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THE PRICE OF A "FREE PRESS"

Whenever election time rolls around, one hears a good many stories about Chicago politics, and how votes can be bought and sold if the price is right. This writer was born and raised in Chicago and can attest to the fact that many of these stories are all too true.

However, votes are not the only things in life that shouldn't be for sale but, nevertheless, are solicited, priced, and bought.

When our constitutional fathers wrote lofty guarantees about freedom of the press, they failed to foresee the impact and influence of those who would decide the placement of advertising—where, when, and how much. It is a sad but acknowledged fact that the editorial policies of many publications—in the lay press, as well as in the medical and pharmaceutical press—are strongly influenced, if not dictated, by the source of advertising dollars. This point has been made at various times relative to the cozy relationship which exists between one of our "sister professions" and the drug industry.

Woe be to the newspaper, journal, magazine, or other publication that dares to report that which does not please the advertisers! The old adage that "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" is mild compared to the rage and retaliation that some advertisers will display when the medium they employ does something to displease them.

The prestigious *New York Times* apparently felt that it was immune to this phenomenon, because early this year it dared to run a five-part series on medical incompetence in which drug industry promotional and advertising practices came in for their share of criticism.

Well, it did not take long for the ax to fall. Just a few weeks later, the *Times* ran another story, this time headlined "Drug Ads Dropped Over *Times* Series." This story told how pharmaceutical concerns abruptly canceled advertising worth \$500,000 from *Modern Medicine*, a magazine owned by The New York Times Company. This translated into a loss of 200 pages of drug company advertisements in the magazine. From the gist of the article, the cause and effect relationship between the series of articles and the canceled ads was made crystal clear.

Predictably, industry trade spokesmen, as well as others, have criticized the *Times* articles as bordering on the sensational. And perhaps there may be some justification for their viewpoint. On the other hand, other writers—including the editor of a prominent journal in the drug and cosmetic field—commented upon the *Times* series in quite favorable terms.

Be that as it may, all of this is "old hat" to APhA and its publications! It has been almost 10 years now since the Association dared to adopt certain policies and to carry reports of these policies in its publications. These actions similarly displeased a wide segment of the pharmaceutical industry.

Massive cancellations of advertising pages and meeting exhibit space were the immediate result. To their credit, a small but significant number of advertisers disdained this petty course. At any rate, to this day our ad sections are thin, and advertising revenue remains a very nominal source of APhA income. Consequently, APhA publications must be funded in other ways. In the case of the *Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences*, subscription revenue, membership dues, and page charges now constitute the principal sources of revenue.

Rising costs, especially for paper and printing, have contributed greatly to major increases in the *Journal* expense budget over the past few years. Only so much can be done to absorb such costs, and one recent result has been the need to raise page charges, effective with the July 1976 issue. Concomitantly, steps are being taken to stimulate authors to pay page charges because there is some indication that the "payment is not mandatory" policy is being abused by certain authors.

Moreover, it has become necessary to establish a ceiling on the number of pages which may be published during the calendar year. This step has also been dictated by the need to control publication costs.

Hence, lack of adequate revenue prevents us from doing as much as we would like. In the case of this *Journal*, meager advertising income is one factor that has necessitated placing a lid on the number of pages available; and, in turn, this page limit is creating a backlog of accepted papers and longer delays in their publication. Regrettably, such is the price that has to be paid in order to maintain "a free press." —EGF