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AMONG OURSELVES

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

Entered as second-class matter December 1, 1922, at the post-office at St. Paul, Minn., under the act of August 24, 1912.

Vol. III

ST. PAUL, MINN., JUNE, 1925

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
DOCUMENTS
OCT 4 1976
ST. PAUL CAMPUS
NO. 7 LIBRARIES

Field Secretary Plan Meets With Much Favor at the Editors' Annual Short Course

The field secretaryship idea received a fresh impetus at the ninth annual editors' short course at University Farm, St. Paul, May 7-9.

This impetus came largely from facts presented by G. L. Caswell, managing director of the Iowa Press association, who in a talk of an hour and a half, no moment of which any of the fifty or sixty editors present begrudged, gave a most satisfactory cross-section of the work to be accomplished by a field secretary.

Mr. Caswell said that the membership dues of the Iowa association ranged from \$5 to \$25 a year. This, with the results obtained by the judicious expenditure of the funds raised, has given the editors of Iowa a deep interest in the work of the association, and brings them to the meetings of the association—from 250 to 350 at each meeting.

One of the first things undertaken by Iowa's field secretary was to get publishers to see that their position in their communities depended in considerable measure on their making money, and business methods were advocated which immediately helped toward that end. One of these methods was the establishment of sound advertising rates. Through this came a "blue ribbon" list, which advertising agencies now keep on file and refer to, in placing advertising in Iowa papers.

Another thing undertaken was the scrutiny of legislation. This was the job of the field secretary. In performing this duty the field secretary, with proper assistance, has checked unfavorable legislation on the one hand and has secured favorable legislation on the other. A satisfactory libel law was one of the things fathered and fostered by Mr. Caswell as field secretary. The Iowa press association includes thirty dailies, and Mr. Caswell says that when the editors of these dailies think of what the present libel law does for them they thank their fortune for backing the Iowa Press association.

Another thing accomplished was the boosting of the rate for publishing the delinquent property tax list from 20 cents to 40 cents a description. The same thing was done for the automobile tax list.

During the paper shortage, Mr. Caswell operated a purchasing organization, buying paper for members in car lots at large savings.

Mr. Caswell's organization, furthermore, operates an employment bureau, protects its members and collects bad accounts, and serves as a consulting engineer either by mail or in the person of the field secretary.

These are only a few of the activities of the Iowa field secretary.

After Mr. Caswell had finished his talk and answered questions. Andrew Bromstad, Milan Standard, for the Minnesota Editorial association committee on the employment of a field secretary, reported in favor of the executive committee's going ahead with a try-out of the plan. H. Z. Mitchell, president of the association, felt, however, that the committee would hardly be justified in taking such an important step, committing the association to a considerable expense. It was agreed, therefore that a definite plan should be ready to be submitted at the next annual meeting of the state association—in Minneapolis next February.

Advertising Problems Up

Some "simple" solutions of country newspaper advertising problems were presented by J. Bryan Bushness, who touched some vital spots. A summary of his address will be found elsewhere.

The plan of linking-up wholesaler and retailer advertising as presented by T. G. Harrison of the Winston Harper Fisher company, Minneapolis, provoked a lively discussion, and brought out information on both sides which should promote a better understanding as between wholesalers and country weekly publishers.

The thoughts presented in this discussion were followed up by Mr. Mitchell with a discussion of "The Store Survey and the Field Secretary," who said the problem was one of bringing the different interests together on a satisfactory basis. Something more of Mr. Mitchell's views will appear in the July number of *Among Ourselves*.

Miss Minnie A. Buzbee, of the Minneapolis Trust company, who discussed more and better bank advertising, gave some valuable suggestions for effective bank advertising, and Carl W. Jones's talk on soliciting advertising was of a kind to lead one to go out after more business—and to get it, too.

James Paige, of the Law School, University of Minnesota, gave what was pronounced by the editors present the best exposition of the law of libel they had heard.

