

# St. Louis Newspapers Draw Battle Lines

The St. Louis daily newspapers are in a shooting war with each other over issues that reflect the emerging national political polarization between zero-growth policies and those of the American Whig tradition for economic growth. The dispute, between the staunchly Whig *Globe-Democrat* and the *Post-Dispatch*, perhaps the nation's most vehemently "Fabian liberal" paper, is a significant indicator of more general U.S. factional fights, since St. Louis is one of the few remaining cities where two genuinely competitive newspapers exist to air such a battle.

The *Globe-Democrat* issued the declaration of war with a front-page editorial on Thanksgiving day saying that the *Post-Dispatch* "emits a barnyard stench which is a measure of a good deal of that paper's pretense at news coverage: rot." This came in response to a series of *Post-Dispatch* articles based on FBI documents that the *Post-Dispatch* alleged "show that the Bureau considered its access to the *Globe-Democrat* (in the 1960s — ed.) an important part of the counter-intelligence operation in St. Louis against so-called 'new-left' organizations, dissidents, and persons suspected of being Communists."

The implication that the *Globe-Democrat* is a tool in intelligence agency harassment of individuals is, on reflection, absurd. It was, after all, the *Globe-Democrat* which on July 25 published the first condemnation in the country of the Federal Election Commission's harassment of the U.S. Labor Party in an editorial, "Curb the Federal Election Commission," while the *Post-Dispatch* has piously endorsed an expansion of the Election Commission's arbitrary powers.

The actual issue runs much deeper, as the *Globe-Democrat*'s publisher G. Duncan Bauman made clear by stressing that the *Globe* "cherishes its role as a supporter of the American system." It might be added that the *Globe*'s competitor cherishes its role as a supporter of the British system.

*Excerpts of editorials on key issues, more than adequately draw the lines of their fight.*

## *On Nuclear Power*

*Globe Democrat* editorial, "Carter Breeder Decision Repudiated," May 7:

President Carter is attempting to gloss over the earth-shaking impact of his decision to put the fast breeder nuclear technology in mothballs will have on the American people. . . .

*Unfortunately for the nation this turns out to have been a political decision without any solid scientific basis. . . . (emphasis in the original)*

*Post-Dispatch*, "Risk to Avoid," Nov. 9:

. . . If the risk (of nuclear accidents) is so great that the industry must have the protection of a law limiting its

liability (the Price-Anderson Act) and providing for inadequate federal compensation, the clear implication is that both the law and the power plants represent poor public policy.

## *On Carter's Energy Legislation*

*Globe-Democrat*, "Reject Disastrous Energy Bill," Oct. 27:

President Carter's approach, as expressed in the House bill, is a plan to straitjacket the oil and natural gas industries and rely almost entirely on conservation to solve the domestic energy shortage.

*Post-Dispatch*, "From April to November," Nov. 10:

. . . He (Carter) failed to communicate the need for the sacrifice he said was required or the crises he said the nation would face tomorrow if it did not act today. . . .

## *On Vote Fraud*

*Globe-Democrat*, "Same Day Registration Defeated," Nov. 10:

. . . Rejection of instant voter registration in state balloting (in Ohio and Washington — ed.) should write finis to the ill-fated plans of the Carter Administration to gain passage of an instant voter registration law by Congress. Same-day registration is an invitation to fraud. . . .

*Post-Dispatch*, "Vote Against Voting", Nov. 11:

. . . Although fraud is a risk, safeguards against it can be built into the administration of the law. The real reason for opposition to such a law . . . is fear of a large turnout of last minute voters, many of whom would be unpredictable and uncontrollable. . . . But the action of one state (Ohio — ed.) should not be taken as the mood of the nation. No one knows how many of those Ohio election-day registrants were turned out by foes of election-day registration.

## *On Economic Policy and the 'Full Employment' Bill*

*Globe-Democrat*, "Utopia by 1983," Nov. 1977:

. . . Before Americans become too enamored with the Utopian vision held forth by President Carter and rabid Humphrey-Hawkins backers in Congress, it would be well to look at the record. After more than 40 years of increasing federal intervention into the private economy, including incredible expenditures for all manner of public works, public service jobs and supposedly 'stimulative' deficits, unemployment remains at about 7 percent . . . Americans should reject this promise of Paradise by 1983. . . .

*Post-Dispatch*, "The Humphrey-Hawkins Compromise," Nov. 16:

The full employment bill that has won President

Carter's endorsement is a substantial retreat from the measure introduced last year by Senator Humphrey and Rep. Hawkins but it probably represents the most that can be expected in the present political climate, a 7

percent unemployment rate notwithstanding. . . . If that is not a giant step toward full employment, it is superior to the alternative which, it appears, is not legislation at all.

