

The topic you have chosen for this session of your conference—the relationship of government with our free press—is a challenging one. I do not let myself forget, and I am sure you do not, that the existence of a free press is our best security against forces which would deprive us of our liberties.

In discussing the relationship of my office with the press and public, I should like to begin by describing briefly the machinery by which we operate. Afterward, I want to make some general observations about this relationship.

If I were to choose one word best describing the relationship of the Governor of Maryland with the press, that word might well be “informality.” As long as I can recall, editors and reporters have dealt with the Governors of Maryland on a chummy, “first-name” basis.

I was the first Governor of our State ever to hold formal, periodical press conferences. When I initiated them, some of the older and more experienced reporters assigned to the State House voiced some objections. They feared that the formal conferences would hamper their freedom to move into and out of my office at will. They like the idea of picking up a telephone, dialing a number and hearing the voice of the Governor at the other end of the line. I like informality too, and I try to maintain it in my relationship with representatives of the press.

I do, as I have said, hold press conferences. They are held on a biweekly basis, with sessions rotated for morning and afternoon publications. Unscheduled conferences are held from time to time as the occasion arises. In tone, we try to keep them chatty, conversational and as productive of ideas and information as possible.

My office uses most of the other conventional instruments of public information—radio talks, television appearances, press releases. Recently we began distributing a weekly newsletter, aimed primarily at the weekly and semiweekly newspapers, of which there are some 65 or 70 in our State. We have not seen fit to set up an elaborate, strongly staffed heavily equipped public relations office such as are found in some states and some cities. We may someday come to this, but the need as yet, in my opinion, has not been demonstrated.

So much for the machinery, and now let me make a few general remarks about press relations.

In his letter inviting me to come here, Max Fullerton said it seemed