Two Enjoyable Evening Meetings

The evening given to the Minneapolis Journal dinner was one of the most enjoyable in the history of the nine short courses. The dinner itself was excellent, and what came after was full of fun and inspiration. Frank A. Day was toastmaster, and kept things moving at a lively pace. Dean W. C. Coffey ex-

tended greetings, emphasizing the relationship between agriculture and the press. Mr. Mitchell responded in characteristic style, and then came the address of Gov. Theodore Christianson, which will be found elsewhere in this issue. The address of Rev. Roy L. Smith, pastor of Simpson M. E. church, Minneapolis, was full of inspiration, as was that of the governor. Mr. Smith put before the editors the alternative "Servants or Spoilers." It is to be regretted that his address can not be given here, for lack of space.

The second evening of the course was taken up with a dinner and smoker. The speaker was Prof. T. A. Sorokin of the university, formerly of Russia. He held the closest attention of the editors for more than an hour as he outlined conditions in Russia. Another hour or more was taken up with questions and answers.

Other Features of Program

M. J. McGowan's talk on book-keeping for classified ads brought out the fact that most of the book-keeping thought to attach to the classified ad department could be eliminated by a pay-in-advance system.

The round-table period proved altogether too short. It was conducted by C. C. Campbell, who remarked at the outset that the questions submitted furnished enough matter on which to base an entire short course program. Some of the questions will be used in formulating the program for next year.

Contest Awards Made

The front-page make-up contest was won by the Queen City Sun, Virginia, Minn., second place being given to the Thief River Falls Times.

The first prize for the best statement as to the services which the Minnesota Editorial association might give to add to the prosperity of Minnesota's country weeklies was awarded to H. Z. Mitchell, the second prize being divided between Scott N. Swisher, Le Sueur Center Leader, and Thorval Tunheim of the Warren Sheaf.

Honors for Whiting

The recent announcement that the Country Gentleman had named the Owatonna Journal-Chronicle as one of the great county weeklies of the United States brings pleasure to the host of friends of the publisher, E. K. Whiting. The Journal-Chronicle deserves its ranking, and Whiting deserves the honor that has come his way. Not a little of the glory falls, also, to H. H. Soper, Mr. Whiting's associate editor.

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Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.

AMONG OURSELVES

Published in the interests of the weekly press
of the State of Minnesota

by

The Division of Extension, Department of
Agriculture, University of Minnesota

Edited by W. P. Kirkwood, E. C. Torrey
University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Published monthly at University Farm,
St. Paul, Minn.

THE MASTER JOURNALIST

By Governor Theodore Christianson

REMEMBER DETROIT

The annual outing of the Northern Minnesota Editorial association is just around the corner. The time is June 11 to 14 inclusive. The place is Detroit.

This is going to be a great event in the history of the northern Minnesota editors. They are going to be aided in their joy-getting by the North Dakota Press association.

We can't take space here to tell of all the good things in store for those who attend. But "Doc" Rutledge and the folks of Detroit have already told you. 'Nough said.

FIELD SECRETARY, HIS ANSWER

The first prize for the best paper on what the state editorial association can do to add to the prosperity of Minnesota newspapers went to the president of the state association, H. Z. Mitchell, Bemidji. The judge, R. R. Barlow, of the department of journalism, University of Minnesota, was, of course, in ignorance of the author of the paper when he passed upon it. The second prize was divided between Scott N. Swisher, Le Sueur Center Leader, and Thorval Tunheim, with the Warren Sheaf. Honorable mention was awarded to Andrew Bromstad, Milan Standard.

Because it discusses a subject which was uppermost on the program of the editor's short course, Mr. Mitchell's paper is given in full below:

"The employment of a field secretary, through a plan by which every publisher in the state would bear his share of the expense and the responsibility, is, so far as we can determine, the only method by which the state editorial association could add materially to the prosperity of the individual newspaper owner. Not only would such an officer be in a position to carry on the work that has been started by the association in a more efficient manner but there are countless new activities that could then be engaged in, now out of the question because of lack of time.

"While there can certainly be no complaint on the part of the publishers of the state as to the activity of the association in preventing harmful legislation during the past few years, a field secretary could more easily, and without compelling a few individual editors to neglect their own business, keep in touch with legislative matters and ably represent the organization.