## The British Invasion of U.S. Media

Rumors are flying that following British Lord Beaverbrook protégé Rupert Murdoch's "success in taking over the *New York Post*, big British names and money are hungry for more media "buys" in the U.S. The Hon. Vere Harmsworth, who recently bought *Esquire* magazine for his London-based Associated Newspapers firm, with Clay Felker as his American editor, is now considering taking over the DuPont family press in Wilmington, Delaware.

The DuPonts, once a leading American industrial family, has put its four Wilmington papers up for sale, and Harmsworth says he just can't think of a "nicer, pleasanter prospect" for U.S. acquisitions. The Hon. Vere Harmsworth is a descendant of Lord Beaverbrook's confrère, British journalist Lord Northcliffe, ne Alfred Harmsworth. Together, Beaverbrook and Northcliffe founded a British press empire at the end of the last century which included all of Britain's major national daily press and Commonwealth publications. While billed as "competitors" for public consumption in their lifetimes, the two were close political allies dating from before World War I.

Harmsworth's hunt for U.S. press now marks the first anniversary of Australian-born Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of the *New York Post*, the *Village Voice*, with the magazines *New York* and *New West* out from under their former editor, now Harmsworth-employee Clay Felker.

The new editorial tone at the *New York Post* is best characterized by a recent front-page headline screaming "Sam Sleeps" over an "exclusive" picture of a mass murderer sleeping.

"Mr. Murdoch's impact on New York has been (so) massive" since he took over the *Post* from Dorothy Schiff and the Kuhn, Loeb banking house last year, comments the British *Guardian*, that "hard on the heels of Mr. Murdoch is the Hon. Vere Harmsworth and his Associated Newspapers . . . creating another British, or Commonwealth if you prefer, publishing empire, like Mr. Murdoch's" in New York.

But that may not be all the Hon. Vere Harmsworth is after. New York press columnist Jane Perlez reports he has already shelled out some \$400,000 for a "financial survey" conducted by the British-based Morgan Stanley investment bankers in New York — for a newspaper acquisition that comprises only 350,000 readers all told! It is more likely that that kind of investment and homework may auger interest in more than just the DuPont press. The family is still a major industrial and political force in Delaware, and a number of leading U.S. press companies are also in the bidding, which closes Jan. 28, for their papers.

### *Back to Basics*

The Hon. Vere and his wife "Bubbles" have been shopping around for newspapers in the U.S. for some time now, already acquiring the male magazine, *Esquire*. That magazine his Honor intends to turn into a "fortnightly" in order to orient "away from a monthly literary journal" toward "more of a news magazine," emphatically in the British mode. "We intend to take *Esquire* back to its beginnings as a men's magazine," an editorial spokesman for the new owners told a reporter last week, adding "but I don't mean a girlie magazine or anything like that."

New *Esquire* editor Clay Felker says he will return the magazine to "basics" and restore its former subtitle, "Magazine for Men." Felker should know. As editor of *Esquire* from 1957 to 1962, he introduced what he called the "New Journalism" to *Esquire*. Felker now promises to make *Esquire* a "new kind of news magazine" on the model of what Rupert Murdoch did to the "new *New York Post*."

### *Peers of the Press*

Northcliffe and his "junior partner" Lord Beaverbrook first introduced the "New Journalism" to Great Britain in the late 19th century. Alfred Harmsworth then earned his peerage by mutilating the "Old Journalism" newspapers of record into a hybrid of petty gossip, rumors, sensation, and gimmickry called the "New Journalism." His emblem was: Give the crowd what will make 'em drool and "hand the paper about."

In fact, the premise of Northcliffe's New Journalism was conditioning the public to a steady diet of dribble in the press. Build up the "talking points" and banal items that the "props of the Old Journalism" would never print, Northcliffe instructed his editors. And play up these points "a hundred fold." Today, Rupert Murdoch terms this the revolution of the "new" news that "people will . . . react to and will talk about," against the old "mannered and reflective journalism . . . that belongs to the magazines and Sunday papers," but not the daily press.

Through a phony "competitor" relationship, Northcliffe and Beaverbrook bought up all the major newspapers of record, the major British national daily press, between them. They also collaborated in running Anglo-American private intelligence propaganda operations in World War I, with backing from the English branch of the Rothschilds. Beaverbrook carried this tradition into World War II, working with British intelligence czar Sir William Stephenson camouflaging the British-Nazi alliance through publishing disinformation in his press. Beaverbrook was a warm friend of the Nazi