

UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

UNRESTRICTED

E/HR/2

ECONOMIC

CONSEIL

23 APRIL 1946

AND

ECONOMIQUE

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SOCIAL COUNCIL

ET SOCIAL

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

United States Delegation to the
General Assembly of the United Nations

20, Grosvenor Square,
London, W. 1.

February 16, 1946

Dear Mr. Lie,

I transmit herewith communications concerning freedom of information and freedom of the press addressed to me by Mr. Hugh Baillie, President of the United Press Association, Mr. Wilbur Forrest, Chairman of the Standing Committee on World Freedom of Information of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, and Mr. Kent Cooper, Executive Director of the Associated Press.

I shall be grateful if you will circulate these communications to the members of the Economic and Social Council and request the President of the Council to bring them to the attention of the Commission on Human Rights when it is fully constituted.

May I take this occasion to reaffirm the belief of the United States that the Commission on Human Rights should undertake as promptly as possible after it has been fully constituted a study of the problem of freedom of information with a view to preparing draft recommendations or a draft convention thereon to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and later to member governments.

Sincerely yours,

s/ Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.

The Honorable Trygve Lie,
Secretary General of the United Nations,
Church House,
Dean's Yard,
London, S.W.1.

C O P Y
TELEGRAM

New York City
January 4, 1946

Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.,
United Nations Organization
London

Knowing and appreciating your interest in the subject of freedom of the news in connection with which your efforts at the Mexico City and San Francisco Conferences was so fruitful, I would like to submit through the United States Delegation the following suggestion for reference to and consideration by the Commission on Human Rights:

"In accordance with the United Nations compact to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all the United Nations confirm hereby the right of their peoples to be fully and speedily informed through press and radio of world events as they occur day by day. In order further to encourage the free flow of such information among all nations it is resolved that the following principles shall be applied with respect to the international gathering and distribution of news.

1. All sources of news particularly official sources shall be competitively open to all.
2. All transmission facilities shall be competitively available to all.
3. There shall be a minimum of official regulation of the flow of news itself".

Application of these basic principles to the international gathering and distribution of news would remove the major obstructions which up to now have impeded and checked the world wide flow of free information. As you may recall representatives of twelve governments with whom I discussed this plan in 1944 and 1945 gave it their enthusiastic support. I am asking Virgil Pinkley, United Press Vice President and General European Manager whose headquarters are in London and R. H. Shackford of our Washington staff, whom I believe you know and who is now in London, to place themselves at your service if you or your advisers require any further information or background on this program. Also, I am sending this cable to Gladwyn Jebb, UNO Executive Secretary, so he will be informed.

With cordial best wishes for the success of the momentous tasks you and your colleagues are undertaking, I am sincerely yours.

HUGH BAILLIE
President, United Press Association

C O P Y
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

January 7, 1946

Mr. Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. Chairman
United States Delegation to
the United Nations Organization,
c/o The United States Embassy,
London, England.

Dear Mr. Stettinius,

As Chairman of the Standing Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors for World Freedom of Information, it is my privilege at this time to urge a course of action - as expeditiously as consistent with convenient U.N.O. possibility - toward the following program which has long been that of the Society:

That agreement between nations be sought to include:

- "1. Recognition that complete friendship with any other sovereign power is dependent, among other considerations, on the freedom, the abundance and the exchange of information between people.
- "2. Recognition that any printed matter, film, broadcast or other media of public information paid in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, by a government, organization or person, shall carry conspicuous labels as to source.
- "3. Recognition that any government or private monopoly of the media of information is inimical to the public interest and incompatible with freedom of expression and competition of ideas on which a well informed public opinion is based.
- "4. Refusal to recognize the right of any government, organization or person:
 - (a) To discriminate against any media of information.
 - (b) To infringe upon freedom of information or expression.
 - (c) To place any barriers, technical, political, legal or economic, against the free exchange of information between the peoples of the world.
 - (d) To censor information in time of peace, except for obscenity or fraud."

The above program has been adopted by the membership of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, which embraces every leading newspaper in the United States. It is a program which, as you know, is based on the sincere ideal of understanding between peoples of the earth in the hope that a free flow of information will prove to be a deterrent to international misunderstanding.

Groups of editors in many world capitals adhered to the program in the course of a world survey conducted by the American Society early last year. The Standing Committee of the American Society was named November last and its membership is as follows:

Wilbur Forrest, Assistant Editor
New York Herald Tribune
(Chairman)

Roy A. Roberts, Managing Editor
The Kansas City Star (Missouri)

Alfred A. Kirchhofer, Managing Editor
The Buffalo Evening News

John H. Sorrells, Executive Editor
Scripps-Howard Newspapers

Donald J. Sterling, Managing Editor
The Oregon Journal

N. R. Howard, Editor
The Cleveland News

Benjamin M. McKelway, Associate Editor
The Washington Star

Edward E. Lindsay, Editor
Decatur Newspapers, Inc. (Illinois)

George W. Healy, Jr., Managing Editor
The New Orleans Times-Picayune

J. R. Wiggins, Editor
The St. Paul Pioneer Press

Stephen C. Noland, Editor
The Indianapolis News

Ralph E. McGill, Editor
The Atlanta Constitution

Sincerely yours,

s/Wilbur Forrest
1st Vice-President, American Society of Newspaper Editors
Chairman, Standing Committee of World Freedom of Information

C O P Y
TELEGRAM

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Mr. Edward Stettinius
Chief American Delegate UNO

Open conduct of United Nations sessions now concluding permitting full and free access to news raises high hopes achievement of stable world order based on world public understanding and enlightenment. Permit me offer sincerest congratulations you and your associates for your successful espousal of policy of full frank disclosure setting historic pattern for future.

As one who for thirty years has sought to open channels of world communication in behalf world acquaintance and peace, I confess disappointment it was not found expedient in these sessions to make as first order of business development of effective program to assure that news of these deliberations as well as news everywhere might be freely distributed and published over world as initial basic requisite for success of any world organization. I am highly gratified, however, to have received word from Senator Vandenberg that American Delegation unanimously favors passing world free press resolution to conclusion at next UNO session. It is inconceivable this urgently essential objective could be longer delayed.

It is my fervent hope you and your associates will develop program going far beyond mere access of reporters to news and communications facilities. Whole structure of human rights in world of free men with governments of their own choosing rests upon one basic right - right to know. Vague phrases such as freedom of information are inadequate. Fundamental medium of communications is printed word. Right to know must be implemented by right to print, by full press freedom. This objective must not be selfish one to get news for ourselves. World understanding can be achieved only if news flows freely to all countries and may be freely published in them. This also requires vastly expanded world communications system making optimum use of new science of electronics in interests of world acquaintance. Alternative is use of communications once more to regiment human minds through contests of debased use of propaganda by governments leading inevitably to disastrous military conflict.

With appreciation and very best wishes.

KENT COOPER

(Associated Press)