

UNION COERCION and YOUR NEWSPAPER

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IT IS a sad truth that the public is the victim hit hardest when a handful of people, using the weapon of collective force bestowed upon our trade union movement, succeeds in crippling an industry through boycotts, strikes, and similar pressures. In New York last December, this truism was proved once again in a strike which for three weeks stopped the presses of nine major daily newspapers with a combined circulation of over six million.

Let's review, for a moment, the effect of this costliest newspaper strike in American history, for which nearly every one of the twelve million citizens of the New York metropolitan area paid a price.

Coming in the midst of the Christmas shopping season, the shutdown slashed an estimated 7 per cent from anticipated Yuletide business of major stores which depended on newspaper advertising to draw customers. This loss amounts to about ten million dollars. Ten thousand of New York's

sixteen thousand newsstands were forced to close, throwing many dealers temporarily out of work. The nine struck newspapers themselves lost an estimated twenty-five million dollars in advertising and circulation revenue. Employee pay losses totaled more than five million dollars. Hundreds of businesses, dependent upon newspaper advertising — resort hotels, theaters, restaurants, auto dealerships, real estate agencies, employment bureaus — felt a serious crimp in their income.

In the school system, 270,000 of the city's 300,000 students in 213 secondary schools accustomed to using newspapers in their instruction, were affected.

Contrast these facts with the dubious gains and the number of people who receive them. Directly involved were 4,500 members of the striking news handler's union, representing only a fraction of the New York newspaper industry's total employee force. Of the news handler's union membership, only 19 per cent had voted to strike (887 for and 772 against), and this voting majority — a meager

105 of the city's eight million citizens — brought about a tie-up which ultimately cost an estimated fifty million dollars.

They won their case, of course — a \$7.00 per week "package." But discounting the strike benefits received, those who walked off their jobs and those forced to go with them must work more than ten months at the new pay rate before the "gains" will be realized, because they earned no pay during the strike.

But more tragic than these economic losses is the fact that a handful of union members, with a weapon sanctioned by law, struck a costly blow to freedom and forced concessions to their coercive force.

Because of its magnitude, the New York strike received wide notice across the country and its cold, hard facts were driven home. Not all, however, realize the inroads made by trade unionism in the past few years in the newspaper industry, a trend which today threatens to squeeze our press into such a pattern of standardization that its effectiveness may soon be seriously impaired.

We are quite aware of our con-

stitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press and that this freedom is under attack on many fronts today. One much discussed front is the blanket of secrecy which shrouds an increasing number of activities in Washington, state capitals, and city halls, obscuring the people's right to know under an innocuous guise of "security." Another is pressure from state legislatures and city governments in the form of heavy business license fees on newspapers, taxes on advertising, and, in some remote cases, even direct censorship.

These are the obvious dangers to our press, but they are dangers with which we can cope adequately in the courts because in most instances they violate one statute or another, and we recognize them as such.

Unseen Damage to Freedom

The danger of union coercion as it is practiced in the American newspaper industry, however, is one which too few Americans realize. Such attacks against freedom as that in New York are, in fact, considered perfectly legal and moral, and are blessed by the courts.

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