An Important Innovation

"The important innovation made last year by President McGowan in having representatives of the editorial associa-

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I have come to you tonight, not as a public official, but as a fellow craftsman, a country newspaper man of Minnesota who, despite the rather arduous and exacting tasks of the governor's office, finds it difficult to refrain from expressing himself in hot linotype slugs. I can well understand the old saying that printers' ink is hard to wash off. It can't be washed off; it cannot even be worn off; once a newspaper man, always a newspaper man. Whenever I see a pile of newspapers, reminiscent of the exchange table, I am strongly tempted to ignore unsigned "bills for an act" and neglect the tasks of my office, to browse again through the columns where free and fearless men of the press have placed the product of unshackled thought, or in their lighter moods have made comment, caustic or sympathetic, on the fads and foibles of the day. And at such times, I long again for the chance to wield that incomparable and irresponsible power which is possessed only by the editor of a country newspaper.

When I began my work as a newspaper man, I was of the reforming age of 26. There is much of the spirit of the crusader in a man before he has crossed the threshold of the thirties. Youth, far from being frivolous, as many suppose, is tremendously in earnest. It is not only looking for worlds to conquer, it is looking for worlds to reform. The years from thirty to forty bring disillusion and cynicism—perhaps the world is neither capable nor worthy of reforming. After forty come the years of complacency and *avoids*—perhaps the whole world doesn't need much reforming; perhaps, on the whole, it is as good a world as men have a right to expect, if not the best possible of all worlds. This, therefore, is my confession; I have experienced the evolution from an exceedingly serious youth to an almost frivolous man.

Wide Field for Comment

As a newspaper man, working in a small country town—one of the best towns in the world—I found myself functioning practically without limitations. I could comment, learnedly or otherwise, on a variety of subjects, running the scale from such light stuff as weeding carrots to such heavy matter as the effect of scientific investigation on the ethical conceptions of humanity. I could scold Lloyd George, I could unmercifully flay the French foreign policy, I could expose the pretensions of the Mikado, I could tell the truth about the United States senate. I was all right so long as I didn't say anything derogatory about the mayor of Dawson, the proprietor of the local pool hall, or the men who were trying to put over County Ditch No. 47.

The smaller the circle of a man's activity, the larger its periphery. The number of people a country newspaper man can discuss is in inverse ratio to the number of his subscribers; hence the

almost illimitable possibilities of the rural editorial page.

The future of democracy depends on public opinion, and it is a truism that the press is the foremost molder of public opinion. It is no idle boast that the newspaper men constitute the Fourth Estate of the realm. Count Witte once said: "You call this a free country, but it is not free. It is not as free as mine. Your people have a master and that master is more autocratic and infinitely more potent than the Emperor of Russia. The newspaper is your ruler." The statement of Count Witte exaggerates the power of the press, of course; but there can be no gainsaying the fact that newspapers wield an enormous—an almost appalling—power in the republic. Great, therefore, is the responsibility of the men who control the press for they control public opinion.

Methods Differ

The methods of great journalists have differed. Their manner of appeal has been various. Their attitude toward the profession has exhibited no uniformity. To Franklin, the printer, journalism was a trade. To Bryant, the poet, it was literature. To Dana, the satirist, it was art. To Greeley, it meant statesmanship; to Garrison, a crusade. There can, therefore, be no exact definition of journalism. It presents to the great man an opportunity for self-expression; to the small man, for self-exploitation. Depending on the point of view, it is a mission or a livelihood, a craft or an art.

But whatever be the motive that prompts the journalist, his responsibility is the same.

Must Have Vision

The master journalist must have vision; he must have ability not only to see, but to see in perspective. To do justice, he must consider the events of the moment, not only in the light of today's prejudice, but in the light of tomorrow's judgment. He must have that foresight which men have only when they can project their hindsight into the future. This does not call for the qualities of a Superman. It does call for the possession of common sense to an uncommon degree.

Continuing Purpose Demanded

The master journalist must have a continuing purpose. He must refuse to have his attentions distracted by petty and inconsequential controversy. He must avoid variability of policy. He must have conscience, character, and convictions. And his conscience must operate with such delicate sensitiveness that he will not only scorn the advances of him who would buy opinions for a price, but that he will refuse to please the mob by pandering to its momentary demands or following its transient trend. His wares must have better justification than a public demand for them. They must meet the needs of the people, not merely satisfy their appetites. How much of

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"SIMPLE SOLUTIONS OF ADV. PROBLEMS"

J. Bryan Bushnell of the Bushnell-Dahlquist Press, Minneapolis, challenged the attention of the editors at the short course with the subject of his address. He did so, again, with the content. There was a prompt come-back—a come-back which ought to have delighted the speaker, for he announced almost at the outset: "I shall be really delighted if I can make at least some of you good and mad, and I hope the items I shall touch upon will set everyone of you to thinking."

