

# NIEMAN REPORTS

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# Editors Bear Ethics Burden

By BILL KOVACH

**T**he summer has been like a bad case of indigestion for anyone concerned with standards of journalism.

First, the Supreme Court had to be called in to tell Janet Malcolm and the editors of *The New Yorker* that quotation marks are not just decorative devices. And then the Court had to tell

## Curator's Corner

The St. Paul Pioneer Press and the Minneapolis Star and Tribune that a promise is a promise.

Both of these cases reflect the growing skepticism with which the public — and the courts — treat press claims that its importance to self-government require special protections. Increasingly, a press that talks of representing the public against the powerful is attacked by that same public for callous disregard for privacy and profiting from personal misery. A press once celebrated

for its investment in news gathering is now concerned with the size of its holdings and quarterly profits. Meanwhile the credibility of the press as an institution of public service sinks with each measure of public opinion.

But it was left to the dean of Boston University's School of Communications to remind us just how far we have allowed our ethical standards to slide.

In a stunning breach of faith, Dean H. Joachim Maitre delivered to his graduating class of communications majors a speech made up almost entirely of stolen ideas and words. When the theft was disclosed by *The Boston Globe* it cost Maitre his position.

But it soon became clear that journalists were stealing words and ideas with some regularity. Within a matter of days *The New York Times* had to discipline a veteran reporter for copying several paragraphs of *The Boston Globe* story of the Maitre affair without attribution for his own account of the matter. And then *The*

*Washington Post* and *The Fort Worth Star Telegram* each fired reporters for plagiarism.

What's going on here? Didn't plagiarism once rank as a cardinal sin of journalism? Has the word, which is taken from the name of a tribe that stole children for sale into slavery, lost its sting?

Editors confronting the issue argue that the electronic revolution in newsrooms is to blame.

The problem, they say, is with reporters who grew up on television who see no distinction between the televised image and live observation. These are the same reporters who grew up composing stories on computer screens, which make it possible to research stories without leaving the office. Scrolling through a half-dozen wire service reports and data base searches, they can move sentences, paragraphs, even pages of material gathered by other reporters and observers into and out of stories with the touch of a button.

Since much of this material is the work of wire services like the Associated Press, which the receiving news organizations has a legal right to use, many reporters and editors assume the material can be freely lifted without attribution. Many ethical problems arise from the growing sense in our legalistic society that if it's legal it's ethical.

John Seigenthaler, who has dealt severely with the problem at *The Nashville Tennessean*, tried to address this confusion in a memo to his staff outlining general rules to guard against plagiarism:

"The general rule should be this: If our staffer picks up generally accepted facts that are in the public domain, presenting them without

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# Needed: Commitment

*More Resources Are Required to Tell the Economic Story  
In a Dramatic and Readable Way*

BY WILLIAM NEIKIRK

When The Chicago Tribune in 1989 broke the story of the FBI's investigation of corruption in the city's futures markets, editors knew they had a massive communication job on their hands. These markets may be known for their colorful characters, but they also are very complex. To explain the story of corruption, it also was necessary to explain what the markets were, how they worked, why they were important and how some of the traders got around the rules.

In reporting the story, it was clear that the markets had grown even more complicated, become even more international and constituted an arcane world with its own language and culture, affecting all our lives in indirect and sometimes direct ways. Explaining this story to a front-page audience was roughly equivalent to teaching college calculus to bored third graders, or trying to teach baseball to someone who has never attended or is not remotely interested in the game.

The Chicago futures scandal illustrates the identity crisis for business and economic news in the 1990s. Even as people need to have more of it for their own self-interest and survival, they are more interested in stories of higher entertainment value. In addition, the information often is more complex and more international in flavor, and difficult to apply to the daily lives of most people, except indirectly. Editors seeking to halt declining readership (and declining advertising revenues) prefer more dramatic, compelling stories that will connect immediately with readers. They want to go where their audience is, even if the audience isn't where it should be from the standpoint of interest and comprehension.

But one of the main functions of the press is to educate the public. The colossal economic ignorance of the American people demands that the press assume a more activist role in raising their level of understanding. Once editors and reporters make the commitment to put more resources into this story, they will become more creative in telling it in a more dramatic, readable way. One of the purposes of the Pulitzer Prizes for public service is to recognize newspapers that bring difficult but important stories to the public's attention. The Pulitzer board could do outstanding service to the country, and to journalism, if it began to recognize excellent examples of journalism in the business and economic realm.

## **In Print, on TV, It's Blow-off Story**

In most newsrooms, there is still an attitude that business and economic news is narrow and applicable only to a limited audience. Most editors treat the subject with a mindset bordering on benign malfeasance. In both print and broadcast journalism it is what I call the blow-off story. When Rather, Jennings and Brokaw encounter a big-business or economic story, they put a big graphic on the screen and blow it off with a couple of sentences. The failure of a large bank, for instance, usually has repercussions around the country, but often does not get the widespread attention it deserves except in the region where it's located. You will find many editors treating business and economic stories like sports stories, as if the economic life of a country were something that is regularly scheduled and has developed a daily routine that can be reported as easily as Cubs 6, Astros 5.

Is it any wonder that a savings and loan scandal can sneak up on a journalistic juggernaut primarily interested in politics, crime and abortion? During the Nixon Administration, many Washington reporters failed to see the importance of the Watergate scandal until it was too late and Woodward and Bernstein had gained the upper hand. It erupted right before their eyes, causing them to scramble to catch up. Now, the same thing has happened to them again — only this time, the Watergate scandal is financial. To be sure, there were a few newspaper reporters paying attention to the S&L problem long before it became

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so costly to every American taxpayer, and they justly won prizes for their efforts. But they were voices in the wilderness, and many of their stories were published long after it was practical to do anything about the problem.

My question is: Where was the press when the public needed it most? Was it asleep, or was it out chasing stories that would appeal to short attention spans? If the press's job can be defined in any small way as educating and warning the public about upcoming problems that should be addressed, then the American press corps failed abjectly in its basic role in the S&L scandal. Yet all the signs were there. Freedom of information requests and diligence would have yielded vital information early and persistence and interest might have saved the Republic literally hundreds of billions of dollars. The story achieved front-page status only after it was virtually impossible to do anything about the financial upheaval caused by the perpetrators of the scandal and the only remaining task was to tote up the cost. Even then, some publications and networks believed the Bush Administration's statements minimizing the enormity of the scandal.

The resulting damage to the public purse should be sobering to editors everywhere. Indeed, it calls for nothing less than a full-scale re-examination of the way in which we cover and present economic and business news, including, but not limited to, sharpening the skills of those who must tell the story. The very best stories always come as surprises, but they will be less so if newsrooms are better trained and more vigilant in the whole area of financial and business journalism. Beyond that, editors should have the courage to put more of these stories on page one, or news directors should not hesitate to put them at the top of a newscast. Incidentally, the performance of television news in the S&L problem has been nothing short of scandalous. The networks should hide their heads in shame.

But my complaint is not limited to the S&L problem. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, the competitive crisis facing the U.S. economy has become graver.

Newspapers and the broadcast media have monitored this crisis over the years, but their efforts have chiefly been devoted to reporting the consequences of it. This is fine, but it does not go far enough for an institution that is supposed to be a catalyst for change. It took the business community, a generally noncrusading lot, to sound the alarm about the changing nature of work and the inability of the nation's school system to meet the new demands of the workplace. It took the government, a reluctant finger-pointer, to warn the country about the failure of domestic manufacturers to maintain their competitive stature in many industries. Indeed, many editors fell for the complaint of business leaders that it was the government's fault, not their own. For years, there was a general passivity by the press about this problem, perhaps for the reason that it was so complex. Education was surely part of the puzzle, but so were the cost of money and the way work is organized in big, modern, hierarchical companies. The American press caught up too late with the fact that we weren't using our technology effectively and that there was a revolution in quality and low-cost production. Yet we could have been leaders if we had paid attention and put more resources on the business and economic story.

### **Complexity Yields To Readability**

The real question is whether the U.S. general-interest press is capable of handling the complexity of today's business and economic story, given its demands for explanation and detail that might seemingly bore the average reader. Let me make a Yogi Berra-type statement about this: The complexity isn't that complicated. And this undramatic story is very dramatic. The spectacular failure of Drexel Burnham Lambert and its junk bond king, Michael Milken, is evidence that if the general-interest press early in the game had made the same effort as, say, a *Wall Street Journal*, it would have come upon some very compelling stuff. That's what the *Tribune* discovered when it delved

deeper into the futures scandal. Once you decide that you are the advocate for the reader's interest, working through the maze of jargon and complex transactions yields some surprisingly readable material, if presented in a nontechnical way.

Although I might be crucified for saying this, I believe business and economic news has become too important to be left to the specialists. It's not that I believe most of them are co-opted, as some of them are; it's just that long familiarity with a topic often yields prejudices and bad habits that hamper effective communication with a broad audience. Editors should team their specialists with generalists who have a closer relationship with what the average reader thinks and feels about such topics. Often business writers fall back on technical language and short-cut phrases. They feel hurt that editors and readers haven't read their brilliant expositions on the business pages over the years. Generalists, though, shouldn't get off easy. They are notorious for plopping themselves down in front of experts in various fields and saying, "Please explain nuclear physics to me in 250 words or less," without any prior preparation. Interaction between specialists and generalists in reporting and writing major stories often produces much friction, and some outstanding journalism. There is no reason why this can't be true in business and economics.

### **Cozy Relations Cause Problems**

The press has prided itself on knowing its local community, its socioeconomic makeup and its political and economic leadership. In years past, this often resulted in cozy relationships between editors and executives of firms who were, like themselves, active in the community. While professional standards were rarely violated, editors found an aggressive stance in reporting business and economic news often caused unpleasant confrontation or resulted in charges that negative stories were damaging the communities, or the companies themselves. Editors justified their

lack of action by rationalizing that much of this kind of reporting wasn't of general interest and often was unnecessarily yellow in tone. Even when excesses began to appear, editors — many of whom have backgrounds in political reporting — were not versed enough in business and economics to understand the threat to the community's economic livelihood.

New England strikes me as a case in point. The financial scandals and over investment in real estate should have been spotted by editors early in the game. In hindsight, we know that it is no longer defensible, nor responsible, to neglect economic problems that pose a future threat to the economic base of a region. Editors must be in front, because there is simply no one else to sound the alarm. Regulators have shown themselves to be tardy.

It was easy to get caught up in the excesses of the easy 80's. The press did so, too. You came to work every day, and you saw a new building going up, people working, laughing, taking home paychecks. You took for granted that the bankers and the developers knew what they were doing and, in your own conversations with them, they thought so, too. It is a truly American thing to have faith that the free market always works efficiently and that things never get too far out of line. This attitude prevails despite a long history of booms and busts in this country, regionally and nationally. Yet, in modern times, we had convinced ourselves that such speculative bubbles were not possible and that things never got too far out of line. How wrong we were. Now we find ourselves asking basic questions about how wealthy and prosperous areas, such as New England and, to a lesser extent, Washington, D.C., could have permitted so much of its local income to be poured into real estate. So far, I have not seen a satisfactory answer to this question. The press has so far been content to report the what of the matter, not the how.

Is the press powerful enough to prevent unsustainable, unbalanced economic growth in a region if it sees things getting out of kilter? That is a

very big "if" in the first place, although I think we must try to understand what constitutes unsustainable, unbalanced economic growth. I think that pointing out the heavy investment in real estate early in the game, and how it posed problems down the line, might have helped prevent the crisis. Hard, nose-to-the-ground reporting might have established the dangers of go-go banking to an entire region.

Complicating this challenge is the fact that business itself is changing in ways that makes the word "local" a misnomer. Years ago, when I bought my house in the Washington, D.C. area, I obtained a mortgage from a small, Fairfax, Va. bank. The mortgage has been since bundled up with others and sold, I am sure, but servicing my loan and collecting my payments remained in the hands of bankers. In fact, several bankers. The Fairfax bank was gobbled up by a statewide bank, which was in turn gobbled up by another statewide bank, which was in turn gobbled up by a North Carolina bank. My little mortgage is now being serviced by the nation's third largest banking institution. Integration and consolidation of our financial markets will stretch the capacities of newsrooms to understand the complexity of financial arrangements in the future.

### **Economy Rests With People**

Harvard's Robert Reich makes a good point with his recent writing that as business and economics become increasingly international, the only truly American economic units left are people themselves. While I think Reich may overstate the implications of the case, his writings illustrate new problems for American editors in covering business and economic news. When we say we are thinking of buying an American car, for instance, in fact it means we are buying a product whose parts are made in a dozen different countries and may be assembled across the border. Reich's point is that the U.S. must produce more qualified, highly educated workers in order to survive economically.

What this means for the press is that

the economy rests where it may have rested all along: With real, live human beings. And I think that's where the press has failed — explaining how the workplace is constantly changing and what it takes to be successful in it these days. People look to the press to provide signals for change. If we sit back on our haunches and fail to sound the alarm, we are violating our trust. Coverage of the workplace is improving in America, but it could be much better. Often, stories about the changing nature of work are ignored or ghettoized in a way that readers are tacitly reminded that such information isn't terribly important to them.

The growing globalism of the U.S. economy should force editors out of their isolation shells — and indeed it has, in many places. One danger, in fact, is that they might become so overzealous in supporting the location of a foreign-owned factory in their region that they will back overgenerous taxpayer incentives to land the facility. Yet, while some columnists and a few editors decry foreign investment in the U.S., most recognize that it is a fact of life and a good and healthy thing for the country. This makes reporting on business affairs more difficult, since in many cases the local headquarters of a foreign firm won't be very forthcoming in answering tough questions. Yet editors find the expense of foreign bureaus very heavy, especially when they are located in Tokyo. Yet to do a superior job in covering local business and economics, these bureaus are necessary for big-city newspapers, in my opinion. When United Airlines was battling the Tokyo government to get a Chicago-to-Tokyo route, our Tokyo correspondent was able to get a beat on the story with diligent pursuit.

Editors might be tempted to cut back on business and economic coverage simply because it will be more expensive, but I think this attitude is false economy. For all their other interests and lack of understanding of economic affairs, Americans do rely on the press to provide leadership. One way not to provide leadership is to turn a whole

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# Can Big Stories Be Told?

*Yes, But It Will Take Better Education of Economic Reporters  
And a Reorganization of the News Business*

BY JOSEPH L. BOWER

**W**e're a banana republic.

In the mid 70's, I started a three-week management program at Harvard for senior managers in government. Although it is not the usual practice in a management program — especially a public management program — we devoted some 20 per cent of the curriculum to the international economy, especially the contrast between the investment- and export-oriented economy of Japan and the consumption-oriented economy of the United States. After the fourth or fifth class I was approached by one of the more intelligent participants, a liberal interested in active government. She commented, "now I know why we're cutting all our social programs. We're just a poor banana republic." I was pleased, because she'd gotten right to the critical relationship between what we spend and what we earn.

Almost 15 years later, the same story is playing itself out. Real incomes in the United States have continued their two-decade decline. The physical and social infrastructure of the country cry out for investment. The United States victory in Eastern Europe provides a marvelous opportunity for us to influence the future development there through the investment of serious sums. But we have no money. And the cutbacks in libraries, museums, parks and schools reveal that this richest of nations cannot even afford the basic cultural accoutrements of a modern industrial society.

Looking ahead, there is at least a good argument to be made that the wealth-creating sectors of the economy will continue to lose ground to faster-growing, harder-working societies in

East Asia. The best we can expect is that a decade of hard work will permit us to turn around the situation so that real incomes for most citizens will rise.

This is a simple story to relate. That it comes as a surprise to most people reflects the way they learn the economic news. I believe that the situation can be remedied, but it will take a different approach by reporters and editors. While I am sure the print media can help, I have a mixed view as to the potential usefulness of television.

## News as Entertainment

It is worth a paragraph here to recite what most readers of this article will know. Americans get their news from television. Good television is exciting pictures, or celebrities, or sex and violence, or some combination. To compete, print media have turned to punchy headlines, fast-breaking stories that can be given meaning beyond what pictures can tell and scoops of the sort that come from investigative reporting. The most important national newspapers are successful businesses because they are dominant local papers. The Wall Street Journal is not really an exception. Its business success is as a local paper for investors in Wall Street; except for columns 1 and 4 and 6 of page 1, most of the articles are from company releases and most of the advertisements are institutional (including tombstones).

On the day that this essay was written (Monday, July 15, 1991), section A and D of The New York Times had only two stories on the economic situation anywhere in the world except the United States. Those stories were about Japan and one of them might be said to

fit the "violence" category since it focused on the "scandal" that the Japanese economic scene is governed by far fewer laws than the United States. Oddly enough, the other story was really interesting since it dwelt on the changing legal climate in which Japanese business would operate, putting into historical context what the other article discussed as "news." (It was clear that the stories were not coordinated though both stories had Tokyo datelines.) Japan

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aside, there was no mention of Europe, the Middle East, Africa, or Latin America.

## What Gets in the Way Of Better Coverage?

There are several basic problems that must be resolved for the story of economic activity to be told better. Probably most important, the thousands of events that reflect economic activity have to be put into context. The challenge this poses is much more severe than most suppose.

To begin, very few people know what's going on — and that includes economists. People know a lot of facts, or a lot of theory, or they have a good grasp of their own company or market. They lack a framework that organizes the complex web of international economic activity. Reporters naturally think that economists know about the economy, but they soon learn that most of them know only about economics. When it is empirical, as opposed to theoretical, good publishable economic research is based on large data bases that carry little information about the behavior of the individual components of commerce. Even more disheartening, but certainly not surprising, most economist who care about "the real world," only know about part of the economy: the domestic macro-economy, trade patterns, or financial markets because they are generally studied as separate phenomena. Very few know much about the behavior of companies or unions or regulatory agencies. As a consequence many arguments of economists have the character of "if I was a firm, here's how I would behave," which tells us more about economists than about companies.

Second, economic and political affairs are tied closely together. Economic activity affects the distribution of incomes. Very few governments in the world believe that something as important as income distribution ought to be left to a hand that's invisible. Nor do they believe markets are perfect. Most having observed the relative performance of Japan and the United States,

conclude that active industrial policy — the use of incentives, subsidies, and regulation to intervene directly to stimulate or redirect the efforts of specific industries — such as practiced in Tokyo must be a good thing. They want to understand how business arrangements, the banking system, the corporate system and elective and appointive politics can interrelate in an effective fashion.

Most Republicans and *The Economist* magazine believe industrial policy to be anathema and therefore impossible. Despite the evidence that it has been done, they denounce "picking winners" and call analyses that attribute economic growth to its positive effects "Japan bashing." If industrial policy is evil, then it must be a hostile act to attribute the good performance of others to evil. But this sort of treatment of empirical phenomena corresponds more or less to the way the church treated Galileo. It makes it hard to understand why industrial policy has worked pretty well in Japan, Korea and some parts of the United States and rather poorly in the United Kingdom, France and other parts of the United States. Democrats for example have a tendency to exaggerate what the particular American system can accomplish. If politics and economics are intertwined, they ought to be studied and described that way. When the experts are ideological, it makes it very hard for reasonable orthodox editors to find their way.

Third, most editors are uncomfortable with business because their principal relationship is with what they deem to be an unreasonable publisher. The rest of their experience is comparable to a cop's. They've seen years of venality and it really isn't very pretty. Great business accomplishments reflect unseen decisions made years ago. Or they are catastrophes that were anticipated and avoided. Like the tree that fell unheard in the forest, those events aren't news. As for politics, editors know all too well that it is about the distribution of income. That's why Tip O'Neill was right when he said that all politics is local. As for the bigger stuff, trade trends and industrial policy, it's not

really news. In any case, editors know that at least once a month there is a long serious interpretative piece in their paper that readership surveys tell them no one has read. And last month's story wasn't very different from last year's.

From a reporter's perspective, the problem is even worse. Everything they have been taught about journalism makes it difficult to write a good story about the economy. If they write "Last night the President gave a speech about the economy based on premises that no knowledgeable observer believes," they have "editorialized." Worse, it's awfully hard to identify and critique those premises without a scholar's skill and a pedantic tone. Indeed, it strikes me as impossible to produce a lead sentence and lead paragraph that help the reader to see how an event fits into a pattern without interpreting. It takes great sophistication and experience to do that without editorializing.

The contemporary solution is to quote commentators who do the interpretation for the reporter. But then the need for balance leads to the sort of idiotic "Tis-T'aint" critical discussion in today's reporting. (How often have I been called by a reporter looking for a quote that says what's wrong with what someone else has proffered. The easiest way to avoid being quoted while maintaining good relations with the reporter is to talk for half an hour providing a complex analysis without any simple declarative phrase.)

## If The Story Hasn't Changed In 20 Years, How Can We Make It News?

The solution, I believe, is a combination of physical context and regular tutorial. Print media took a major step forward when they introduced business sections. The result is that there is a regular place in a paper to look for economic news. The next step to to make sure that when the story deserves to begin on page one, that it is continued in the business section. The final and most important step is to develop a pattern of covering the same story in the same physical place on a serial basis. For example, every day there might be a

column covering the economic developments of one of the major national economies. Germany and Japan ought to get a column a week, while France, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Holland and so on would get a story a month, along with Mexico, Thailand, Brazil and so on.

Editors would have to develop the habit of making sure that all their reporters read the economic analysis of the countries they covered and reflected that analysis in their stories of "news" events. Many riots of the sort that get coverage reflect the evolution of the political economy. For example, it is easy enough to identify the union of Pemex as a potential big loser in the reforms of president Salinas of Mexico. Readers might be alerted to the groups who may lose out from reform, and, if there are political eruptions, the links might be noted.

Of course it is one thing to read stories and another to understand them. Economic reporting needs to be recognized as a demanding field worth mastering through a publisher's investment.

For chains, or media complexes, there may be a remarkable opportunity to exploit economies of scale. The Far Eastern Economic Review, for example, does a formidable job of covering the political economies of countries from Pakistan to Australia. But its parent, Dow-Jones, seems to make minimal use of this material. If The Wall Street Journal won't use it, Dow-Jones might want to consider selling the reporting to other news organizations. In turn, some groups may want to consider whether they can't buy much better material from others as opposed to attempting to field a team of international reporters.

For TV, there is no answer if the slot is 20 seconds. But the Susan Stumberg interviews of Robert Krulwich on NPR showed that in a few minutes it was possible to illuminate an important economic issue in an amusing way. Paul Solman has often done the same on TV. Again it is a matter of context. With humor and graphics it should be possible to go much further into economic issues even on network news. Once a week might be the way to start a trial.

