

minor incident in which the question of how many men endangered, wounded, and killed was reduced to a shell game.

In spite of all the criticisms and reservations one can bring against the action of the U.S. in the Mayaguez affair, there are solid grounds on which to justify it. In spite of the unwanted consequences flowing from that action, there are solid grounds for arguing that they are outweighed by the benefits. But what a sorry pass we have come to when such an intervention becomes cause for heady celebration and self-congratulation, what a conception we have of leadership when the Mayaguez affair produces instant encomiums for those who made the decisions. All this is, of course, part of our Vietnam legacy. It will be many years, apparently, before we will, as a nation, have the perspective to deal with minor incidents as if they were minor and save our major responses for major crises.

JF

## EXCURSUS II

### Liberty, Ignorance, and Postal Rates

The First Amendment guarantees that "Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." That freedom of information is, itself, in the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, "the chief and the constitutive element of liberty." General Rufus Putnam, a Revolutionary War hero, said: "Nothing can be more fatal to a republican government than Ignorance among its Citizens, as they will be made the easy dupes of Designing men."

Liberty can only be served by the widest possible dissemination of diverse—even conflicting—ideas. America's great number of newspapers, book publishers, broadcast stations, magazines, all play distinctive roles in furthering that goal. We've just come through a period in which the very actions that threatened our independent press proved its value.

But there is another, equally grave challenge to the First Amendment; one that isn't often brought to the public's attention. The danger comes from runaway inflation in operating costs. Such economic erosion—particularly for publishers—could rapidly curtail the number of information sources in our country. One of the most serious, potentially damaging, and restricting cost pressures we face today is the unconscionable rise in second-class (magazine) and fourth-class (book) postal rates. This is directly attributable to the

purely economic goal of a U.S. Postal Service run as a so-called break-even business.

The new break-even U.S. Postal Service, which would theoretically be more efficient than the old Post Office Department, was voted into being in 1970. Since then the Postal Rate Commission has approved an explosion of rates. Magazine rates are scheduled to swell by 251 per cent, more than three times the rate of increase of first-class mail; nearly eight times the inflation in consumer prices. Book rates will rise by 116 per cent.

At Time Inc., 85 per cent of our magazines, virtually all of our popular book series, and many other products are distributed by mail. With the new rates that have been scheduled our postal bill for delivering magazines alone will triple from \$7 million in 1970 to \$24 million. Meanwhile, postal costs, as a portion of our manufacturing and distribution costs, will nearly double from 10 to 19 per cent. Now, I won't pretend that a company like Time will be knocked over by such cost escalations. But rising postal rates do create upward pressures on product prices, and downward pressures on product quality. Something has to give somewhere. It's no secret that one of the factors that killed *Life* and *Look* was the prospect of higher postal charges.

While *our* readers will have to pay higher prices or accept less quality, customers of other publishers will face even worse consequences. For those publishers will have to curtail distribution sharply and, in some cases, will simply cease to exist. Fewer citizens will be able to purchase fewer magazines and books. Freedom of choice of available publications—and points of view—will decline. A few elite magazines will be read by a few elite readers. Despite this discouraging prospect, the U.S. Postal Service and the Postal Rate Commission continue to press for even higher magazine and book rates.

Happily, there is a very simple cure for this disease: a return to the original spirit of the postal system. To the Founding Fathers' notion that the postal system was a means to encourage the free flow of information in our new nation. To the conviction that it was a necessary *service* of government and *not* a business. George Washington stated in 1782 that a postal service was needed to "bind these people to us with a chain that can never be broken."

Ten years later, as Spencer Grin noted, Washington, commenting on the Postal Act of 1792, was afraid it would inhibit news distribution. Should that concern prove true, Washington said, it would "lead to the application of a remedy." Our first President was right. Two years later, following the death of the *Columbian* and the *Museum*, two popular journals, the Congress first gave special postal status to magazines.

For nearly two hundred years, publications have received preferential treatment in the mails. This concept was a mainstay of our democracy until five years ago, when the misguided notion came into being that the post office could be run as a business. To call the current Postal Service a business is, at best, an illusion. If true business principles were followed, for example, mail would be priced not only by weight and delivery speed, but by distance traveled. A letter sent from Madison Avenue to Wall Street might cost five cents; from Wall Street to Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, fifty cents.

It is also clear that a number of the 31,000 local post offices could be consolidated. My colleague, Warren Phillips, who is president of Dow Jones, reported the following: "Within a radius of a ten-minute drive of the vacation home of Dow Jones Board Chairman William F. Kerby there are one supermarket, one hardware store, one liquor store, one bank—and five post offices." So we have a system that is neither a business nor the public service our Founding Fathers intended it to be.

But, as I said, there exists a simple remedy for the postal problem. It lies within easy reach of the Congress. For, despite the break-even economic goal of the new Postal Service, the Congress appropriated \$1.6 billion for its operations in the current fiscal year.

If we must have such a questionable system, and if the Postal Service believes it must boost rates for books and magazines, then, I believe, the Congress should increase the public service appropriation to cover those rate increases. Or at least it should cover the portion of the rate increases not directly attributable to normal cost inflation. The result would be nothing less than a reaffirmation of the principles upon which our democracy was founded.

**Andrew Heiskell**

*Chairman of Time Inc. Remarks to the Institute on Man and Science award dinner, April 29.*

## **EXCURSUS III**

### **Education Vouchers: Not the End of It**

Denis Doyle works for the National Institute of Education. His boss, HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger, is keenly interested in education vouchers. Mr. Doyle's job is to fight off teachers unions and others who wish to see education vouchers discarded once and for all. In June, with two new voucher experiments coming up this fall, Mr. Doyle pleaded for understanding. "We are

talking about a carefully controlled demonstration project," he said. "If it does not work, that's the end of it."

Education vouchers, a plan whereby parents would be able to send children to the school of their choice, is one of the most promising public policy proposals to surface in many years. It dare not be discarded after a handful of fumbled experiments. In fact, out of the six experiments originally proposed by HEW, only one has been put into effect (in the Alum Rock School District, San Jose, California). The other five failed to get off the ground largely because of intensively organized opposition from unionized teachers, who are accustomed to running "their" schools without any troublesome nonsense about parental choice. Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, last year denounced the Alum Rock experiment as a "washout" on the basis of achievement test scores that had come to his attention. It turns out his information was in error, but Mr. Shanker has yet to apologize in his regular column that carried his denunciation.

A flaw in voucher experiments conducted to date is that they have included only public schools. Education vouchers should give parents a real choice, including the choice of schools that represent the philosophical, political, and religious commitments in which they wish their children educated. Opponents of education vouchers contend, among other things, that such a plan may be used to advance racial segregation. The objection is patently spurious. Every voucher plan put forward contains the clear prohibition of racial discrimination and, it might well be argued, would further racial integration more effectively than other devices now being pressed against the clear desire of parents and communities, both black and white.

At the heart of opposition to vouchers is the understandable protective instincts of teachers unions and a deep-seated fear of genuine pluralism in education. Mr. Shanker recently told the *New York Times* that his union opposed a "national sales campaign" for vouchers because "We oppose any public funds for non-public schools." That is the heart of the matter. Those who have a virtual monopoly on education are not about to give it up without a fight. Those who can and do send their children to private schools are not prepared to extend the same right to those who cannot for economic reasons.

As this is written, a majority of the Supreme Court has again—using what the minority rightly recognizes as contorted logic—narrowed the ways in which private schools can receive public support. Churches and other proponents of educational diversity now see that the door to public aid is almost completely closed. Education vouchers