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## THE CATHOLIC PRESS AND THE PROFESSIONAL MAN\*

By REV. A. R. ZUROWESTE

Belleville, Ohio

It is not exaggeration to say that today more than ever before Catholics need the Catholic press, and conversely, that the Catholic press needs the full support of Catholics.

Much is being written these days about such things as fascism, communism, capitalism, and the need of a new social order. But it seems a fair question to ask how many, even among those who set themselves up as instructors, have a clear and comprehensive grasp of the fundamental problem, or are desirous of presenting the matter in a constructive and objective way—calming minds, allaying fears, guiding people aright, and creating a spirit of cooperation in which to work peacefully toward a dynamic and just social order.

There is a great need today of a worthy press, an intelligent press, a press devoted to the well-being of all classes of society, a press dedicated to friendly cooperation among nations. Yet, if we make a few notable exceptions, the secular press generally falls short of these high aims. It is too frequently actuated by purely material considerations or by mere partisanship, based upon some conception of economic advantage

for a group or class rather than the welfare of the nation as a whole. The tremendous pressure in modern industrial society to dispose of goods when a sufficient amount of purchasing power is not available, has commercialized and cheapened the press. The competition for circulation has resulted in the printing of numerous editions and the exploitation and debasement of readers by rapid and cheap reporting, with emphasis on novelty and sensationalism. In a word, there seems to be far too little recognition of the fact that the right of freedom of the press carries with it the corresponding duty of utilizing that freedom in the promotion of worthy ends and that, after all, the very freedom of the press depends upon a dynamic, well-functioning, and just society.

The Holy Father, knowing that "the word is ruler of the world" in creating those dispositions and disseminating that knowledge necessary to the preservation of individual and social well-being, acclaims the Catholic press and calls upon the faithful in every clime to come to its support. "Here is a field of apostolate," he says, "worthy of all the solicitude and interest of good Catholics, of the members of Catholic Action. They can never cultivate the Catholic press enough. According

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to the care with which they prepare, so will the beneficent fruits be abundant. With this apostolate they will obtain the other precious result of averting the evil effects of a poisonous press that propagates things that should be abolished not only by culture but also by civilization. Here then is a large field for apostolic activity, since the widespread reading of a good press is a great good and the spread of the reading of a bad press is a great evil."

The Catholic press is the proponent of Christian culture, of the eternal verities of faith. In its presentation of news, its editorial expression, its special articles, its books and periodicals and pamphlets, it is concerned with the really worthwhile and lasting things of life—the spread of Christian truth, the integrity of the home and family life, the development of spirituality and good will, the promotion of charitable enterprises and welfare work, the application of the great social principles of the Gospel to the task of industrial and economic rehabilitation.

There is no possibility for the development of an effective Catholic Action without a well-supported Catholic press, and it is equally true that Catholic families and individuals need the information and knowledge that come to them through the Catholic press if they are to realize something of the vision of the Faith, of its efficacy in promoting social well-being, and to enjoy the per-

sonal satisfaction of Catholic life. Children in the Catholic home, subject as they are to the varying influences of modern social life, should not be deprived of the help brought to them by the Catholic press. In the broader field of the study club the Catholic press, understood as embracing newspapers, periodicals, books, pamphlets, etc., is indispensable in the development of Catholic lay readers.

Why, you might ask, do I bring these facts of the need of the Catholic press before you, the Catholic Physicians' Guild of the Belleville Diocese. The answer is simple. The Catholic professional man is the educated Catholic and from this group the Church expects and wants to obtain its lay leadership. If, for example, we can interest the Catholic physicians and the Catholic lawyers in the Catholic press and have them to realize the importance, especially of their own diocesan paper, we are making a great step forward for the welfare of the Church in the Diocese and are cementing the greatest bond that we have of presenting a united front against the many *isms* that would tear down the high ideals of both Church and state.

The diocesan paper is the voice of the Pope, the bishop, the priests and the people in the diocese. It forms a strong bond of union whereby we as Catholics are united in thought, in expression and in Catholic Action. It is really the only medium through which Cath-

olic people can present a commanding influence for the promotion of a diocesan cause. Perhaps if we were deprived of it, we might appreciate its importance. It is indeed sad that we take so lightly the great benefits and gifts of our Catholic faith in this free America. If the government took away our right to maintain our Catholic schools, if our Catholic hospitals and charitable institutions should become government controlled, then our Catholic people would rise up in protest against the unfairness of the government's actions and they would rally around their cause.

But, do you realize that today in America many Catholic schools retain their freedom only because of the power of the Catholic press? Do you realize that children attending Catholic schools have been given the same privileges of bus transportation in certain states only because the Catholic press within that state, supported by other Catholic papers throughout the country, put up a noble fight and placed the facts before the public? Do you realize that there are many hospitals and Catholic institutions that have kept their autonomy only because the Catholic press has waged battle for them?

Take your own profession and examine the attitude of the Catholic press towards it and you will be forced to acknowledge that if you have received any aid in upholding the high ideals and ethical principles of your profession this

aid has come primarily, if not exclusively, from the Catholic press. As a practical example of what the Catholic press is doing for the Medical Association, permit me to quote the following N. C. W. C. news release of this week:

"Chicago.—Referring to a survey by *Fortune* magazine of what it calls 'the business of birth control,' an editorial in the current issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* says, 'it is a strange industry, with one foot among the sciences and the other among hundreds of scoundrels who make small fortunes out of ignorance.' The *Fortune* survey is quoted as saying 'the industry' at present does a \$250,000,000 a year business and that there is an estimated annual profit of \$75,000,000 a year for the manufacturers alone.