Within the 20 seconds, the choice of words becomes critical. I am hard pressed to propose a solution. But the TV reporting of Boesky, Drexel, Milken and the S&L crisis provides an example of the way the image of events can be politicized so as to obfuscate a very radical approach to government intervention in the financial markets. "Convicted junk bond king billionaire Mike Milken" doesn't really help us to understand how government decision to require the disposal of unrated debt hastened the collapse of the market in much the same way that the chosen approach to S&Ls and commercial bank assets may have worsened the market for real estate. Our government has chosen to implement a series of deflationary policies across the board. To ignore the consistency is to miss the news.

This is where I am most worried by the habits of the reporters I know. They want to get to the juicy guts of the story and that's not the news at all. Will Clark Clifford be indicted? Does Bush trust Brady? Most important these warm days when attention might wander to really significant matters, will Sununu survive? We are working with a very sophisticated administration whose leaders have managed their face to the press for 11 years. They have learned not to shrink from giving the media controversy when the alternative is a serious examination of big problems — like the twin deficits of budget and trade — that have only painful solutions. The desire of reporters to get into the nitty-gritty of controversy makes distracting them a no-brainer.

The most recent example of this I have seen was a Nieman reports discussion (Summer 1991) of the reporting of the Persian Gulf War. The basic concern of the reporters was restricted access. My view is that more access would have compounded the desire of the reporters to get caught up in the action. Early attention having been captured by the issue of potential American casualties, they wanted to get up there and see what was actually going to happen. Somehow, our learning from previous wars about strategic bombing got lost

and it wasn't until well after things were over that we began to inquire what the consequences would be of demolishing the Iraqi economy and whether it would have any relationship to getting rid of Saddam Hussein.

In this desire to report the war well, we also neglected to discuss what the war was about. I happen to think that until the end, it was a brilliantly executed defense of Saudi oil. Regardless of how liberal we think we are, United States and European economic policy is more or less predicated on control of Saudi oil. We weren't over there making the world free for democracy. While "the new world order," may have been necessary to mobilize the coalition, perhaps it was Wilsonian confusion about what could be accomplished in a very different part of the world.

Could the press have done better? Maybe yes, maybe no. It was a short war. But closer to the front lines wasn't the answer any more than it was in Vietnam.

I am not suggesting that reporters do without juicy quotes. They have to recognize, however, that they are not the news. They can only illustrate or illuminate. The problem is the relationship between complex and even contradictory truths on the one hand and the myriad events that are their manifestation.

### **Is Economic News Just An Example of Bias Against Interpretation?**

Speaking as an avid consumer of the news product and fond observer of the process, it seems to me that the implication of the discussion of gulf war reporting for this essay is clear. American journalists seem to believe that the sum of all the events reported correctly is the truth. While free access to facts may be a major contribution to political freedom, it is not the quick route to the truth. Scientists know that only a mind informed by theory and a knowledge of the past can make sense of data. The photograph of cells or neutrino paths tells nothing without a theory of cell or particle behavior. One can't even design

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# Foreign Affairs at Home

*Far Too Few Reporters and Editors Try to Trace  
World Events to Main Street America*

BY JOHN MAXWELL HAMILTON

At first blush the proposition seems preposterous: If you are going to be a good local business reporter you should think of yourself as a foreign correspondent who stays home.

It's true nonetheless. The reason lies in sensational, though often overlooked, international economic trends.

Globalization, that ungainly word so often tossed around these days, is generally thought of as the proliferation of *national* ties with other countries. The typical globalization story appears in a large metropolitan paper with a corps of talented foreign correspondents and concentrates on threats to the United States from growing international trade competition or dependence on foreign oil. As valid as these national stories are, they miss an essential part of the reality: One end of the globalization equation ends up right on the doorsteps of everyday Americans.

No city, no matter what its size or location, is exempt from economic interdependence, argues William F. Schmick III, Ottawa Newspapers' Washington bureau chief and someone who has worked with me on projects showing how reporters can trace foreign events to Main Street America.

Here are some real-life examples:

- A large high-tech company relies on export markets but prides itself on keeping manufacturing operations in a small Oregon town. Too late the company realizes that failure to build plants overseas and share technology with other countries excludes it from those growing markets. Not forward looking in other ways as well, the company's stock price falls; local jobs are in

jeopardy.

- A Lincoln, Nebraska, bank doesn't make foreign loans. But it cares deeply about developing countries piling up mountains of debt. Why? Indebted countries cannot afford to buy food from Nebraska and that contributes to local farmers' troubles repaying *their* debts to the Lincoln bank.
- In the 1970s a Texas city worried that Middle Eastern oil money would buy up the state. Now, upon investigation, local reporters find that not much property changed hands after all — which is a real problem. Local real estate is overbuilt; the city needs investors to help revive the economy.
- A journalist's chance call to a Keene, N.H., entrepreneur finds him excited. He makes industrial printing equipment, including machines to print wattage on lightbulbs and codes on integrated circuits. He has just heard that Malaysia passed a consumer protection law. That means he may be able to sell machines that print "sell-by" dates on milk and other spoil-prone food.
- Every clothing store on Main Street is packed with foreign connections. Many of our clothes are made abroad. As one Oklahoma reporter discovered, that fact leads to at least two kinds of stories: one about the benefits to consumers of lower-priced imported clothes; another about American garment workers losing their jobs.

Some of these are feature stories; some analysis; some qualify as hard

news. Some have insights that may not be found in those national newspapers with huge teams of foreign correspondents. (The Lincoln bank challenged the view of money-center banks like Citicorp, which balk at providing new loans to developing countries. The Lincoln bank argued that new Citicorp loans are essential to growth in developing countries and their ability to import Nebraska food.)

Most important of all, every one of the stories tells readers something about the global economy and does so in terms that relate to their own lives. None of them is exceptional. Stories like these come up every day in communities — and this local globalization is just beginning.

International economic interdependence is often described as something that has just happened. In reality it is

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happening — and has been for some time. Paul Scott Mowrer, the Chicago Daily News correspondent who won the first Pulitzer Prize for foreign reporting, liberally used the word "interdependence" in his 1924 book, "Our Foreign Affairs." British economist John Maynard Keynes wondered a decade later if "interdependence hasn't finally reached the point where its costs may be outweighing its benefits." The difference today, which would perplex Keynes all the more, is that the speed of global interactions has increased thanks to faxes and jet planes and, thanks to events like decolonization after World War II and sweeping political change in Eastern Europe recently, the number of sovereign, independent countries eager to be global actors has increased just as dramatically.

Virtually no aspect of economic life is exempt from foreign ties. Adam Smith and Karl Marx didn't agree about much, perhaps, but both considered services insignificant in local economies and downright irrelevant to foreign trade. Today services have become as important to global trade as cars and wheat.

Saztec, to which I devoted a chapter in a recent book "Entangling Alliances," is a prime example. This small company based in Kansas City, Missouri, puts information traditionally on paper into electronic databases. Those databases include mailing lists of Stride Rite shoe clients, the British voter rolls and back issues of newspapers and magazines. Most of Saztec's data entry work is done in the Philippines. The completed databases come back on magnetic tape via airplane or are beamed via satellite.

The information industry, of which Saztec is a part, is now the planet's largest and is especially nimble in looking for overseas opportunities. The start-up costs for a data entry facility are much smaller than for a steel plant and the start-up time is also much shorter. It takes three to five years to get a steel plant up and running; Saztec established a profitable data entry facility in Scotland in less than six months.

In the past daring American companies might put a plant in Europe. Now

they can go to any number of developing countries. Texas Instruments has a software programming facility in Bangalore, India; the tiny island of Mauritius off the coast of Africa is now taking some of Hong Kong's clothing manufacturing business.

As easy as it is to track down such stories locally, far too few reporters and editors try. If anything, the trends in the media run away from the global almost as relentlessly as the economy runs toward it.

For one thing, old-fashioned outlooks in the newsroom hold journalists back. As an editor in the town where Saztec is based once said, "The farther it is from Kansas City, the less it is news."

A second factor hindering local reporters from thinking like foreign correspondents is today's overwhelming fear of losing readers, listeners and viewers. Wanting to hold on to traditional audiences, journalists pour their energies into making news local. Theoretically this habit should encourage journalists to look for overseas ties to their community. But because the emphasis is so inward looking, editors and reporters rarely hunt for the foreign angle. If they care about international news, they hunt for jobs on larger newspapers or at the networks.

The irony is that readers need to understand the impact of global economies on their home turf and may be especially eager to pay for and tune in news that explains how complex their world is becoming. A Society of Professional Journalists' project conducted a couple of years ago showed how much foreign news lies on Main Street waiting to be picked up. Related studies also showed that people pay attention to these stories.

Political scientist Samuel Popkin substantiates this finding in a book released this summer, "The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns." The public, he argues, is better able than ever to make connections "between their own lives and national and international events."

None of this is to say that being a foreign correspondent at home is easy.

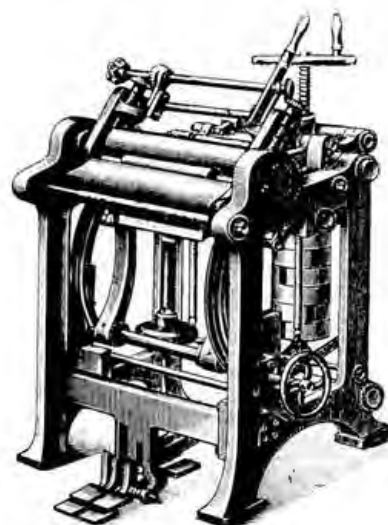
New habits and approaches must be learned. Also, serious stories like these require serious reporting. The challenge is precisely to avoid the obvious and dig beneath the surface.

One area of inquiry that raises serious issues is a local trade and investment promotion. One issue is about local self-preservation. The flow of federal government support of state and communities is decreasing, and governors and mayors realize that a solid tax base depends on maintaining competitive local business. The result: every state and many, many cities are learning to hustle business abroad. Another issue is about all the new difficulties this trend creates. Local economic diplomats are usurping the role of Washington in ways that can hinder global trade negotiations and even foreign-policy making generally.

Unfortunately, neither issue is covered well. Instead of using a local trade mission to the Far East as an occasion to open citizens' minds about local foreign affairs, journalists habitually write boondoggle stories that confirm readers' worst prejudices about government profligacy.

Strictly local news is still important, of course, and not every story has a foreign angle. But reporters must learn to ask internationally minded questions, even if it only produces a paragraph or two in a 30-inch story.

As preposterous as it sounds, the farther it is from Kansas City, the more it is news. □



# Explain, Explain

*MacNeil/Lehrer's Reporter Finds Decoding Arcane Economics the Most Useful and Least Exploited Form of Journalism*

By PAUL SOLMAN

For 14 years, I've tried to explain, on television, the world of business and economics, rather than practice traditional journalism, in the original sense of covering a daily beat. My assumption has been that, given the din of information already deafening this culture, yet another story of IBM's weak second quarter, say, would be unilluminating, if not downright unhelpful.

In fact, explanation seems to me the most useful and least exploited form of journalism around these days. If a journalist's purpose is to help the citizenry make sense of the world around us, what better way to do it than decode the experts, untangle the statistics, get back to the basics of understanding?

It's taken awhile to arrive at this conclusion. Along the way, I've tried various other journalistic approaches. Problems with them have led to my increasing faith in explanation. Finally in 1976, I wandered onto the business beat. My first encounter was a story about how the cities of Boston and Cambridge borrowed money with bonds. Boston paid a higher interest rate than Cambridge and my sources were unanimous as to why: Boston's city government was corrupt, Cambridge's wasn't.

But the more I learned about bond rates, interest costs and the like, the more lost I became. The financial experts were patient and forthcoming. They were also impenetrable.

It was then that my current approach to journalism began to take shape. I knew nothing (broadly speaking) about business and economics. I decided to school myself and let the public in on what I learned.

That was 15 years ago. Ever since, I've been a TV business explainer. Why TV? Because I thought it would be easier and more collegial than print. (For the record it isn't easier, but it *is* more collegial.) Why business? Because I

figured that if I was so thoroughly ignorant, even intimidated by the subject, lots of other people must be too. Why explainer? Because I thought that, as a proxy for the audience, that's how I would wish to be served.

## Solman's Decisions

It all began in the spring of 1963, when the second best thing that could have happened to a freshman boy did: a hip upperclasswoman accosted me after class, proffering the job of art critic for the college weekly.

The first crisis came at the year-end senior art exhibit. On the walls, no Paul Klees; instead, the paintings of fellow students, for whom this show was the culmination of a quadrennium of effort and imagination. I didn't like any of it.

The crisis was this: What purpose would it serve to slice up these students? Surely it would serve readers to help them appreciate art, but to deprecate it?

So, I wrote the review, praising what I could, and resigned. The experience had provided Serving-the-Reader Lesson #1: Criticism can do more harm than good, unless you're sympathetic to what you're criticizing.

After serving a three-year sentence in graduate school, I turned pro in 1970, as a writer and editor for a Boston "alternative" weekly. "Advocacy journalism" seemed an ideal way to serve the public. But it turned out to have its own difficulties. True, on a weekly, we had the time and space to tell stories at length. Indeed, we were compelled to: our main competitive advantage (leaving aside, for a moment, sex, drugs, and



rock and Ho) was our ability to bring the story to the reader in candid detail. The problem was: the more one immersed oneself in a story, the more complex it seemed to become. Moving from topic to topic as general assignment advocates, there wasn't even the mastery of any one subject area to fall back on. Instead, we depended on a rather simple political analysis that kept foundering on complications. Eventually (maybe grudgingly), I learned lesson #2: advocacy should probably follow mastery, not precede it.

There was another journalistic option: investigative reporting. So I took out after desperados: The Crooked Sheriff of Suffolk County; the chiselers at Boston's Real Property Department. These were stories with their own built-in purpose.

The results were tangible enough: several bad guys chased from office. But I couldn't help feeling that there was something slightly disingenuous about the whole business. Wouldn't the proper authorities have nailed the sheriff, had I given them the initial leads I'd been given? Was I helping bring a malefactor to justice or competing with those whose job it was to do so?

I was suspicious of the adrenaline (or was it testosterone?) rush associated with the high points of an investigation, and troubled again by the net benefit to readers. There was, I guess, no hard epiphany here. The lesson was more personal: Leave the sleuthing to others.

So, finally, I turned to business journalism and explanation.

—PAUL SOLMAN

I still think that. Before you disagree, consider the alternatives, at least on the business and economics beat:

## 1. Daily Reporting On Business

It's much more sophisticated than it was, of course, even 15 years ago. Given the time and space limitations, I don't know how to do it any better. But much of it is extraneous and some arguably insidious. A corporation can, in any given quarter, pretty much report the profits it wishes to. So why do the media give such prominence to profit pronouncements? For one thing, because they're easy to report. For another, because there's a demand for them. But who could possibly care about a company's quarterly profits, beyond the workers and customers?

The answer, I think, is the insidious part, and speaks poorly for both the public and the profession. Because the core clientele of business journalism are America's investors. Which leads us to:

## 2. Investment Reporting

If you think Wall Street (figuratively defined) represents a misdirection of American talent, time and money, just think of the waste involved in reporting on Wall Street. The stock market is a spectator sport in which gambling isn't just legal; it's the whole point. Yet it's covered with the solemnity and urgency of a military campaign.

What does the public really want to know about investments? Which ones to make, when. Can any journalist usefully tell them? Of course not.

So investment journalists quote one expert, then another, each contradicting the last, since the experts don't know much more than the journalists. How come no one makes fun of the prognosticators on Louis Rukeyser's show the way they used to when Jimmy the Greek tried to pick football winners on CBS? How come the top piece of business news, day after day, is the Dow Jones Industrial Average? Do you even know what it is?

In fact, we're talking about a weighted average of the stock prices of 30 industrial companies, supposedly representative of the market and thus

the economy, as a whole. They're not all strictly industrial in the traditional heavy industry sense of the word. But 70 per cent of economic activity in the United States is now in the service sector, and much of it is in small businesses whose stock is not widely traded. The Dow Jones industrials, it can be argued, are thus a poor sample of the economy as a whole. Or even the stock market.

Yet consider, for a moment, how vast is the coverage of the DJIA. In print, we get daily reckonings; on radio and TV, hourly, even minute-by-minute accounts. What can you say about a number whose fluctuations, research suggests, are largely a function of random change? A whole lot, it would seem, e.g.:

At the opening bell, the Dow was up three points, on rumors of a drop in interest rates. By 11 a.m., it was up 22. Then came word of an industrial oil spill in Waikiki, which hammered the already weak airline stocks. The market turned skittish and by noon, it was down 15. At quarter past, Alan Greenspan was seen entering a hospital. The market continued its slide — down 20 by 1 p.m., with declines leading advances, 5-4. However, on news that Greenspan was simply visiting his mother, and that rumors of a secessionist revolt in Michigan were unfounded, the market rallied and, by 2 o'clock, the Dow had rebounded, and was up 15. At that point, program trading kicked in and the market soared, up 45 by 3 p.m. But then came a wave of profit-taking, driving the market down. At the final ticker, the Dow had emerged from the day unchanged.

It sounds silly. Yet it's not much different, in essence, from a typical day's coverage of the Dow. Moreover, given the mysterious ways in which the market moves, the above account may be as relevant as any.

Returning to the basics for a moment, every company "for-profit" has to be owned by someone. The rights of

ownership are the company's stock. Own a share of it and you own a share of the company. The stock of a big company with lots of owners is usually traded on a stock exchange, so that it can be more easily bought and sold. Generally, as the company prospers, so do the shareholders.

Therefore, if an oil spill were in fact to ruin Waikiki Beach, as in the above example, it would probably put a damper on Hawaiian tourism, which might in turn depress the business of airlines serving Hawaii, and so perhaps, the prosperity of those airlines, and so, ultimately, airlines stocks.

Even Alan Greenspan's health could have palpable economic consequences: if he were replaced, if his successor charted a different course, if, if, if . . . (One can imagine a scenario in which his mother's health would affect Greenspan's mood, his judgment, etc.)

The problem is that we have entered a twilight zone of extraordinary speculation. Anything might affect the stock market and, indeed, chaos theory, applied to the market, suggests that *everything* probably does.

One phrase epitomizes the certainty in which those who cover the market cloak the uncertain: "a wave of profit-taking." It is the last refuge of the chronically perplexed. When a drop in the market is simply inexplicable, you can attribute it to profit-taking, since profit-taking occurs almost every time a stock is sold for more than it was purchased. Thus it explains everything. Which means, of course, that it explains nothing.

In fact, the market is impossibly complex, and impossible to predict. Back in 1935, John Maynard Keynes wrote his famous "General Theory." In it, he suggested a metaphor to illustrate how speculative the stock market had become, even by his day.

There was, at the time, a popular newspaper game not unlike TV's *Family Feud* today: pick the six prettiest faces from 100 photographs, the winner being the person whose choice most closely matches the top six contestants. To Keynes, it worked like the stock market:



"[E]ach competitor has to pick, not those faces which he himself finds prettiest, but those which he thinks likeliest to catch the fancy of the other competitors, all of whom are looking at the problem from the same point of view. It is not a case of choosing those which, to the best of one's judgment, are really the prettiest, nor even those which average opinion genuinely thinks the prettiest. We have reached the third degree where we devote our intelligences to anticipating what average opinion expects the average opinion to be. And there are some, I believe, who practice the fourth, fifth and higher degrees."

Chronicles of market movements, then, are accounts of speculations on speculations as to the impact of data on the collective consciousness of investors. The DJIA is a sample of that market.

But suppose, instead of keeping the industrial average, Dow Jones chose a sample of 30 baseball batters, tallied their total hits on a daily basis, divided by total at-bats, and kept a running account. That too would be a real number, influenced by real events, susceptible to speculative analysis. If enough people bet on it, it might be given the prominence now accorded the DJIA, graphed daily and scrutinized for patterns, for clues to the true reasons behind its movements. And the Dow Jones Batting Average would be reported as seriously as the Dow Jones Industrial Average is today.

How well is the public served by all this? The truth of the matter is that the key sources of business journalism — professional investors and investment advisors — on average, *underperform* a random selection of stocks, year after year. Instead of reading the daily outpourings of the overpaid oracles, even the investment public would be better served by one simple recommendation: Buy an indexed portfolio whose stocks are never bought or sold. An explanation of indexing, plus maybe another three or four paragraphs, is all you'll ever need to read about investing. But let that truth sink in and about half the business journalists in America would

be out of work.

### 3. Economics Reporting

In economics, the prognosticators are also wrong at least half the time. But at least they're more reliable when it comes to quoting them: then, they're consistently incomprehensible. It's not just their vocabulary that's the problem. It's those leaps they make from one fuzzy concept to another. See if this rings a bell:

Today's Department of Labor statistics show that unemployment is up; therefore, the Fed may ease the money supply to boost the economy, thus lowering interest rates, which should send bond prices higher, which will, in turn, help the stock market.

That's how the experts talk. That's what the journalists report. That's what professional investors bet money on. As a consequence, you read or hear stories with that sort of logic. But how often have you understood the logic in the time allotted? How often have you wished for an alternative? A shot of Absolut, for example.

Worse still is the fact that, when, as a journalist, you really dig into this stuff, it kind of dribbles away from you. In the above example, it turns out that even the first "fact" — unemployment is up — can be very slippery, given the way unemployment is counted in this country. There are two monthly surveys taken, and in two of the last three months, they have flatly contradicted each other. The *payroll* survey counts the number of jobs, as reported by 300,000 businesses. The official *unemployment* number comes from a separate survey of 60,000 households. But in August, for example, the payroll survey reported 59,000 fewer jobs in the economy, yet the unemployment number went *down*.

No need to panic. There are plausible explanations, which all stem from the fuzziness of the data. But the analysis is fuzzier still.

For instance: it's unclear that the Fed can ease the money supply these days

or that it can lower interest rates for long. And if the Fed can't keep interest rates down, it can't keep bond prices up.

Besides, the Fed may not ease enough. Consumers may not respond to the easing, etc., etc. An economist named Don McCloskey has written a book called "If You're So Smart," about the indeterminacy of economics. To read it is to be reminded how subjective supposedly objective economic analysis really is.

Yet journalists cover the field as if there really were some knowable truth out there. The public retaliates when it gets a chance. Thus the second most common question you're asked as a business journalist is: What's ahead for the economy? (The most common: What's ahead for the stock market?) The best response is to plagiarize John Kenneth Galbraith's reply: "There are two kinds of economists; those who don't know the future, and those who don't know they don't know." The same, one might add, is true for people who make a living quoting economists.

There are two final classes of business and economics journalism worth noting:

### 4. Certain Columnists

David Walsh and Michael Schrage to name just two, do a great job, but mainly for specialized audiences who already understand the world being covered, and

### 5. Investigative Reporting

I admire, even envy, the folks who get the drop on the Crooked Bankers and blow them out of the water. I love that 60 Minutes candid camera stuff. It's great show biz and it serves a social purpose: exposing bad guys.

