

Columbia University
April 29, 1921.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
New York City.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

I am attempting a study of the influences affecting the policies of newspapers and for one phase of the study I am endeavoring, by means of the enclosed questionnaire, to gather together for tabulation and discussion authentic opinions on the subject from persons who have had actual experience in the newspaper field and who are representative men of the press.

I am counting on your co-operation and that your vital interest in the subject will prompt you to fill out and return this questionnaire. The use of the information will be wholly impersonal, nevertheless you may use your own pleasure about signing your name to the enclosed schedule. At the same time I am going to ask that you do me the favor to run up on the back of the schedule your total experience in newspaper work, as it will give added weight and importance to the information in its final compiled form to be able to make a definite statement as to the varied and extensive newspaper experience of those whose opinions I am setting forth.

The enclosed list of influencing factors was compiled from suggestions resulting from interviews with about twenty prominent newspaper men of New York City. That our results may be uniform will you kindly observe the following plan in making a study of this list:

First:- Go over the list carefully with the idea of looking for omissions and if there occur to you other influences which in your opinion operate as forces shaping the policies of our newspapers, please add them to the list.

Second:- Taking the list as a whole, grade the items in the order of their importance, as you see it, by giving them serial numbers, 1, 2, 3, etc., letting 1 stand for the factor of most importance, 2 for the next and so on down the descending scale of their values. If there are two forces which you would rank as of equal value, so indicate by giving both items the same serial number. All items which you consider as negligible in importance may be shown by marking with a cipher (0).

Third:- It will be most desirable and greatly appreciated if you will cite examples taken from your own experience or observation which show concretely the actual working, either positive or negative, of these forces in shaping the policies of our newspapers. The second sheet headed "Specific Examples" has been supplied for this use.

Remarks and any additional opinions or suggestive criticisms will be most heartily welcomed. Believing you will see the value of such a study as planned I hope to have an immediate reply and thank you for any courtesy you may extend to me in this matter.

Very truly yours,

L. E. Bailey
Department of Social Science,
Columbia University,
New York City.

first principles

All students of social science agree that one of the most powerful influences affecting public opinion is the press.

The purpose of this study is to find out as far as possible the forces that control the policies of the press.

Granting that newspaper men, like other high minded business men, are desirous of working for the best interests of the country and humanity, with a real desire to improve life conditions, which of the following do you consider to be the dominant influences which control their efforts in determining the policies of newspapers?

INFLUENCES AFFECTING THE POLICIES OF NEWSPAPERS

**SERIAL
NUMBERS**

(Rank as to
importance)

INFLUENCES.

Circulation
Competitive newspapers (Does the pace set by others force certain policies)
Tremendous cost of newspaper making.
The paper's creditors and financial backers
Crises
What the public wants
Owners
Self aggrandizement
The intellectuals
Commercial gain (Purely a business proposition—must make it pay)
Life philosophies and beliefs of the Editor-in-Chief
Life philosophies and beliefs of the Managing Editor
Subscribers (Are their suggestions and complaints reckoned as a serious force)
Propagandists
Advertising patronage
Reporter's point of view (Both his ideas and personality reflected in his news reports)
Hobbies of editors
Leaders of the American Press (Both past and present)
Promotion of private business of publishers or owners
Potential subscribers (Are their interests studied for incorporation)
Corporation - Big Interests
Concerted action of reporters (Team-work to put over some common conviction)
Signs of the times - opportunism
Politics
Dynamic personalities (Forceful characters in the community)
Press Agents
Press Associations and News Service Agencies
Rapid evolution of newspaper machinery
Feature Syndicates

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QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that newspapers as now controlled are effective to a high degree in shaping public opinion for good?
2. What remedy or solution have you to suggest to overcome the weaknesses of the press.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

(Illustrating the working of the forces enumerated in list)

Number the same as
corresponding force
in previous list.

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