

READERS' LETTERS

Paper's 'Sunshine Week' propaganda was overkill — and one-sided

I'm in favor of press freedom as much as the next guy, but does anyone else out there feel like we've been force-fed a diet of pablum all week? By last Friday, I thought to myself, "If I see another article on Sunshine Week, I think I'll puke."

No, seriously, that's not what a newspaper should be all about. That's really propaganda — good propaganda, of course, but still propaganda, which is defined in my dictionary as "ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause."

The problem is that, faced with such a barrage of one-sided articles, readers cannot conceive of the possibility that there might be other valid viewpoints. The propagandist simply does not admit that there is another side to the question.

Another word for that kind of a narrow presentation of ideas (you'll love this) is **fundamentalism**, which in a nonreligious

context means "a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles" — like, for example, the basic principle that all government information should be freely available, without exception.

But isn't that like motherhood, apple pie and the Fourth of July? Who could be against a basic principle like that?

Birth mothers, for example, who were solemnly promised when they gave their children up for adoption that their identity would never be disclosed. Should adopted children be able to get that kind of information from government agencies? I'm not saying they should or they shouldn't. I'm saying that fair-minded people can come to differing conclusions on that one. It's not neatly settled by Sunshine Week propaganda.

Another example is the periodic tug-of-war between reporters who want to keep

their sources confidential and judges who order them to testify. Reporters see confidentiality as crucial to a free press; judges see disclosure as crucial to the defendant's right to a fair trial. There really are two valid opposing arguments here, not just one doctrinaire view to be shoved down newspaper readers' throats.

So I have a suggestion for The Daily News. Next year, run one news article on Sunshine Week — you can even put it on the front page — and then, if you want to fill up space with all those other one-sided articles, group them in a separate section of the newspaper clearly labeled "Advertisement." Then those who want to buy what you are selling can read them, and the rest of us, who are looking for news from a newspaper, can go straight to the sports section.

Roland F. Chase, Newport