

## MARYLAND PRESS ASSOCIATION LUNCHEON

Hotel Emerson, February 15, 1941

Baltimore

**I**N all the wars and turmoil that rage throughout the world today, there is one fundamental consideration involved. That is the preservation of Democracy which, in its highest form as developed in this Country, means liberties and rights and privileges that have become a part of the very fiber of our American life. It seems inconceivable that we should ever lose these rights and liberties, and yet France and Poland and Holland and Belgium, and other Democratic people have lost them.

In the preservation of Democracy there stand in this Country two sturdy bulwarks of defense, one official, the other unofficial, but of possibly even greater importance than that set up in the law of the land. As the official preserver of our American system, we have the courts of the land, which interpret the law without fear, free from pressure of majority groups, entirely unbiased. To the courts any minority groups may look, with entire confidence, for the preservation of their rights, and just as so long as minority groups can look with confidence to our courts, so long will Democracy survive in the exalted form in which we have been privileged to know it here in America.

On the unofficial side, the free press of our Country always has been, as I have mentioned above, possibly of even greater importance for the preservation of our liberties than the courts themselves. The people of America, or of any other country, in the final analysis will get pretty much the kind of government that they are willing to accept. Even here in our own Country, if perchance the people come to a state of mind where they are willing to accept less than the rights and privileges that have always been theirs, then it is safe to assume that they will get just the amount of liberty that they demand.

With Democracy throughout the world making its final, desperate stand against dictator-led onslaughts, this unofficial safeguard of our liberties, the press of our Country, including the one hundred or more splendid publications in our own State of Maryland, are on trial along with Democracy. Only as long as the press of our Country, and of any other democratic nation, remains entirely free, free to publish and to criticize, free from official repression or coercion, only so long, we may be sure, will Democracy survive.

The first step towards autocracy, whether it be Communist, Nazi, Fascist or under any other guise, is to shackle the press, to control its utterances and opinions, to use it as a medium for propaganda rather than for the free dissemination of information.

You know only too well that America is the one Country in the world today where complete news of the world developments is available constantly