But I keep wondering if what people need to know, before anything else, is not so much that certain bankers are crooks, but that certain kinds of policies draw crooks to banking. I think people would appreciate knowing that when a savings bank (or any other institution) is paying a higher rate of interest, it's making riskier investments. They would also appreciate knowing why that's so. In short, the public would be well

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# Economics 101

## *A Short Course on the Background Reporters Need to Write Intelligently in This Field*

BY DAVID WARSH

In a little essay called "Ground Under Our Feet", Richard Ely recounts how he and others founded the American Economic Association in 1886. It was a spirited meeting; its real business had to do with cutting out the conservative advocates of *laissez faire* in favor of more progressive scholars, excluding the religiously motivated investigators in favor of practitioners of a more "disinterested" economics, and with long-range plans to insulate economists from the general public. Long years later, Ely was circumspect about these aspects of the occasion.

With the ink barely dry on the charter, however, he and E.R.A. Seligman tramped through the rain to the office of the Associated Press in Saratoga, "to see that we had such publicity as we both felt we deserved." Economists and those whom they have excluded have been arguing with the press ever since about exactly what each subsequent story is worth.

What is a reader — or his proxy, the reporter — to do when confronted with the vast array of doubledomes and numbercrunchers who can't agree on anything in the world worth knowing? The deficit is going up or down, productivity is a problem or it isn't, the savings rate a disaster or maybe not, the United States is in dire peril or else it has never been stronger. It is one thing when desk sergeants and community activists tell differing stories about what happened last night in the 18th precinct. They are expected to disagree. So are colonels, diplomats, politicians, lawyers and land salesmen.

But what are we to make of the myriad voices of the economic and financial commentary community?

There are Wall Street touts and Washington policy jocks, self-taught businessmen and gifted politicians, Nobel finalists and interesting gadflies, text-book authors and left-field visionaries — all vying for our attention. Amid the constant stream of chatter from the stands and the hench, and often irrespective of it, the world constantly is going forward powerfully in the hands of business people, practitioners who are reflective and otherwise — inventors, bankers, corporate planners, magnates, organizers, investors, regulators. Conflicting views, anyone? At least Americans don't have a Likud GNP and a Labor GNP, as they do in Israel.

At the bottom, reporting economics is no different from reporting anything else. The cast of characters is just a little more complicated, that's all. The reporter's tools, as Stanley Karnow once described them, are nothing more than background knowledge and skepticism. In the name of background knowledge, I will sketch here a few things worth knowing about the production and distribution of economic knowledge.

### **The Declaration Of Interdependence**

Technical economics, as we know it, appeared on the scene a little more than 200 years ago. Indeed, "The Wealth of Nations" was published in 1776, the same year that the American colonies cut loose from England.

To be sure, there were plenty of beginnings before that. On the one hand there were politically motivated students of trade like Barbon and Cantillon who sought to advise kings on the best way to raise taxes or otherwise compete successfully among nations. These thinkers were then known as mercantilists; today they tend to identify

themselves as political economists — with an emphasis on the political.

On the other hand, there was the tradition of "political arithmetic," associated with Gaunt, Petty and King. Begun in frank imitation of the successes of early physicists like Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle and physiologists like William Harvey, this school aspired to create a truly "scientific" economics — hence its concern with objectivity and empirical inquiry.

Technical economics burst decisively on top with the work of Adam Smith, and his less appreciated contemporary, Sir James Steuart. The galvanizing idea at the heart of "The Wealth of Nations" was the idea of the economy as a big interdependent system, in which everything was dependent on

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started newspapering in 1963 as a copyboy at the *City News Bureau* in Chicago, reported the war in Vietnam for *Pacific Stars and Stripes* and *Newsweek*, and covered business for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Wilmington News-Journal* and *Forbes Magazine*. Since 1978 he has covered economics for *The Globe*. A two-time winner of the Loeb Award for financial journalism, he is the author of "The Idea of Economic Complexity." (Viking Penguin.)

everything else, rather like celestial mechanics. To convey the working of this system, Smith conjured up the famous metaphorical "invisible hand," which led every individual, pursuing his own self interest, to promote the greater good of all, giving rise to an order "which was no part of his intention." Lowly porters, rich landlords and everybody in between would come together to contribute their unique skills in the self-organizing system of the market.

To put it slightly differently, the fundamental ideal in "Wealth" was the concept of negative feedback, the notion that the price of tea in China — and every other price — was in some sense self-regulating, that if its price rose, less of it would be demanded and more would be supplied, until the price returned to its normal level, and the system that supplied it — tea plantations, sailing ships, merchants bankers, warehousemen and jobbers and retail shops — returned to "equilibrium." This glimpse of a systematic, predictable interdependence among individuals organized in markets was quickly seized upon and rendered more precise by David Ricardo. It has been the indispensable core of economics ever since.

In a second vital turn, just a little over 100 years ago, economics went professional — that is, it ceased being a field for talented amateurs and became a self-selecting community which aped the social organization of science. Economists came to be those who taught in colleges and universities. They learned from texts, published in journals. They freely gave advice to politicians and business but they relied on one another for credentials and advancement. About the same time, their field underwent a considerable deepening, which gave a distinct psychological cast to their investigations. The central tenet of this "marginal revolution's" new emphasis on the psychology of value has been summed up this way: pearls are expensive not because men dive deep for them; rather men dive deep for them because they are expensive. Economists have been talking about the "utility" of pearls ever since.

(Largely left out in this transformation were the political economists, those enthusiasts for policy who sought to ground their prescription in some theory of how the world works that has not been submitted to economists. When you meet someone like, say, Jude Wanski, a journalist turned political consultant, or Robert Reich, a lecturer who identifies himself as a political economist in pre-Marshallian sense, what he means is that he dissents from all that has happened in economics these last 100 years. He simply is operating in a different tradition.)

The rest is simple. From the 1870's until 1945, the world capital of economic understanding was Cambridge, England. Alfred Marshall gave way to John Maynard Keynes; his smooth Victorian confidence as propounded in the 24 editions of his "Principles" yielded to Keynes's preoccupation with the central role of government in everyday economic affairs, described in "The General Theory of Employment Interest and Money."

With the end of World War II, however, the center of intellectual inquiry shifted to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and, in time, a couple of counter-revolutions occurred — launched mostly from Chicago. Keynes, having been widely diffused, was rolled back on the topic of money by Milton Friedman, on interest by Robert Lucas, on employment by Martin Feldstein. All the while the field of technical economics itself has only grown. The number of economists employed by government, industry and finance since World War II has simply exploded.

### **Alsager's Heirs And Bagheot's**

Business and financial journalism grew up from quite different roots than these. For at least a couple of centuries neither reporters nor their editors were very interested in economists. After all, it wasn't economists who built the modern world; it was business persons, investors and inventors and salesmen and empire builders who created the farflung and intricate international economy. It was these movers and

shakers and their stock touts and lawyers and press agents that the financial press covered from the beginning of the modern industrial economy. For a long time, most journalists paid relatively little attention to the economists. They were interested in the markets themselves.

The key event in the emergence of financial journalism was the shift during Napoleonic wars of the center of world finance to London from Amsterdam, according to Richard Fry's essay in "The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics." In London, for the first time, there was a large middle class interested in opportunities for investment. The newspapers were not slow to attempt to shed some light. Thomas Massie Alsager, a cultured businessman, was appointed the first financial editor of *The Times* of London in 1817. He set a pretty good example, according to Fry. "For some years he stood alone in warning investors that the great boom in railway collections was bound to collapse. *The Times* lost a great deal of advertising but the proprietors were high minded and Alsager was proved right."

In economic journalism, the signal event probably was the founding of *The Economist* magazine in London in 1843, and the appointment of the great Walter Bagheot as its editor in 1857. Bagheot was perhaps the first man to write about economics as a modern science writer might; that is, he reported the views of some leaders of the field as though they were most probably correct; he was honest about disagreements between experts when they arose; he mixed in liberally his own convictions. Ever since *The Economist* has reported on professional debates with distinction, though never flinching from imposing its own journalists' convictions on events. Oscar Hobson's brief but extremely influential tenure as editor of *The Financial Times* in the early 1930s should be noted, as well as the rise to prominence of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

In the United States, there probably has been a good deal more action from the magazines than the newspapers. The New York papers had for many years covered Wall Street aggressively. The

long boom of the 1920's persuaded Henry Luce to launch *Fortune* and the McGraw family to start *Business Week* to compete with more personal magazines like *Forbes* and *Barrons* and *Duns*. Barney Kilgore built the *Wall Street Journal* into a national business daily in the years following World War II, utterly eclipsing the daily *Journal of Commerce*. The founding of the McGraw-Hill economics department by journalist-turned-economist Dexter Keezer deserves special mention; it contributed a steady stream of talent to *The New York Times*. *The Times*, in turn, has greatly influenced the television networks.

Today, a remarkable array of reporters and editors for the daily and electronic press, financial magazines, trade journals and newswEEKlies track developments in the global economy — in the U.S., Europe and Japan. Coverage is not as good as it could be, it never is; but certainly there is plenty of it. England still leads the world in the social standing and independence of its commentators. What can be said about the state of knowledge that they confront?

### **Persuasive Experiments**

First, consider our understanding of economics in its largest outlines. Is it a "science" or not? Does somebody really *know* the answers? Or is it all a matter of intellectual fashion? Would the mathematical verities of one age seem stale and unrevealing platitudes in another? Let me address this question somewhat obliquely.

During the 1970's and 1980's, in every corner of the world, occurred a sea-change, a turn away from government, toward democracy, toward more decentralized forms of social organization, usually having to do with market processes. This was a matter of nearly spontaneous ignition. It started in China about the same time as it did in the United Kingdom. It happened to the United States at first tentatively, in the form of Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign, then decisively, with Ronald Reagan's 1980 election; between times Margaret Thatcher became prime minister of England. Sometimes it arose from the

grassroots, as in Poland; sometimes it was directed from the top down, as in Chile. Some places followed the "Four Tigers" and Japan; others, like France, made up their own mind; still others, especially in Africa, followed France. Eventually, the Soviet Union itself embraced glasnost, perestroika and democracy, and even tiny Albania opened up. In the end, only North Korea, Cuba, the Khmer Rouge and the Shining Path stood four-square against what, for lack of a better word, was called "capitalism."

What drove this transformation? Certainly it did not come about as a result of arguments carried out in books. Instead, a series of dominating events were at the heart of the transformation of our ideas. Each of these had the clarity and persuasive power of controlled experiments. They had their effect not so much on technical economics, but on the deep structure of public opinion, which is ever so much difficult to change.

The first of these "experiments" was the experience with the OPEC cartel and the price of oil. This was in effect a decisive demonstration of the fundamental truth of the law of supply and demand, that suddenly soaring prices will have predictable effects: demand drops, supply increases and the price tends to fall back toward a certain equilibrium. The world wasn't running out of oil, it turned out; it just needed a little time to adjust. (In general, the press couldn't have got this story more wrong.)

The second "experiment" was the rise of Japan and the "Four Tigers" of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Analysts could argue about just how much governmental guidance was involved in these success stories. What wasn't open to question was that they achieved their remarkable growth within a competitive global market system in which consumers were more or less sovereign, much as economists predicted.

The third "experiment" had to do with the demonstration, starting in 1979, that money mattered, that inflation was not some cosmic cloud

through which the earth was passing but that it could be controlled through conventional regulation of the banking system. When Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker sent interest rates soaring past 20 per cent, he precipitated a desperate global recession. But when inflation rates fell to subsequently low levels, he showed conclusively government could in fact achieve relative price stability.

The fourth "experiment," perhaps the most important, was the utter collapse of the command economies of the Soviet Union and its satellites. What had been an arcane debate between Ludwig von Mises, Friederick Hayek and Oscar Lange over whether planning could work as well as markets in the 1930's played out in the 1980's with the utmost clarity. Taken together, the experience added up to what Robert Heilbroner described as the "clearest possible proof," "that capitalism organizes the material affairs of humankind more satisfactorily than socialism . . . The great question now seems how rapid will be the transformation of socialism into capitalism, and not the other way around, as things looked only half a century ago."

A fifth "experiment," what Bush Administration economist Lawrence Lindsey has called "the great growth experiment," has to do with the series of deregulations and tax reforms that were undertaken by the Western industrial democracies during the 1980s. On these experiments, the returns are not yet in, although the arguing about them has continued at a blistering pace. Eventually these disagreements will be resolved by the extent to which their rival predictions pan out — either there will be a new surge of economic growth or there will not, either the gap between rich and poor will widen or it won't. In the meantime, the issue will regularly be put to formal and informal votes in venues all around the world.

The point is that, by the beginning of the 1990s, everybody, everywhere, was studying economics. The accounting systems of the Communist countries were being restated in terms of Western conventions. Chinese students were

studying econometrics. Business schools were opening in the capitals of Eastern Europe. Third World nations were privatizing their nationalized industries, with the help of international bankers. By that crudest and most refined test of all — the market of human opinion — economics had proved its worth, if not its most vaunting claims.

### Adam Smith Was Right?

How to describe the delicate mixture of doubt and certainty with which we confront the claims of modern technical economics to be a science? I think an analogy may be helpful here.

What has happened to economics in the last 60 years is roughly comparable to what happened to the infant science of ecology during the years from, say, Aldo Leopold's first publications on the interdependence between wolf and deer populations in the 1920's to Rachel Carson's powerful manifesto against pesticides, "The Silent Spring," in 1962. That is, a certain set of expert views about the intimate interrelatedness of the natural world conquered the professional field, then went on to the conquest of popular opinion.

Today, people may disagree about the desirability of maintaining a certain level of species diversity in the Amazon or the Pacific Northwest. They may argue about a specific proposal for dealing with, say, the greenhouse effect. They may speculate with no very deep conviction at all on the mechanisms of evolution. But no one seriously suggests that the ecological viewpoint doesn't apply.

Moreover, they recognize, as Aldo Leopold came to, that nature imposes severe restrictions on the extent to which we can hope to successfully interfere with interactions between human beings and nature. In the course of a very few years in the 1920's, Leopold went from arguing that the way to make the West safe for hunters was to kill all the wolves and lions, to the conviction that it was necessary to learn to "think like a mountain" and in so doing, let predators exercise their

natural checks on the size of the deer herd, at least to the greatest extent that could be harmonized with citizens' political tastes. In a similar fashion, reformers who a few years ago pressed insistently for nationalization, rent control and redistributive taxes today look for ways to subtly bend market processes to their ends — to "think like a market," in other words.

This is, I think, what people mean when they say "Adam Smith was right." They mean that individuals, left free to pursue their own interests, generally will contribute to the greater good of all. They mean that obstacles to one sort of economic activity will likely have implications in unexpected places. They mean that government policies exist to be captured and that corporate policies don't necessarily benefit the consumer. They mean that everything economic is connected to everything else.

Here are some things people don't — or shouldn't — mean when they celebrate the profundity of the economic insight: they don't mean that we know exactly how these things are connected. Nor does it mean that much can't be done to ameliorate the conditions of poverty and distress. Nor that markets don't fail sometimes and require government correction.

Least of all do they mean that the economists at long last agree. All the old schisms persist, only now they have new labels. Today we have the "new classicals" vs. "new Keynesians." They debate in ever-more difficult (and more powerful) mathematical and statistical languages. They may even have some success in narrowing down their disagreements: one of the most promising developments of the last decade has been the emergence of the National Bureau of Economic Research as a kind of quality-testing laboratory for new ideas. But underneath, there is little difference between today's factions and the *laissez-faire* free-traders and the governmentally inclined progressives of Richard Ely's day. Economics may be progressing, but very slowly.

Taken together, the lessons of the 25 years do, however, mean that the basic tools of the economists' kitbag can

scarcely be done without by those who aspire to make public policy or to comment on it. Left, right or center: from here on out, men and women who aspire to leadership from city hall to the White House to the great international policy bodies are going to have to know some economics. And reporters who aspire to cover the news are going to have to know some, too.

### Getting To Know You . . .

So what is it that reporters and editors should be seeking to provide in this complicated world? The answer seems to me to be that there is plenty of opportunity, and that it is growing.

Certainly economics and economic policy has emerged as a legitimate beat, quite different from the market-oriented coverage of business and finance. These traditional specialties will continue to flourish. Businessmen still don't look to economists for permission to expand, after all, to break new ground.

Even here, economics is exerting new claims. In some areas the practical and theoretical worlds of markets are growing even closer together, much as did practical engineering and science in 19th century. The huge markets in futures and options — in risk — that have grown up in Chicago in the last 15 years are a prime example of how "basic" economic science can find lucrative application in the real world. On the other hand, pure economics, injudiciously applied, can still do a great deal of damage. The effect of the deregulation of the air travel industry on the companies involved (not on passenger safety!) may turn out to be a very interesting example.

The degree to which technical, university-based economics informs our view of the world shouldn't be underestimated. Today, bright kids go from classroom training at the London School of Economics to doing narrative and news on the money wires; Wall Street economists only lightly wear their PhDs; business schools see to it that their graduates have only a smattering of managerial economics, lest they

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# Cheering On The Scoundrels

*Too Many Business Pages Have Portrayed Sharpsters as Amusing, Shying Away From Their Unsavory Past*

BY RICHARD E. CHENEY

After 40 years in the public relations business, I've come to feel that media in the United States, while building data banks, have been losing their memory. Most men and women who appear in the news seem to have meager pasts and no relationship to the times they've lived in. While I recognize the confining pressures of time and space on the air and in print, I find myself wishing fervently that more stories were told like good obituaries.

The business pages in the 80's particularly appeared to be written in one dimension, like *Citizen Kane* without *Rosebud*, sometimes even without last week. Scoundrels hoodwinked the public and the best of the media too rarely sounded the alarm until it was too late. Indeed, they rooted them on with puffery, detailing, day by day, tender offers and counter-tender offers, breathlessly following the bidding like hicks at Sotheby's. Hardly anybody stepped back to examine the consequences for the country.

Too many reporters laid down the red carpet for men like Ivan Boesky and the raiders who used him, many of whom already had nolo contendere records at the Securities and Exchange Commission that were clearly on the public record.

Men like Fred Carr, a former mutual fund sharpster who had taken investors down the primrose path in the 60's, turned up in the insurance business and destroyed the pensions of thousands of men and women, creating what was clearly a house of cards by putting the pensioners' and policy holders' money into Mike Milken's junk bonds. The media can be charged with inadequately sounding the alarm about this insurance wizard's past, with not setting his seem-

ing success in the insurance business against the backdrop of his failure with mutual funds. True, there were stories chronicling his past failures, but too many reporters seemed to find men like Carr amusing, even awe-inspiring — as if they were writing about Willie Sutton's bank robberies.

On little or no evidence other than the fact that they had conned creditors into giving them billions of dollars to buy stock at a premium, sleazy nobodies — even a man like Robert Campeau, who has suffered a number of mental breakdowns — got themselves touted in the media as far more able to "maximize" assets at a company than conscientious managers who were confronted with the day-to-day realities of running the business.

In the play-by-play reporting on takeovers, too few reporters stepped back and asked where the money was coming from, how the loans could be justified, what the motives were of the leaders and their investment banker accomplices, whether the loans would be repaid and the implications for taxpayers if they were not. We're getting the stories now, largely in books. Why were they so sparse at the time?

Despite my being involved in so much of the takeover activity of the 80's I really don't have the answer. I found that surprisingly often information on file with the SEC about security fraud cases involving major financial figures never appeared in news stories. About the only way that information got in the paper was in the form of advertisements paid for by one of the adversaries. Reporters were inclined to say they didn't want to get into "character stuff." Nobody is an angel, they'd say, what really matters is whether the

stockholders are going to get a good price for their stock. As with Carr, men who did serious damage to people's livelihoods were portrayed as having the panache of riverboat gamblers.

I couldn't figure out, and still can't, what accounted for the squeamishness about not mentioning the history of financial rogues when the shades were being raised on the private lives of politicians. I once told a reporter that I thought it was worth his taking the trouble to look into the fact that a top

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Richard E. Cheney, chairman emeritus of Hill and Knowlton, grew up in Pana, Illinois. Like another Pana boy, Vincent Sheean, he wanted to be a foreign correspondent. But Dick learned



only how to smoke a pipe in his stint on the Pana newspaper. After an attempt at creative writing, he began his public relations career. For 25 years he has played a leading role in a revolution that has transformed American business, wiping out thousands of companies in the process. He supervised Hill and Knowlton in scores of proxy contests and takeovers. He battled for Unocal in its fight against T. Boone Pickens, Walt Disney against Saul Steinberg, Getty Oil against the Getty family, Marathon against Mobil and many others. He is a graduate of Knox College and holds a master's degree from Teachers College, Columbia University.



# Lower Pay for Analysis

*Greater Rewards Are Offered Those Writing Economics  
From Human Interest and Political Viewpoints*

BY JAMES T. HAMILTON

**S**outh Succotash hasn't been in the news much lately. This mythical town garnered two media stories in the Nexis index in 1989, none in 1990-91. During the 1982 recession, however, reporters frequently referred to the city in their coverage of unemployment; a total of 79 stories listed in Nexis mentioned South Succotash in 1982. The unwilling, and unlikely, source for many of these reports was himself a former reporter and commentator — Ronald Reagan.

In an interview in *The Daily Oklahoman* during March of 1982, President Reagan took aim at network television for focusing on bad economic news. "Is it news that some fellow out in South Succotash someplace has just been laid off and that he should be interviewed?" the President asked. Complaining that television's focus on "downbeat" human interest stories could threaten a recovery, he said, "I wonder sometimes if it isn't the battle of the ratings . . . and if they aren't more concerned with entertainment than they are with delivering the news."

Though nearly 10 years have passed since President Reagan's complaint, officials in Washington still voice the same concern that business and economics coverage focuses excessively on bad news and often is simply inaccurate. Speaking before the Society of American Business Editors in May 1991, the Council of Economic Advisors Chairman, Michael Boskin, said that "when one reads about the economy, that it's about to go into the abyss," that he had concerns about "the quality of the fact checking that goes on in business and economics reporting."

Debate about economic news coverage is often conducted in personal

terms: journalists are sloppy, audiences are lazy, politicians who criticize the coverage are partisan pundits. In fact, what is missing from complaints about the quantity and quality of economic news is an economic analysis of the market for economic news. Professor Joseph Kalt of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and I attempted to fill this gap through our report "The Foundation for American Communications/Ford Foundation Study of Economic and Business Journalism." We found evidence from salary structures in journalism and sample story selections that economics can be used to explain the state of economics and business reporting.