With this, Mr. Bushnell entered upon a searching catechism as to the country newspaper, asking questions which, doubtless, every editor present answered in his own way as the questions were put. The questions were grouped as follows:

Physical:

Is your paper well set up?

Is your paper well and carefully printed?

Is your paper free from mistakes?

Financial:

Have you all the subscribers you can possibly get?

Are your subscriptions paid up or in arrears?

How do you get your subscribers?

Literary:

Is your paper worth reading?

Do you just get out a paper, or do you put some of yourself into it?

Do you stand 100 per cent for your town and community?

Are you 100 per cent patriotic or do you make fun of the eighteenth amendment?

Do people respect your views and ask for your opinions?

Do you take an active part in the religious, social, and civil life of your community?

Are you constantly studying to improve your paper, or are you just drifting along?

Is your paper so valuable to your community that the community would in any way suffer by its loss?

Advertising:

Do you understand the buying public?

Have you ever sold any goods—retail, wholesale, or as a traveling salesman?

Do you know anything about the value of merchandise?

Do you know a good ad when you see one?

Can you write plain, simple, intelligent copy?

Do you make a regular habit of studying the larger and better city papers to see how the representative stores are advertising?

Can you make an intelligible layout?

Have you ever done anything to make your town merchants feel any confidence in your ability to help them advertise?

Is your advertising space honestly worth the price you are asking for it?

Mechanical:

Do you have enough type adequately to set display advertising?

Are you nursing along a lot of obsolete, old-fashioned types (not enough of any one kind), or have

you learned the value of a good family or two, such as Caslon or Cheltenham? And have you all sizes, and enough of each size, to work with?

How about a variety of good borders—of a kind to enable you to give your ads a variety of fencing?

Advertising Prospects

Turning from this sharp inquiry, the answers to which each editor was supposed to make for himself, Mr. Bushnell suggested just as severe a cross-examination for the country merchants, asking whether they were jealous of one another, whether they were good merchandisers, whether they had the confidence of their communities, whether they really gave advertising careful thought or dashed it off on wrapping paper when the editor called for copy, whether they figured advertising as an expense or an asset, whether in case of a sale they would have enough help to take care of the crowd, whether they backed up their advertising with meritorious merchandise, whether the publisher gave honest-to-goodness service.

The Farmer Considered

Mr. Bushnell wished to know, also, a lot more about the farmer; or, rather, he wished to set the editors to thinking about him—providing, of course, they had not been thinking about him as a big factor in the situation. Then he said:

So here is your paper, the merchant, the market; what is the reason they can't all get together?

Printing Plant and Advertising

With this, again, Mr. Bushnell went on with his rapid-fire questioning, intermingling his questions with suggestions and advice. He packed his talk full of good things, which may have been more or less familiar to his hearers but which it is always good to review now and then under a strong stimulus. He insisted that advertising to be read must be physically pleasing to the eye, and that the eye naturally loved order and was repelled by disorder. Then he added:

A proper lay-out makes for a pleasing ad. A lay-out is the architectural drawing or plan on which the type construction of the ad is built.

There are nine elements or parts in a lay-out, though all may not be used in every ad—border, white space, headline, copy, illustrations, firm name, trade mark, package and trade name or logotype.

In retail advertising you deal with border, white space, headline, copy, illustrations, and firm names; also with subheadings, borders within borders, and black prices.

If you are to render advertising service to your merchants, you must know how to lay out the advertising plan.

To the possible objection that the newspaper publisher has not time to spend on advertising lay-outs, Mr. Bushnell made answer that a lay-out greatly decreased composing room time, simplified labor, increased production, and reduced costs.

To the objection that one might not know how to do the kind of work indicated, Mr. Bushnell said one could learn

by observation and by maintaining a library or file of ads of all kinds of goods, to serve as a guide when a call for a special kind of ad demanded attention or preparation.

