

P. Watson, Campbell
(Calif.) Tribune publisher, told the Bishop of his opposition to the national press council proposal presented here during sessions of journalism teachers.

627 underground newspapers

New youth press laid to vacuum

By Campbell Watson

Berkeley, Calif.

The underground press now numbers hundreds of publications with a distribution in excess of three million because it fills a vacuum left by the establishment newspapers.

It will continue as long as publishers fail to meet the need of today's youth, said two journalism education investigators in a report to the CNPA Newspaper Workshop here September 11-12.

It is the creation basically of young people who are visually oriented and who realize that graphics express emotion. It performs important services in some areas. All underground papers are not obscene, they added.

Double base

These papers were established "because of conditions in society, as the establishment press left a vacuum," said Robert Glessing of California's *Canada College Journalism* faculty.

Their circulation is three times the million distribution of the college press, said the educator whose book, *The Underground Press in America*, is scheduled for publication next Spring.

Glessing, who interviewed 30 underground press editors across the country in developing his volume, lists the *Village Voice* as the largest. He credits this with 13,000 paid purchasers, \$140,000 a week in revenues and ad-loaded editions which run to 72 tabloid pages.

Paul Slater, graduate Journalism student at the University of California here who has just completed his master's thesis on this subject, reports 627 underground papers.

Shifting list

While many small papers come and go, a dozen are significant, Slater told the meeting headed by Eric Colby, *Terra Linda* (Calif.) *News*. One is an Audit Bureau of Circulations member, he reported. This is the *Los Angeles Free Press*, established in 1964, one year before the *Berkeley Barb*.

Underground press papers as a whole are hippie, psychedelic and political. Its members want to be politically involved and in that sense are political, he declared.

Those who call themselves members of the alternative press use their own news network,

work without press passes and shun press conferences. They tend to differ from the overground press in objectivity, fairness and obscenity, it was admitted.

Seek voids

The self-styled members of the fifth estate seek to penetrate voids they see in establishment newspapers. They often perform without regard for safety, Slater said.

A *San Diego Free Press* reporter flashed his passport as identification to Secret Service guards to cover President Nixon's visit to Camp Pendleton, he reported. The security officers did not notice the pistol-grip camera he carried in his back pocket, according to Slater.

Not all of the fifth estate product is four-letter trivia, he said. A *Santa Barbara* (Calif.) *Probe's* report of hospital discrimination, frequent investigations of the community power structure by the *Peninsula Observer*, published near San Francisco, and the *Berkeley Barb's* expose of "a million dollar mansion" project for the University of California president were listed.

Slater joined Glessing in evaluating the purposefulness of the alternate press. Rejecting the charge that these are tourist papers which was aired at the AEJ convention here, he observed: "As you publishers know for whom they write, so do they." (See E&P Sept. 6).

Five-year move

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The underground press is something for historians to look back on to see what a disenchanting, alienated era this was, Slater believes. Since 1964 it has been interesting and has proven valuable in giving insight into society, he said.

The technical advantages of offset have enabled this return to the era of quickly-established newspapers. William Allen White thought this period when "a printer with a shirt-tail of type" could establish a paper because of costly equipment requirements.

Glessing said a small printing

press could be converted to offset for \$26. He also pointed out that the overground press prints 25 underground papers in San Francisco alone.

Publisher view

This also is a revival of the yellow journalism of Horace Greeley's day, publishers charged in the question period. They asked if they could publish such obscenity and remain in business.

Underground publishers wish to reflect something not found in the vernacular or honkey press, have added advertising to their resources since 1966 and have upped circulations, the questioners were told. A few now foresee entries into television and movies.

"You created the vacuum. Why don't you do something about it, such as providing an outlet by printing letters for youth," the panelists submitted.

Establishment press publishers also "can turn youth on the graphics," said Glessing. He referred to special art displayed in large space and the *San Francisco Oracle's* use of six to eight colors by using split ink fountains.

Policies vary

Two young pros from the metropolitan field displayed modernized weekly newspapers which they have adapted to the special needs of their separate communities.

William A. Drake, who became editor of the *Pacific* (Calif.) *Tribune* from *United Press*, covers community police news and little league sports intensely. The *Tribune* puts great store on obits.

Steve McNamara, former *San Francisco Examiner* Sunday magazine editor who became *San Rafael* (Calif.) *Pacific Sun* publisher in 1967, shuns sports and weddings. He does not believe names in news.

The *Pacific Sun* likes to devote itself to stories of continuing value and offers reports on government, politics and drugs. Contending with the daily *San Rafael Independent-Journal's* full news coverage, the *Sun* uses big spreads on things the community will remember.

Raymond Spangler, Peninsula Newspapers Incorporated of-