

CANADIAN CAPERS
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The interesting drama going on since July first in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan offers much material for serious contemplation on the part of doctors, public and government in this country. Caught in between the stubborn determination of the socialistic government on one hand, and the equally determined medical profession on the other, the public of the province is the unhappy victim. While our sympathies are naturally with the public and the doctors, the affair, however it turns out, should provide valuable lessons to all of us here as we seemingly drift along in strong currents toward a similar impasse. One of these lessons, and a painfully evident one, is that in a struggle of power and policy between a vengeful administration and an embittered medical profession, both sides may well end up as losers with the by standing public, over whose health care the battle rages, taking the worst beating.

But also, of great interest to us has been the manner in which the press in our area has handled its coverage of the Saskatchewan news. We were introduced to the hostilities on the morning of July 2 by a headline over the UPI report in the *Atlanta Constitution*, which read: "BABY DIES AS DOCTORS GO ON STRIKE." That afternoon the *Columbus Ledger* carried the same UPI report, but its headline writers (who apparently, for the present, are less critical of doctors and more critical of the Kennedy Administration and its Medicare plan than are the headline writers of the Atlanta papers) were content with: "MEDICAL CRISIS IS POSED." There were other subtle differences too in the way the UPI report was printed in each paper. The dispatch was apparently a long one and each paper selected the paragraphs most suitable to its point of view. The *Constitution* used the paragraph relating to the 9-month-old infant who died of meningitis on the long drive to a hospital as one of their lead paragraphs, whereas in the *Ledger*, this did not appear until the seventh paragraph. The *Ledger* included a paragraph containing the comment, "there was no way to determine whether the infant would have lived if a doctor had been more readily available." But the *Constitution* did not consider this bit of information newsworthy and omitted the paragraph entirely in its story. (Out of curiosity we looked up the funeral notices in that issue of the *Constitution* and noted that an infant brought over from Washington, Georgia, had died on that same day at Emory Hospital, where, as far as we know, no doctors were on strike.)

Two days later the *Constitution* carried another UPI report from Canada under the headline: "2 MORE DIE AS DOCTORS STAY OFF JOB." The two deaths were one of pneumonia in a 5-month-old Indian child and one of a heart attack in a 68-year-old woman.

Several days later, in the Sunday Columbus paper, headlined by "PUBLIC NOT SUPPORTING EXPERIMENT IN MEDICARE," was a lengthy AP report on the medical crisis in Saskatchewan. It related that while everyone, including government officials, had expected opposition from the doctors, few had anticipated the lack of support from the public for the Medicare plan, and that "public criticism of the doctors was absent." In addition, in regards to the four deaths that had occurred during the week was the statement, "But both the government and the doctors say all would have died anyway." Knowing that the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* also subscribes to and utilizes the Associated Press service, we looked through their Sunday edition that day for this report and their headline. Their dispatch wire must have broken down, since news from Canada was absent.

We are aware of the difficulties and problems in putting together a daily newspaper and we are agreeable to the notion that a newspaper, even where it has a one-city monopoly, is entitled to set its own policies and support any cause in which it believes. We do not feel, however, that the press (which frequently and piously reminds us of its responsible role as a public servant and as a guardian of liberty, free speech and the rights of men) is acting in an entirely ethical manner when it slants news one way or another or omits or suppresses news that is not favorable to its own point of view. There are the editorial pages and special columns where the opinions of publishers, editors, special correspondents and analysts rightfully belong and where they can express their views, promote any cause, and belabor any point they wish.

Once upon a time, as a German prisoner of war, we had to read the Reich-controlled *Volkischer Beobachter* daily for about 16 months, and we learned that all Americanized airmen were "luft-gangsters," uncultured, maniacal killers who dropped bombs only on women, children and aged; and that there was nothing nobler or more self-sacrificing than the German Reich, which was fighting solely for the preservation of human decency as the savior of western civilization.

We decided then that a controlled and biased press was not to our liking. We have not grown any fonder of it today here in Georgia.