## Information Markets

People "demand" economic information from the press for at least three separate reasons:

1. They may desire information that is useful in their personal economic decisions, such as stock quotations or interest rate levels.
2. Economic news can provide entertainment, be it coverage of the lifestyles of savings and loan executives or the drama of a discharged factory worker.
3. People can also use economic information in their role as citizens and voters.

The market for personally useful information and for entertainment generally works well, as the expanded business sections of newspapers, the strong business publications and popular television shows attest. The demand for informative coverage of economics issues that might assist in people's civic decisions, however, is plagued by the incentives that readers and viewers have to let others invest in learning about public issues. Because an

individual often has little personal ability to influence public decisions, he or she may let others generate information about public policy and simply share in the benefits. The same incentives that lead to low voter turnout lead to low voter search for information. If one's voting decision has little impact on acid rain or monetary policy, why become informed about these issues? Each individual's self-interest in free-riding on the efforts of others means that there is little demand expressed for public affairs aspects of economics news.

The difference between having a private interest and a "public interest" in economic information is clear in the degree that people are informed about economic facts. A survey by the Hearst Corporation found that individuals are much more knowledgeable about events that affect their personal economic decisions than those issues that have a social or political nature. Most people surveyed

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did not understand the definition of frequently reported economic variables, such as the national unemployment rate or the gross national product; a majority did not know the relative magnitudes of policy figures such as the size of the federal deficit or the proportion of government spending devoted to social programs. However, on issues directly affecting their personal decisions, individuals had a greater incentive to be informed, as reflected in widespread knowledge of the current minimum wage level, the definition of the consumer price index and the going rates for adjustable rate home mortgages.

The three demands for economic information (personal use, entertainment, public affairs) are also evident among the readers of different features within a single publication. The *Wall Street Journal*. The per cent of readers who read a particular feature is high for those sections that relate to personal decisions: Stock Quotations (70.4 per cent); Daily Business News Reports (70.8 per cent); and In-Depth Coverage of Companies and Industries (61.5 per cent). The entertainment demand for business/economics news is evident in the readership figure for the Feature Stories, which at 77.3 per cent is almost the highest within the paper. Though the demand for general news is high (84.9 per cent read the What's News section), reader interest fades as the news becomes less obviously connected with the readers' private decisions (only 44.1 per cent read the International News section). The Editorial Page which generally contains discussions of public policy, with a special emphasis on economic issues, also rates one of the lowest readerships (only 46.1 per cent). In a microcosm of a single publication, the popularity of different sections thus reflects the greater demands for business/economics news for personal decisions and/or entertainment, compared to information needed to make informed social or political decisions.

While the demand for analytical coverage of economic affairs goes unexpressed in a market where citizens free-ride on the acquisition of political information, readers and viewers will

express a demand for coverage of public policy that emphasizes human-interest angles and politics as a sporting event. This suggests that the competitive drive to hold audience attention will be reflected in the emphasis on entertaining public affairs coverage that personalizes stories or focuses on "bad" news. There is also a segment of the public that derives consumption pleasure from political participation, such as voting; they vote not out of a rational calculus of probability of influencing the outcome but because they derive ideological satisfaction from expressing a position and participating in politics. These people may also demand coverage of public affairs for the pleasure of knowledge in and of itself. Evidence for this demand comes from the fact that, controlling for demographic characteristics, those people who feel that it is a civic duty to stay informed are more likely to read the newspaper daily and view television news. Finally, public affairs coverage may sometimes be demanded by a much smaller audience — the owners of media outlets. The concentration of ownership of media companies by individuals or families is consistent with the notion that owners may trade off some profits for amenities, such as the satisfaction of performing the duty of informing the public on public affairs. This latter effect may become more tenuous, however, as ownership becomes dispersed among many stockholders.

### **The Market For Journalists**

The demand for journalists skilled in business and economics reporting is derived from audience demands for business and economics information. Media companies will offer information that satisfies private demands for personally useful or entertainment information by hiring and rewarding journalists able to provide such coverage. These companies will have fewer incentives to hire and reward journalists able to provide analytical coverage of economic news that relates to public policy, though audience interest in economic

affairs covered from a human interest or political battle angle will mean that reporters and editors who choose this approach will be rewarded.

The likelihood of low expressed demand for analytical coverage of economic public affairs issues versus the likely expression of demand for privately useful or entertainment information relating to business leads to a number of theories about the labor market for journalists: 1. Training for business coverage should be rewarded more heavily than training in economics coverage. 2. Those journalists who adopt human interest or political angles in public affairs coverage should be rewarded more than journalists who rely on an economic framework to explain economic issues. 3. In general, factors associated with the entertainment demand should be rewarded in the journalism labor market.

To test whether the lack of public demand for public affairs affects journalists' incentives, Joseph Kalt and I conducted a survey of reporters and editors in both print and broadcast markets. The responses we received from over 800 journalists formed the basis of our study of reporting environments, educational attainments and the demands for mid-career education in journalism. Our results confirm that while many recognize a need to improve coverage of economic issues there are few private incentives for journalists or their employees to do this.

Over 80 per cent of the journalists in our survey said that their organizations had increased coverage of business and economic news, but they do not necessarily equate more quantity with quality. More than 50 per cent feel that their firms only do a "fair" or poor job of business/economics coverage, while 80 per cent believe that general reporters are not well equipped to handle business/economics content. The poor quality of coverage affects the space and time allotted to economic issues, for 62 per cent of the editors surveyed said they would increase coverage if the quality of business/economics reporting improved.

Though journalists may wish for

better coverage of economic issues, the lack of expressed public demand for such analysis means that employers do not have the incentive to hire those with the training to provide it and that reporters do not have the incentive to invest in such training. The business/economics reporters in the survey tended to be younger, have less experience in journalism and have education backgrounds similar to those of other reporters. The majority were journalism majors (55 per cent); only 4 per cent majored in economics and only 6 per cent majored in business. The low rewards for training reinforce the lack of incentives for coverage that satisfies the public affairs aspect of economic news coverage. Among the journalists surveyed, taking three or more business courses outside their majors in college was rewarded 10 times more heavily (they were paid, other things being equal, an extra \$2,650 in income) than taking at least three economics courses. Preparation that leaves journalists better prepared to satisfy demands for privately useful information (e.g. business stories) is thus rewarded more than preparation to handle stories with more public affairs aspects (e.g. economic news).

Strong evidence that reporters and editors have little incentive to incorporate economic analysis in their coverage comes from a group of sample stories we included in our survey. We gave the journalists three stories — about the Federal deficit, international trade and tobacco price-support programs. For each story, the journalists were asked to choose from a list of potential themes and closing analysis that included examples of three different angles in covering the story: a human interest approach focused on the actions and emotions of individuals; a political angle that focused on the electoral winners and losers associated with an economic policy; and an economic approach focusing on market principles of supply and demand as a framework for explaining an event.

Very few journalists selected an economic angle in covering these stories; they were much more likely to

focus on the personal angles or the political fallout of the deficit, trade issues and agricultural price supports. When we compared the salaries of reporters and editors in our survey with their approach in selecting story angles, we found an even more striking result. Those journalists who adopted economic analysis more frequently were paid less than those who relied more on personal or political analysis in covering economic stories.

Broadcast journalists lost the most in terms of lower salaries if they were likely to choose economic analysis over human interest or political analysis. In addition, the attitudes of broadcast journalists surveyed reflect the greater time constraints in research and presentation they face and the greater pressures to attract audiences through entertainment. Broadcast journalists were much more likely to say that business/economics coverage is difficult because it is hard to find experts who speak "plain English," that background and data sources are too difficult to understand, and that the beat does not lead to interesting stories. They were also more likely to agree that deadline pressures prevent the kind of research necessary to develop business/economic news in depth.

Overall, our study indicates that the low expressed demand for analytical public affairs coverage and the high expressed demand for privately useful or entertaining information do affect training and incentives in the market for journalists. Reporters are rewarded more if they have coursework in business than in economics. Journalists who adopt more "marketable" approaches to story approaches are paid more. The rational ignorance of voters about economic affairs (e.g. why learn about economic affairs if you have such a low probability of influencing events?) is thus translated into a demand for rationally ignorant journalism and journalists (e.g. why as a reporter learn about the analytics of economic policy if the market only rewards human interest and political coverage?).

When we further analyzed the characteristics of the journalists who were more likely to pick economic

themes or analysis in our sample stories, we discovered that training does affect the approach that journalists take in their coverage of economic issues. Those journalists who were economics majors were more likely to select economic angles in the sample stories. Reporters and editors who had attended the midcareer education conferences sponsored by the Foundation for American Communications were also more likely to select economic themes or analysis. The Foundation has offered short midcareer training programs for over a decade that teach journalists how to incorporate economic principles into their coverage. Our results indicate that it is actual attendance at these training seminars, not an underlying tendency that leads the economically inclined to both attend these conferences and select economic themes, that is responsible for the pattern of selecting story angles that focus on economic principles.

Though training can increase the economic literacy of reporters, media companies will still not face sufficient incentives to provide such training. Increasing the economic training of reporters would thus require support from foundations since the private market for public affairs reporting is subject to market failure. Still another alternative for improving coverage, however, may lie in the "public market" for public affairs coverage.

### Public Television's Public

The impact of audience interest in entertainment and disinterest in public affairs is most evident where these pressures are muted — in public television. Correspondent Paul Solman's coverage of business and economics on the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour demonstrates that economics can be explained well on television. Typical of his coverage is the story he did on Mikhail Gorbachev's search for aid at the July 1991 economic summit in London. An economist detailing the problems confronting Gorbachev's country might include references to the importance of defining and securing property rights, the effect of instability in legal and political regimes on investors'

assessments of future returns and the difficulties of government's ability to commit to restrain its actions in the future. Solman hits all these points by posing as a mendicant Gorbachev and interviewing individuals representing institutions or groups crucial to foreign investment in the Soviet Union: an investment banker from Goldman Sachs; an official at the World Bank; Harvard economist Larry Summers; Dwayne Andreas of Archer-Daniels-Midland, a world agribusiness company, and a Soviet emigre in the United States who is wary of the new Soviet policies. Solman asks questions so that each individual describes the economic motivations of the institutions or businesses they represent. The result is coverage that uses human-interest angles (real bankers, real businesses) to convey impersonal economic forces. The viewer is left with two demands well satisfied: a demand for entertainment and a demand for accurate coverage of economic news.

Though MacNeil/Lehrer's coverage of economic policy is outstanding, its success in educating the public is still limited by the small segment of the television audience that has a taste for public-affairs coverage. In a Times-Mirror survey of media consumption in 1990, the percentages of respondents who reported "regular viewership" of such feature news programming were 43 per cent for news magazines such as 60 Minutes or 20/20, 24 per cent for CNN, 18 per cent for A Current Affair, 13 per cent for Entertainment Tonight, and 6 per cent for MacNeil-Lehrer. That segment of the audience the show attracts tends to be older and more highly educated. MacNeil-Lehrer watchers outscored regular watchers for news magazines, Sunday morning news shows and A Current Affair for each of the news quiz questions included in the Times-Mirror survey, such as identifying Vaclav Havel or the fate of Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu, with the exception of one question. News magazine and Current Affair watchers were more likely than viewers of the NewsHour to be able to identify Marla Maples, which may be further evidence

that MacNeil/Lehrer viewers have a different demand for "entertainment" news than the average television viewer.

## Elections And Economics

Candidates face similar constraints in conveying their message to audiences as newscasters and advertisers. Granted, a strategy of ambiguity may at times help candidates leave their own positions undefined while seizing the initiative in shaping voter perceptions of their opponents. Yet once candidates have decided on the messages they wish to convey, the public's demand for entertainment and rational disinterest in public affairs means that the candidates, too, will attempt to combine entertainment with education about their positions.

The 1988 campaign demonstrated that it is possible to summarize economic positions in succinct images, though the positions themselves may draw fire as well as attention. In the Iowa caucus season, Representative Richard Gephardt ran a memorable television ad that said, over a shot of American auto workers: "They work their hearts out every day trying to turn out a good product at a decent price. Then the Korean government slaps on nine separate taxes and tariffs. And when that government's done, a \$10,000 Chrysler K-car costs \$48,000 in Korea." The ad went on to say that with Gephardt as President the Koreans might be left asking themselves, "How many Americans are going to pay \$48,000 for one of their Hyundais?" The ad struck a populist chord in the electorate and engendered a score of critical articles about protectionism in the media. The ad also served the purpose of drawing attention to the candidate, for in the 1988 election cycle 120 articles in Nexis refer to Gephardt and the Hyundai.

Other candidates found similar ways to dramatize their economic positions. Bruce Babbitt stood up for taxes at candidate debates. Jesse Jackson included a show of hands test in his stump speech. How many in the audience own a VCR? he would ask. "There's not one American-made VCR," he would point

out. How many own an MX missile? he would ask. The implication? "Why are we in a deficit? We're making what ain't nobody buying. Don't nobody want no Midgetman missile for Christmas. Don't nobody want no 'Star Wars' for Christmas. They want Honda, Toyota, Sony, Panasonic and VCR."

Fighting for viewer attention and voter interest by dramatizing economic issues is a rational candidate reaction given the media's incentives to highlight entertainment political coverage. In their content analysis of stories during the 1984 Democratic primary season, Henry Brady and Richard Johnston found that only 3 per cent of the total UPI story lines on the Democratic field were devoted to economic issues; overall issues coverage accounted for 16 per cent of the UPI coverage, compared to 21 per cent for horse-race coverage and 23 per cent for "candidate" issues, such as human-interest or personal stories. They point out that the human-interest campaign stories can be viewed as informing the voters, for they do provide insight on the leadership qualities and personal stability of the candidates. Viewed from this vantage, one might even judge a candidate's ability to convey economic ideas through arresting imagery as a test of future ability to influence debates in Congress and the public over issues on the political agenda.

In the 1984 election, as in the 1980 election, close to a majority of national election survey respondents listed economic policy issues as the most pressing problem facing the country. Given the small quantity of economic issue coverage, however, one is left with the question implicit in Ronald Reagan's remark about South Succorash. President Reagan used the image of the interview with a laid-off worker to illustrate his belief that network television focused on the human-interest side of bad news. Research since his anecdotal analysis bears out his assumption, though perhaps with surprising implications. Analyzing network coverage of economic indicators, David Harrington found that in nonelection years

*continued on page 74*

# The Pro-Corporate Tilt

*Despite Some Impressive Gains, the Press Is Pathetically Inadequate In Covering Life-Threatening Industrial Misconduct*

BY MORTON MINTZ

A built-in, chronic tilt chills mainstream press coverage of grave, persisting, and pervasive abuses of corporate power. I will limit my case for this proposition to corporate murder, manslaughter, mayhem, and environmental rape; for simplicity's sake I will omit the savings and loan and other mainly financial scandals. In sum, my focus will be on blood, not bucks. An important reason for this focus is that, for decades now, the corporate potential to inflict bodily harm has been increasing rapidly, by reason of the onward march of perilous new technologies — chemical, nuclear, and others.

A case in point is the most terrible industrial disaster of all time. It occurred in 1984 in Bhopal, India, where Union Carbide had a plant that used a gas called methyl isocyanate. A leak of the gas left between 2,000 and 5,000 dead, possibly as many as 200,000 harmed and at least 30,000 to 40,000 seriously hurt.

The tilt "robs the public of a chance to understand the real world," Ben Bagdikian wrote in "The Media Monopoly." But few Americans are aware of the tilt (or "institutional bias," as he called it). That's hardly surprising: the subject is rarely mentioned by newspapers, broadcasters and big-circulation magazines.

## About the Word "Tilt"

*The word fits the facts.*

It lays emphasis on observable reality, not on moral judgment or self-righteousness. It reflects courageous, excellent coverage as well as non-coverage and erratic, distorted, and inadequate coverage. It is also the net result of a gamut of causes and motives,

including: bias, boosterism, careerism, cowardice, libel risks, economic imperatives, friendships, ignorance, lack of resources, laziness, protection of news sources, retreats from investigative reporting, stupidity, suppression, survival instincts and the pro-business orientation of owners and of the managers they hire.

*The word needs historical context.*

Well into the 20th Century, much of the press was an appalling swamp of prostitution to corporate power. No one has documented this more thoroughly than George Seldes, the magnificent reporter who became the fiercest critic of the American press it has ever had (see, for example, his curl-your-hair revelations about the Associated Press and other major press organizations in his 1937 book "Freedom of the Press"). Yet for decades Seldes (who, by the way, will be 101 years old in November), has been praising the press for a sea-change improvement. When he won a George Polk award in 1982, he said that "the honor roll of good newspapers has increased impressively . . . [there is] an almost revolutionary change that has resulted in the nation's having a fairer and more honest press than ever before."

It's easy to forget how corrupt things once were. Consider an expose' in 1905 by Collier's magazine titled "The Patent Medicine Conspiracy against the Freedom of the Press." At the time, the Proprietary Association of America was spending about \$40 million a year on newspaper advertising, much of it for quack medications, good or bad, for man or beast. Association president Frank J. Cheney told an association meeting how to influence the press: ". . . I, inside of the last two years, have

made [advertising] contracts with between 15 and 16,000 newspapers [presumably including a great many weeklies] . . . This is what I have in every contract I make: 'It is hereby agreed that should your State or the United States Government pass any law that would interfere with or prevent the sale of proprietary medicines, this contract shall become void' . . . I have carried this through and know it is a success. I know the papers will accept it . . . It throws the responsibility on the

Morton Mintz, *Nie-*  
*man Fellow '64,*  
*has been a reporter*  
*for 45 years, start-*  
*ing in St. Louis at*  
*the Star-Times and*  
*Globe-Democrat,*  
*both now long ex-*  
*ting. At the end of*  
*1958 he went to*  
*The Washington Post and, for nearly*  
*thirty years, afflicted the comfortable.*  
*He has a capacity for indignation,*  
*even outrage. This has been a cause of*  
*minor wonderment. Observant younger*  
*reporters have noted that it did not*  
*seem to diminish as he passed 50, then*  
*60, and even now as he nears 70. On*  
*occasion they have asked if he could*  
*explain it. His standard answer has*  
*been, "Ask Dr. Freud," meaning "Who*  
*knows?" Mintz has authored and co-*  
*authored several books, the latest being*  
*"At Any Cost: Corporate Greed,*  
*Women, and the Dalkon Shield" (New*  
*York: Pantheon, 1985). He has been*  
*freelancing for the last three years, and*  
*is chair of the fund-short Fund for In-*  
*vestigative Journalism.*





newspapers . . ."

Today, it is nearly inconceivable that the head of the Nonprescription Drug Manufacturers Association could strike, or even try to strike, deals like Cheney's, let alone dare to brag about them. Indeed, one could pick up the Washington Post on October 25, 1988, and see this page-one headline on a story in an investigative series:

### ***Drug Firm's Strategy: Avoid Trial, Ask Secrecy***

The firm was pharmaceutical industry giant Johnson & Johnson.

One could pick up the New York Times on July 4, 1991, and see this headline:

### ***Drug Maker Didn't Heed Warning of Deadly Effect***

The firm was another industry giant, Hoffmann-La Roche. There are many other wonderful examples of press integrity, whatever the lapses. The Associated Press that was condemned by George Seldes has long since been transformed. The disgraceful Chicago Tribune of Col. Robert McCormick and the awful Los Angeles Times of the old days are fading memories. The foul Philadelphia Inquirer of the Annenbergs became a great newspaper under Knight-Ridder's ownership and the leadership of Gene Roberts (NF '62). The ownership of The Washington Post had close ties to Allied Chemical, but when an Allied subsidiary massively polluted the James River, severely harming fishermen on the East Coast, the Post fully covered the story. The New York Times, after decades of knuckling under to the tobacco industry, has been hitting it hard for years.

But it would be a grievous error to conclude that the press no longer has a pro-corporate tilt or that its closets hold no more skeletons. For the moment, consider this one fact about the electronic press: With no threats or deals, mostly just to economize while deceptively looking good, local television stations without identifying the source have regularly been incorporating into *newscasts* sophisticated

video "news" releases that puff potent, often dangerous, prescription drugs. These videos are supplied free of charge by pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Seldes gave full and loving praise to the few papers that did tough corporate reportage, an outstanding example being The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, while a great many other papers were bought-and-paid-for mouthpieces of corporate interest, not least the newspaper industry. If I had to date the approximate start of the sea-change reforms that pleased George Seldes, I would suggest the early to mid-1960s. In that era of social ferment the press devoted deservedly tremendous attention to, for example, the late Senator Estes Kefauver's hearings on exorbitant prices for prescription drugs; to the story of thalidomide, the sedative/tranquilizer that caused the birth of thousands of armless, legless, or limbless children, nearly all of them in other countries; to Ralph Nader and automobile safety after General Motors had been shown to have tailed and harassed him; and to numerous other issues that cut close to life, safety, and health.

### **An Erratic Mix**

*The word allows for the persisting erratic mix of good and bad performances by leading news organizations.*

One such erratic pattern involves auto safety and The Washington Post. In the winter of 1965-1966, my late boss, Laurence Stern, made auto safety my beat, and I covered it — hard — for years. In recent times reflecting the way news is being redefined quite generally, Post management has been content with weak or nonexistent coverage of automobile safety issues, while publishing every Saturday an evaluation of whichever new car the auto-industry reporter has test-driven.

In early 1989, fairly typically, the Post "buried in the bowels of a long 'round-up column' in the back of the financial section [a one-sentence item reporting] that NHTSA [all readers know what that is, right?] is stepping up probes concerning more than 2.1 million 1987 and 1988 GM cars *because of complaints about poor braking, faulty steering,*

*and doors that fall off.*" (My italics.) Insofar as possible, the paper redeemed itself by publishing a column by the writer of the words just quoted, Post Ombudsman Richard Harwood (NF '56), in which he savaged several such atrocious news judgments. His column didn't change anything, of course, but that does not diminish the acuity of the insight with which he closed:

"Consumer" news is old hat in American newspapers, especially for our upscale clients. We have been evaluating ballet performances, symphony concerts, the Paris fashions and accommodations on the Riviera for years; our restaurant critic has been recently sampling Italian food in Boston for those who might wish to fly up this weekend. But the 'new' consumer news involving ripoffs, commercial fraud, product safety and the like has tended to fall between the cracks. We haven't known how to handle it or where to put it in the newspaper.

A radical idea would be to look at it as "news."

If there is no pro-corporate tilt, why on earth would it be "radical" to judge product-safety news not as "consumer news" or "corporate news," but simply as news?

