The Associated Press.

What it is.



New York.

1915.

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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS is a mutual and co-operative Association of newspapers in the United States, formed for the purpose of gathering and distributing to its members the news of general interest, domestic and foreign, collected through its own members and other agents, including foreign news associations. Under its charter, and as its name indicates, it is not an agency for the sale of news, but an association for the co-operative collection of news and its distribution to its members. In its charter it is specifically set forth that it is not to make a profit nor to make or declare dividends, and is not to engage in the business of selling intelligence nor traffic in the same. In its organization it consists of approximately 900 newspapers, each of which contributes to the common budget all news of general interest originating in its territory and pays its share toward the expense of supplementing this stock of domestic news with a foreign news service and maintaining the necessary executive and distributive machinery. The Associated Press was incorporated under the Laws of the State of New York, May 22, 1900.

To gather the news of this country bureaus have been established at various central points, to which the members of the association send the news of general importance gathered by them in the territory for which each is responsible. The association also has its own staff of salaried correspondents at all important points and men

subject to call throughout the country as well as skilled writers who are sent to report important events. The news gathered from all these sources is assembled at these central bureaus and from them it is sent out by telegraph or telephone to all the members of The Associated Press.

To supply its members with the foreign news of the world, The Associated Press has, in addition to its own special bureaus and correspondents, arrangements for the interchange of news with the three great European news agencies, which, with The Associated Press, cover the news field of the entire world. As, in a sense every editor, reporter and correspondent of an Associated Press paper and, through these foreign alliances, of newspapers throughout the world may be said to be an agent of The Associated Press, untold thousands of men in all quarters of the globe are the servants of the members of the association.

GATHERING AND SERVING THE NEWS.

The gathering and distribution of the news would be an impossibility without the present perfection in telegraph, telephone, cable and wireless telegraph service. For its most important service The Associated Press has leased wires which form a net work of trunk lines across the country from Bangor, Me., and New York on the East to Seattle, San Francisco and San Diego, in the west, and from Duluth on the north to New Orleans, Galveston and Tampa in the south. The

total mileage of this leased system is approximately: day wires, 22,000 miles; night wires, 28,000. Newspapers in more important cities are served by these leased wires; papers in towns not situated on these lines are furnished with news by means of the regular wires of the telegraph and telephone companies. Heavy use is made of commercial wires and of the ocean cables in the gathering and transmission of news and the wireless system is also utilized in the work of The Associated Press. The Associated Press owns no telegraph lines. More than 60,000 words are daily received and transmitted at each of the more important offices of The Associated Press. In events of great importance no expense is spared to have the most capable writers and correspondents on the scene in order to furnish the news promptly and completely.

To meet the expense of this news service The Associated Press has need of an annual revenue of about three million dollars, which is derived from assessments levied upon the members of the Association. As was said above, The Associated Press sells no news and has no revenues from this source.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.

The principle of co-operation in newsgathering, of which The Associated Press is to-day the highest development, was first applied before the Civil War by New York City newspapers, which realized that each was paying a large sum for news

that was accessible to all and might as well be gathered in common with no loss of prestige and great saving of cost. Provision was therefore made for a joint agency, to which each paper turned over any news of this character it received for distribution to all the members. The New York *Herald, World, Tribune, Sun, Times, Journal of Commerce* and *Express* were later parties to this agreement. Subsequently other papers outside of New York sought to buy this news and thus the New York Associated Press was formed, and was authorized to sell news, the customary contract providing that these papers, in addition to paying for the general news budget, should turn over to the New York Association any news originating in their territory. The prime object of the New York Associated Press was to gather the news for the New York papers.

In the meantime papers west of the Allegheny Mountains had established the Western Associated Press, a similar organization, incorporating it in Michigan in 1865, and in New England, New York State, Philadelphia and Baltimore papers formed minor associations, all of which contracted as the individual papers had done before to interchange news with the New York Associated Press, to which they had paid a bonus for the delivery of the general budget. This general alliance, centering in the New York Associated Press, became known as The Associated Press. It obtained European news through foreign agents and covered the domestic field by means

of the allied papers and its own correspondents.

As this arrangement, however, permitted the New York papers not only to control its management, but also, by reason of the payments made by the dependent organizations, to obtain their own news practically without cost to themselves, dissatisfaction arose, culminating in 1882 with the revolt of the Western Associated Press and the establishment of a new alliance on more equal terms between the two associations, the expenses being more equitably shared and the management being intrusted to an executive committee on which both associations were represented.