"As the writers in *Fortune* emphasize,' the editorial says, 'the contraceptive manufacturer realizes that most of the products are unsatisfactory and frequently fail to produce the desired result.'

"The *Journal's* editorial adds that 'the feminine side of the birth control business is appalling'; that women spend \$200,000,000 annually for 'at least 636 different brands, sold largely under the deceptive advertising term 'Feminine Hygiene'; that not one of them has been proved to be entirely effective when used alone, and some of them are potentially dangerous.'

"'Feminine hygiene products,' the editorial adds, 'may even be advertised as "sure, safe and dependable contraceptives."' The result of such advertising is that thousands of women are duped. There is not one product on the market that is 100 per cent efficient as a contraceptive measure.'

"'It is interesting,' the editorial also says, 'that a publication like *Fortune* has made available complete information as to the manner in which commercial interests are exploiting the public in this field.'"

Did you gentlemen read this in any secular paper? I didn't. As far as I know the Catholic press is the only press release that gave this particular editorial any publicity after its appearance in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Now in turn I ask, what you as a physician or as members of this group do for the Catholic press. I am asking how many of you can conscientiously say that you read a Catholic paper each week. How many of you ever discuss the articles contained therein with other members of the profession, with your patients, or with your own families? Would you be willing, if called upon, to write an article dealing with some Catholic question pertaining to your own medical profession?

Now what could you do as individuals or as members of this organization? Before I answer, permit me to digress for a moment to give you the human side of a patient waiting in the doctor's office, which in my opinion the physician too frequently overlooks. This little incident was commented on by a friend of mine, a member of the Catholic Press Association and appeared in the paper of which he is the editor. I quote:

"Your appointment with the doctor is 2 o'clock. But you arrive at 1:55, hoping to get in ahead of the others sooner. You discover that at least 10 other persons had the identical idea, so the waiting room is practically filled at the appointed hour. There doesn't seem to be much to do in a doctor's waiting room, outside of trying to figure out whom the

office girl is phoning to and thumbing through ancient magazines. Everybody sits in a row and looks blankly at everybody else. Then someone whispers that the doctor is late. One by one the patients try to figure out what disease is afflicting the other person.

"The doctor, of course, slips in a side door. Anyhow, before you know it, the office girl nods to a fat woman and says that Doctor Tippin will see you now, Mrs. Gutowsky. This is your first disappointment, as you were sure you would be called first. Anyhow, you hope Mrs. Gutowsky's ailments aren't very severe. There follows a long spell when patients wiggle around, study the paintings on the wall, wonder what size shoe other patients are wearing and in general make themselves uncomfortable."

While the average patient is trying to figure out how to entertain himself he has the opportunity of spending some moments in reading. Now, how many doctors have a copy of their diocesan paper or any Catholic literature in their waiting room? One will find a copy of *Life*, *Esquire*, *Literary Digest*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Rotarian*, *Boy Scout Magazine*—all ancient copies it is true, but nevertheless the doctor is not afraid to advertise that he belongs to the Rotarians, is a member of a Boy Scout committee or that his wife reads the *Delineator*, but I am sorry to say that I have never found a Catholic paper on display in any Catholic doctor's office.

What would it mean to have the diocesan paper sent to your office each week? While patients are waiting to see the physician, one never knows what article may interest them, or what item might appeal to them. In this manner

it might so happen that a non-Catholic becomes interested in the truths of our Faith and from this cursory reading eventually accepts the Faith.

If we make a comparison between the secular dailies and the Catholic weeklies we will find that as far as news content, editorial thought, and interesting articles are concerned, the Catholic paper has all these with a triple "A" rating. If we are looking for real freedom, the Catholic editors and the Catholic writers enjoy this gift much more than the writers in our secular dailies. If we are look-

ing for truth, real news, void of scandal and salacious writing, the honor must also go to the Catholic press.

Thus, in brief is the thought I would impress upon you. I plead with you to realize the importance of the Catholic press, especially your own diocesan paper, for you as individuals; for you as members of a Catholic Physicians' Guild; for you as Catholic educated leaders who must look beyond your own personal and private interests to the interest and welfare of Holy Mother the Church.

## CATHOLIC DENTISTS TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION

Our colleagues of the Dental Profession—members of St. Apollonia Guild—have taken a stand which we physicians must admire. Aroused by the efforts of the "Dental Appeal for Aid to Spanish Democracy," which succeeded in having certain supply houses contribute to the aid of those carrying on this unholy conflict, our dental confreres protested and in the case of one large manufacturer of dressings, secured a repudiation; the firm stating that their gift was not intended to be used in Spain, the appeal merely asking for dressings for a clinic in a small town in New York and for European clinics. The firm wrote that "at the time of the re-

quest and mailing, we knew nothing of Dr. P——'s affiliations with any group or party in Spain or elsewhere. Had we known of the proposed use of these products, we should have refused to make this contribution." A blacklist was printed of the other donors, and the members of the Guild were requested to divert their patronage from such houses. Americans will deprecate boycotts which have not the sanction of the national government, but we have the right to be aroused against those people who, without national authorization, conspire to help those who are carrying on a war against religion and in furtherance of Communism.