

La Follette's

MAGAZINE

"YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE"

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People Demand a Free Press

IT is vital to democracy that the voter should be able to form an intelligent opinion upon the issues of the day.

The press assumes to enlighten the people upon all public questions. It pretends to publish the facts on current events day by day, upon which the voter may rely in forming his voting judgment.

If the press were honest, if it printed the uncolored news, the real essential facts without bias, democracy would be safe.

The American public will think straight if given a fair chance. The great heart of the mass of mankind is right. It always beats in sympathy with human welfare.

But sound judgment may only be formed upon a sound basis of truth. When truth is distorted, when lies pass current for facts, when white is made to look black, and black white by a press that poisons its readers day by day,—then the public is drugged into apathy or befooled into a wholly false opinion.

The people know the press is owned or controlled. They know that it is the servant of the combined groups which control Big Business, and through Big Business is rapidly acquiring the control of little business—line after line.

But foreknowledge that the press habitually misrepresents the facts, that it suppresses news, that it is unreliable on all issues involving public interest as against private monopoly,—foreknowledge of all these facts cannot protect the public against its sinister influence.

So potent is the psychological effect of the printed lie, when artfully

and persistently repeated, so destructive of all soundness of judgment are the deadly half-truths, the "doctored" news, the sly insinuations, the sensational falsehoods, retracted after they have served their purpose,—and all the varied and multiplied forms of spurious, deceptive fabrication, wilfully and wickedly printed from day to day by the Kept Press,—that however thoroughly it be discredited, it is still the most powerful influence for evil, which menaces American democracy today.

The very life of democracy is committed to the voter. If he be ignorant or misinformed upon vital issues his ballot is a source of peril to the righteous decision of any issue.

The American pioneers sought to safeguard democracy by an effective system of universal education. Hence they established the public school as the foundation stone of the American commonwealth.

We have made education free, from the kindergarten to the primary, from the primary to the secondary schools, and on through the state universities.

This system of education—the most wonderful in all the world,—with its hundreds of thousands of devoted teachers, has for its primary purpose the training of men and women for the grave responsibilities of citizenship.

All the way from the kindergarten to the university, the founders determined that the public school must be jealously protected against error and bias in textbook and teaching.

It was believed that the youth of the land would come from the public schools with open, unprejudiced minds trained to decide the issues of self-

government as presented by an honest, intelligent press.

But of what avail is our splendid system of education in preparing the voters to meet their responsibilities when the sources of current news are poisoned, and editorial comment controlled by sordid and mercenary influences. That control need not be through open ownership of the newspaper or magazine, though in many instances it is. But it is more frequently achieved through that community of interests, that interdependence of investments and credits which ties the publisher up to the banks, the advertisers and the Special Interests.

The power that controls the press, controls the American market.

It is doubtful if the American people can ever emancipate themselves from the merciless exploitation of the colossal MONOPOLY which CONTROLS MARKETS and PRICES, until they shall establish a FREE and INDEPENDENT PRESS.

Men and women of America, do you want to BREAK the STRANGLEHOLD of MONOPOLY, that TAKES TOLL, to the limit of its GREED, out of your DAILY LIFE?

Do you want to be FREE, ECONOMICALLY and POLITICALLY FREE?

Then BEGIN AT ONCE. ORGANIZE! Organize in EVERY STATE for a FREE and INDEPENDENT PRESS.

Robert M. La Follette