This alliance continued for ten years until, in 1892, the charter of the Western Associated Press being about to expire, "The Associated Press" was incorporated under the laws of Illinois by members of the old organization. It took the form of a stock corporation, the stockholders of which, newspaper proprietors all, could hold no more than eight shares apiece, but in operation it was rather a mutual organization, the possession of stock not being essential to membership and a news service. The stock was very widely distributed, however, and a large share of the members were holders of stock with a voice in the election of a directorate of the company.

PRESENT ORGANIZATION.

This form of organization proved satisfactory for a time, but in 1900, for a number of reasons, some of them based on legal technicalities, it was

deemed impracticable to continue the organization. A large number of the more important and influential members withdrew and the corporation was practically dissolved. The organizers of the present association deemed it best, instead of having stock, to form a mutual association of all newspaper proprietors entitled to receive The Associated Press report, each member having a voice in the management. Thereupon the present organization was effected under the laws of the State of New York, on May 22, 1900, and headquarters of the organization were fixed in New York, where they are now located. Operative methods were not altered from those employed by previous associations having a similar purpose, the principal change being in management, in which all the members of this association share substantially. All the newspapers which were members of The Associated Press of Illinois subsequently became members of The Associated Press thus organized in New York, and many other new members have since been elected by vote of the Directors or members, the association having the same right to say who shall be admitted that any other mutual organization or club possesses.

Persons eligible to membership in the association are only the proprietors or executive officers of newspapers and are entitled to the report only for publication in their papers.

The revenues of the association are collected from the members by weekly assessment, pro-

rated according to the cost and volume of service, the apportionment being fixed by the Board of Directors.

The Associated Press is administered by a Board of Directors, representing all sections of the country, the present membership of the Board being Charles A. Rook, Pittsburgh *Dispatch;* Charles Hopkins Clark, Hartford *Courant;* Charles W. Knapp, St. Louis *Republic;* Clark Howell, Atlanta *Constitution;* V. S. McClatchy, Sacramento *Bee;* Frank B. Noyes, Washington *Star;* W. L. McLean, Philadelphia *Bulletin;* W. Y. Morgan, Hutchinson *News;* Adolph S. Ochs, New York *Times;* A. C. Weiss, Duluth *Herald;* Herman Ridder, New York *Staats-Zeitung;* W. H. Cowles, Spokane *Spokesman-Review;* Victor F. Lawson, Chicago *Daily News;* D. E. Town, Louisville *Herald;* R. M. Johnston, Houston *Post.*

The officers are: President, Frank B. Noyes, Washington *Star;* First Vice-President, Daniel D. Moore, New Orleans *Times-Picayune;* Second Vice-President, B. H. Anthony, New Bedford (Mass.) *Standard;* Secretary and General Manager, Melville E. Stone, New York; Assistant Secretary and Assistant General Manager, Frederick Roy Martin, New York; Treasurer, J. R. Youatt, New York.

In addition to the General Manager and the Assistant General Manager, the Executive Staff consists of a Chief of the News Department, directly in charge of the news service, and a

Chief of the Traffic Department, in control of telegraph wires and operators.

For purposes of administration the United States is divided into four great divisions, each under charge of a superintendent of divisions. The Eastern Division, with headquarters at New York, comprises the New England States, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, District of Columbia and West Virginia. The Central Division, with headquarters in Chicago, comprises the States of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota. The Western Division, with headquarters at San Francisco, comprises the States of California, Wyoming, Oregon, Colorado, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona, and the Southern Division, with its superintendent located at Washington, D. C., includes the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky and Oklahoma.

Under the division superintendents there are in all important cities and news centers of the country salaried agents or bureaus which collect the news from every available source, gathering much of it themselves, having access to that gathered by newspapers in the association, utilizing the local press associations and news bureaus in the large cities and sending out any

verified intelligence of general interest originating in the territory covered. Special bureaus are established for gathering important news of a specialized character, such as a Wall Street bureau, to handle the important news in the New York commercial district, and a Ship News Bureau, to cover the arrival and departure of shipping. In all, there are about 1,000 salaried employees of The Associated Press. To these are added the hundreds of correspondents all over the country, on the watch for any important news in their vicinity, and subject to call in an emergency, whose reports go by telegraph to the nearest Associated Press agent and are by him turned into the general news report.

FOREIGN SERVICE.

