

HUNTLEY DEFENDS JOURNALISTS' ACTS

At Polk Ceremony, He Assails
'Belaboring' by Official

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

Chet Huntley, the television news broadcaster, predicted yesterday that "it may take us years to undo the damage done" by recent criticisms of journalism.

Mr. Huntley, of the National Broadcasting Company's "Huntley-Brinkley Report," said the "belaboring of journalism and journalists" had "caused no telling how many millions of Americans to deprecate their heritage of the richest and most free and the most all-inclusive press in the world and to join a noisy chorus demanding restraints on the right to inquire, the right to speak and write freely."

Speaking at the Roosevelt Hotel before an audience assembled for the 22d annual George Polk Memorial Awards in journalism, Mr. Huntley asserted:

"I can find no record of a time when we in journalism were so assailed and ridiculed. It may take us years to undo the damage which has been done, to make our fellow citizens understand what the function of journalism in a free nation is."

Functions of Journalism

He said that journalism "is the rather simple process of distributing a true and accurate account of what is going on and what is being said . . . circulating and pointing to ideas in the market place . . . the good ones and the foolish ones."

At times, he noted, there is an additional function, of translating obscure statements and developments, interpreting them and extracting from them their full value and meaning. This function, he said, "seems to be the one which arouses the anger and vituperative talents of our accusers."

He said that "journalists were never intended to be the cheerleaders of society, the conductors of applause, the sycophants. Tragically, that is their

assigned role in authoritarian societies, but not here."

"I fear that the current assault on journalism is not going to go away soon," Mr. Huntley said. "Only last week in this city, a high-ranking Government official said that our failure to promote the Administration's policies and cases explains why our patriotism is in question. That was a low blow, deserving the stiffest penalty in the book."

Stresses Truth, Facts

"Patriotism is a private matter, not to be flaunted on the cuff or in the lapel and certainly not in a column of print or in a space of broadcast time. Patriotism is not our business. Truth, information, facts and ideas are our business, and if these verities . . . these commodities are permitted to flourish, if they are permitted to circulate, then then patriotism of all of us is on substantial foundation and flourishes in benign climate."

Mr. Huntley declined to identify the Government official to whom he referred. It was understood to be Vice President Agnew, a critic of journalism.