

THE CEBU PRESS: *A Sick Dinosaur*

I

FOR A CITY with only about 300,000 inhabitants, Cebu City is supporting and feeding a press of dinosaur proportions. At the moment, the city is flooded by small newspapers and magazines "The Republic News", "The Morning Times", "The Cebu Star", "The Advocate" and "The Youth", all of which are engaged in a nip-and-tuck affair for the head and heart of the Cebuano. Although through tacit agreement, not all papers are published on the same day, the field is still too crowded for comfort. Obviously, the laws of the jungle will determine which of the many will survive. The grim strength of reality will force some out of the overcrowded boat.

II

A most common complaint of the spectators of this competitive battle to the death is the limited scope of the newspaper coverage. By leaving the international and national news to the Manila dailies, the Cebu papers may be digging their own graves. Realizing one's own limitations is laudable, but fear to venture is despicable. This self limitation is as short-sighted as locking oneself into a corner. There's no hope of a way out!

The Cebu papers do not even cover foreign affairs, yet they publish out-of-the-country stories. The knowledgeable readers can easily see that what foreign news the papers have are free press releases from the consulates, etc., printed usually verbatim; but the unwary reader is deceived into believing that these USIS originated materials are genuine news. To be honest, the papers should label these propaganda materials as propaganda or else stop playing wastebasket for the foreign PROs. Nobody can accuse the local publishers for not trying to keep up with the national news, but everybody can see that they do not try hard enough. Some papers have Manila correspondents, but most local newsmen just prefer to re-write those national news items that are of local interest from Manila papers. But more likely than not, the journalist presumes that these

readers have Manila papers and let national news alone. Thus, national affairs are printed between long stretches of time and like a neglected mistress seldom sees her keeper.

Local news, being the primary beat of most local reporters, is presumed to be well covered but pathetically this is seldom the case. The reporters often can not see what is five feet beyond their noses. They see only the floating part of the iceberg; the submerged part, the greater part of the news seldom sees print. This lack of depth reporting can be the fatal blow that may knock out the surviving members of the press. The background, the significance of the news need assessment, yet they are rarely assessed. The fundamental question "why" is left hanging in the air, waiting to be answered. In the analysis of local affairs, Cebuano often have to rely on Manila pen-pushers who come across the scene on in passing, yet the scribbles of the outsiders are far superior to the silent answers of the local press.

While hard-core news is lacking, sensationalism is much in abundance. This can only mean two things: crime and politics. The distant town is seldom covered, but if a crime is committed there, it never fails to make the front pages. Constructive programs and effective legislation get only a brief review while mud-throwing politicians always hit the headlines. Certainly, Cebu has other gratifying elements aside from politics and crime.

III

As if running out of news, many reporters assume the role of a rumor-monger. They hide behind the smoke screen of anonymity and issue reports full of press jargons such as "reliable sources said" and "high city hall officials announced". While many of these reports may be genuine leaks and trial balloons of government officials, many more are straight head speculations. Day-dreaming newsmen let their imaginations run wild and put words into the mouth of nonexistent sources and pass off the rumor as gospel. Unless this

by

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abusive use of press jargon is curbed, the press as the torch bearer of truth will receive a black eye.

Some local papers seem to be particularly fond of distorting the news. It is an open secret that these distortions are but the services expected of them from their boss — the Politician. While partisan press has its own use, editors should not allow their papers to degenerate into mere party organs. The fate of the now defunct "Daily News", is a lesson for all practicing journalists.

Partisanship in editorial policy may be justified, but news should never be colored by blind loyalty. Unfortunately, some biased editors can not keep news and editorial functions apart. If one is to believe these papers, some of our local politicians must be incarnated satans, all black, no white. Slanted writing, unfavorable placement, deliberate omission and misleading headlines are constantly employed against them to serve the whims of the powers that be. Knowing that newspapers should be the last to spurt ink of hate and dissension, these editors are the first to sow seeds of confusion, viciousness and bitterness among the people. But the public knows who are thriving on this charivari of mud-slinging, sloganeering and brouhalas; this knowledge will sound the death knell of personal journalism.

