

Mr. Tom Mills
News-Post
Frederick, Md. 21701

12/17/85

Dear Tom,

When I wrote the first letter about the first Meachum column I regard as anti-Semitic I never dreamed that he would persist in it and I certainly never expected that his friends would denounce me as a bigot for exposing bigotry!

This has become a strange and self-describing kind of dialogue, one I had not anticipated, do not welcome but from which I cannot withdraw, much as I'd rather spend the time in other ways.

Please understand, however, that, in this I have no complaint at all about the papers of their editing and that, however repugnant I might find some views, all are entitled to expression.

If I find it difficult to go as far as Hugo Black, who held that there is no such thing as libel, I do believe that repression of any view does undermine the right to expression of contrary views.

Thus, separately, I have responded to Hefflin's truly incredible letter.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg

columnists are rarely taken to task for their lack of balance. But when they are, the letter writers usually point out the lack of balance by listing ideas that tend to emphasize their opposing obligation to a particular philosophy without personal abuse.

It's a narrow advocacy, somewhat like what happens in a court of law, where it is hoped that, in the end given the two extremes in argument, the truth will somehow take form in the mind of the judge or the jury.

Then you have Roy Meachum, a columnist who is not so interested in fulfilling an obligation to a particular philosophy or scoring points. He would rather look at all sides of a problem as a judge or jury would. The purpose of his writing is not persuasion, but to arrive at or communicate the truth.

It is as though he is sitting back with us, interested but unemotional, and looking at the problems that surround us in an effort to make them clear and understandable. It is also apparent by his writing that he has thought long and hard about the problems of racism, prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination in all their subtleties (Perhaps because these are the very enemies of what he holds so dear — truth.) and he doesn't hesitate to identify them wherever they may be, even if such thinking isn't in season.

So, for Mr. Meachum, popularly villainous people like the Russians, the white South Africans and the Palestinians aren't animals but rather human beings that are part of problems that need to be understood.

Sadly, however, in letters to your editorial page he has been vigorously attacked with abusive ad hominum arguments by some of the very people who are members of groups that his-

torically have every reason in the world to support Mr. Meachum's purpose and method of writing.

Such bigotry is extraordinarily flagrant and gives one cause to question any belief in the essential goodness of people. We now need to begin teaching some of the people who belong to groups that have been so remarkably injured in the past by illiberal attitudes about people, the value of tolerance when considering the Russians, the white South Africans, and the Palestinians. Does it never end?

RON HEFLIN
Walkersville

'They score points for their side'

Many of the columnists of your paper are people who are not so interested in the truth so much as they are in fulfilling a personal obligation to a particular philosophy. Their writing is frequently slanted and unbalanced, but popular. Their purpose when writing is persuasion. They want to score points for their side.

In letters to your editorial page these

F. Poole 12/17/85

Editor
News-Post
Frederick, Md. 21701

12/17/85

Dear Editor,

From so high in the clouds of personal befuddlement he has no contact with reality and with words that mean the exact opposite of his uses of them, Ron Heflin denounces you and me alike and in this is so lost in himself and his prejudices he is utterly unaware of his remarkable self-denunciation in his letter published the 17th.

With but a single exception, Roy Meachum, all your many columnists are liars (not "interested in truth") and propagandists ("frequently slanted and unbalanced" whose only interest is "to score points for their side") and, to Heflin, because I expose undenied bigotry ~~that~~ I ~~am~~ ^{am} a bigot! He concludes with what from either insensitivity or ignorance precisely duplicates the traditional posture of anti-semites, Jews must heed those who incite to prejudice and hatred and, with reference to me he says that "members of groups that historically have every reason in the world to support Mr. Meachum's purposes and methods of writing." Because I do not and instead have exposed the factual error and exactly those flaws in Meachum's columns that Heflin attributes to everyone save Meachum, "Such bigotry is extraordinarily flagrant and gives one cause to question any belief in the essential goodness of people." P.W.Botha could not have put it any better!

One would never gather from Heflin's letter that I have not questioned any opinion Meachum has expressed and have, in fact, stated that he has a right to hold and express any opinion he wants, no matter how wrong and indefensible it is, but have, with great specificity, criticized ~~his~~ ^{his} factual error and its clear meaning.

~~But~~ Heflin says that Meachum's sole purpose is "to arrive at or communicate truth." As in castigating the FBI for the failures in the "collard security investigation - which was not conducted by the FBI? Or in communicating that the Israeli leader Yitzak Shamir was the leader of the so-called Stern gang when he wasn't even a member of it? Or in describing Arab terrorists as both "moderate" and innocent?

As ~~Meachum~~ Heflin sees it, Meachum "is sitting back with us, interested but unemotional... has thought long and hard about the problems of racism, perjudice bigotry and discrimination in all their subtleties." So that is why to Meachum it is the Jews who murder Arab children, the Jews who are extremists and do not want peace in Israeli, which is outnumbered about 200 to 1 ~~with~~ ^{with} those who are in a state of war with it for so many decades?

or a Yes /
Preacher Heflin, perhaps unaware that he is arrogating all knowledge and understanding to himself and those who think like him, "We need now to begin teaching some of the people who belong to groups that have been so remarkably injured in the past by illiberal attitudes about people the value of tolerance..." "liberal" and "tolerance" indeed! I have news for Preacher Heflin: we've lived it since before the time of Christ and those who need to be taught are the Meachums and the Heflins who turn everything exactly around. How else can an undenied complaint of bigotry be described as bigotry?

With such friends friends as Heflin to "defend" him, something most men prefer to do for themselves, Meachum ~~could~~ ^{could} be better off with enemies. But I do thank Heflin for his unintended underscoring of the bias, racism and yes, dishonesty of the Meachum columns I have addressed and about which Meachum himself is entirely silent. Silence, too, is Meachum's right, but it speaks for him as Heflin cannot and does not.

Sincerely,
Harold Weisberg

