

In 1733 New York had only two papers. One was the old *Gazette*. It was a "yes" paper. It praised the English rulers, no matter what they did.

The other paper was the new *Journal*. It was run by John Peter Zenger. He was a bright young man, and a brave one. He dared to say no at times. He spoke out against the cruel laws of that time. And he put the blame for them on William Cosby. Cosby was the governor. He passed those laws.

Cosby closed down the *Journal*. He burned all the papers he could find. Then he had Zenger arrested. The charge was printing false news to harm the government.

The trial began one hot day in August 1735. It was almost a joke. For the judge was Cosby's good friend. And he showed it from the start. He ruled that Zenger's lawyers could not appear to defend him.

Things looked bad for Zenger. It seemed sure that he would lose the case. He might be sent to jail for years. He might even be hanged.

Of course, the jury had to decide this. But in those days juries usually did as the judge told them.

The judge was just about to tell the jury

to find Zenger guilty. But he never did. For a handsome man with white hair stood up. His name, he said, was Andrew Hamilton. And he would act as Zenger's lawyer. He had come all the way from Philadelphia to do so. For he believed that all Zenger had said about Cosby was true. And he would prove it.

The judge tried to stop him. He told soldiers to throw Hamilton out. But the crowd would not stand for that. They held back the soldiers. They let Hamilton speak. Hamilton talked to the jury like an old friend. He pointed out that the charges against Cosby *must* be true. If not, why was he afraid to have them even mentioned?

He told them what an important case this was. He warned them what would happen if they found Zenger guilty: it would be the end of free speech and free press. They would be no better than slaves.

The members of the jury listened well. Then they decided: not guilty. Peter Zenger was free, and the *Journal* was back in business.

When Hamilton left for home, crowds cheered him. And they should have. For he had settled the matter once and for all: Americans must be free to speak and print the truth.

## CHECK YOUR READING

1. When the *Gazette* printed stories about the English rulers, it usually
  - A made fun of them
  - B scolded them
  - C praised them
2. The story says that the *Journal* was
  - A bigger than the *Gazette*
  - B newer than the *Gazette*
  - C richer than the *Gazette*
3. John Peter Zenger blamed New York's bad laws on the
  - A president
  - B governor
  - C mayor
4. The story calls the trial "almost a joke" because the judge was so
  - A funny
  - B unfair
  - C noisy
5. In those days the jury usually
  - A obeyed the judge
  - B hired the lawyers
  - C ran the trial
6. Hamilton believed that Zenger had
  - A made a mistake
  - B printed the truth
  - C helped the government
7. Hamilton would have been thrown out of the room if it had not been for the
  - A soldiers
  - B crowd
  - C jury
8. The jury decided *against*
  - A Cosby
  - B Hamilton
  - C Zenger
9. After the trial was over, New York had
  - A no newspapers
  - B one newspaper
  - C two newspapers
10. The trial was a victory for freedom of
  - A worship
  - B trade
  - C speech