

NYTimes

MAR 12 1973

# Some Sweetness...

By Spiro T. Agnew

MINNEAPOLIS—Is there, to borrow Arthur Schlesinger's phrase, a "reign of terror" against the press now going on in Washington?

In the clichéology of the 1970's, are the Nixon Administration's press policies producing a "chilling effect" of First Amendment rights?

Is the people's-right-to-know in jeopardy today because this Administration is "plotting an assault on the freedom of the press with a determination and malignity never before seen in the republic"?

The answer to those questions is an emphatic "No."

Certainly, like national Administrations throughout our history, the Nixon Administration has had and will no doubt continue to have its differences with the press. That adversary relationship, as we know, is not only traditional but healthy. A pliant press is not carrying out its responsibility as an independent guardian of the public interest.

Neither is a Government that is pliant to the pressures of day-to-day headlines or editorial criticism necessarily carrying out its long-range responsibilities to the national interest.

When editorial and Administration opinions differ, why cannot the differences be accepted as sincere judgments by both sides? Why, a decade and two Administrations later, must there remain what President Kennedy once described as "paranoia" in the reaction of some members of the press to Government's role in this adversary relationship?

Yet, some prestigious media spokesmen can be read and heard almost daily expressing fear for the future of the First Amendment. They assert that the American people are being kept in the dark by a deceptive Government.

It is hard to find any factual basis for this hysteria. Almost nothing goes on in Government that is not examined, re-examined, plumbed, analyzed, guessed about, criticized and caricatured by the media. All this affects the American people, as it should. But that doesn't mean that they necessarily accept it as revealed truth.

The fact is that the Nixon Administration is no more desirous of nor more capable of curtailing freedom of the press in America than any of its predecessors. On the contrary, despite the exaggerated and ill-founded charges of past decades regarding various administrations' reigns of terror, news coverage of Government today is more intensive than ever before in American history.

But let me get to the fundamental

issue: The major areas of contention between Government and the press today do not truly involve incursions of Government power into press rights and prerogatives.

Rather, they involve the point at which the rights and prerogatives of a free press interface those of other institutions and rights in a free society.

Such questions are complex. They concern First Amendment rights and

## ... and Light

LOWELL, Mass — The public impression, fostered to some extent by prevalent media attitudes, is that Government constantly tries to deceive the people about its decisions on international matters.

This entire thesis is absolute balderdash. First of all, President Nixon has already issued three definitive reports setting forth his thinking and decisions on foreign affairs. They total some 610 cogently written pages and leave little to the imagination of anyone who has the interest or objectivity to approach them fairly. But some of our most prestigious publications have not approached them fairly. In fact, I have doubts as to whether they have bothered to read them. They would prefer to spread under banner headlines some imagined exposé such as the Pentagon Papers. Never has matter so flagrantly out of context been given such prominent attention. Never has the distillate of the tiny Pentagon dovecote, further edited and refined by the Vietnamphobic elements of the media, been so outrageously flaunted before the American people.

*These are excerpts from a speech six days later by Mr. Agnew.*

interests about which journalists are vitally concerned, as well as rights and interests accorded not only members of the Fourth Estate but all Americans under other parts of the Constitution.

In addition, they concern the fundamental interest of society in the proper administration of justice under a system providing due process.

It would therefore seem that, in any discussion regarding these conflicting rights and interests, we can best serve the public by foregoing oversimplification and the easy stereotype.

*Vice President Agnew made these remarks recently in a speech in Min-*