IV

The tabloid format seems to be the mark of the local news. While this size is versatile, and easy to handle, the Cebu newsmen has yet to realize and utilize its full potentials. Tabloids can carry photos with great impact, yet photography is rarely used to its full advantage. The colorless and lifeless portrait prevails, thus one finds eternally smiling politicians on the front page. Sadly, modern photo-journalism still has to see light in the local press.

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dedicated, as far as its resources allow, to encourage and to provide for better teaching and learning opportunities through better and more extensive use of audio-visual and other instructional media.

THE McNELLIS SCHOLARSHIP

What is it? A friend of the Dean of Education at the University of San Carlos, Mrs. Marie McNellis of Michigan, indicated her desire to support a student through college by paying all tuition and some incidental fees. Qualifications were simple: real need, past evidence of good scholastic work and the recommendation of the dean. The beneficiary for this scholarship has been chosen and accepted by Mrs. McNellis. Her name: Miss Prima Ligronio.

NEW ARRIVALS

Rev. Thomas Mueller, SVD, arrived from Manila last November 1 and since then has been an asset and power to the Mathematics degree from De Paul University, Father Mueller arrived in the Philippines on October 25.

Rev. Ludwig Lehmeier has returned from Washington D.C. where he obtained a doctorate in Sacred Theology at the Catholic University of America. He has been appointed University Chaplain and Dean of the Theology Department.

Rev. Charles Hutterer, a new addition to the Department of Anthropology, arrived at the University of San Carlos on December 1. He was accompanied to Cebu by President Father Rudolf Rahmann, a well-known anthropologist.

Brother Bernulphus (A. van Schagen) also arrived at the beginning of December. He is a specialist in stained glass art work and an artist whose draw-



MISS ERLINDA CHICA

... headed for France . . .



The USC SSC delegation to the 9th National Union of Students Congress in Bacolod during the last week of December. — *Sitting from l to r:* Sergio Cugtas, Rex Acosta, Ignacio Enerio. — *Standing from l to r:* Manuel Juanillo, Cesar Coraza Jr., Lillian Gul, Treasurer; Jennie Kinsens, Atty. Dazario, Adviser; Corazon Jara, Secretary; Lucille Dy, Dulcemina Ong, Edgar Male, Vice-President; Lorenzo Lee.

ings were on exhibition January 6-12 at Talamban Technological Center.

With these and other arrivals, namely Father Margarito Alingasa and Father Enrique Schoenig and the departure of Father Hubert Lorbach, Father Peter John Raats and Father Fermín Dichoso, the San Carlos SVD community totals 29.

FORMER FACULTY MEMBER COMES HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

Miss Aurora Labitan, formerly of the USC Chemistry Department, recently arrived on a Christmas visit to her family in Tinaan, Naga, Cebu.

Miss Labitan taught chemistry here from 1955 to 1957, then again in 1962. She left for Germany as a trainee in food and drugs at the Institute in Cologne, and in the organic chemistry department at Bayerwerk, Leverkusen. During her stay in Germany she met a lot of Carolinians and made extensive tours of continental Europe. Miss Labitan lavishly praises the German government and people for their friendliness and hospitality. At the end of her training, she went on a world tour (met Father Rigney in London), coming home via the United States. She plans to go abroad again very soon.

The eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Demetrio Labitan of Tinaan, Miss Labitan took her AA. here in USC, and obtained her B.S. in Chemistry from the University of the Philippines.

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Many of the papers have developed, consciously or unconsciously a standard lay-out formula. These stereo-type layouts are used day in and day out without fail. This dressing of news in the same old rag is taking the dynamics out of dynamic news. This kind of monotony kills the suspense. Who wants to eat the same food everyday? The readers know what to expect already; they might as well not buy the papers.

Except for a few who genuinely like their jobs, many newswriters are evidently bored by journalism. They seem to believe that the best writing is dull writing and that the best way to build a great newspaper is to offend no one. Some newspapermen write in the colorless fashion of a club secretary posting up minutes. Some seem to be copying from the telephone directory. Many reporters and columnists should even go back to school to learn what English really is. The way they grow bumper-to-bumper grammatical and idiomatic errors, one wonders if they are embarrassed at all.

In general, most of the city's newspapers are remarkably successful and alert-looking. But the healthy outside hides a rotten inside. It is encouraging that some seem to be aware of their defects and are trying to heal their sore spots.