

Our own Declaration of Rights, proclaimed in our first State Constitution, stated the principle clearly, unequivocally.

“The liberty of the press,” it declares, “ought to be inviolably preserved” and “every citizen of the State ought to be allowed to speak, write and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that privilege.”

From this fundamental doctrine, so rich a treasure in our great heritage, the State of Maryland has never veered. The right of a citizen to express his feelings about any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that privilege, as our Declaration of Rights states it, is unchallengable in Maryland. And so long as we retain our strength and preserve our faith in the great principles of democracy, we know that right will never be challenged.

The sacredness and inviolability of a free press is a doctrine so firmly implanted in the fabric of our democratic society that it is a profession of faith to all Americans. There is no single characteristic that so distinguishes a free nation from a totalitarian nation as a free press. All dictators abhor a free press; all freedom-loving people cherish it.

The oft-quoted remark by Thomas Jefferson, that if the choice were left to him whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, he would not hesitate a moment to choose the latter, is meaningful to us today as we are threatened on all sides by the forces of communistic oppression . . .

What a blessing we have in a free press! And how grateful we all should for such a legacy!

And as we rededicate this monument to a noble principle, and unveil our plans for a memorial to the valiant men and women who have sustained it, let us all resolve that the right of citizens to speak and write their sentiments will never be allowed to perish.

Before I have finished, let me once again express my appreciation to all of you who have come here today for these ceremonies. I hope and believe that your presence here indicates a feeling in your hearts and minds that our undertaking is a worthy one. I earnestly solicit the support of each of you in our endeavor to make this an appropriate memorial to the men and women of the journalistic profession who have contributed so much to human progress and the preservation of our liberties.