

Proceso selectivo para ingreso en la Carrera Diplomática

Resolución de 5 de diciembre de 2025 (BOE de 15-12-2025)

TEXTO DE INGLÉS DEL SEGUNDO EJERCICIO (07-03-2026)

Excerpt from “An Aristocracy of Critics. Luce, Hutchins, Niebuhr, and the Committee That Redefined Freedom of the Press”, by Stephen Bates (Yale University Press).

In the years after publication of *A Free and Responsible Press*, the American media moved in the direction favored by the commission. In the cultural realm, television brought about a “soft conformity”, wrote Niebuhr in 1957. By then, the villains of commission meetings were gone—William Randolph Hearst died in 1951, Robert R. McCormick in 1955—and big newspapers across the country were embracing norms of objectivity and professionalism. By century’s end, most major cities had newspapers that sounded something like *The New York Times*, and soft conformity came to dominate news coverage as well as culture.

But by the early twenty-first century, even as the soft conformity spread (including a global *New York Times*), a hard nonconformity had arisen alongside, with new voices spreading divergent messages via partisan content providers—cable news, talk radio, and political news and commentary websites—as well as social-media platforms. The partisan content providers at times purvey skewed accounts of events in an authoritative news voice (today, as in the 1940s, the major conservative outlets reach much-larger audiences than the major liberal ones do), while social media at times purvey skewed accounts of events in the voice of fellow citizens. In some ways, the resulting media landscape raises difficulties that commission members identified in the 1940s. There are new ways to avoid political information that challenges one’s preconceptions; new ways to silence opponents through organized campaigns targeting employers, sponsors, or social-media platforms; new ways for provocateurs, including foreign ones, to hide their identity and sponsorship as they spread half-truths and lies; and new ways to propagate hoaxes and conspiracy theories.

As in the 1940s, the situation is complicated. Elements of the media system promote disunity and falsehood in some respects but unity and truth in others, according to Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts, writing in the 2018 book *Network Propaganda*. Political leaders and activists, driven by partisan passions of varying strengths, interacting with news organizations with varying commitments to objectivity, disseminate messages in varying ways. “Technology is not destiny”, the authors write. Many factors have driven the American media system away from what they call “the institutional heart of the post-World War II professional ethos”: *A Free and Responsible Press*.

A modern-day counterpart of the Hutchins Commission illuminates the continuities and the changes. In 2017, the Knight Foundation and the Aspen Institute launched the Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy. The Knight Commission was bigger than the Hutchins Commission (twenty-seven members, versus the Hutchins group’s thirteen American members and four foreign advisers) and more diverse, with women, African Americans, journalists, and conservatives. But it resembled the Hutchins Commission in other respects. It employed a small staff for research and administration, used outside experts for additional research, adopted official-sounding jargon (*commission, witnesses,*

testimony), and produced a final report with lively prose, a manageable length, the unanimous backing of members on major points, and a tone of urgency if not desperation.

Published in 2019, the Knight report, *Crisis in Democracy: Renewing Trust in America*, is full of terminology that was unknown in the 1940s —*augmented reality, bots, deepfakes, memetic warfare*— yet much of its analysis parallels *A Free and Responsible Press*. Citizens, the Knight report says, are divided and distrustful. What they once shared —a vision of the common good, a national narrative, a set of agreed-upon facts— has shriveled. Instead, many people inhabit ideological silos, aided by social media and partisan news outlets. They're uninformed about some important topics and misinformed about others. To help reverse the trends, the Knight Commission calls for depicting the full diversity of American society, separating fact and opinion, separating news and advertising, identifying sources of information, exploring nonprofit models, and exposing people to different points of view. It looks to academia to help devise solutions. It raises the possibility of government funding. It recommends that other entities continue its work. It says that media companies owe a fiduciary duty to users. It tells corporate managers that they must do better, or else the government may step in and regulate them. And it argues, repeatedly, that freedom of speech must be tempered with responsibility. All of this guidance also appears in the works of the Commission on Freedom of the Press.

But the guidance at times points in different directions. For the Hutchins Commission, a major remedy for bad speech was more speech. It wanted the *Chicago Tribune* to publish ideas other than McCormick's and *Time* to publish ideas other than Luce's, even if McCormick and Luce considered the ideas wrong. By contrast, one of the Knight Commission's principal remedies for bad speech is less speech. Social-media companies must stop publishing some ideas that their managers believe to be wrong. The common-carrier model was part of the solution in 1947. Now it's part of the problem.

Even so, the two reports' lodestar is the same. Both *A Free and Responsible Press* and *Crisis in Democracy* adopt the view that the media do more than inform a community; they also help form the community. Both emphasize the necessity of common facts and a shared commitment to the public interest. And both address what Niebuhr identified as the paramount challenge of the age: finding ways to “maintain the old ideal of a free society against the hazards created by the new conditions.”