

OPE 29-41

I saved only this one of the series.

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

Memphis, Tenn., Saturday Morning, October 15, 1977

Editorial Page Lets Editor And Readers Have Their Say

(Last in a series)

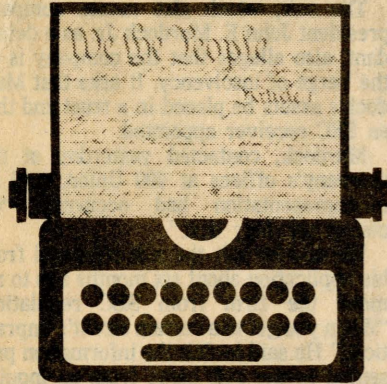
The American editorial page goes back, in a way, to Patrick Henry. That firebrand foe of English tyranny also feared that the new U.S. Constitution would limit individual rights. He fought hard for the first 10 Amendments, with the first one including the right of a free press.

The idea that opinion, dissent and debate can be published and disseminated without censorship or ban is by no means universal. In America, however, it means open decisions openly arrived at. Opinion is expressed through many forms of mass communication. But undoubtedly the newspaper's editorial page is one of the most familiar.

The Commercial Appeal's editorial pages offer a voice both to the editors and to the people.

The editor, Michael Grehl, can be presumed by readers to be the individual who stands responsible for the statements and analysis that appear in the first two columns of The Commercial Appeal's daily editorial page.

He presides over the daily meetings of the editorial page staff. These meetings are themselves small forums. Discussion sometimes becomes lively. But conclusions have to be reached, and when they are, a stand is taken by consensus of the editor and at least one editorial writer.



When agreement is easily achieved, the writing assignment may go to any of the five editorial writers on the staff.

Public opinion is never out of the minds of the editorial page staff. But since somebody's always going to disagree, an effort is made to present diverse opinion. The columnists are chosen for variety and expertise — not because they reflect the newspaper's own opinion. Indeed, they often are in disagreement.

From a pool of syndicated columnists and wire service writers, the editorial page editor, Guy Northrop, selects the other articles that appear both on the regular editorial page and the op-ed (opposite-editorial) page. Some are regulars, such as

Art Buchwald, with his humorous approach to events, and Neal Peirce, with his comprehensive studies of the ways in which state and local governments are dealing with contemporary problems.

Columnists also include the editor himself, when he feels moved to express himself through a signed article.

In its editorials The Commercial Appeal offers its opinions and they should be regarded as such. Although an editorial may review all aspects of a controversial issue, by its very nature it will take a stand. That stand should be unmistakable. Sometimes that gives rise to complaints that editorials are "one-sided" because they reach conclusions and are opinion.

The editor makes no claim to infallibility and this newspaper has admitted mistakes in judgment and revised its opinions on the basis of new information or developments.

The Commercial Appeal is an independent newspaper without any party affiliation. It judges people and issues on the basis of what it thinks is right, fair and sensible, rather than from doctrinaire political or social persuasion.

The most apparent sign of a press that is free is not a newspaper's editorial staff, however. It is the published letters to the editor. The Commercial Appeal prints as

The Editorial Page Staff

Editor of the editorial page is **Guy Northrop**. He was born in Little Rock and attended Arkansas State Teachers College and the University of North Carolina. He was a reporter for the Arkansas Gazette before joining the staff of The Commercial Appeal in 1945. He became editor of the editorial page in 1968. He also writes a weekly column of art criticism.

E.W. Kieckhefer was born in Milwaukee, and attended the University of Wisconsin. He was named a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University in 1942. He worked as both an editorial writer and farm editor for The Minneapolis Tribune and The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Ky., before joining the staff of The Commercial Appeal in 1960.

David Vincent was born in Springfield, Mass., and worked for the St. Petersburg, Fla., Times and the St. Petersburg Independent and the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot before joining the staff of The Commercial Appeal in 1966. He was an award-

winning education writer before joining the editorial page staff.

Archie Quinn was born in Greenwood, Miss., attended the University of Mississippi and after several years of such diverse activities as serving in the Army and playing a horn with a band on New Orleans' Bourbon Street took a job with the Tate County Democrat in Senatobia, Miss. He joined the staff of The Commercial Appeal in 1948. He became editor and publisher of the Leesville, La., Leader in 1963 and returned to The Commercial Appeal in 1968, serving as editor of the Sunday Viewpoint Section before becoming a regular member of the editorial page staff.

Mary Deibel was born in St. Louis and attended Duke University and the University of Missouri School of Journalism. She was an Alfred P. Sloan Fellow in economics journalism at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School. She was a member of the staff of the Wilmington, Del., Evening Journal before joining The Commercial Appeal in 1976.

many of these as it can give space to, usually devoting a full page to letters on the "op-ed page" on Sunday in the Viewpoint

Section, and publishing more letters on the first editorial page on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Letters are screened by

the editor, and then checked by telephone to verify authorship. Anonymous letters are never printed, and names are withheld only in rare instances. The rationale is that readers have a right to know whose opinion they are reading.

Preference is given to letters that disagree with the newspaper's opinion. When an issue generates too many letters to publish, representative ones are run and in a ratio that reflects the totals pro and con.

The readers never have any doubt about who the cartoonist is. Bill Garner, who came to The Commercial Appeal's editorial staff in June, 1976, after several years with The Washington Star, has followed in the long tradition of strong editorial and political cartoonists going back to the great J.P. Alley.

Garner has some competition, of course, from the Ziggy cartoon, which adds a light touch to the lower part of the editorial page, another attempt to give some balance to the reader's fare.

The late John Sorrells, who acted as overseer of The Commercial Appeal when it entered the Scripps-Howard Newspapers lineup in 1936, said of the editorial page then: "The dominating note should be one of friendliness — not the insinuating friendliness that is born of tolerance, self-assurance — the sort that springs from a genuine understanding of, and liking for our fellows."

A succession of editors has renewed the creed in the years since.