Another example of the erratic pattern involves the drug industry and, principally, The New York Times. Early this year, some nut put cyanide in over-the-counter Sudafed cold capsules in Washington State. Burroughs Wellcome immediately recalled the product nationwide. Rightly, the story drew prominent press attention everywhere. But in stark contrast with the Sudafed case, in which, as in the earlier Tylenol episode, a drug company was a victim, prominent press attention was denied the story of Merital, in which people were victims of a drug company.

Merital was an occasionally lethal prescription antidepressant formerly marketed in more than 80 countries. An estimated 190,000 Americans took the drug in the six months in which it was sold in the United States. When the

manufacturer, Hoechst AG, a German-based multinational, asked the Food and Drug Administration to approve Merital for sale in the United States; it knew that at least 17 persons on the drug in other countries had died of hemolytic anemia. Forthright disclosure of the deaths risked FDA disapproval, even though a causal relationship in some of the cases was questionable. Hoechst took the easy way out: it didn't report the fatalities. Thus it was in ignorance of Merital's potential to kill that the FDA approved it, in July 1985, with an inadequate and therefore misleading official labeling. The prescribing instructions warned that the drug could cause hemolytic anemia, but *not* that the anemia could kill. In January 1986 Hoechst halted sales of the drug worldwide because of a rising incidence of the disease in users.

Hoechst's misconduct — violation of FDA regulations requiring prompt reporting of any serious and unexpected, or unexpectedly severe adverse drug reactions — was nailed down at a hearing of a House Government Operations subcommittee led by Congressman Ted Weiss (D-N.Y.). For example, Weiss brought out, Hoechst had learned in February 1981 that an Italian woman had died of hemolytic anemia probably caused by Merital. Yet, subcommittee counsel Daniel W. Sigelman established, Hoechst had delayed reporting the fatality for five-and-a-half years, until June 1986, which was six months after it had stopped selling Merital.

The House hearing was thinly covered, and the stories on it drew predictably little prominence or attention. The *Post's* appeared in the financial section. Last December 12, the U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, Michael Chertoff, issued a comprehensive press release on the filing of criminal misdemeanor charges against Hoechst and its former clinical research director, Dr. Rainer Zapf, of Frankfurt, Germany, for withholding from the FDA information on two deaths of Merital users that had occurred before the agency approved the drug. One of the users was the Italian woman; the other was a French patient whose death had been reported

to Hoechst in March 1984. In the French case, Chertoff said, Hoechst's own Drug Safety Department had judged it highly probable that Merital had been the cause of death.

By reading the March 1991 Public Citizen Health Research Group Health Letter, I learned that Hoechst and Zapf had agreed to plead guilty. On April 29, in Newark, they entered the pleas and received the maximum allowable fines, \$202,000 and \$2,000, respectively. Hoechst's plea, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul A. Weissman, made it the first foreign drug manufacturer to be successfully prosecuted for failing to provide the FDA with reports of adverse drug reactions occurring outside the United States. It was also important — and newsworthy — that Hoechst followed two American drug companies, Smith Kline (for Selaeryn) and Eli Lilly (for Oraflex), in being convicted and trivially fined for withholding information on foreign deaths. Such a sequence raised the possibility of an industry-wide pattern.

### All the News That's Fit to Print?

Surely the pleas and the sentences were a significant national and international story. It drew five paragraphs on page B3 of *The Wall Street Journal* — not much, but something. In *The New York Times*, however, the filing of the criminal charges got two paragraphs at the bottom of page D4; both the agreement to plead guilty and the actual pleas and sentences went unreported. Would the publisher or editors of the *Times* enjoy defending the proposition that this criminal case did not deserve better from the newspaper with a daily page-one ear preposterously bragging about "All the News That's Fit to Print"?

Underlying the pathetically inadequate coverage of life-threatening corporate misconduct is the everlasting embrace by the press of a truly absurd but wondrously convenient rationale for pro-corporate tilt: in an industrial society government constitutes the whole of governance. Yet it is beyond doubt that the large corporation has always governed, most importantly by deciding

whether untold numbers of people will live or die, will be injured, or will sicken.

The large corporation governs *directly*. I was jarringly awakened to this glaring truth in 1962 by the story of thalidomide. It was in the first instance governance by a corporation, not by government, that visited a terrible fate on the deformed children and their families. But let's leap to the present — to an ongoing example of direct, life-and-death corporate governance that to this day has drawn zero attention in most newspapers and magazines.

Liability insurers know of product defects that continue to injure and kill unsuspecting consumers yet resolutely refuse to share that knowledge with government regulatory agencies and the public. The National Highway Traffic Safety Agency provides an illustration. While it test-crashes cars equipped with dummies to determine how safe or unsafe they are, insurers refuse to release to NHTSA the data in their files on millions of cars that crashed with real people in them.

Another case concerns the Dalkon Shield intrauterine device. The longer it was worn, the greater possibility that its defective retrieval string would cause a life-threatening pelvic infection that could render the woman forever unable to bear a child. While hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of women were still wearing the contraceptive device in utter ignorance of the hazard to which they were exposed, Aetna Casualty & Surety, the product insurer, knew of it but was silent.

Approximately 21 million U.S. workers have been exposed to asbestos. Over the next quarter-century, several hundred thousand of them are expected to die of asbestos-induced cancer. In the 1985 book "Outrageous Misconduct," which was serialized by *The New Yorker*, Paul Brodeur wrote that by 1981, many of the insurers of the manufacturers of asbestos products "had known for decades that asbestos workers were dying early, but had kept silent while their underwriters wrote policies for workmen's compensation and comprehensive general liability as fast as they

could put pen to paper."

Brodeur proved that the insurers had known the truth from their own "actuarial tables, ratings schedules, physicians' reports, workmen's compensation claims, underwriting guidelines, and safety-and-engineering manuals." "If at some point along the way, Aetna, Travelers, Commercial Union, Liberty Mutual, INA, Hartford, Home, Lloyd's, or any of the other major insurers of the asbestos industry had gone public with their inside knowledge," he writes, "they might well have been able to save tens of thousands of lives and untold suffering and pain."

The large corporation also governs *indirectly*. It does so by governing the government, just as do other clout-wielding private interests, including trade associations and unions. Governing the government is exactly what all of the above do when they buy legislators with, say, fat election-campaign contributions, honoraria and expense-paid vacations. Indirect corporate governance is too well known to need elaboration here.

There is, I believe a strange, undetected influence of corporate governance on the system of rewards and punishments in the nation's newsrooms. It is a system that leads inexorably to desensitization. People go along to get along, consciously or unconsciously abandoning professional journalistic principles along the way. At least 60 years ago, the historian Frederick Lewis Allen wrote: "Editors and reporters find out what pays is to write the sort of news-stories which pleases the man at the top . . . They put their jobs first and the truth second . . . the whole process of corrupting the news, where corruption today exists, is less often the deliberate work of men bent on falsehood than a process of drifting before the winds of circumstance, timidity and self-interest."

I believe Allen's words are still true. Desensitization breeds indifference not only to news of that corporate misconduct which directly and profoundly affects life, safety, health and the environment, but also to other important areas of news that may superficially

seem unrelated. The outstanding areas I have in mind are regulatory agencies, Capitol Hill and court proceedings that produce highly revealing, important, legally privileged and otherwise unavailable information, and the White House and Presidential election campaigns.

### 1. Regulatory agencies

In 1987, the FDA approved two prescription drugs intended to prevent a particular type of irregular heartbeat. The medicines were Bristol-Myers's Enkaid and 3M Riker's Tambocor. In 1989, Dr. Joel Morganroth, director of cardiac research at the University of Pennsylvania's hospital in Philadelphia, surveyed 1,000 cardiologists who had prescribed the medicines during a nationwide trial. On the basis of the survey he concluded that up to 3,000 Americans who had taken the drugs may have died prematurely as a result. *Physician's Weekly* called the trial a "sudden-death debacle."

The AP moved a comprehensive story on Morganroth's survey. On July 26, 1989, the story appeared in *Investor's Daily*. It also appeared in *The Washington Times*; the four-column headline, on page A3, was: "3,000 may have died from two heart drugs." It did not appear in *The Washington Post*.

### 2. Capitol Hill

Over and over, the Washington press corps kisses off truly important, investigative hearings. One example emerged from a year's investigation of the most lethal defective medical device in American history: at the time, it was known to have failed in, and caused the deaths of, at least 250 persons. The device was a particular model of the Bjork-Shiley mechanical heart valve. A defect caused a strut, a key component, to fracture while it was implanted in the body.

The investigation, made by the investigative subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, culminated in an all-day hearing in February 1990. The hearing produced a great deal of previously undisclosed information that was highly embarrassing to the manufacturer, Shiley, Inc.; to

its owner, Pfizer Inc., a major pharmaceutical firm, and to the FDA as well. For example, a subcommittee chronology said: "Records provided by Shiley . . . show that the second known strut fracture occurred on July 15, 1979, . . . Shiley notified the FDA by phone on March 7, 1980, i.e., six months later. Other delays 'ranged from three weeks to as long as twenty-four months.'" A *Washington Post* reporter attended the hearing; no story ran in the newspaper.

In May 1987, the House subcommittee that had investigated Merital held a hearing on Suprol, a needless and expensive prescription painkiller that was used by approximately half-million Americans. Suprol caused reversible kidney failure in more than 300 middle-aged men. In addition to exposing the FDA's inexcusably complacent handling of Suprol, chairman Weiss and counsel Sigelman documented the failure of subsidiaries of Johnson & Johnson, the pharmaceutical conglomerate that had been glorified for its intelligent response to the Tylenol poisonings, to make required reports to the agency. Thousands of reporters represent the general press in Washington. None attended the hearing. This was not atypical.

### 3. The White House and Presidential campaigns

In 1981, in his very first days in the White House, Ronald Reagan signed an executive order creating the President's Task Force on Regulatory Relief and designating Vice President George Bush as chairman. Under his leadership, the task force set into motion severe cutbacks in government protections, almost across the board, against hazards in the marketplace and the workplace (not to mention the financial sector). Bush often boasted of his achievements. Yet during the 1988 Presidential campaign, so far as I know, no major news organization undertook to probe seriously for the answer to an absolutely elementary question: what had the task force done under Bush? Meanwhile, *The Washington Post*, in a series of elegant promotional ads, congratulated itself on going all-out to provide the voters with

all of the information they needed to know about the Presidential candidates.

### **Nader Group's Report Ignored**

However, Public Citizen, the public interest organization founded by Ralph Nader, did investigate the task force and Bush's leadership of it. About two weeks before the election, on October 24, Public Citizen called a news conference on Capitol Hill to release a 52-page report. The findings were summarized in a press release, which charged that the task force had "undermined a system of health and safety standards that has taken America over 80 years to achieve." It went on to say:

The record is brutal, indeed. At least 40,000 deaths and one million injuries can be traced to the Administration's delay in requiring air bags and automatic safety belts in cars. Hundreds of thousands of infants were fed nutritionally deficient formula while Bush and the OMB [Office of Management and Budget] delayed rules requiring testing of infant formula, and thousands of babies and young children suffered the serious and often fatal Reye's Syndrome disease while the Administration stonewalled rules to place warning labels on aspirin products linked to Reye's Syndrome in children.

Not a word on the report appeared in the news columns of The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, or The Washington Post. Indeed, the press conference sign-up sheets, which I have seen, do not carry the signature of a reporter from any of these most influential newspapers. To get its message out, Public Citizen finally bought ads, which were seen by far fewer people than would have seen news stories in those papers.

In an article several weeks after the election, Christopher Drew of The Chicago Tribune, who during the campaign wrote a superb series on workplace hazards in the meatpacking industry, said this: "An extensive Tribune

investigation has found that President Reagan's emphasis on deregulation has left millions of workers vulnerable to death and serious injury from hazards in the workplace. As Vice President, Bush has been a chief architect of that drive."

"I think of the press's long winter nap during the Reagan years when all those giant stories were missed or botched," Thomas Winship, president of the Center for Foreign Journalists and the Boston Globe's former top editor, said in a talk published in the Winter 1990 Nieman Reports. "The press missed completely the full impact and significance of Reagan's overarching crusade to deregulate the Federal government. And we all forget that Vice President Bush was assigned to develop and to carry out that policy by President Reagan. The book on the total cost of deregulation in lives and dollars has yet to be written."

### **Some Still Snoozing**

Do you think that snoozing publishers or top editors would care to defend this performance in public?

Some are still snoozing. In 1989, the Bureau of National Affairs reported, the Bush Administration shifted more than \$200,000 from the budget of the Justice Department unit that prosecutes companies involved in workplace deaths to the unit that prosecutes obscenity violations. This insight into Bush Administration values got a buried paragraph in The Wall Street Journal on April 28, 1989, and no space at all to my knowledge, in other major papers.

In another odd phenomenon of pro-corporate tilt, vital issues that do draw prominent press attention somehow become nonissues in the coverage of Presidential campaigns. In May 1988, while the Presidential campaign was heating up, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop released a report in which his expert scientific advisers on tobacco pronounced nicotine to be as addictive as heroin. I have not heard of a campaign reporter asking a question such as this of George Bush or Michael Dukakis:

"Mr. Vice President (or Governor), do you agree with the Surgeon General's

advisers that tobacco is as addictive as heroin? If you agree, will you target tobacco in your war on drugs and support proposed legislation to ban tobacco advertising and promotion? If you disagree, what is your scientific basis for doing so?"

Nor have I heard of reporters at the White House asking President Bush questions like these:

"Mr. President, was Vice President Quayle speaking for you when he said in North Carolina, in July 1990, that our tobacco exports should be expanded aggressively because Americans are smoking less?"

"Mr. President, consultants to the World Health Organization estimate that cigarettes are likely to kill 500 million of the people now alive — one-tenth of the current population of the planet — if current smoking patterns continue unchanged. Do you agree or disagree with Assistant Secretary of Health James O. Mason that, to quote him, 'it is unconscionable for the mighty transnational tobacco companies . . . to be peddling their poison abroad,' and that these companies, quoting him again, 'play our free trade laws and export policies like a Stradivarius violin?'"

### **Court proceedings**

Diseases induced by smoking, the government says, killed more than 434,000 Americans in 1988 alone, accounting for better than one of every six preventable deaths. So during the years in which millions of smokers died prematurely important questions such as the following cried out for answers: What did the cigarette manufacturers and their trade organizations know — and perhaps try not to find out — about the hazards of lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease and other smoking-related afflictions? When? What did they do?

Lacking subpoena power, the press had no way to compel answers. But in the mid-1980s, a plaintiffs' lawyer, Marc Z. Edell, finally found a way. In a cigarette product-liability lawsuit brought by Rose and Antonio Cipollone, Edell won pretrial court orders enabling him to deploy the resources, skills, and stamina sufficient to force Liggett

Group, Lorillard and Philip Morris to disgorge large numbers of hitherto confidential internal documents and to compel many of their executives and scientists to testify under oath.

## Secret Material Finally Released

The court orders bound Edell to keep secret nearly all of the choicest fruits of his labor for about four years — until the case went to trial in January 1988 in U.S. District Court in Newark. At that point, a great proportion of his discovery materials began to be put in evidence, making them public at last. Thus was the press handed on a platter an unprecedented, magnificent opportunity to inform the public about the secret life and conduct of three leading cigarette makers.

Here are just two of many samples of the kind of hitherto concealed, privileged information surfaced by Edell:

In 1972, Frederick R. Panzer, a vice president of the Tobacco Institute, wrote a "confidential" memo on the "holding strategy" that the tobacco industry had used for nearly 20 years to defend against the charge that smoking causes disease. Panzer acclaimed the strategy as "brilliantly conceived and executed" (by Hill and Knowlton, the global public relations firm) and said the industry had deployed the strategy "on three major fronts — litigation, politics and public opinion." The memo cited the strategy's three principal elements:

"Creating doubt about the health charge without actually denying it."

"Advocating the public's right to smoke, without actually urging them to take up the practice."

"Encouraging objective scientific research as the only way to resolve the question of health hazard."

In 1980, a letter from Robert B. Seligman, research vice president of Philip Morris U.S.A., to his Lorillard counterpart, Alexander W. Spears, listed three "subjects to be avoided" in industry-funded research: "1. Developing new tests for carcinogenicity; 2. Attempt[ing] to relate human disease to smoking; 3. Conduct[ing] experiments which require large doses of carcinogen

to show additive effect of smoking."

At the start of the trial, and for a few weeks thereafter, notwithstanding millions of tobacco-related deaths through the years, I was the only out-of-town newspaper reporter on hand; in all, I was in Newark for nine weeks, and I applaud and thank my editors at The Washington Post for making and standing by their commitment to have me there. Newsday arrived fairly soon, and The Philadelphia Inquirer shortly after that; and both hung in. The federal courthouse reporters for the AP and UPI covered on a daily basis despite a continuing heavy workload. CNN sent reporters and artists a few times. Surprisingly, the trial had been underway for several weeks before The New York Times made a serious commitment to coverage. No reporter showed up from the Media General newspapers in Richmond, where Philip Morris is the largest employer, or from tobacco country. Oddly, the hometown Newhouse-owned Newark Star-Ledger suspended coverage for a long period. Most national news organizations, including the three major television networks and The Wall Street Journal and The Los Angeles Times, finally began to staff the trial in early June, when the jury was about to begin to deliberate.

The examples of awesome press insensitivity — *numbness* — to horrendous corporate breaches of trust are all over the place. Here are two. The first, from late 1986, involved disclosure of the knowing and willful production and shipment, over a five-year period, of millions of jars of bogus apple juice. The chemical cocktail, albeit apparently harmless, went into the mouths of babies whose mothers and fathers had trusted the label on every jar. As is frequently the case, the breach of trust was not ferreted out by investigative reporters; it was disclosed in a Justice Department press release on a 470-count indictment of Beech-Nut Nutrition, owned by Nestle SA of Switzerland, and of two of Beech-Nut's top officers. Every last one of us having been a baby, the indictment of the country's second-largest baby-food supplier might have been assumed to be worthy

of page one. It was not so assessed by senior editors of the three papers I read regularly, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal. At The Post, the story was offered by the Justice Department reporter to the national desk, which rejected it; it landed on page one of the financial section.

The second example dates back to November 11, 1980, but I've never been able to forget it because it's so revealing. In The Washington Post's "Around the Nation" grab-bag column, on page A6, the first item was a yawn for 99 percent of newspaper readers in an East Coast city. The headline was,

## Chain Collisions Kill Seven in Fog on California Freeway

The fourth item, judged to merit only a small headline,

## Chemical Dumping Agreement

said in its entirety:

One of the nation's largest machinery and chemical manufacturers, the FMC Corp., was fined \$35,000 and agreed to pay \$1 million into an environmental trust fund after it pleaded guilty to charges of concealing the secret dumping of a deadly chemical into West Virginia and Ohio waterways.

The chemical, carbon tetrachloride, showed up in municipal water supplies in Huntington, W. Va.; Cincinnati and Louisville in 1975 and was traced by the Environmental Protection Agency to an FMC plant in South Charleston, W. Va., on the south bank of the Kanawha River, which flows into the Ohio River.

Queried by the EPA, the firm said it was dumping only 100 pounds of the chemical into the Kanawha River each day, when its records, later obtained by the EPA, disclosed that more than 3,000



pounds were being dumped into the river daily.

That last item makes a further point: the pro-corporate tilt is nowhere clearer than in the way the press defines crime. Overwhelmingly, it's in terms of the personally inflicted violent offenses that have beset us since the first cave man picked up a club — murder, rape, robbery. Yet this definition has been ludicrously inadequate for well over a century — since the advent of the Industrial Revolution. That's when impersonal crime committed by the large corporation — and morally reprehensible conduct not violative of criminal laws — began to flourish and to inflict vastly greater harm on life, limb and pocketbook than the traditional offenses. Yet the press constantly downplays serious corporate misconduct.

### Rewriting a Rhyme

A minor rewrite of an old folk rhyme captures my point:

*The press exposes both man and woman  
Who steals the goose from off the common,  
but lets the corporation loose  
That steals the common from the goose.*

Only a few decades after the Industrial Revolution, Edward Alsworth Ross, a sociologist at the University of Wisconsin, published a brilliant little book, "Sin and Society," on the ethical and moral dilemmas created by the large corporation. That was 84 years ago, but I know of no one who has surpassed his piercing clarity and insight. Here is an excerpt, in his unique prose style:

... the patent ruffian is confined to the social basement and enjoys few opportunities. He can assault, or molest, to be sure; but he cannot betray. Nobody depends on him, so he cannot commit breach of trust — that arch sin of our time. He does not hold in his hand the safety or welfare or money of the public. He is the clinker, not the live coal, vermin, not beast of prey. *Today, the villain most in need of curbing is the respectable, exemplary, trusted personage who, strategically placed at the*

*focus of spider-web of fiduciary relations, is able from his office-chair to pick a thousand pockets, or imperil a thousand lives. It is the great-scale, high-voltage sinner that needs the shackle. (My italics)*

A former federal judge, in a personal letter to me in 1989, put it this way: "It seems ironic that in this country you can kill for money and get away with it — so long as you are incorporated for that purpose." A few years ago, the iconoclastic Robert Sherrill began an article in *Grand Street*, a quarterly, with a fresh look at the death penalty:

There are something over 1,500 men and women on the death rows of America. Given the social context in which they operated, one might reasonably assume that they were sentenced to be executed not because they are murderers but because they were inefficient. Using guns and knives and the usual footpad paraphernalia, they dispatched only a few more than their own number. Had they used asbestos, mislabeled pharmaceutical drugs and devices, defective autos and illegally used and illegally disposed chemicals, they could have killed, crippled, and tortured many thousands of people. And they could have done it without very much fuss.

It's no surprise that the pro-corporate tilt is often steepest in editorial pages. The late William E. Chilton III, of *The Charleston Gazette* in West Virginia, was a unique publisher. His motto was "Sustained Outrage." He went after his fellow publishers for having editorial pages that "sound like what they are, the voice of an extremely wealthy corporation." On a single day, *The Nation* recalled after his death in 1987, his paper editorially denounced E.F. Hutton as a "scum bag company" and the Manville corporation as "slimy." The contrast I will offer here derives its force from an unavoidably detailed summary of the often startling facts.

### Not A Single Post Editorial

The case involved *The Washington Post* and the aforementioned Dalkon Shield, the defective IUD at the center of one of the most disastrous episodes of American corporate misconduct in this century. When it entered the worldwide market in January 1971, it had not been tested for safety in either on animals or women; it had been fraudulently tested for effectiveness. Physicians implanted it in about three million women before the manufacturer, A.H. Robins of Richmond, ended U.S. sales in June 1974. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of these women suffered life-threatening pelvic infections and related destruction or impairment of their ability ever to bear a child. At least 18 died in the United States; how many died elsewhere, particularly in the Third World, where no one counted, is unknowable.

