

WASHINGTON REPORT

Congressman Edwin D. Eshleman

16th District—Pennsylvania



Nearly everyone is aware of the tremendous power held by the news media. All elements of the media — newspaper, radio, television and magazines — play a big role in the shaping of public opinion. The business of passing along information to the public necessarily carries with it some ability to influence public thinking. In a republic, that ability is power because our national policy grows out of what the people think.

In recent years, a concern has emerged about the use of this power of the press in the United States. Time and again, it has been proven that most people accept as true that which they read in newspapers and maga-

zines, see on television or hear on the radio. But, what if the "truth" is slanted? What if some particular viewpoint is elicited by the way in which the news is presented? What if, as in advertising, the media are used to sell a select group of ideas out of the many which are available? Such a condition certainly would seem to be an abuse of power.

Just by raising questions, I may have implied that the news is not as honest as it might be. While that is a technique which has been used with some success by some national reporters lately, I don't mean to say that all the news is distorted. Most of the media are not abusing their power. Most try to do an

honest job of presenting the facts.

Since I readily admit that the majority of newsmen are reputable, you might be tempted to ask why there is concern about the power of the press. The answer can be found in some disturbing signs which daily become more noticeable. One sign is the expanded use of the technique that I applied above — ask questions, imply wrongdoing, but never really prove anything one way or the other. Another sign is the increased preoccupation with the idea that the only big news is bad news. Still another sign, and perhaps the most disturbing one, is the willingness of the media to simplify every issue by dividing it into two unalterably opposed camps.

I would like to pursue that third point a little because its an important one. As you follow the news, you soon could become convinced that everything has two sides and only two sides. The war debate has the hawks against the doves. The generation gap pits adults against youth. Each national issue seems to have only two extremes.

The trouble with that kind of news coverage is that it ignores two basic facts. First, decisions are most often made on the middle ground while the extremists scream at each other. I was fascinated to learn, for example, that many of the Congressmen most often in the national news are not those who are the big decision-makers but are merely those who talk the most. Second, people tend to behave the way they think they are expected to behave. For instance, the generation gap is nothing new, only more publicized. Yet, it has become more of a problem possibly because as a result of the

publicity many young people and adults think that they are somehow abnormal if they don't have intense hostilities toward the "other side."

I suppose this commentary on the news media carries a message for those who see, listen to

and read the news as well as for those who report the news. For the reporter it asks that you be demanding but fair. For all others, it asks that you evaluate carefully that which the media presents.

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Starting 8:00 P.M. Sharp

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Friday, November 14, 1969 at 8:00 P. M. EST

James Carter of Brampton, Ontario is shipping 30 head of top registered and grade Holstein 1st calf heifers for this sale of which approximately 15 will be fresh.

There will be other consignments of fine cattle from top local herds. Plan to attend this sale if you need additional cows or replacements.

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ABERDEEN SALES COMPANY
Sale Managers
Phone: 301-734-6050
Night: 734-7105 - 272-1368

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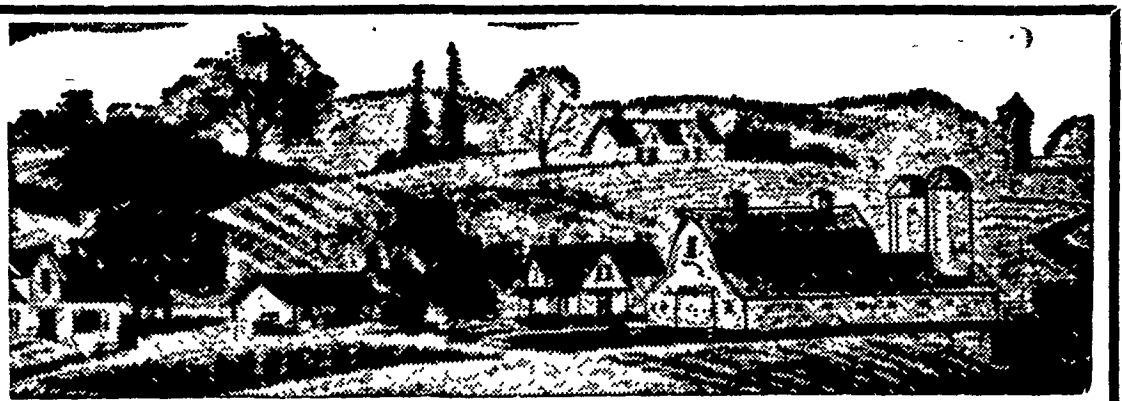
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