate Networks for Adoption During the Progressive Era

By Patricia S. Hart

The Chicago-based National Children’s Home Society (NCHS), founded by the Rev. Martin Van Arsdale in the early 1890s, maintained that orphanages could be emptied and the nation spared the expense of “restraining criminals” if permanent adoptive homes could be found for every neglected, abused, or abandoned child. Adoption met with fierce resistance from charities that depended on state subsidies and private donations to care for children in orphanages, and later from such diverse critics as eugenicists and newly professionalized social workers. Nevertheless, adoption gradually gained adherents during the Progressive Era among civic leaders and families wanting to raise these “chicks of another brood” as their own.

This article considers the practical uses and rhetorical strategies of little magazines published during the Progressive Era that were intended to set a new agenda for child saving and build a constituency for adoption through dozens of independent, state-based Protestant home-finding societies federated under the NCHS umbrella. Little magazines were sold by subscription and mailed monthly to tens of thousands of individual supporters for the purpose of raising donations, finding adoptive homes, and advocating adoption as social welfare policy. To this end, NCHS modeled its appeal on popular magazines of the period, publishing letters and human interest stories, rescue narratives and advice columns, poetry and sentimental fiction, photographs, and even musical scores to persuade families—but primarily women—to donate and adopt. This article employs social movement theory to argue that NCHS used these little magazines during the Progressive Era to reframe child-saving discourse to include adoption and build effective advocacy networks for adoption at the grassroots level.
Freedom’s Vanguard: Horace Greeley on Threats to Press Freedom in the Early Years of the Penny Press

By Daxton R. “Chip” Stewart

During the early years of the Penny Press, the concept of freedom of the press faced grave threats from government and citizens as journalism became more commercial and accessible. Horace Greeley, founder of the New-Yorker and the New-York Tribune and one of the most influential publishers of this era, stood up to these challenges in the 1830s and 1840s through numerous libel lawsuits, battles with the postmaster, and threats of physical violence from the public and political rivals. Greeley used his platform as a publisher and editor to link these dangers to press freedom as threats to American freedom and democracy that limited the ability of the press to serve as a watchdog and agent of social reform. This study, which examines Greeley’s thoughts and actions when dealing with government and social constraints on publication in the pre-Civil War era, details Greeley’s role in shaping modern understanding of press freedom in the formative years of the Penny Press.

The Printer’s Art

Heaven speed the proud cause of the world’s renovation
May virtue and Truth our Art ever befriend
While from each it may claim, in our deep adoration,
A heart to uphold it—an arm to defend.
Then flourish the Press; Freedom’s vanguard adoring
The light of past ages reflecting on this,
And earth shall yet bloom in the freshness of morning
An Eden of Glory, of Knowledge, and Bliss

Horace Greeley, 1837
Pine Straw in an Evil Wind:  
A Study of James Boyd and the *Pilot* of Southern Pines, NC, 1941–1944  
By Melita M. Garza

This study of novelist James Boyd and the *Pilot* of Southern Pines, North Carolina, during the World War II years widens the notion of what a country weekly editor can be or can do. In the shadow of Pinehurst, the renowned and tradition-bound golf resort, Boyd rescued his failing hometown weekly newspaper, editorializing in favor of an early entry into the war, civil rights for blacks, and equal rights for women. He also called for adherence to free speech and the Bill of Rights amid a national climate increasingly intolerant of dissent. Contrary to previous scholarship on the southern country weekly, this article about the *Pilot* shows that not all were conservative and anti-New Deal. It also shows that noteworthy journalism and commentary were not the exclusive province of the nation’s major metropolitan dailies. Boyd’s newspaper work during the pivotal pre-Pearl Harbor period in 1941 through his death in 1944 at age 55 is illuminating, demonstrating how an editor might negotiate the proper role between journalism and the government and readers in wartime.

On August 1, 1941, the new editor of the *Pilot* in Southern Pines, North Carolina, fired off a letter to his equally new publisher and boss, the novelist James Boyd, who was vacationing in Maine. The editor wrote that he’d filled three editions with “no boiler plate” and “no general free publicity.”

I’m trying to get friendly around the courthouse in Carthage—spent the afternoon there today, and am going back Monday for the commissioner’s meeting. From my

Melita M. Garza is a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, CB 3365, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, (312) 375–3163, melitag@live.unc.edu

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