Such are the arrangements for handling the domestic news service of The Associated Press. It is in the foreign news service of The Associated Press, however, that the greatest advances have lately been made, and as a result of improvements and developments of the past few years the American public is kept as promptly, completely and satisfactorily informed of the progress of events in the European capitals or of important happenings in far-off Bombay, Peking, Johannesburg, or Teheran as it is of the news of its own land. This is accomplished in part through the special correspondents of The Associated Press, located at a hundred or more of the important news centers, and through an

arrangement between the four great news collection agencies of the world, namely, The Associated Press of the United States; Reuter's Telegram Company, Limited, of England—better known as Reuter's; Agence Havas of France, and the Continental Telegraphen Compagnie of Germany, usually called the Wolff agency. These associations, through the instrumentality of The Associated Press, entered into a four-sided contract for the mutual interchange of news. Reuter's, with headquarters at London, is responsible for the news of Great Britain, India, Australasia, South Africa, Egypt and all the other British dependencies, except Canada. The Agence Havas, with headquarters at Paris, is responsible for all the Latin countries, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal; Tunis, Morocco and the other North African states, South America and the French possessions abroad. The Wolff Bureau covers Germany, Austria, Turkey in Europe, Russia, Scandinavia, Denmark and the German colonies. Many points are covered by two, three and even four of the agencies. Under the three great foreign agencies are subordinate agencies covering specific countries, such as the Stefani Agency in Italy, the Fabri in Spain and the Swiss, Belgian and Portuguese agencies, all controlled by the Havas agency, but with large portions of their stock owned locally. The Kaiser-Koeniglichen Correspondenz Bureau of Vienna, the Agence Télégraphique of Russia, the Norsky Telegram

Bureau of Norway, the Svenska Bureau of Sweden and the Agence de Constantinople of European Turkey are controlled in the same manner by the Wolff Bureau at Berlin. Each of these agencies gathers the news for and from the newspapers in its special field, and turns in a budget of this news to the parent agencies, receiving for its papers in return a budget of the general news gathered by the larger agency from the rest of the world. The contract between The Associated Press and the three great foreign agencies which became effective June 1, 1903, requires them to deliver to The Associated Press copies of all telegrams and other news matter furnished their subscribers or members simultaneously with the delivery to their own papers. In practice this is effected by having representatives of The Associated Press in the Reuter central office at London, the Havas office at Paris and the Wolff office at Berlin, who look over the news received there, select that which is of interest to the United States, and cable it direct to The Associated Press office at New York, whence it is sent to The Associated Press papers in this country (Canadian news is gathered by an arrangement with the Canadian Press, Limited). In return The Associated Press furnishes quarters in its New York office for representatives of the foreign agencies and gives them access to its despatches.

SPECIAL FOREIGN FACILITIES.

The contract also provides an arrangement whereby, in cases of sufficient importance, The Associated Press may order news reports direct from any of the regular or salaried correspondents of the other three agencies, instead of obtaining them through the central offices. In this way foreign events of special importance to Americans may be cabled directly to the New York office and covered to any extent justified by the American demand.

In addition to its contract relations with the Reuter, Havas and Wolff agencies, The Associated Press maintains its own bureaus in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Vienna, Petrograd, Tokio, Peking, Mexico City, Panama and Havana, and correspondents at countless points in the world, the list including correspondents at Constantinople, Berne, Brussels, Stockholm, Christiania, Copenhagen, Madrid, Lisbon, Cairo, Fez, Madeira, Fayal, Teheran, Beirut, Colombo, Calcutta, Bombay, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tsingtau, Rangoon, Yokohama, Sydney, the South and Central American capitals, and important cities of both hemispheres. Since the Spanish-American War it has maintained a highly efficient service with Cuba, Porto Rico, the Philippines and other American possessions, with correspondents at the principal points. Great improvement of late has been made in transmission of Associated Press despatches over European telegraph lines, whereas formerly

press messages were considered unimportant matter, to be delayed to suit the convenience of all other business. In 1902, the general manager visited Europe to remedy this, and by his representation in official circles obtained orders giving The Associated Press despatches precedence over all ordinary business, and on urgent occasions over all other messages on the wires. As a result, messages which formerly took from five to six hours to reach New York are now transmitted in much less than an hour. As a signal triumph of American newspaper enterprise, it may be noted that the news of the Pope's death and of the election of Pope Pius was first received by London papers by cable from New York, the Associated Press bulletins cabled back from New York beating the direct messages from Rome by seven minutes. The speed and thoroughness with which the readers of Associated Press papers were kept informed of the news from Rome during the illness and death of one Pope and the election of his successor is but one of many illustrations of the efficiency of The Associated Press service, an asset which is so valuable to the papers which are represented by members of the association that many attempts have been made on behalf of other papers to compel the association to deliver its news to them.

PROPERTY RIGHTS IN NEWS.