The catastrophe was utterly preventable. Robins knew full well, and early on, of the continuing danger to Dalkon Shield wearers. It could have minimized the toll, drastically, simply by recalling the device in, say, 1974. Instead, with the connivance (not mere silence) of its product insurer, Aetna Casualty & Surety, Robins stonewalled and lied for 10 years before finally ordering a recall.

In 1985, inundated by product-liability lawsuits, Robins filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. Shortly, federal prosecutors began an investigation into charges that Robins had, quoting a subsequent brief filed by the Justice Department in the Supreme Court, "engaged in ongoing criminal and fraudulent activity for roughly 15 years and used its attorneys to further and cover up these illegal activities," including possible "obstruction of justice, false declarations before the grand jury, and racketeering." In January 1990, without explanation, the Justice Department abandoned the criminal investigation it had conducted for nearly five years.

In 1986 the federal judge presiding in the bankruptcy proceeding held Robins in civil contempt, and in 1987 he held it in criminal contempt for "deliberate defiance" of a court order. Also in 1987, the Kansas Supreme Court voted 7 to 0

to affirm a jury award to a Dalkon Shield victim of \$9.2 million, including a record \$7.5 million in punitive damages. Never before, the unanimous judges said, had a Kansas appellate court "been presented with corporate misconduct of such gravity and duration."

In 1989, a Dalkon Shield trust fund of approximately \$2.5 billion was created, and it made the first small payments to some of the nearly 200,000 Dalkon Shield users who had been injured as far back as 1971, and who had survived court eligibility screenings. Finally, consider that the Dalkin Shield was developed in The Post's front yard, Baltimore, and that it was manufactured by a company in its back yard, Richmond.

None of the foregoing was suppressed. Anything but: the unfolding story, many times, drew widespread attention. At the Post, I began to report the story in 1973; in 1985 I did a five-part series — researched at great length and at considerable cost to The Post. But not once during the more than fifteen years that the Post was chronicling this atrocious episode in its news columns did it publish a single editorial on any aspect of the story.

- Not on the unprecedented tragedy of massive disease and sterility.
- Not on the Chapter II case.
- Not on the contempt citations.
- Not on the condemnation of Robins's conduct with which Kansas's highest court unanimously upheld a \$7.5 million award of punitive damages.
- Not on the lengthy grand jury investigation.
- Not on the Justice Department's characterization of Robins's conduct.
- Not on the adequacy of the trust fund.

Nor has The New York Times, nor, to my knowledge, The Wall Street Journal, commented editorially.

I may be reaching, but it's not implausible to suggest this: the long-sustained absence of editorials in these newspapers on a human disaster of such stunning magnitude implied — wholly mistakenly — that corporate conduct in grossest violation of our basic ethical and religious heritage is too freakish to

engage editorial writers and the publishers for whom they speak. Yet the reality of every industrial society is that corporate misconduct imperiling life, safety and health on a great scale is pervasive.

## Diluting the Dialogue

The absence of editorial resonance, I also believe, has two additional adverse effects: it dilutes the potential, such as it is, for a much-needed serious public dialogue about corporate crime and misconduct and it sends an unfortunate signal to the corporate community that corporate murder, manslaughter — or womenslaughter — need fear no editorial-page sting.

Excepting the tobacco industry, the norm for many mainstream editorial pages and columnists is silence about corporate crime and misconduct, even when it is prolonged and inexcusable as that of Robins, although editorials coinciding with corporate viewpoints somehow do appear. On July 11, 1989, for example, one Washington Post editorial opposed punitive damages (intensely disliked by corporate wrongdoers), while another claimed that when the FDA "approves a drug, it is almost certainly both safe and effective" (the claim, often made by drug companies, is false, as shown by Merital, Suprol, Oralflex, Selacryn and other drugs whose hazards emerged only after FDA approval).

Moreover, in my experience, at least, it is rare, if not unheard of, for editorials to name and hold personally accountable the corporate officers, directors, and decision-makers responsible for the murder, mayhem and abuses of the environment committed in the names of the companies they lead. Yet, to paraphrase a slogan of the National Rifle Association, corporations don't kill people, people do.

The dangers of corporate governance that does not violate criminal laws but is morally repugnant cannot be over-emphasized. Consider the timeless truth that emerges from a candid exchange of letters six decades ago between Lamont duPont, president of E.I. duPont de Nemours, and Alfred P. Sloan, Jr.,

president of General Motors.

At the time, Ford had for years been using safety glass for windshields, while GM was using only plain flat glass in Chevrolets. On impact, such glass breaks into shards, disfiguring, slashing, killing. For sound business reasons — his company would reap a large profit — Lamont duPont urged Sloan to buy safety glass for Chevrolets. For sound business reasons, Sloan refused: he did not, as I see it, care that what was good for General Motors was not good for the country.

"Accidents or no accidents," Sloan wrote, "my concern in this matter is a matter of profit and loss," adding that Ford's use of safety glass "is no reason why we should do so. I am trying to protect the stockholders of General Motors and the Corporation's operating position — it is not my responsibility to sell safety glass . . . You can say, perhaps, that I am selfish, but business is selfish. We are not a charitable institution — we are trying to make a profit for our stockholders."

Sloan broke no laws. Indeed, I believe, he saw himself as a man of conscience. Then and for decades afterward, similarly, GM and other auto industry executives broke no laws when they allowed cranks, handles, and knobs to protrude toward knees and skulls. Nor did they break criminal laws in resisting life-saving air bags for eighteen years.

"I surround myself with people who generally see the way I do," Los Angeles Times Publisher Otis Chandler has said. Could it be otherwise? Some meat was put on that bone by William Allen White, the legendary Kansas Republican who owned, published, and edited The Emporia Gazette. "The owners of newspaper investments, whether they are bankers, stockholders of a corporation, or individuals, feel a rather keen sense of financial responsibility," he said in an extraordinary but widely neglected speech in 1938. "The sense of property goes trilling down the line," he continued. "It produces a slant and a bias." Similarly, William Greider, a former assistant managing editor of The Washington Post, said in a 1989 (Post)

Oped piece: "Some admirable owners like the Post's are much more tolerant than others, but inevitably the owner's outlook will define the boundaries of what gets printed, what gets excluded."

## Imagine Nader On Post Board

Now imagine the unimaginable: Katharine Graham names Ralph Nader an outside director of the Washington Post Company. Surely Washington Post editors and reporters would see in this a signal from Mrs. Graham that consumer news and investigations of corporate misconduct merit more attention and support. Then surely it's also reasonable to assume that an opposite signal is sent by the routine loading of her board — and the boards of all other large media organizations — with outside directors from the big-business community.

Chairman Graham alone, as a practical matter, decides who sits on her board. Only friends or persons who have her complete trust become outside directors. In consequence, much about her views may be divined from her selections. Overwhelmingly, they have been people lacking persuasive credentials as no-strings-attached representatives of journalistic independence in the public. To be sure, one, George W. Wilson, is president of the Concord Monitor in New Hampshire. His appeal was surely enhanced by his long legal battle for an objective for which The Washington Post has also fought in the courts: having reporters declared "professionals" under the wages and hours law, so that publishers can deny them premium pay for overtime work.

A relatively new outside director, named in November 1989, is James E. Burke, retired chairman and chief executive officer of Johnson & Johnson. During his tenure, the ethical conduct of this international pharmaceutical manufacturer and/or its subsidiaries has repeatedly come under fire:

- From a Washington Post(!) series showing that during five years of litigation in 43 states, the company used court secrecy procedures — protective orders — to prevent the disclosure of information about an unnecessary prescription painkiller, Zomax, which figured in at least 14 deaths and 403 life-threatening allergic reactions.
- From Congressman Weiss's subcommittee, for failing to tell the FDA and the medical community promptly and fully of the kidney failures caused by Suprol, another unnecessary prescription painkiller discussed earlier.
- From a Canadian court, which found that Johnson & Johnson withheld from Canadian physicians essential warnings about an oral contraceptive that it gave to U.S. physicians.
- From plaintiffs in a lawsuit who successfully alleged fraud in connection with a machine that reduces or eliminates pain with electricity.
- From 3M Company, which, also in a civil lawsuit, demonstrated infringement of a patent.

I believe that a record of this kind should have disqualified Burke from consideration as an outside director of any news organization, and that this appointment carries an undeniable large potential to send a highly troubling signal to the staff, particularly about hard coverage of the drug industry.

## Sitting on a Story For Three Months

By the end of 1988, the Post's weekly Health section had published some tough articles about highly questionable conduct by pharmaceutical houses, including Johnson & Johnson. Things changed. For about three months in 1989, for example, Health sat on a freelancer's carefully researched, important and timely story on astonishingly disproportionate price increases for prescription drugs — increases that far outpaced inflation and that punish the taxpayers and the elderly, sick, and poor. Finally, a Health senior editor sent him a form rejection letter saying — preposterously — that the piece didn't meet the section's needs. Meanwhile,

the cover stories that did meet its needs included, perhaps oddly for a section named Health, one on problems with lethal injections in executions. Another cover story was on killer bees. For a cover story in March, Health excerpted a five-month-old article from another magazine.

This must be said in fairness: I have no evidence to support an inference of a connection between the appointment of James Burke as an outside director and the softening of Health. It is a fact, too, that the drug-prices piece was rejected by three (nonhealth) periodicals — The Atlantic and the Sunday magazines of The Los Angeles Times and The New York Times — before being published by The Progressive. But I stand by my contention that the appointment of someone like Burke sends an undesirable signal.

Former New York Times reporter Tom Goldstein, in "The News at Any Cost: How Journalists Compromise Their Ethics to Shape the News" (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), wrote: "At The New York Times, in 1984, Richard Gelb, chairman of the Bristol-Myers Company, had been a director of the Times for 10 years, a fact that business reporters for the Times cannot possibly be unaware of when they write about his [drug] company." Goldstein did not say what difference, if any, the awareness may have made, other than implying — unsurprisingly — that Gelb had easy access to the ruling family. Still, the ethical rap sheet on Bristol-Myers is sufficiently similar to Johnson & Johnson's that if James Burke should be ineligible for membership on the board of a news organization, Gelb should have been, too. At the time, incidentally, the Time had a second outside director from a drug company, Merck; the Post had none.

Another Washington Post Company outside director who is an eminence in Corporate America is Nicholas deB. Katzenbach. For many years senior vice president and general counsel of IBM, he is now a partner in a corporate law firm whose clients include Johnson & Johnson and R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Another outside director,

- From the FDA, which in June asked the Justice Department to consider criminal prosecuting the company for promoting a drug called Retin-A for an unapproved use (wrinkle reduction).

George J. Gillespie, is a long-time partner in Cravath, Swaine & Moore, the nation's premiere corporate law firm — and one of the Post company's law firms.

Today we are well into a new era in which the reforms I cited at the outset are accompanied by depressing economic trends. Inevitably the great shrinkage in media advertising revenues has triggered sharp cutbacks in news staffs and belt-tightening at many newspapers and at all the television networks. This is bound to cut deeply into the will and the resources available to investigate and report corporate misconduct. More news people than at any time in my career fear unemployment, and with reason; so timidity may fairly be presumed to be on the rise. In 1986, General Electric bought RCA, the parent company of NBC. In 1989, officials of NBC News deleted three sentences critical of GE from a segment of a five-part Today show series on the use of bogus and substandard materials in American industry. In 1991, who would argue that GE's ownership provides an environment at NBC that is conducive to enterprise reporting on, say, fraud in military procurement by GE?

The chairman of CBS, Laurence Tisch, heads Loews Corporation, owner of Lorillard, a major cigarette manufacturer. Loews also owns CNA, an insurance company that, perhaps ironically, discounts premiums on life insurance for nonsmokers. Can I prove that the environment at CBS for enterprise reporting on smoking and on abuses in the insurance industry has been adversely affected by Mr. Tisch? No. Do I believe it's a good environment for such reporting? No. Do I believe that at no time has an editor or reporter backed away, or will back away, from stories in these areas out of fear of the consequences? No.

In the late 1970's Steve Weinberg, later director of Investigative Reporters & Editors, and Peter Dreier, then assistant professor of sociology at Tufts University, made a year-long study of nearly 300 directors of the nation's 25 largest newspaper companies and found "thousands of interlocks with institu-

tions the papers cover — or fail to cover — every day." They wrote in an illuminating report in 1979 in the *Columbia Journalism Review*:

The directors of these companies, whose dailies account for more than half the circulation of all American newspapers, sit on the boards of regional, national, and multinational business corporations. Many are partners or directors of banks, insurance companies, and corporate law firms . . . Overall, the directors are linked with powerful business organizations, not with public interest groups; with management, not labor; with well-established think tanks and charities, not their grassroots counterparts.

The directors are overwhelmingly white and male, and drawn from among the most privileged members of society . . . Most of the outside directors . . . have no newspaper experience.

Dreier and Weinberg cited the example of the Times Mirror Company, owner of The Los Angeles Times and Newsday (and now The Baltimore Sun). The company "has more than two dozen interlocks with Fortune 1,300 companies (the 1,000 largest industrial and 50 each of the largest banks, insurers, financial companies, utilities, retailers, and transportation companies)," they wrote.

They also pointed out that "Ford Motor Company — which has a pervasive impact on American society through its products, its annual sales of \$43 billion, and its work force of half a million — shares directors with the corporations that publish The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Los Angeles Times." For some years two former top officers of Ford, Robert S. McNamara and Arjay Miller, sat on the board of the Post company (Miller is no longer there). Let me know if you can find a vocal critic of the auto industry — maybe *any* industry — on the board of any large media corporation.

Benjamin C. Bradlee, the famed,

recently retired Executive Editor of The Washington Post, has praised Mrs. Graham and her son, Donald E. Graham, publisher of the newspaper, as "good owners." They are. He went on to say, at a conference in Prague last year: "I define them this way: people who have an all-consuming commitment to excellence, to fairness, to independence; people who are beholden to no outsiders; . . ." Bradlee would be happy, I suspect, if one and all were to infer that at the Post "[t]he sense of property" does not go "trilling down the line," producing "a slant and a bias" or pro-corporate tilt. On the basis of long experience, much evidence (including the makeup of the board of directors), and common sense, such an inference would go too far.

Indeed, only a month after Prague, Bradlee himself implicitly acknowledged that the "all-consuming commitment" had frayed. "We're less concerned with taking risks now that we're successful and 25 years older," he was quoted as saying in a Time article on The Post in August 1990. He also acknowledged that "[t]here is a certain conservatism that has set in." And in a June interview with The New York Times, he "conceded . . . that the Post might be somewhat less aggressive than it once was, but he said he thought that was true of journalism generally in the Reagan Administration years." I believe that those engaging in corporate misconduct will be prime beneficiaries of the fewer risks taken, of the "certain conservatism," of the lessened aggressiveness and of what has been "true of journalism generally" over the past decade.

To Bradlee's heir, Leonard Downie, as to publisher Donald Graham, "conservatism" comes easily — more easily than to Ben Bradlee, who, it should be noted, has become a director of the Washington Post Company. As Time said, Downie "is less willing to take on the powerful and needle the pretentious." Large corporations, including those plugged into the board of directors, are surely "powerful."

In newsrooms, the filter-down pro-corporate tilt is more often sensed than

seen. It may be conveyed to editors at a daily news conference by silence; and it may take the form of self-censorship. Still, some reporter-friends I greatly admire don't share my belief that, however subtly, the slant and bias of owners and boards of directors of our best and greatest news organizations significantly influence what stories their news departments cover or do not cover, emphasize or de-emphasize, stay with or abandon, investigate or ignore. These friends say it would be unusual for them and many other colleagues even to know who the directors are. I don't doubt this. But I also believe that the realistic working assumption must be that even if they don't intend to, boards, owners, and the senior managers they hire send clear but generally unadmitted and undiscussed signals, particularly to editors and to fearful and on-the-make reporters. How else to explain why major areas of news are left unfurrowed, important stories are unassigned, safe stories get support and play, sensitive stories are tortured or killed?

Such results, I contend, are inconsistent with the responsibility of the press in our constitutional system. The people, the putative sovereign, have delegated power to the corporation in order to enhance efficiency in the economic sphere. They have not delegated power to the paper entity to knowingly and willfully impair and take life. So when the corporation abuses its power in this ultimate sense, it wholly lacks the political legitimacy conferred by the consent of the governed. The Framers of the Constitution provided an intricate system of checks and balances on the exercise of power by the branches of government. The press proudly acknowledges its high duty to monitor this exercise of power. But the press also has a high duty, seldom acknowledged, to monitor the exercise of corporate power because the large corporation also governs.

## Reporters Learn What Is Wanted

Back to the system of rewards and punishments. However subtly it operates in newsrooms, people learn what kind of reporting is wanted and rewarded.

They also learn what kind is unwanted and discouraged — by, say, the editing of hard-hitting stories into mush, burial of page-one stories and recalls of unsafe consumer products in back pages, and denial of merit pay increases and promotions.

In the Columbia Journalism Review last year, Ralph Nader criticized consumer coverage by The New York Times, former Executive Editor A.M. Rosenthal denounced the criticism as "loony", and Frances Cerra, an outstanding consumer investigative reporter who joined the Times after winning a George Polk award at Newsday, upheld Nader. "The fact is that the Times never wanted stories critical of consumer treatment by major corporations," she said in a letter to CJR.

I served as the Times's consumer reporter for six years — from 1974 to 1980 — until I was demoted to Long Island reporter after I failed to report enough service stories . . . the shopping hints, the how-to-get-a-better-bargain stories. But I was always far more interested in investigative stories, in seeing, for example, whether skyrocketing insurance rates for malpractice were truly justified. I did a series of these issues, noting along the way the revolving door between the regulators and the regulated, and the political ties of the powerful lawyers who represented the industry.

These stories, and others like them, never earned me any compliments. In fact, I was called on the carpet for describing one such lawyer as "politically connected."

She came to realize that her new bosses had hired her to answer "the criticism that the Times had been neglecting consumer coverage," and that they "had no interest in my work." Her investigative reporting of the Long Island Lighting Company's financial fiasco with its Shoreham nuclear plant became the last straw. It led to suppression of an important story and her removal from the LILCO beat. LILCO "silenced reporters like me," she wrote.

She finally resigned in 1983.

Cerra's experience resonates with Ronald Kessler's at The Washington Post. In the early 1980s, he did a path-breaking series on the life-insurance industry. In an irrational, hellish process lasting more than three years, he was directed to cut the series from 10 parts to six, then to three. Later, it became four parts. Finally, it became a highly compressed single article, published in a typographically repellent format. Yet Kessler's unused material was good enough and fresh enough to become a major portion of a well-reviewed book. He later resigned.

For reasons never made clear, a corporate-scandal series of my own languished for seven months. Not until another newspaper persuaded a federal judge to unseal the documents on which my series was based did I get a go ahead. In a letter on another topic, I mentioned to Ben Bradlee that I had endured many such episodes of "morale-crushing discouragement and nibblings to death" and "abusive extremes." He replied with a dismissal of the quoted phrases as my spin on what "the editors of this newspaper, honestly and with principle, call editing."

## Special Praise For The Journal

It would be accurate as well as fair to accuse me of having accentuated the negative. Indeed I have. So now I will begin to accentuate the positive. For example, I will cite superb reporting of many grave episodes of corporate misconduct affecting life, safety, health, and the environment. By CBS's "60 Minutes," ABC's "20-20," the network evening news programs, Public Broadcasting's "Front Line," National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Detroit Free Press, and others. A special word about The Wall Street Journal. It is peerless in its reporting of government actions and prosecutions of corporate misconduct, an area of news indefensibly slighted by many news organizations including, as I have tried to show, The New York

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# German View: U.S. Myopia

*America's Press, Like Its Business, Emphasizes  
Short-Term Results Rather Than Potential*

BY DIETER BUHL

"America's business," Calvin Coolidge once said, "is business." No matter how one judges the 30th President of the United States, he certainly was right in his time. He would be even more right today as the military capability of a country becomes increasingly less important than its economic growth and productivity.

How then is the state of the United States economy? A European reader, who uses *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* or especially the *Wall Street Journal* on a regular basis will find this out. American print media usually inform him better about the actual economic situation in the United States than do, for instance, French or German papers about the economy in their respective countries.

One reason for this is that American (and British) economic writers on the average specialize more on certain segments of the economy than their continental counterparts. For a German journalist it is not uncommon to cover large parts of the economy more or less simultaneously — a general meeting of an industrial company today, the balance sheet of an insurance firm tomorrow.

Another difference becomes apparent in the makeup of the economic sections. Continental papers are just beginning to use more graphics and statistics on their pages, whereas in America these elements have been in use for a long time. They might not always be completely reliable but in general they offer quick and comprehensive information.

There is — to some degree at least — a third advantage. On the whole the American economic writer will respect

the rules of capitalism. That means the writer will basically accept the functions of the market and doesn't have an ideological prejudice against someone who makes money the capitalist way. This again quite often is different on the Continent. There, many economic journalists find difficulties in reporting or analyzing an economic process without using a touch of anticapitalistic feeling and raised eyebrows.

The basically positive attitude toward capitalism has its disadvantages, too. Americans, it looks to the foreign observer, are more fascinated by financial success than other people, except perhaps the Calvinistic Swiss in their subdued way. And this fascination is revealed in economic reporting.

There is nothing wrong with success, if it is real and solid. But all too often parts of the American press seem to be just overwhelmed by success stories. This is especially true of weekly news magazines, with the exception of *US News & World Report*.

In the 70's, there was, for instance, the case of Bernie Cornfield, the notorious founder of Investors Overseas Services (IOS), a kind of predecessor of junk bond dealers. He got the most admiring coverage, especially by American news magazines, for his beautiful women and glamorous lifestyle when his empire began crumbling. As even every layman became suspicious of Cornfield's manipulations, many reporters still were overwhelmed by his public relations game.

More recently many of the dubious heroes of the S&L scandal were favorably treated in United States reporting. Apparently their French paintings and German luxury cars made better copy than their questionable dealings.

The crisis of the Savings and Loans banks in any case wasn't an honorable page in the annals of the United States economic press. Looking from abroad it is still surprising that a scandal of these dimensions was not detected earlier and brought to the open. Compared to the willingness and ability of political reporters in the United States to investigate even the slightest wrongdoings, their economic colleagues appear very hesitant to grapple with corruption and intrigue.

The S&L scandal could prove that some parts of the American press do not see the forest for the trees. Of course facts and numbers are important for economic reporting. But they don't give all the answers.

