

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR JAMES B. EDWARDS  
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LIMESTONE COLLEGE, GAFFNEY, S.C.  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 1976

I DON'T KNOW OF ANY BETTER WAY OF UNDERSTANDING THE JOB OF BROADCAST NEWSPEOPLE, SHORT OF BEING ONE, THAN BEING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL WHO IS COVERED BY THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA.

OVER THE PAST YEAR OR MORE, I HAVE GAINED A TREMENDOUS RESPECT FOR THE JOB YOU ARE DOING IN OUR STATE, THE PRESSURES YOU ENDURE, AND THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS YOU ACHIEVE.

WHEN YOU STOP AND REALLY THINK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF BROADCAST NEWS ON OUR DAILY LIVES, ITS SCOPE IS ASTOUNDING. EVERY COMMUNITY, TOWN, AND CITY ENJOYS AT LEAST ONE, IF NOT MORE BROADCAST STATIONS. A GROWING PERCENTAGE OF OUR INFORMATION AND NEWS COMES FROM THE BROADCAST MEDIA WHETHER IT BE TELEVISION OR RADIO.

SOMETIMES WE TEND TO TAKE ALL THIS FOR GRANTED. THE OLD CONCEPT THAT "ACCESS TO THE AIRWAVES IS A PRIVILEGE" IS REALLY A TWO-WAY STREET...IT IS A PRIVILEGE BOTH TO THE BROADCASTER AND TO THE LISTENER.

YOU HAVE ACCEPTED YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THAT PRIVILEGE WITH HIGH INTEGRITY. I NOTED THAT YOUR "BROADCAST NEWSMAN'S CREED" CONTAINS THE LINE... "THE TRUTH TO ME SHALL BE PRECIOUS, AND THUS TREATED; AND BECAUSE IT IS PRECIOUS, I WILL SHARE IT WITH OTHERS, FOR TRUTH IS THE WEALTH OF FREEDOM." THIS PRINCIPLE, I BELIEVE, SHOULD ALSO BE EXTENDED TO ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

SINCE BECOMING GOVERNOR, I HAVE STRESSED THE EXTREME IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH AND OPENNESS IN GOVERNMENT. MY ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN DEDICATED TO THAT PRINCIPLE. WE TOO, MUST NEVER FORGET THAT SERVING THE PEOPLE IS A PRIVILEGE AND WE MUST SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEAL OPENLY AND TRUTHFULLY IN OUR AFFAIRS.

I DON'T NECESSARILY HOLD THE VIEW THAT THE NEWS MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT MUST LIVE IN AN ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP. WHILE OUR ROLE SOMETIMES FALLS SHORT OF A PARTNERSHIP, WE MUST SEEK TO FULFILL THE NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC WITH HONESTY AND FAIRNESS.

IF GOVERNMENT FAILS TO DEAL FAIRLY AND TRUTHFULLY WITH THE NEWS MEDIA, IN ESSENCE IT IS DEALING UNFAIRLY WITH THE PEOPLE IT IS SUPPOSED TO SERVE.

EVENTS IN GOVERNMENT-NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS HAVE CHANGED THE ATTITUDE OF MANY PUBLIC OFFICIALS TOWARD THE MEDIA.

IN SOME QUARTERS THERE IS AN APPREHENSION OF THE NEWS MEDIA. SOME OFFICIALS FEAR THAT THE MEDIA IS INTENT ON HARMING THEM IN THE PUBLIC EYE. I HOLD THE VIEW THAT AS LONG AS GOVERNMENT CARRIES OUT ITS AFFAIRS WITH INTEGRITY AND HONESTY, IT HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM COMPLETE OPENNESS WITH THE NEWS MEDIA.

WE MUST BE EVER MINDFUL THAT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS ONE OF THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF THIS NATION. THE ROLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA IN HELPING THIS NATION ATTAIN THE GREATNESS IT ENJOYS TODAY IS IMMEASURABLE. PROTECTION OF THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS AS VITAL AS THE PROTECTION OF ALL OUR OTHER INALIENABLE RIGHTS AS AMERICANS.

IN RECENT YEARS, AS YOU KNOW, A GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN DONE TO DEFINE AND INSURE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. IN OUR OWN STATE, I HAVE URGED STRENGTHENING THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW. I HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT THE F.O.I. LAW PROVIDE:

1. A \$500 FINE FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC OFFICIAL FOUND GUILTY OF VIOLATING ANY PROVISION OF THE F.O.I. LAW.

2. THAT ANY BOARD, COMMISSION, COMMITTEE OR SUBCOMMITTEE OF GOVERNMENT, AT ALL LEVELS MUST TAKE A PUBLIC VOTE BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AND MAKE PUBLIC THE EXACT REASON FOR GOING INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION.

3. THAT ANY ACTION TAKEN IN EXECUTIVE SESSION MUST BE VOTED ON AND ADOPTED IN A SUBSEQUENT OPEN SESSION.

THIS LEGISLATION IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF MAINTAINING OPENNESS BETWEEN THE PRESS AND GOVERNMENT.

I ASSURE YOU THAT FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF THIS LEGISLATION WILL BE ONE OF MY MAIN PRIORITIES IN THIS SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ARE NOT RIGHTS LIMITED TO THE NEWSPAPERS, TELEVISION AND RADIO STATIONS. THEY ARE RIGHTS THAT BELONG TO EVERY AMERICAN...THE RIGHT TO BE TOLD THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT THEIR GOVERNMENT IS DOING.

AS I SAID EARLIER, WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH JUST THE RIGHT OF THE PRESS TO KNOW...BUT WITH THE RIGHT OF OUR CITIZENS TO KNOW.

THOMAS JEFFERSON CONTENDED THAT THE PEOPLE WILL NOT MAKE A MISTAKE AS LONG AS THEY ARE INFORMED OF ALL THE FACTS. THAT SAME PRINCIPLE HOLDS TRUE TODAY.

SO FAR I HAVE DISCUSSED GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC. PERMIT ME TO SPEND A FEW MINUTES ON WHAT I, AS A NON-NEWSMAN, FEEL YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PEOPLE ARE.

THERE IS IN THIS COUNTRY, A GROWING CONTROVERSY OVER THE POWER OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA. THERE ARE THOSE WHO SEEM TO FEAR THE SIMPLE FACT THAT THE BROADCAST MEDIA PROVIDES AN INSTANT AND AN ATTRACTIVE FORM OF COMMUNICATION TO A WIDE SECTOR OF THE POPULATION.

THERE IS NOTHING INHERENTLY WRONG IN THAT. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE IT IS WRONG WHEN THAT POWER IS USED TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON PEOPLE OR ISSUES. I HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF THIS AMONG ANY OF THE MEDIA IN OUR AREA. PERSONALLY, I FEEL THE MEDIA HAS DEALT FAIRLY AND EVEN-HANDEDLY.

I WOULD, HOWEVER, URGE THAT WE NEVER FORGET THAT BROADCAST COMMUNICATIONS AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS ARE PRECIOUS FREEDOMS. THEY ARE NOT CHANNELS FOR SPREADING BIAS OR MIS-INFORMATION.

I RECALL READING A COMMENT BY EDWARD R. MURROW THAT IS QUITE APPROPRIATE. SPEAKING TO A YOUNG REPORTER ABOUT TO MAKE HIS DEBUT ON NATIONAL TELEVISION, HE SAID, "REMEMBER THAT JUST BECAUSE YOUR VOICE WILL BE HEARD ACROSS THE NATION TONIGHT, WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY IS NO MORE IMPORTANT THAN IT WAS WHEN YOUR VOICE WAS ONLY HEARD AT THE END OF THE BAR."