

## OPINIONS CONFLICT ON PRESS FREEDOM

Cronkite and Lawyer Differ  
on Role of the Media

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 30 — Walter Cronkite, the television journalist, said today that the Government had too much power over the press, but a law professor asserted that the press had too much power over public expression.

It was the first substantive clash in three days of hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, which, under Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, has heard steady support of the press.

Mr. Cronkite, the longtime anchorman for the Columbia Broadcasting System's evening news program, joined earlier witnesses in describing radio and television as particularly threatened by hostile Government regulation.

"Broadcast news today is not free," Mr. Cronkite said. "Because it is operated by an industry that is beholden to Government for its right to exist, its freedom has been curtailed by fiat, by assumption, and by intimidation and harassment."

"We are at the mercy of the whim of politicians and bureaucrats and whether they choose to chop us down or not, the mere existence of their power is an intimidating and constraining threat in being," he contended.

### Standing Room Only

Several Senators who had spent little or no time at the subcommittee's sessions earlier this week turned out for the newscaster's appearance and were joined in the Senate Caucus Room by a standing-room-only crowd.

Senator Roman L. Hruska, Republican of Nebraska, and Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the minority leader, showed up for the first time this week. Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, had attended less than an hour of the earlier sessions.

When Mr. Cronkite, the three Senators, and most of the crowd departed, Jerome A. Barron, a professor of law at George Washington University, appealed for restrictions on broadcasting and the newspapers.

The First Amendment guarantee of freedom of the press applies not just to the communications media, he said. It also gives the public a "right of access" to the media which is sometimes unfairly denied, he added.

Professor Barron proposed legislation, which the courts would enforce, requiring newspapers and broadcasters to accept paid advertising in support of views that receive little or no news coverage.

The contention of Mr. Cronkite and other witnesses that the press is sufficiently diverse to permit the airing of different views was also challenged by Mr. Barron. He said that broadcasters had not promoted diversity.

### F.C.C. Ruling Opposed

They opposed a Federal Communications Commission ruling that requires television stations to offer some locally originated programs during prime-time evening hours, he said.

And while advocating an almost complete elimination of Federal regulation, the broadcasters are not suggesting that they "start all over again" with a new allocation of licenses to use the various frequencies, he continued.

Mr. Barron asserted that it was possible to establish "a procedure for dialogue" without the Government meddling with the content of the news, but Senator Ervin said he did not think "there would be much freedom in forcing a man to say what he doesn't want to say."

Mr. Cronkite had argued that access to an audience would not assure an audience. Special interest and minority groups could obtain half an hour of prime-time television, he said, but there would be "nothing to assure that a single viewer would still be with them at the end."

The newscaster, who called for an end to F.C.C. authority over broadcasting's content, acknowledged that radio and television were "a long way from perfection."

"But that is not the point," he continued. "How could we be improved by outside monitors without destroying the independence which is so essential to a free press?"