During the wave of unfriendly take-  
*continued on page 76*

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extremism in the Cow Palace of San Francisco in 1964, he has covered most American Presidential election campaigns (and still is fascinated by them) and all the superpower summits. He learned much about journalism during an internship at the *Nashville Tennessean*. His academic career led him through the universities of Berlin, Münster, Vienna and two postgraduate terms at Harvard.

# A Japanese View: Beyond Facts

*Interpretation Is Viewed as Vital Because  
Of Impact of U.S. Media In Tokyo*

BY KAZUTAMI YAMAZAKI

Being an economic and business writer for 18 years, I am convinced that economic-financial coverage can be distinguished from political, social and cultural coverage in one vital way. It deals almost solely with factual information: trade balances, unemployment rates, company profits and losses, stock prices. Economic coverage should have no ambiguity, it should be clear-cut; fact is fact, period. With all other kinds of news there is more room for interpretation and implication.

In the early 1980's, the three American television networks began full reports on U.S. trade statistics every month, focusing on the steady increase in the huge U.S. deficit with Japan. This visual coverage of the trade imbalance had a definite impact on trade issues between the two countries. And particularly on the mood on Capitol Hill. A Japanese government official told me then that because of the networks coverage, strong concern over the trade gap quickly spread and ignited Japan-bashing in Congress, that politicized the issues and made it more difficult for Tokyo to negotiate with Washington.

In short, "factuality" is the key element of economic-financial coverage and can have a significant impact on economic policies and business activities. The American media, in this regard, have been doing well. Coverage has improved in terms of scope of information as well as timely analysis.

It is becoming more and more unsatisfactory, however, for any kind of media to pursue only factuality in economic coverage. I can see a couple of reasons for the need to change:

First, the economy and business are rapidly internationalizing. One nation's

economy is becoming deeply interdependent of others. The rising interest in building regional economic blocs can be understood as a natural consequence stemming from the intertwined economies.

This new, dynamic aspect of economy and business should be more reflected in media coverage. American media, especially, should spend more time on investigating and making in-depth analyses of globalization of the economy because the U.S. economy is the leading force in the changing world and, at the same time, faces serious challenges from foreign competitors.

## From Domestic To World News

Like American industries, which have long been interested almost solely in doing business at home, the American media, it seems to me, have paid more attention to the issues of domestic economy and business. The shift from the domestic-oriented coverage to international-minded coverage should be emphasized.

In this respect, special reports would be valuable on, for example, diversification of South-East Asian economies and the impact on American industries, the lights and shades of the Hong Kong economy, success and failure stories of American corporations in the Japanese market. I would personally like to see an investigative report on what is going on in Silicon Valley and the Sun Belt because there must have been notable restructuring in these high-tech bases resulting from foreign competition and increased technological interdependence.

Second, economic-financial news is not simply economic and financial any more, not only in the negative political

sense of the U.S.-Japan trade problems, but also in the realistic political sense.

The recent brokerage-house scandal in Japan is a clear example of politicalization of economic news. Financial aid to the Soviet Union is another one, and it is a highly political and strategic issue. As public-opinion polls clearly show, the American people now see an economic threat as the most serious national security problem. We are living in a world where economic news can not be separated from political, even cultural, contexts.

So political aspects and backgrounds should be an essential part of economic coverage. Extensive reporting, with thorough analysis, on various developments of the Soviet economic reform, including converting the military indus-

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commentary articles and produces special reports on U.S.-Japan relations, as well as international affairs in general. He was a Washington correspondent for the newspaper from 1979 to 1982. Since then he has covered relations with the U.S. extensively and is now known as one of the most knowledgeable journalists in this field of coverage. Yamazaki was a *Nieman Fellow*, 1990.



try into a commercial one, would be a great example of econo-political coverage. To this end, reporters would be required to possess more savvy and double vision.

Third, "manipulation" of information is getting conspicuous. This is sometimes the case with even factual information. As the U.S. is a media-driven society, government, institutions and businesses are tempted to use the media for their own purposes, and they know how to do it.

"Talk-up" and "talk-down" are clichés in the financial world. Talk-up is the authorities' effort to raise the U.S. dollar against foreign currencies by top officials' use of non-attributable statements. Talk-down means the opposite. A former U.S. government official who has been involved in many trade negotiations with Japan once said to me: "The important part of the negotiations was how to agree on what should be told to the press in the after-negotiation briefing. On one occasion, we negotiated it for more than an hour." Reporters should be careful about efforts to manipulate them.

In my view, there are two other "problems" existing in American media coverage of economic issues. One problem is sensationalism.

### **Newsweek Switch Of Headlines Noted**

The cover story of the October 9, 1989 issue of Newsweek dealt with Sony's acquisition of Columbia Entertainment. The cover showed a Japanese woman dressed in kimono, posing as if she were the Statue of Liberty. The headline read: "Japan Invades Hollywood". This headline, however, was seen only in the edition of Newsweek sold in the U.S., The Pacific edition, which is sold in Japan, did not use the word "invades." Instead the headline said "Japan Moves Into Hollywood."

Of course the word "invades" reminded American people of Japan during World War II, and generated antagonistic feelings toward aggressive Japanese investment in the U.S. A study of Japanese and American media

coverage of the frictions between the two countries, conducted in 1990 by the Dentsu Institute for Human Studies, a research arm of the Japanese advertising giant, Dentsu, criticized the cover: "Newsweek's intention to sell more copies both in the U.S. and Japan is all too clear in its dual headline: the very strong expression funneling the American's anger toward the Japanese, and the softened headline aimed at evading a sales drop in Japan."

Mitsubishi Real Estate's investment in the Rockefeller group was also described by the American media as threatening to America's autonomy. Some of the media ran pictures of kamikaze pilots, and alluded often to Pearl Harbor. A more important point was that the majority of the American stories did not bring out the fact that the Rockefellers asked Mitsubishi for financial help.

Those are just examples of sensationalism in the American press. With circulation and advertising down, the pressure generally speaking, is to be sensational. Economic-financial coverage is most vulnerable to pressure from sales and advertising interests. Even the New Yorker magazine now carries special advertising pages.

In a speech at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo on September 28, 1989, the American Ambassador, Michael Armacost, offered "gratuitous advice" to the Japanese press: "There is no *nichibei sensoh* (the U.S.-Japan war), but we have read a lot about the grapefruit "war", the beef and citrus "war" and the like. *Kohshoh aki no jin* (autumn battle arrays) or *gaishi no jobriku* (the landing of foreign capital) are other examples of favoring military terminology. It can condition a reader to perceive more hostility in the relationship than is warranted . . . I urge you to search for some new metaphors."

The Ambassador thus gently chided sensationalism in the Japanese press. The same thing can be and should be said to American media coverage.

The other problem is linked to sensationalism. It is the problem of editors. American correspondents in Tokyo express strong frustrations over their

editors in the U.S. Here are some of their complaints: "Editors tend to dictate what they expect from their correspondents." "I am quite often told my piece is too soft." "Good news is rarely accepted. Editors always like eye-catching accounts."

The consequence is that reporting from Tokyo tends to be biased, superficial over-exaggerated. These faults apply especially to economic news. American media coverage from Japan has improved in recent years and the correspondents generally do well, but one can say that they also know what their editors want to hear.

I understand their situation because I had the same problem when I was a Washington correspondent for a Japanese newspaper. However, I believe that the "education" of editors would be crucial in improving coverage of Japan by the American media.

As I pointed out earlier, all the weaknesses can be held true of the Japanese media, too, but it's much more important for them to be corrected by the American media. The American media is more powerful than the Japanese media; they can influence even Japanese leaders more than the Japanese media can.

There are now 544 foreign correspondents in Japan: 187 of them are Americans (second largest is British, 75). When I had dinner with a former producer of the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour early this year in Tokyo, I was impressed with his "confession:" "I made 50 programs on U.S.-Japan relations, mainly trade issues, in the eight years with the show. I've never been to Japan before, never studied anything about Japan. My sources for the programs were just American newspapers."

I hope that the American reporters, editors and producers recognize the power they hold. □

# Death Of the Ten O'Clock News

*How Public TV Station WGBH Killed 40-Year-Old Program  
Balancing Boston Politics And Cambridge Eggheads*

BY CHRISTOPHER LYDON

Six or eight years ago an interview with the great Mike Wallace of CBS and 60 Minutes caught my eye. It was in his hometown weekly newspaper in Brookline, Massachusetts. He was talking about the fantasy life he wanted to retire into. He imagined coming home to Boston, having an apartment on Commonwealth Avenue, going to Symphony every Friday afternoon. He'd get himself an idiosyncratic news program on the best TV station in the country, WGBH, where he'd talk about politics and the books he was reading; and he'd give himself a chance to interview the amazing variety of oddballs and experts that make Boston/Cambridge the gabby capital it is.

Immediately I wrote to Mike Wallace to say, "that's my gig you are talking about." Of course I thanked him for letting me keep the seat warm as long as he lingered in New York, and I confirmed, yes, the news job at WGBH was all the fun he fantasized, as blessed a little pulpit as there was in the provinces of American journalism.

This, alas, is the gig that WGBH cancelled last spring, forfeiting a 40-year tradition of independent local journalism at one of the flagships of public broadcasting. Most public stations had closed their newsrooms decades earlier; so the death of our Ten O'Clock News marked very nearly the end of nightly community coverage, bedrock localism, in non-commercial TV.

I am eager to dedicate this mini-memoir of our rather exhilarating death to the late great Nieman Foundation curator Louis M. Lyons. The ghost of Louis Lyons loomed as large on our battlefield this spring as he did in life.

Louis Lyons's "other job," of course, was founding the news tradition at

WGBH and maintaining its lively prose and political bite for almost 25 years. In my high-school days in Boston, which were Louis's radio days, I got used to overhearing his nightly "News and Comment," my parents' favorite broadcast. "Well, here's the news," he always began. His sign-off, "... well, that's the news." Gradually I got hooked on his rustic delivery of straight-forward New England opinions. (I have, in my Louis files, a bad review he gave the Weather Bureau's hurricane names for 1971 — Arlene, Beth, Chloe, et al.: "If that's a catalog of characteristic contemporary women's names, the country is in a bad way. Half of them have about as much power and awe as a zephyr, and sound as though they were picked out of a movie magazine.")

The deepest impression on a schoolboy from Louis's cranky, meticulous coverage of the State House and the press was that Massachusetts in the 1950s had become the Poor Farm of American politics — and Boston the Poor Farm of American Journalism. And so my ambition and my point of view were formed.

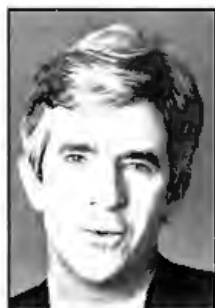
By 1976 I'd had five years covering city and state politics at the Boston Globe, and eight years in the New York Times Washington Bureau. When I spied the opportunity to anchor the Ten O'Clock News at WGBH in 1977, what I really saw was the chance to reinhabit a generous frame that Louis had designed. The news telescope he built at WGBH searched the whole heavens but was firmly rooted in Boston. That is, Louis himself was interested in Vatican politics as well as American poetry and US Census figures. Yet in his weather reports he covered the flora and fauna of New England with an eye trained in

agriculture at the University of Massachusetts — it was "Mass Aggie" in Louis's time. And he delivered all the news with an old-fashioned Plymouth County accent. He had, in short, the most universal *and* the most Bostonian voice on the air.

He set an unusual cultural standard, too: politics was his meat, but literature was his love. Robert Frost, on his death bed, wrote to admire Louis's allusiveness: "your brave talk buoys me up. Bravery is all. How I love to hear a poem quoted to some purpose."

In another of his admirable dimensions, Louis was fearless. In the Boston Globe in 1940 Louis had recounted Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy's readiness to appease Hitler. "Democracy is finished in England," Louis quoted him, from what Kennedy claimed was an off-the-record audience. The interview ended Kennedy's diplomatic career, and it dimmed Louis's newspaper career after Kennedy, in reprisal, pulled liquor ads from the Globe. But Louis never learned to step back from a political bully. His son Tom has told me that Louis's wife worried continually that he'd be waylaid by City Hall thugs, but Louis never flinched or complained.

*Christopher Lydon, born in Boston in 1940, lives on Beacon Hill with his wife, Cindy, and three daughters.*





Not the least part of Louis Lyons's fearlessness had to do with television itself. This was a newspaperman who had learned to read his script for radio. When the visual medium arrived, he talked the news straight to the merciless camera. His jacket mis-buttoned on occasion, his eyeglasses slipping and his tongue darting. Louis was not the sort of newsman you'd dismiss as a "haircut." He did not genuflect at "production values." Of all the Louis Lyons stories, I like the one about his awkward adjustment from easygoing news-and-music radio to the rigidity of the TV schedule. A floor manager was assigned to count Louis down to the close of his program. Louis, of course, ignored the frantic signalling. Finally he tossed down his script, peered over his glasses at the floor manager, and roared, "Don't wave your arms at me, young man. I'll tell you when I'm finished!"

Louis was almost 80 and had suffered a stroke when I got to WGBH but he was still broadcasting on radio, and still setting standards. In a typically tart note to me, he warned us not to avoid "the wretched racism, fraud, corruption" in Boston politics; and not to become "too much like the commercial broadcasts; . . . it is important to establish a separation from them — both philosophically and in substance. Not to scamp the top news, but to find in it pegs for meaning, and as pointers to discussion of things that matter more."

I dwell on Louis Lyons because he personified my aspirations. But what, in fact, did our Ten O'Clock News accomplish on its own? How many of the goals did we reach?

Well, I never really dazzled my own teen-aged daughters, who in deepest adolescence admitted they found the show " . . . boring, daddy." Some others, with more objectivity, found the program ponderous and me somehow wanting in anchor weight. Our "production values" kept improving over the years but never caught up with the industry. We made some howling blunders — as on the famous night when the lights went out in the studio and I, oblivious yammerer, kept reading the news through the blackout, because my

prompter light stayed on. It is fair to say we groped and stumbled a bit — though I add defensively that we stumbled the way real people stumble.

We were, in a sense, the local version of the MacNeil/Lehrer news idea — with a lighter touch, I felt, and much better Boston ratings; yet we never acquired the sparkle and range of public radio's exemplary *All Things Considered*.

We made some contribution in what we left out, starting with weather maps and game footage. Key sports scores were posted in chart form; two-day weather forecasts were delivered with a terse seasonal note, in the Louis Lyons tradition — all in a matter of seconds.

Our political balance tilted to the left, many complained. I thought it more important that our program maintained two other, rarer kinds of balance. The first was the balance between the two cities symbolized by Cambridge and Boston: the intellectual capital and "frontal lobe of the universe," on one shore of the Charles River, and the ethnic town and political capital, on the other. It had often seemed to me that the Boston Globe (our dominant newspaper, between the New York Times and the tabloid Boston Herald) lives somewhat uncomfortably in both of its local worlds. The Globe has tended to tug its forelock before the brainy "Cambridge" audience and to talk down to the benighted "Boston" neighbors. One of our main missions, I felt (as an Irish-American Boston native who'd gone to Yale), was to cover both sides of our river with a level gaze, to give and get the same respect in Harvard Square and the State House. I still feel we were the only news institution in Boston that approached that target.

The second elusive balance we strove for was between politics and the arts, between civics and aesthetics, or, shall we say, between news of power and news of the spirit. Looking back at the Ten O'Clock News, nothing pleases me more than the record that poets, preachers, novelists, pianists, painters and composers were part of the rotation with professors and politicians among our live guest commentators. Our poets? On the night Robert Lowell died, Robert

Fitzgerald memorialized him on our program. Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott examined Robert Penn Warren's selection as Poet Laureate. Galway Kinnell addressed the Persian Gulf War. David McCord, Donald Hall, Czeslaw Milosz, Felicia Lamport and Octavio Paz each read from their own work, and many times a Seamus Heaney reading bailed us out on a thin news night.

We were ten years ahead of *The New Yorker* with our Yo-Yo Ma profile. Russell Sherman, successor to Glenn Gould as provocative pianist and conversationalist, played Beethoven's Tempest sonata on our news. Yehudi Menuhin advocated universal music education. On Johann Sebastian Bach's 300th birthday, pianist Makoto Ozone demonstrated Bach's importance among jazz keyboard players. Mario Vargas Llosa, once, and Carlos Fuentes, many times, engaged us on Latin American literature and life. John Updike gave us a gloriously long, laughing interview on the night last spring he won his second Pulitzer for "Rabbit At Rest" — big news, was it not, though no other TV show thought so.

Over the years we were the only broadcast news outfit in town that ever hinted that words and opinions were a big Boston industry.

Night after night, of course, the staple of the Ten O'Clock News was not poetry but politics. Giscard d'Estaing, Gatscha Buthelezi, and George Bush dropped in. Anthony Lewis of the New York Times was an almost regular visitor; as was Richard Raines of the Boston Phoenix, and the late Geoffrey Godsell of the Christian Science Monitor.

I hope I am not the only interviewer whose favorite moments were more the questions than the answers. I told John Silber in the 1990 governor's race that he and rapper Chuck D of Public Enemy had jointly discovered the entertainment value of social anger. "Did you ever think of yourself as a rap group?" I asked. The question was an "act of desperation," Silber replied. Why didn't I compare him to Harry Truman?

I asked Senator Edward Kennedy, early in the intifada, why the Palesti-



nians — alone, it seemed, among the wretched of the earth — had never had a visit from him. When Governor Dukakis, in a live interview in 1989, dismissed the scandal of legal fee-splitting and profiteering by state Senate President William Bulger, I cracked that Dukakis was sounding more like Ronald Reagan on Ed Meese than the old scourge of Massachusetts corruption. Dukakis's seven-fold answer in that case echoed longer than the question: "Christopher! Christopher! Christopher! Christopher!" he said, and then "Christopher, Christopher, Christopher!"

Why, then, did the station kill our program? The official story was that money and editorial considerations were mixed up in the decision. But which was it really — money or editorial? The mixing sealed the mystery. WGBH managers shifted from one foot to the other in their explanations. When reporters and unions pressed money questions — why, for example, could not WGBH find just 3 percent of its \$105-million budget for a barebones news effort? — the answer came back that, well, it wasn't just money, it was time for a change. When questions bore down on programming — like: why not kill some of the syndicated cooking shows before cancelling your award-winning local news presence? — the station's answer had to do with money; in effect, that news for a single market is expensive and, besides, Massachusetts is in a recession. (WGBH, however, projecting 2 per cent growth this year, has appeared recession-proof.)

The news staff volunteered to cut its budget 20 per cent and an industry lobbyist wrote to the station president, "if it is a funding problem I am sure that the business community would rally to its support, if given any encouragement at all." But the station never showed the petitioners or us any bargaining room.

Many people felt they never heard a good reason why the news on WGBH had to die, so many people invented their own explanations. Some asked reflexively if we were being punished for airing Arab voices and critics of Israel over the years. The truth was that we'd aired many more Jewish voices and

friends of Israel; and many of the latter, including Alan "Chutzpah" Der-showitz, turned out to be militant for saving our program.

Some guessed that our undoing had been the deliberate, unblinking examination we gave the Mapplethorpe photo show when it came to Boston. But this theory didn't work either. Our Mapplethorpe show had in fact provoked a determined complaint to the FCC, but station management had encouraged us all along to share Mapplethorpe's kinkiest images with the TV audience. Then, as the Ten O'Clock News was dying this spring, our Mapplethorpe coverage won a New England Emmy.

In the fanciful casting around for covert pressures against us, some suspected that the relentless Senator Bulger had played an unfriendly hand. Two years earlier, when we located the money trail from the developer of 75 State Street to Bulger's bank account, the Senate President refused to be interviewed but sent many indirect complaints about our coverage. One WGBH executive cautioned me that the "arts community" felt we'd been hard on Bulger. The arts community? Yes, he said, the station had been inportuned personally by George Kidder, the chairman of the Boston Symphony board, and Ann Hawley, then of the Massachusetts Arts Council. I could hardly believe my ears. "This isn't the 'arts community,'" I said. "These are people who get cash grants from Bill Bulger in the state budget — and shame on them for running his errands at WGBH." Bulger is known for his obsessive pursuit of endless feuds. But still I cannot believe that WGBH management gave in to his belly-aching.

My own theory about the decision that killed the news is less sinister than sorrowful. I think one end of WGBH's identity consumed the other. For years, two mentalities had co-existed in one respected logo: one face of WGBH was the public broadcast station for Boston; the other was a national production house. With programs like *Nova*, *Masterpiece Theater* and *Frontline*, WGBH had become the main contributor to the PBS network schedule. WGBH, in my view,

was not suffering a case of schizophrenia. Rather it was enjoying the vitality of Dr. Doolittle's lovable two-headed pushmipullyu. One end served the other. WGBH had turned the Boston Pops and Cambridge's Julia Child into national institutions; and it had turned its PBS prominence into a local asset. Yet the balance was not as stable as the pushmipullyu's. WGBH's 'national' budget, pumped up by oil companies and other corporate underwriters, grew out of all proportion to the 'local' base. And at some point WGBH must have decided it had graduated out of the old neighborhood. They must have been tired of our hometown celebrities, tired of our village squabbles, tired of Bill Bulger's badgering, tired of me. And so, as I doped it out, they killed the Ten O'Clock News.

I had no grounds for bitterness. We'd had a good run, a very long one as TV lifetimes are counted. And as my mother used to say, calling us in from the ballfield, "all good things come to an end." I wasn't sure myself, as I said when we announced that the axe had fallen, "whether to dwell on the infinite privilege of being here, a free voice, for almost 15 years; or to dwell on the infinite disappointment that our time in Louis Lyons's seat is up."

Then came the mail, from hundreds and eventually thousands of friends we'd never met. None touched me more than the copy of a note to WGBH president Henry Becton from Louis Lyons's step-daughter, Sheila King:

Yesterday, on Easter Sunday, my husband, son and I went to Mount Auburn Cemetery. Over at the Willow Pond, our destination, there was a disturbance. An underground tremor rumbled the earth, and the ducks and geese were in disarray. Louis Lyons was turning over in his grave. The news that Channel 2 is considering dropping the 10 O'Clock News had reached him, along with the rest of the concerned and literate community he had informed, enlightened and, yes, entertained for so many years . . . May

the rumble from Mt. Auburn spread for miles around and rock your shortsighted boat.

It was an unexpected blessing, from a woman I'd never met, to be called Louis's successor, "an alternative voice of reason and passion." It also suggested to me that Louis would have struggled against our cancellation, and that we must read our marvelous mail not just as benediction but as a call to a certain kind of battle.