Things to Keep in Mind

Mr. Bushnell said that there was one place in every ad that was most valuable and that was the optical center—about three-eighths of the way from the top, and that the big idea in the ad should be there. Advertising was usually poor, he went on, because commonplace, too wordy, too general in its claims, or extravagant in statement. On the other hand advertising to be good "must be seen, read, believed, and remembered." Advertising was generally more effective when the language was simple, earnest, direct and chatty, rather than formal. Greatly to be deplored, said the speaker, was exaggeration and brag. Advertising was news, and as such should be specific and contain a strong element of human interest. Mr. Bushnell pointed out how advertising ties up with the news of the day, as in the case of fuel, furnace, and ash man advertising with news about the coal situation.

Bargain advertising was greatly abused. The advertiser must give a true and sound reason for a bargain sale, or else he'd better avoid it. The final purpose of advertising is to sell. Every ad, said Mr. Bushnell, should have a very definite and specific purpose, and not be run because someone else was advertising or for some equally futile reason.

Why Merchants Don't Advertise

Mr. Bushnell then turned to reasons why merchants did not advertise. He listed thirteen:

They did not believe in advertising because advertising had never been intelligently sold to them.

They regarded advertising as a waste of money; used their windows and dodgers.

They did not believe people read the papers, because they contained little news, were poorly written, etc.

They questioned the ability of the publisher to get up a decent ad.

They thought themselves too busy to prepare copy, but would advertise if someone would help them get up their copy.

They had no confidence in their paper; said it never did anything for them or boosted the town; why should they support it?

They lacked confidence in their own ability to prepare effective advertising.

Their banker did not advertise, so why should they?

They were in many cases poor merchandisers—buying unwisely and having vague ideas as to how to sell.

They took the attitude that the store was essential to the growth of the community, and that the residents should buy from them even though they might do better elsewhere.

They had no confidence in their jobbers and buying connections.

They did not get co-operation from their buying connections and jobbers, had no cuts or specials for sales or good copy helps.

The merchant himself tried to run the whole business, unwilling to trust anything to employees.

Merchants were sometimes suspicious of competitors; afraid that advertising would tell competitors too much about their business.

Why Papers Don't Get Advertising

Some papers, continued the speaker, did not get advertising because their physical appearance was poor; because there was an apparent lack of brains in editing; because they revealed a shortage of working materials for setting display ads properly; because of lack of credit standing on the part of the publisher; because they offered no service—no cuts or advertising assistance; because they were not discriminating in the printing of advertising, running almost anything offered.

Situation Might Be Changed

By way of remedies, Mr. Bushnell suggested that the publisher should see to it that his credit was A1; that his paper was attractive in appearance; that his subscribers received a real newspaper; that he had proper type faces and border material for setting sales-producing ads; that he learn to lay out ads and make up his paper with thought as to the placing of ads; that he be helpful, offering to prepare copy, submitting layouts, or even demonstrating the value of advertising by a free test ad; that he should avail himself of an alliance with his banker by getting the banker to do persistent, up-to-date advertising; that he should be active in the commercial, social, and religious life of his community; that he should stand for his community and show backbone; that he should talk in his news columns of the interesting things about his merchants' stores; that he should accept no mail-order advertising and advocate buying at home—provided his merchants were keeping up their end of the game.

Mr. Bushnell's address touched many a weak spot in newspaper making and provoked a lively discussion.

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current periodical literature is like the stuff many men drink nowadays—authentically labeled but filled with formaldehyde and fusel oil! Our profession contains too many literary bootleggers.

The master journalist must be moved by no personal animosities. Relentless in pursuing and exposing evil, he should be tolerant toward men even when they are evildoers. I have no respect for the newspaper that heralds iniquity in three-inch wood type on the front page and chronicles the unselfish devotion of an every-day hero in six-point on the market page. The journalist must use a hammer, but if he is a great journalist he will use it most, not to crush or splinter, but to construct—in fastening loose boards in the community wall. The true journalist is never a character-assassin. He is more zealous in denouncing wrong than in exposing the wrong-doer. His passion is to supplant evil with good.

