

Those of us in public office sometimes are sensitive to your criticism but none of us ever would attempt to impair your right to criticize.

Fortunately in this country, the restraint under which newspapers operate is self-imposed. Regulations such as are placed upon other institutions which perform a public function have never been imposed upon newspapers because of the abiding consciousness of American journalists of their responsibility not to abuse the liberty of the press. For this reason, our newspapers are deserving the highest praise of all of us. And for this reason, they merit our tolerance when they sometimes err.

I have spoken here much about your duties and your responsibilities, I should not like to end these remarks before first having told you that I am conscious of my own obligation to the press. As a public official — as a servant of all of our citizens — it is my duty to keep these agencies of public information informed at all times of my activities as Governor of the State and of the activities of the departments and agencies which function under me.

In a democracy such as ours, the government cannot operate successfully unless it is supported by the people, and the people cannot participate effectively in their government unless they understand it. An informed citizenry is the keystone of democratic government.

Thomas Jefferson, who has become a sort of patron saint of the press and the newspaper profession, wrote this: "No government ought to be without censors, and where the press is free none ever will."

To guard our liberties as a free people, we must rededicate ourselves to the principle that every citizen has the right and ought to speak and write his sentiments, keeping within the bounds of truth.

REMARKS, PANEL DISCUSSION, MIDDLE ATLANTIC
ASSOCIATED PRESS MEETING
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, WEST VIRGINIA

August 17, 1961

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to you for inviting me to attend this meeting of Associated Press members of the Middle Atlantic Region. I assure you that I am both delighted and highly honored to have this opportunity.