

How Can the Press Best Serve a Democratic Society? | The New Yorker

By Michael Luo

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Henry R. Luce, the publisher of Time Inc., first proposed engaging a panel of scholars on the state of the American press in December of 1942. He suggested the idea to his friend Robert Maynard Hutchins, a legal and educational philosopher who, just over a decade earlier, at the age of thirty, had become the president of the University of Chicago. With the country mobilized for the fight against totalitarianism, Luce envisioned a philosophical inquiry that would reaffirm the foundations of freedom in the United States. Distrust of the media had become pervasive, and Luce believed that the public needed to better understand the purpose and function of the press. At first, Hutchins demurred, contending that the project would be too difficult to organize. Finally, in the fall of 1943, after months of Luce's cajoling, he agreed to lead the effort.

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