Must Understand Character

Again, the master journalist must know human nature and understand human character. He must have contact with men as well as intimacy with books. He must be a rare mixture of business man and scholar, of captain of industry and leader of public opinion. When I

say that he must know human nature, I do not mean that he should pander to it. He should be no mere weather-vane to detect the currents of public opinion, no windmill deriving its motive power by reason of its ability to adjust itself to the direction from which the wind blows, but a dynamo which, disregarding tides and currents, generates power and light for the community it serves. His chief aim, therefore, must be, not to win favor with majorities, but to convert majorities from the wrong to the right. If he keeps his ear to the ground in an effort to divine the direction of popular opinion, it is not in order to make an adjustment of his own views to those of the mass, but rather in order to be the better able to time his own shells against the breastworks of error.

The master journalist is a tribune of the people, yes; but the true tribune is not a mere defender. He is never an apologist. He is a counsellor, a leader. His mission is not to detect and encourage popular tendencies; it is rather to ascertain and, if necessary, correct them. The newspaper may be the mirror of life, but a mirror serves no cosmetic purpose if it exposes blemishes without indicating the manner of removing, or at least overcoming them. To protect society from itself, to point out its errors and work for their rectification, without preaching too much about it, has been not only the purpose but the passion of great journalists.

A Responsible Calling

Ours, then, is a great and responsible calling, a profession with traditions, a history, and an increasing opportunity. The master journalist is not a mere craftsman producing a merchandise to sell. He is a teacher, a leader of men. He is a voice, crying in the wilderness if need be; spiritual successor of seer and prophet; companion in service of the ministers and priests of religion. He is an instrumentality of the state, an uncommissioned officer of government; but he wields his power, not through soldiers and the police, but through that greater safeguard of organized democracy—an intelligent and alert public opinion.

LOWER MINN. VALLEY EDITORIAL ASSOCIATION

The editors of Nicollet, Sibley, Le Sueur, and Scott counties at a meeting in Le Sueur recently organized the Lower Minnesota Valley Editorial association. The following were elected officers: President, Col. O. J. Quane; vice president, J. J. Olson; secretary, Arthur J. Suel; treasurer, C. C. Eaton; members of executive committee, Carl S. Eastwood, W. F. Duffy, and Charles Wallin. It is the purpose of the new organization to invite all editors of the Third congressional district to become members.

With the issue of April 9 the Dodge County Republican was 58 years old. G. W. and J. P. Nottage purchased it in 1903 from members of the Shaver family, who were the founders.

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tion appear at every possible meeting held by similar organizations in other lines, could be splendidly followed out with a field secretary, who could outline a permanent policy and arrange to have speakers present those views to the merchants and professional men.

"The work with co-operative organizations started this year would receive such a tremendous impetus at the hands of a field secretary. Two co-operative organizations are now ready to suggest concrete advertising plans to their individual members and lack only the incentive that could be given from the office of a field secretary.

"Problems of county and district editorial associations are of vast importance as they are concrete and embody known factors. These can be worked out by a field secretary.

"Disputes between local publishers, that place the entire newspaper profession in ill repute, can often be solved through the intervention of an outside person. The field secretary could well serve as a mediator.

Increase in Advertising

"Advertising can often be materially increased in the various local communities through a get-together meeting at which the joint problems of the merchant and the publisher are intelligently discussed. The field secretary would be in a position to intelligently discuss those problems.

"Information regarding fifty-fifty contracts, dealers helps, aids to intelligent copy, and co-operation desired by manufacturers and wholesalers, who are always potential users of newspaper space, is desired by every wide-awake publisher. The field secretary could secure and disseminate such information.

"Each year the publishers of Minnesota lose a large amount of money and incur no little ill-will by employing irresponsible wanderers to put on special editions. The field secretary would be in a position to check this waste with reliable information.

Office Would Be a Stimulator

"While this direct action on the part of the field secretary would without doubt add to the prosperity of the publisher the real benefits would come through the individual efforts of the publisher himself. The knowledge that an officer of the editorial association was watching his work, the many suggestions that would be received in the weekly bulletin that would naturally be issued from the field secretary's office, the personal responsibility that would be felt by the progressive publisher, would spur each of us on to better performances. More frequent calls on our merchants would give us the much needed acquaintance. The information received from the bulletins would offer a common ground for discussions with our merchants. The suggestions sent out would open our eyes to hitherto undeveloped fields.

"Surely such a move would add to the prosperity of the publishers and the state editorial association would have rendered a worth-while service in working out a plan that would make the employment of a field secretary possible."