

## No Cockatoos

No newspaper is worth its salt unless it makes everyone angry at one time or another.

**The San Francisco Jewish Bulletin has demonstrated that capacity in the last few weeks—which should gratify all of us who are sometimes angry at it. But it also points up, in Jewish miniature, a continuing dilemma for our free society.**

If there is any Jewish public issue, this is it. "Since the Exodus," wrote Heine, "freedom has always spoken with a Hebrew accent." And in modern society, there is no freedom without a free press. One could chart the pattern of relative Jewish freedom in modern history, and it would exactly match the pattern of free press.

But no one knows exactly what a "free press" is. One only knows what it is *not*. Obviously there is no free press in Russia, where no one is allowed to use a printing press or a mimeograph machine without explicit government approval. But there is also less of a free press in England than there is in the United States. The British Official Secrets Act would have certainly resulted in the imprisonment of the *New York Times* staff for having printed the Pentagon Papers. The press of Europe was openly astonished by what the American press was able to print.



Raab

Perhaps that press is most free which is least managed by government. But there are also some deep problems of "freedom" for a press which is privately owned and governmentally unmanaged, as in the United States.

**It is increasingly expensive to produce a newspaper. Not too long ago, San Francisco had two morning and three evening newspapers. Today there is one morning and one evening paper, not altogether unconnected. And if only one or two publishers are operating in a city, how do we avoid suppression of news, or unfair treatment of dissident views?**

But, conversely, if the official hand of the community is laid on newspapers in order to "insure" fairness, how do we avoid the management which has resulted in a less free press in other countries? Perhaps we're faced again with the reality that our press system may not be "good" by absolute standards, but it's the best that anyone has been able to think of.

There's an American tradition of free press which the press itself takes seriously: This tradition may not insure a high-quality newspaper on many levels, but it does help insure a basically free press. Thus, reporters notoriously write stories slanted in ways with which their publishers would not politically approve. And editors often write editorials with which their publishers do not agree. That's the only way the system will work.

**That's the only way the Jewish press will finally work, insofar as its freedom is concerned. Freedom of expression is obviously not the only asset a Jewish newspaper needs. That does not guarantee quality or sensitivity to the needs of the Jewish community. But neither can lack of quality or sensitivity be remedied by establishing "controls." In this period of ferment, it is more important for a Jewish newspaper to be independent than for its opinions to be always "right." In its independence, for example, the San Francisco Jewish Bulletin, which is partly supported by the Jewish Welfare Federation's purchase of a subscription for every donor, has succeeded in stirring up the adrenalin of officials and official agencies of the Federation. And, in itself, that's not bad.**

Moritz Saphir, a Jewish writer of the 1830's said that "many journalists are like cockatoos; they pull in their claws when fed, and shut an eye when given a drink." Whatever we need, we don't need any Jewish cockatoos.