Legal proceedings have been instituted to force the members of the association to share the bene-

fits of their news-gathering facilities with every paper that wishes to avail itself of them, thereby destroying the value of the exclusive news service by making it common to all papers on the ground that news is a public commodity and that the association in gathering it is performing a quasi-public service, which, as in the case of a railroad or other common carrier, must be rendered to all papers alike. But as there can be no monopolization of news, except by the monopolization of the facilities for gathering it, and as The Associated Press enjoys no special privileges from governments or telegraph or cable lines that are not obtainable by other associations or papers, having no more privileged contracts and getting no better telegraph and cable rates than rival associations, it cannot be classed as a monopoly. Nor as a voluntary association of newspaper publishers can its members be denied the right of members of any other club or voluntary organization to select their fellow members and adopt rules for the protection of the interests of the organization. For this reason the courts have ruled that the association has a right to forbid its members to deal with rival press associations in such fashion as may permit its news falling into the hands of non-members and thereby losing the principal element of its value to members of the association. For the chief value to a paper of news, meaning thereby the first intelligent account of an event, lies not so much in the information itself as in its prompt

and accurate presentation to the reader. This service constitutes a private asset valuable only as it furnishes the information to the readers of a paper before they learn of it from any other source. The news of the destruction of the battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor, for example, cabled to the people of the United States by an Associated Press correspondent located at Havana, or the news of the recovery of "Mona Lisa" in Florence, was of great value to the papers that published it first; the same information would have been almost valueless to a paper publishing it a month, a week, or even a few hours after a rival had given it to the public. The fact that the account of the event was promptly sent in and reasonably well covered constituted the marketable value of the news, and the members of The Associated Press, by virtue of having maintained a capable correspondent in Havana and another at Florence, were in a position to reap the benefit of a full and early publication of the news. Had the association been compelled to furnish its account to all applicants, or had one of the members of the association been permitted to furnish its despatches to outside papers the value to The Associated Press papers of the service would have been largely destroyed. For this reason the courts have of late been holding that there is a right of property in news of this sort, and that news associations have the power to protect this right by suitable rules to prevent non-members from obtaining the information

prematurely, just as the individual paper has a property right in the information gathered by its reporters and need not divulge it before publication to other papers.

ACCURACY OF ITS NEWS.

By virtue of its wide membership embracing newspapers of all shades of political faith and industrial and sociological thought, The Associated Press is necessarily non-sectional and committed to a policy of the strictest impartiality and non-partisanship. Political events are handled simply from a news standpoint without expressions of editorial opinion or tinge of partisan coloring, and that fair and accurate account of such happenings is given is evidenced by the fact that The Associated Press reports on such events are carried by papers of all varieties of opinion, even the reports of national and other political conventions being acceptable to papers on both sides.

It would be well if The Associated Press, its purposes and practices were better understood alike by reader and editor. The institution bears a very important relation to American life and is well worth studying. Its telegrams are printed primarily in 900 newspapers and are copied or rewritten in unnumbered thousands of other daily, weekly or monthly publications. It is safe to say that they are read by over three-fourths of the people of the country, and from the intelligence they convey practically everyone gathers his information respecting current events.

All will agree that it is important, to use no stronger word, that the market reports be trustworthy. What assurance is there, not only that the reports of The Associated Press are honest, but that out of the necessities of the case they must be more certain of accuracy than any other market reports? One good reason arises out of the magnitude of the Association's work. There are persons who think it would be better to have a half-dozen small agencies acting in sharp competition, but this is a mistake. Such rivalry would doubtless tend to the greatest celerity in gathering the news. But such rivalry would not, from any point of view, tend to greater accuracy. And it is far less important that the citizen gets prompt news than that he gets true news. However desirable it may be to be first in the field in the presentation of news, and this feature of the work is not to be undervalued, still its reputation for truth and strict impartiality is the best asset of The Associated Press. And no smaller agency can possibly give as great a guarantee for accuracy or impartiality.

Every telegram of The Associated Press is subjected to such a degree of censorship as to make untruthful or biased reports practically impossible. Every one familiar with the work knows it is impossible for any one in the service, from the General Manager to the least important agent at the most remote point, to send out an untruthful dispatch and escape detection. One may write a biased or inaccurate statement for a

single newspaper and succeed with it, but this cannot be done with the argus-eyed millions who read the dispatches of The Associated Press. Obviously then, the very magnitude of The Associated Press work tends to make truthfulness and impartiality in the service imperative. It cannot be used to "grind any one's ax," to serve any special interest, or to help any political party or faction or propaganda.

This is not laying claim to any great virtue. It is saying that, under its system of operation and in view of the millions of critics passing upon its work, The Associated Press is automatically truthful and fair. If a man complains that The Associated Press is run in the interest of this party, or that, it is perfectly clear that what he wants is not fair play, but a leaning his way. As one evidence of the truthfulness of The Associated Press reports, it is significant that, during the existence of the present organization, damages have never been paid in any action for libel.