

I went further to state that I considered it an obligation of government to "keep the public fully and frankly informed," and I concluded this portion of my remarks with the pledge that it would be my purpose to "heighten the public awareness of all the functions of State government." To fulfill this pledge, I have sought—and in most instances received—the cooperation and assistance of the press—the men and women who publish newspapers and operate the wire services, radio stations and television stations. Without their help, we could not hope to keep the public informed.

In this country, we have always recognized that an untrammelled and unrestrained press is an essential of good government. The principle is stated in the very first article in the Bill of Rights of our federal Constitution which prohibits the abridgment of the freedom of the press. In our Maryland Declaration of Rights it is stated that "the liberty of the press ought to be inviolably preserved; that 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."

I like the way our Maryland Constitution states the great principle, for it not only establishes the right but it also defines the responsibility. The freedom of the press is inviolable, it says, but those who write and publish are held responsible for any abuse of the privilege granted them.

But a free press is more than just a grant of privileges to individual citizens. It is, indeed, the very foundation of our democratic government and our democratic social order. That is what Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he wrote that "if it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

As public officials—as servants of the people—it is one of our primary duties to keep these purveyors of public information fully informed at all times of our own activities and of the activities of the agencies which we administer. It is my earnest hope each of you will return to your counties from this congress with a broader knowledge of press and public relations and a keener insight into how you can best fulfill your obligations in this important field.

And now, to conclude, may I express my appreciation to all of you for the courtesies I have received here this morning. May this conference be a rewarding and pleasant experience for all of you. I thank you.