a code of
FAIR PUBLISHING PRACTICES

Prepared for Use by Catholic Newspapers and Magazines of the United States and Canada by the CATHOLIC PRESS ASSOCIATION

MEMBERS OF THE 1955 COMMITTEE ON FAIR PUBLISHING PRACTICES
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The Code of Fair Publishing Practices is phrased to express the determination of anyone who adopts it to perform or refrain from performing, as the case may be, the definite practices described within it. Thus by its expression it is a pledge or a promise, and as such it was then presented to the Catholic Press Association for acceptance or rejection.

Now the Code was published almost a year before the Association voted on it, so that all members had ample time to study it and to discuss it privately. It was publicly explained and discussed at some of the Association's regional meetings during 1954, and for almost three hours as a part of the program of the national convention. After this last discussion several important changes were formally voted upon.

It seems no question, then, but that the Association's final decision on the Code came only after all due deliberation. This helps make plain the significance of the action that was taken. For when the Association formally voted approval of the Code at the final business meeting of the 1955 national convention, it freely and deliberately adopted it as the standard of the practices of its members. By the democratic process of that vote, the entire Association membership accepted the Code and every member pledged to abide by its provisions.

Like all promises, the Code can be as effective as the will and determination of the members of the Association make it. If, having been accepted, it is borne in mind and persistently followed, it will pretty well eliminate the possibility of anything but fair practices being performed by Catholic Press Association publications.

But if it is not reaffirmed by practice and conduct it can become only an empty statement, a pledge ignored and a promise forgotten and broken. Since the Code expresses the best practices now being performed by Association members and those to which the greatest respect already attaches, there is every reason to expect and no reason not to expect that the Code of Fair Publishing Practices will be faithfully followed.

Of course, the fundamental standard of every Catholic publication's practices and every Catholic journalist's conduct is the moral law, by which God governs men. The Code does not purport to state the moral law as it governs the work of journalism, much less to state it adequately. The very phrasing of the Code forbids this.

Nevertheless, many of the Code's provisions can be drawn as conclusions from the moral law, and the others can be shown to specify and determine the moral law. The Code, then, ought not be divorced in thought from the moral law and its sanctions, even though it is phrased merely as a pledge accepted by the Association's membership.

Finally, elements which require adjustment or even correction may come to light in the Code as it is tried out. Members who discover any such imperfections can help the Association by explaining them to the Fair Publishing Practices Committee.

July 14, 1955

David Host, Chairman

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SECTION I

NEWSPAPER REPORTS AND EXPLANATORY ARTICLES, INFORMATIVE MAGAZINE ARTICLES:

It will be our policy, when reporting events, enterprises, problems and trends to give readers all the pertinent facts and to be accurate in all factual statements. When, by our continued practice, statement or suggestion, we lead readers to believe we supply general coverage of the news in any area or of any kind, we accept it as our duty to keep readers informed of the events within that area or of that kind which seriously affect their lives as Catholics. To accounts of such matters we will give the space, position and display they deserve. We will never withhold information which our readers have the right to expect of us.

1. When we are only surmising we will strive never to conceal that fact from our readers nor to give the impression that we are reporting.

2. We will never contravene the truth by statements we make in print, nor will we publish hearsay as recorded or witnessed fact, conjecture as certainty, or opinion as truth.

3. When we report disagreements and controversies we will treat all sides as reasonable and honest unless we know with moral certainty they are not.

4. We will not make suggestions or inferences in headlines, leads or the body of stories for which evidence is wanting in the stories.

5. We will explain only those matters on which we have sufficient knowledge, understanding and competence.

6. We will not in our published statements judge men guilty of wrongdoing unless we can substantiate their guilt, nor will we mistake disagreement with our own judgments for moral wrongdoing or intellectual inconsistency.

SECTION II

PRACTICAL JUDGMENTS, CRITICISMS AND PERSUASION:

It will be our general policy to serve the good of our readers by open and prudent discussion directed to them as intelligent beings with the right to make their own judgments freely under divine law.

1. We will give public approval and support only to those enterprises, policies and courses of action whose morality and prudence we have considered, weighed and made morally certain of, and we will oppose enterprises, policies and courses of action only when, after due consideration and analysis, we are morally certain they are immoral or imprudent.

