

My newspaper has had some little experience with the Federal Government. Oak Ridge, Tenn., is probably the country's most federalized city outside the District of Columbia.

In Oak Ridge's very early days there was, necessarily, very little "freedom of information." It was, of course, one of the most secret operations undertaken by any nation ever. But secret or not, this did not inhibit the rugged east Tennessee mountain men from speculating as to what was going on down there at the "project," as it was termed by the natives.

The story is told of the farmer who commented to one of the residents of nearby Norris, to whom he regularly brought eggs, "I don't know what the Government's makin' down there, but from all the stuff they're building, it seems to me it'd be a lot cheaper to just go out and buy it."

This gentleman, obviously, did not have the benefit of "freedom of information." Therefore, he was not able to make a valid judgment on his Federal Government. And this it seems is more than just a good story. It illustrates the basic point I would make—that the more information the public has about its own Government, the more valid will be its judgments, the more effective then can be Federal operations.

Of course, it was imperative in those early days of Oak Ridge—1943, 1944—that neither this particular east Tennessee farmer nor anyone else have full "freedom of information." It was vital that they not know that what they were building down there at "the project" were huge facilities to make the tiniest quantity of U^{235} —something that the Government could not just go out and buy.

And perhaps the whole secret of Oak Ridge is an example of how well a proper military secret can be kept, even with a free press. For indeed, there are many stories told of voluntary censorship which the press particularly in the immediate Oak Ridge area, accepted and followed on request of Government officials during those hectic early times of the nuclear effort.

There was a whole city and industrial complex built within months where before there had only been farmland. And yet the secret was exceedingly well kept. History is full of such evidence of a free yet responsible and patriotic press. All the years of World War II provide instance after instance of how well voluntary censorship works. Indeed, freedom of the press is an inducement to responsibility as it creates an atmosphere of mutual trust.

The situation relative to information in Oak Ridge has, thankfully, changed. For now while, to be sure, there are still many vital atomic secrets, secrets our newspaper would never want to infringe, there are also many areas of nuclear information that are consciously available to all.

More than that, in Oak Ridge I believe we have had a unique information experience in the community's transition from a city completely owned and operated by a Federal agency to one with the highest percentage of individual home ownership anywhere. We also now have a thriving, vibrant self-government. The Oak Ridge has been given considerable credit for aiding with this unprecedented transition.