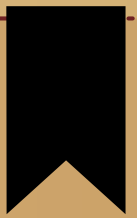


# **Journalistic Ethics and Professionalism**



**Is Journalism a Profession?**

**by**

**John Baptist Wasswa**



# Types of Press Responsibility

- We have looked at responsibility in general. We now turn to press responsibility.
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  - Three main types of press responsibility have been identified
1. That which is legally defined and determined by the government.
  2. That which is professionally defined or determined by the press itself.
  3. That which is determined by individual journalists themselves.

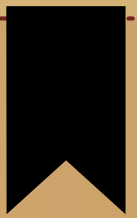
# **Press Responsibility defined by govt.**

- What do you think of this in the context of Uganda, when the govt. determines what the press should cover?
- Is it contrary to the spirit of the Constitution that grants and guarantees freedom of expression and of the press?
- What would media content look like under this arrangement? More conformist, more educational, less or not critical?

# Professionally defined responsibility

- What are the advantages of this? No govt intervention, yet some sort of enforcement mechanism.
- Can this professionalisation work for journalism?
- Many journalists are on the road to professionalisation. Good thing.
- But there are some obvious dangers, we need to look at.

# What is a profession?



- It is selective and exclusive
- It has minimum entry requirements
- It has an elite directorate who can eliminate 'irresponsible members'
- It has a code of ethics to direct its members
- It has a kind of certification or licensing system
- This is OK for law or medicine, but does it work for journalism?



# Is Journalism a profession then?

- Some see it differently because freedom of the press implies the freedom to be a journalist. Also because other professions have a recognised body of knowledge, which journalism doesn't have.
- Some see licensing as restricting the much valued pluralism, and an affront to the spirit of the Constitution.
- But despite these, many see good reason for journalism to have aspects of a profession.  
[ Discussion on this]

# Samples of Responsibility determined by selected media institutions

- **Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)** *The public's right to know of events of public importance and interest is the overriding mission of the mass media. The purpose of distributing news and enlightened opinion is to serve the general welfare. Journalists who use their professional status as representatives of the public for selfish or other unworthy motives violate a high trust*

# Media Responsibility

- **The BBC's Statement on Standards:** *From the earliest days, Radio News was conscious of its responsibility. A memorandum drafted in 1926 laid down that news should be "what those in control of the BBC think the listeners should hear." This paternalistic statement sounds odd today, but its point is clear: news is not a commodity to be handled lightly or wantonly, to be purveyed simply on the principle of "giving the public what it wants." It also embodies the principle of independence of the BBC, that has been challenged many times over decades in critical times in the nation's history. It has survived.*



# Media Responsibility

- **America Society of Newspaper Editors**

- **Responsibility:** *The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by informing people and enabling them to make judgements on the issues of the time. Newspapermen and women who abuse the power of their professional role for selfish or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust. The American press was made free not just to inform or jest to serve as a forum for debate but also to bring an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces of power in the society, including the conduct of official power at all levels of government.*


# Media Responsibility

- **Associated Press Managing Editors Code of Ethics for Newspapers and their Staffs:**
- **Responsibility:**
- *A good newspaper is fair, accurate, honest, responsible, independent and decent. Truth is its guiding principle. It avoids practices that would conflict with the ability to report and present news a fair and balanced manner.*
- *The newspaper should serve as a constructive critic of all segments of society. It should vigorously expose wrong doing or misuse of power, public or private. Editorially it should advocate needed reform or innovation in the public interest.*

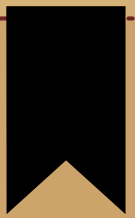
# Media responsibility



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# Media Responsibility



- **The New Vision Printing and Publishing Corporation**
- **Responsibility:** *The Corporation will serve a range of public service obligations such as publishing government newspapers, providing information, promote a national culture, provide a platform for public discussion of government policies and programs, and also enable constructive criticism of government as well as operating as a profitable business, without necessarily becoming an institutional opposition to the government of the day.*