2. We will supply reasons and evidence for all judgments we make in print which are not self-evident or evident to our readers.

3. We will not commit the Church to our personal judgments on the temporal aspect of affairs, or suggest that the Faith demands assent to any judgment it does not.

4. While we recognize that religious and spiritual principles must direct all human acts we will not lead our readers to believe that they supply all the necessary means of managing their temporal affairs.
5. We will quote others always with due regard for the context of their statements, and we will give to those who disagree with us the courteous, respectful and just treatment Charity demands.

6. We will give those persons and groups whose reputations we have questioned ample opportunity to defend themselves in the pages of our publications.

SECTION III

PUBLICATION RIGHTS AND PAYMENT:

It will be our general policy to give our staff members and contributors the payment and credit due them as the originators and creators of the work we publish and to respect their rights of possession and use of their products.

1. We will not give original publication to anyone's work without the consent of the producer and the payment agreed upon.

2. We will not publish in whole or in considerable part anyone's creation without the consent, at least reasonably presumed, of the producer or of the person to whom the producer has given possession of it, nor without publishing the name of the producer and of the original publisher, nor will we ignore any of the rights and payments due the producer.

3. We will determine our minimum rate of payment not exclusively on the basis of our budget but also on the basis of the quality of the product and with due consideration for the normal requirements of the producer considered as one whose livelihood is derived solely from this sort of work.

4. We will inform every contributor of our acceptance or rejection of his work promptly -- if possible within four weeks of our receiving it -- and we will make payment for it upon acceptance.

5. We will never publish news or information gathered by other publications or journalists without their consent, until they have made use of that knowledge.

SECTION IV

PROMOTION AND SELLING:

It will be our general policy to seek public esteem and support for our publications and to persuade people to buy or subscribe to them primarily for the services they render readers.

1. We will not exaggerate our publications' circulation, prestige, coverage or authority, or the competence, experience or training of our staffs, or the quantity or quality of content.

2. We will not seek exclusive permission to promote and sell subscriptions to our publications in any institution or diocese.

3. We will not state or suggest that any particular publication or combination of particular publications is necessary for the salvation or sanctification of prospective subscribers or for the fulfillment of their Christian duty.

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4. We will not promote or sell our publications in combinations of any sort with non-Catholic publications whose content or policies are inconsistent with Catholic doctrine, values or attitudes.

SECTION V

ADVERTISING:

We acknowledge that we bear a major part of the responsibility for the effects upon readers of the advertising we publish. Consequently, we hold ourselves duty-bound to take what prudent means are necessary to assure that our publishing of advertisements will not cause or cooperate in causing any physical or moral harm to our readers. Accordingly, we will not enter into any agreement with advertisers or advertising agencies which limits the exercise of our responsibility by giving to others the authority to decide what advertisements will be inserted into our publication. Furthermore, we will accept advertisements from only those institutions we have prudent reason to deem trustworthy and financially sound, and we will publish only those advertisements whose claims the producer, seller or advertising agency will upon our request substantiate.

1. We will publish advertisements of only those products or services which will fulfill the purposes ascribed to them in the advertisements.

2. We will publish advertisements of only those products or services which are justly priced and whose substance, quality and quantity are what the advertisement declares, implies or suggests them to be.

3. We will not publish advertisements of products or services whose purposes as ascribed to them in the advertisements are immoral, which are morally or physically harmful to their users, or which are likely to be put to purposes which are immoral or harmful to their users or unjust to others.

4. We will not publish advertisements which by expression, or typographical or illustrative devices deceive or tend to deceive ordinary readers regarding the practical value, the price, the quality, quantity or substance of the product or service advertised.

5. We will not publish advertisements whose copy or illustrations offend against Christian modesty, courtesy or good taste.

6. We will not publish advertisements or products whose ordinary purpose or use makes Catholic devotion primarily a matter of sentiment rather than of intellectual faith, or whose copy states, suggests or implies that Catholic devotion is primarily sentimental.

7. We will not publish advertisements of products whose ordinary use is superstitious or dangerously approaches superstition, or whose copy contains superstitious statements, suggestions or implications.

8. We recognize our obligation not to refuse to publish advertisements arbitrarily and without reasonable grounds.

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