In fact we had never known the audience was there, not anyway with the numbers and articulate outrage that made a real fight to save us. Among other things, we got a lesson about letter-writing power in this supposedly illiterate age. This, for example, from R.W. of Boston, to the chairman of the WGBH board:

Like a thief in the night . . . like the plunderers of the California groves, you fell the tallest redwood in the night and face us with your chainsaw arrogance. No discussion, do the deed, axe completely public comment, trust not the people. What an appalling travesty of all that WGBH has stood for. Revulsion and disgust with this destructive, surreptitious and deceitful action. Reconsider.

H.R. of Brookline said the Ten O'Clock News had seemed to her,

to transpose the best of the 19th Century New England sensibility to the demands of this moment: morally earnest, quirky, courageous, clear-sighted, hopeful, goofy, energetic and beauty loving.

V.M. from Martha's Vineyard wrote,

We have watched it stumble, pick itself up, grow stronger, bolder. It is unfailingly interesting and beyond that has an integrity that is rare in most network shows.

WGBH contributors were furious that the station had pitched for pledges all through the month of March, and only with that money in hand announced the cancellation of the news. "We're not

in it for the tote bags," wrote A.M. from Boston University. People wrote, "we don't think of it as 'our' station anymore."

The newspapers by this point were making us a cause — especially the daily *Globe* and the weekly *Phoenix*, but also the Boston University Free Press and the faraway Los Angeles Times. Actually the *Globe*'s TV columnist, Ed Siegal, kissed us off — we'd always been low-tech and solemn for his taste: but the *Globe*'s political columnists rallied all the stronger, — confirming that the Ten O'Clock News had always had its citizenship in the land and the sensibility of the editorial op-ed pages, not in TV-land.

"If The Ten O'Clock News goes," the *Globe* commented in its lead editorial on April 26, "WGBH will have largely cut its anchor line to Boston . . . Without local programming, WGBH might as well be a windowless production mill at the end of an 800 line in, say, Atlanta or Salt Lake City."

Yes, we were so enchanted with the mail and the clippings that we mistook the sound and fury for our salvation. WGBH, as it turned out, was not to be moved. As S.O. of Sudbury wrote to the president of the station:

Auden, thinking of Yeats, despaired that poetry made nothing happen. Apparently WGBH agrees, ignoring so many eloquent pleas from Greater Bostonians to continue this fine program.

The form letter from station managers promised instead a studio talk show on local public affairs, admittedly a money-saver without reporters or cameras in the field.

We were accustomed to taking a break at the end of every May for 10 days of WGBH's fund-raising auction. This year on May 30 we buried the News for good. There was something of *Life* magazine about the last show. Reporter David Boeri, our sleuth, unveiled the Store 24 TV spot too hot to be aired because it mentioned condoms. Meg Vaillancourt did an autumnal interview with the most voluble pol of

our time, former mayor Kevin White. John Hashimoto revised the Big Bang theory of creation. Hope Kelly, whose specialty was the Wry and the Poignant, covered the Charlestown High School prom. Marcus Jones put a shimmer of show business on a scrapbook history of The Ten O'Clock News. The weather line from Betsy Meyer noted that ours was not the only notable death on the date, 560 years earlier on May 30 Joan of Arc had been burned at the stake. Co-anchor Carmen Fields celebrated not just the "different drummer" but our daring "to strut to that different beat." I tried to thank the letter writers who "knew what we were doing and how we loved doing it. Nobody's given up hope that we will find a way to do it again."

I kept wondering what would Louis Lyons have said. And then I stumbled on one of his old commentaries that seemed a perfect parable. He was commenting 20-some years ago on the hard fate of native lettuce and the truck gardeners who'd grown it around Boston all his life.

It is worth a market campaign in the interest of the consumer, to give him a chance to buy open-head green salad lettuce. Much of the year it is almost impossible to come by. The markets prefer the big cabbage-like solid white-centered heads of iceberg, for two reasons. They can buy it by the carload from California. And it holds up in the store, no matter how long it takes to sell it. It has, in short, all the market virtues of the Howard 17 strawberry, a staple market product, which has the durable and other qualities of a wooden nutmeg. For a salad-conscious population, it is nothing short of commercial crime that the only lettuce fit for a tossed salad is practically squeezed out of the market.

As we struggle to reinvent a Boston news tradition, let it inspire us and let it console Louis to note that the resourceful shopper can still find Boston lettuce in the markets. □

# Africa And Central Europe

## *The Media and Strengthening Democratic Institutions*

### Bill Kovach

For the past decade the revolution in communications brought about by the technology of the computer and the communications satellite have fundamentally changed the relationship between people and their governments. In country after country the flow of unrestricted information and competing ideas which the communications revolution has set loose in the world heralds the doom of centralized dictatorial governments and highlighted in country after country the crucial role of a vigorous and independent press.

Much time and attention has been paid to the role of the press in such times of change. What has been less studied and is less understood is the role of the press in the aftermath of these changes, its role as a catalyst in building a body of knowledge and information upon which a people can come together and express their interest in their own governance. That's the role on the agenda.

### Frank Ferrari

Following last year's meeting the institute had a number of meetings with Congress, with the private sector and aid agencies on the economies of Southern Africa and expansion of training opportunities in Africa and a major African-American conference in Cairo which took place immediately before the beginning of the Persian Gulf War. Throughout these discussions and meetings and following the changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union one recurrent theme was "What will happen to Africa's interest?"

In a report recently published by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations on American public opinion and foreign policy, apart from the high interest

ratings to Europe and the Soviet Union, only South Africa and Nigeria appear on the list of countries of interest to both the public and leaders. Within that listing it is significant that only two African leaders have a high visibility

rating. They are Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk in that order. So perception of issues impacts on the relationships that take place outside with regard to the press and to the establishment of democratic institutions.

## Keynote Address

### James Hoagland

I'm going to make a Washington Post presentation tonight. Those of you who know the Post as the world's greatest uncensored newspaper will understand what I mean. You can find a page-one story anywhere in our newspaper. It's going to be a very free-flowing, informal and uncensored kind of presentation. That approach is helped by the subject assigned me — to draw some comparisons and perhaps make some contrasts between Central Europe and Africa, the process for democracy, the search for democracy, and the media's role in that in both areas.

It's important to look back on our own personal experiences and to try to develop some principles out of that perhaps. I am fortunate to have worked for one newspaper for the last 25 years and to happen to have come to The Washington Post at the time when it became a national newspaper and began to be a great newspaper. Before that it had been primarily a local newspaper and thanks to a pact that was struck between Katharine Graham, the publisher of the newspaper, and Ben Bradlee whom she hired as the executive editor with a commitment on both their parts to producing an excellent newspaper. It is thanks to that that The Washington Post has become a newspaper that I think is respected in many

parts of the world. In both Africa and Central Europe it is important to look at ownership patterns because I think that one of the lessons of American journalism is that as reporters are only as good as their last story, newspapers are really only as good as their editors and publishers and owners make them. There are a number of us who have worked for excellent newspapers and who have seen that principle in action. There are at least a few of us who have worked on newspapers without excellent owners and who have put their narrow commercial interests before the health of journalism, the health of their community, and, indeed, the health of their newspapers in the long run and have suffered for it.

*The sixth annual conference on the media in Africa co-sponsored by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University and the African-American Institute was held April 30 - May 1, 1991 at the Harvard Faculty Club in Cambridge, Massachusetts. These excerpts from the transcript were prepared by the Nieman Foundation.*

As journalists, all of us can, and particularly those of you in a rapidly changing situation in a process of democratization, can look to your self interest in trying to influence the ownership situation in your countries. What are the laws? How do you lobby? How do you particularly establish and maintain standards of excellence that will make it difficult for any owner to change the kind of pact that they do make and should make or any new owners to dilute what you as journalists have done. It really is something that you can accomplish and can hold to very high standards.

The second point I wanted to try to make and perhaps to get you to develop a little bit with me concerns of course the nature of the market and how both in Central Europe and in Africa one of the big changes that is going on is a move to a freer economic system and a move to a market system. When I was in Moscow a few months ago I was fascinated to discover that really the only functioning market today in the Soviet Union is the media. The newspapers there have carved out markets of their own. They have their own subscribers and this became very apparent when they began to abandon Gorbachev. The people who had been made real editors and gotten control of the newspapers, gotten their own budgets through glasnost, found that their readers were forcing them to choose between Gorbachev and themselves. It was fascinating to see that they stayed with their market and began to very vehemently criticize Gorbachev and to accuse him of having abandoned the democratic ways that he had adopted.

We live in an era where increasingly people feel that governments are out of their depth. Increasingly the media has a much more important role to play and not a less important role to play. That puts a heavy responsibility on us all and particularly on those who are involved in creating new rules, in creating new formats and that's what all of you here are doing, directly or indirectly.

When I first went to Africa, there was something in the air then of the same

kind of feeling you feel in Central Europe today. That is a sense of the withdrawal of a foreign control. With the retreating, departing foreign rule went supposedly many of the vices.

Much of the tyranny we now have in Central Europe, although it's beginning to fade. I was in Berlin last week and you begin to see the euphoria leaving and the depression beginning to set in.

## Conference Participants

Rui Araujo, Nieman Fellow, Field Producer/ Journalist, Portuguese Broadcasting Corporation, Spain

Deety Winston Baye, Nieman Fellow, Assistant Editor, "Neighborhoods" The Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY

Kabral Blay-Anihere, Nieman Fellow, Former Publisher/Editor, The Independent, Ghana

Fernando Cano, Nieman Fellow, Editor-in-Chief, El Espectador, Colombia

John Carlson, Nieman Fellow, Iowa City Bureau Chief, The Des Moines (Iowa) Register

Raj Chengappa, Nieman Fellow, Special Correspondent, India Today

Vivian Lowery Derryck, President, The African-American Institute

Maria Dunin-Wasowicz, Nieman Fellow, Deputy Economic Editor, Przegląd Tygodniowy, Poland

Ray Ekpu, Editor-in-Chief, NewsWatch Nigeria

Tony Eleumunor, Nieman Fellow, Assistant Editor, This Week, Nigeria

Frank E. Ferrari, Senior Vice President, The African-American Institute

Carmen Fields, Anchor/Reporter, WGBH-TV

Nanise Efitia, Nieman Fellow, Senior Journalist, Tonga Broadcasting Commission, Tonga

Tim Giago, Nieman Fellow, Publisher The Lakota (South Dakota) Times

Joel Greenberg, Nieman Fellow, West Bank Reporter, Jerusalem Post, Israel

Marcia Slocum Greene, Nieman Fellow, Reporter, The Washington Post

James Hoagland, Chief Correspondent and Associate Editor, The Washington Post

Carol Jenkins, Anchor, NBC-TV News, New York

E. J. Kahn, Jr., Staff Correspondent, The New Yorker Magazine

Bill Kovach, Curator, Nieman Foundation at Harvard University

Jim Landers, Foreign Editor, Dallas Morning News

Jennifer Lewington, Nieman Fellow, Washington Bureau Chief, The Globe and Mail, Canada

Peter Marek, Reporter, Radio Forum, National Forum Foundation

Tom Masland, General Editor, International Department Newsweek

Thami Mazwai, Senior Assistant Editor, The Sowetan, South Africa

Terry McGuire, Senior Vice President, American Newspaper Publishers Association

Dale Mezzacappa, Nieman Fellow, Education Writer, The Philadelphia Inquirer

Rapitse Montsho, Executive Producer, South Africa Now, South Africa

Luis Alberto Moreno, Nieman Fellow, Director, TV Hoy, Colombia

Thomas Morgan, Metropolitan Reporter, The New York Times, President, National Association of Black Journalists

Makau Mutua, Director, Africa Project, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights

George Neavoll, Editorial Page Editor, The Wichita Eagle-Beacon

Joe Ndifor, Radio Cameroon

Kevin Noblet, Nieman Fellow, Bureau Chief, Associated Press, Chile

Margaret Novicki, Editor-in-Chief, Africa Report

Prof. P. Anyang' Nyong'o, Head of Programmes, The African Academy of Sciences, Kenya

Daniel Passent, Editor, World Paper

Ana Puga, Nieman Fellow, Latin American Correspondent, Houston Chronicle

Barbara Ross, Nieman Fellow, Reporter New York Daily News

Danny Schechter, Executive Producer, South Africa Now

Carl Schieren, Vice President for Programs, The African-American Institute

Charles E. Shepard, Nieman Fellow, Investigative Reporter, The Charlotte Observer

Enoch Sithole, Educational Reporter, New Nation, South Africa

Katherine Skiha, Nieman Fellow, Reporter, The Milwaukee Journal

Matthew Storrin, Managing Editor, New York Daily News

Andrea Taylor, Deputy Director, Office of Communications, The Ford Foundation

Joe Thloloe, Deputy Editor, The Sowetan, South Africa

Linda Thrane, Editorial Page, Minneapolis Star-Tribune

Vladimir Vessenski, Nieman Fellow, Reporter, Literaturnaya Gazeta, Soviet Union

Thomas Winship, President, The Center for Foreign Journalists

In Africa the foreigners have been gone for a long time. The political systems and their many faults have calcified and are no longer associated with the simple act of getting a foreigner to leave. Therefore, in many ways, perhaps, for Africa the transition and the changes will be more difficult in the short run. But what has happened in Central Europe can be a tremendous example, a tremendous inspiration perhaps, for the rest of the world and certainly for Africa.

Let me throw out one final topic, the way in which the changes in Central Europe will affect the perception of the rest of the world and the United States and particularly among government officials, the Congressman, the aid officials, who provide foreign aid to Africa and to other parts of the world. My sense now is that we are moving into an era when conditionality will be made political as well as economic. In the coming years you will see all American, and perhaps much European, foreign aid tied to democracy. I would argue that the press should support that. The press should be at the forefront of trying to shape a sensitivity to the fact that United States, Western European countries, have seen the kind of dramatic change occur in Central Europe. They are seeing dramatic change although it's still not enough in South Africa. They are indeed seeing change in many African countries where dialogue has begun, elections have produced peaceful change and there is no longer going to be a reticence to demand that progress toward democracy be a condition for receiving foreign aid and perhaps we will get to the happy day when foreign investment will also be linked in some tangential way to that.

**BARBARA ROSS** — Could you explain a little bit on the conditionality stuff? Secondly, could you address the issue of at what point these papers shouldn't follow what their readers want? I think that it's interesting to hear you talk about the press in the Soviet Union succeeding because in some instances they're giving up on Gorbachev and I've heard Vladimir

Vessenski all year saying they're only doing this to sell newspapers. It's outrageous and it's the same kind of stuff I hear in New York saying we're only writing sex and gossip to sell newspapers.

**A** — On conditionality, what I'm talking about is simply that in the past the IMF, the World Bank, USAID have set certain economic conditions for giving aid. You have to have budget subsidies of a certain percentage, you can't print too much money. But they've always shied away from or at least they say they shy away from (with exceptions), conditioning, that is, not granting aid or granting aid as a result of political change. That attitude will be a thing of the past very soon. Because, first of all, the bipolar system, the Cold War, the end of the Cold War, the arrival of the twilight of the Cold War, whichever way you want to look at it, means that we in the United States and many governments in Western Europe no longer have to compete with the Soviet Union and no longer have to have client states. There will have to be a new set of criteria for giving aid and I think the only way to get public support for foreign aid is to make it an instrument of bringing democracy. The alternative is complete abolition of foreign aid by the United States and I think that we're not far from that.

The second topic is a lot more fun of course. Kitty Kelley, Nancy Sinatra, Nancy Reagan, Frank Sinatra — whoops, who knows? My reaction to the newspapers in Moscow selling newspapers by criticizing Gorbachev is terrific. That's great progress. I can understand that Gorbachev might not feel the same way and obviously doesn't. What is sensationalism, what is news? We could spend the whole conference on that. When the New York Times publishes it is it news and not sensationalism? When the tabloids, vice versa? The argument in terms of foreign news is often framed as if they didn't publish the story about the Kennedy rape case, they would publish an analysis of politics in Togo instead. I don't think they would. I don't think those stories drive out good hard news. Those stories I think when

handled properly — and they are not always handled properly — bring readers into the paper that we might not have had otherwise and do no basic harm.

**ROSS** — Can I ask a follow-up? I wasn't so much talking about the Kitty Kelley part of it. At what point do these foreign papers learn from our mistakes in going too far? At what point do they, in doing what they are supposed to do, protect their own culture and not become dominated by a Western culture that has its different attention span and a different set of interests?

**A** — I'm not as worried about that as you are. One of the things we're going to see as we get into this year of increased interdependence run amuck is that newspapers in particular are going to be the guardians of local interest and of local personality and indeed I would say even of national character and they are going to play a more important role in those terms. As borders become more supple and as we get a movement in Europe certainly to regionalization as an answer to the many problems — that is, the kind of groupings of the Danube states to try to resolve the problems that are brought about by the end of the Cold War or the process in general — national newspapers are going to be extremely important in keeping national character. I won't say alive, but very healthy as well. So I think that if you take the Nigerian newspapers, unless they have changed a lot in recent years, will give The Daily News, The New York Post a good run for their money on covering local stories of interest in a very colorful way in a very Nigerian way at the same time.

**THOMAS WINSHIP** — How long is it going to take for the marketplace in Central Europe to become strong enough to produce advertising to support independent newspapers? How's that for a publishers' question?

**A** — It's a good question. Do you depend on state capital or foreign capital to establish newspapers that will have the kind of resources that will make them viable? Many people would say neither and both of those answers are terrible. Given the choice between the



two I would say that foreign investment is probably preferable to state control in Central Europe and it would help break the pattern. One of the great dangers I think, particularly in broadcasting even more than in newspapers, is that even though the old governments will be gone the central radio station, the national radio transmitter, will continue to be used in the same way that it was, with simply different political parameters put on it. I think anything that can be done to break up that kind of pattern is good, including allowing foreign investment and that's why I think it's very important that newspapers, journalists be very aware of and be very involved in the shaping of the laws that cover investment and cover the economic contours of the new situation. How long will it be? Ah, from what I've seen, you probably know I think the questioner knows more than questionee at this point, but if you look at Hungary, I think there's a good chance there that within five years they may have a situation where you'll have some profit-making newspapers that will then be able to reinvest. I'm less optimistic about Czechoslovakia for a variety of reasons and we have Daniel Passent who could tell us about Poland, perhaps? What would be your guess?

**DANIEL PASSENT** — In Poland, there are some communications that are already making profits. There are some communications that are extremely profitable as this includes new publications like Solidarity, and this also includes some old, liberal Berlin-published publications. At the same time many papers have lasted only a few months. But most of the press which has not been privatized has been bought by either foreign capital, predominantly French, or local companies.

**Q** — What kind of democratic reforms are you talking about? What particular brand of democracy do you want them to practice? The American form of democracy? Secondly, there is an ethical question involved. If you have a problem with Saddam or even in Iran and the people are suffering and aid should go to these places, are you going to withhold the aid because Saddam

Hussein is not behaving? Those are the things that bother me.

**HOAGLAND** — Two very good points. Let me deal with the second one first, the question was, do you condition aid to starving people in countries like Iraq, or Ethiopia or Iran or Sudan on political reform? That would largely be humanitarian aid and that's not the kind of aid that I was talking about. I was talking about official development aid which is usually project or budget aid. I think humanitarian aid will continue in its present form and would not be affected by what I said. The first question was what kind of standards, what kind of criteria could be set? Would they be either too vague or unclear or contradictory? The G-24, I think has done I think a pretty good job of establishing political criteria for the Central European countries. I think that's a good enough start.

**DANNY SCHECHTER** — In the gulf war what we've seen was most Americans rely for their information on television media. Surveys were done at the University of Massachusetts plumbing the basis of people's opinions. The study concluded that the more people watched television, the less they knew about what was going on, and the less informed, they actually were. I think there's a bias or maybe an unexamined bias, in your remarks that somehow equate the whole free market with the free press, and ignores the concentration of media power, which is an increasing process that's underway: the trend toward tabloid journalism on television, that is getting more and more dollars thrown at it, whereas major networks, including their bureaus in places like South Africa, are scaling back. Many journalists now who work for the media, Bernard Shaw, Richard Threlkeld and others, went on panels after the war, saying, we were suckered, the American people never really knew what was going on. We allowed ourselves to get into the cruel situation, and we're locked into it, and in fact, self-censored our own reports, and never got access to the whole story, and I think when this full story comes out, it's going to be a black eye for American

television journalism.

Public television, what there is of it, had more diversity of perspective than commercial broadcasting — fewer generals giving all the background commentary and the like.

When they sit in South Africa and watch CNN coming out of Atlanta, and they see the coverage, they begin to say, is this the model that we want? That's where, I think, conditionality, tying American aid inevitably with an American model of what's right and wrong, this a very dangerous, and very insidious. And actually is antithetical to notions of a free press, where people have the freedom to define what their media should be. So I'm worried about this, although I appreciate the sentiment and the impulse behind it.

**HOAGLAND** — Your remarks on television correct the absence in mine, and I was hoping that somebody would do that, since I don't particularly know a lot about television. I was concentrating on newspapers.

**Q** — I'm looking at it from the perspective of reliability. Let's take the American State Department, for instance. I happen to have run into serious problems over the years with American [diplomats] in my country, because at one point I criticized American foreign policy with regard to international terrorism, with just the comment of: who is the terrorist and who is not? I was speaking in the case of Reagan and Qaddafi, side by side. Well, there are the same Americans, the champions of human rights. Now what is that talk here about linking this democratic process? I really am skeptical about how one could really count on these same people with this kind of intelligence when it comes to American diplomats.

**A** — I'm not here to defend American diplomats, they can do that on their own, particularly since American diplomats almost got somebody from the Voice of America fired for being every so slightly critical of Mr. Saddam Hussein before August the 2nd, which I think ranks as one of the most stupid acts of diplomacy in the history of the world. So it's not surprising to me that

they might have gone to your government, but in essence, I mean it is still your government that makes the decision whether you would be fired or not. I don't know what the kind of pressure that would have been brought. But, again, I think the G24 model with Central Europe offers a model. Make it multilateral, much more than it is today, that would provide protection, I think, from the American ambassador in Cameroon feeling it is his duty to get you fired because of criticism of Ronald Reagan.

**Q** — You mentioned the role that journalists can play in ownership issues, in Africa and Central Europe. I have a very hard time seeing how you can conceive any role that the individual can play.

**A** — Well I think helping establish a newspaper or a television network's reputation for integrity is part of it, simply by — I mean you've got to be blessed with a good owner to begin with, that's part of the problem. How do you shape the environment? Political parties are interested for their own reasons, surely, but you can play some role in having them become interested in shaping the ownership environment,

and pretending this as a public issue, making sure that there is a general public awareness of this as an issue, rather than accepting it as part of the landscape, rather than taking the attitude that there's nothing you can do.

**Q** — Can you give me an example in North America?

**A** — The examples I tried to use pertain to The Washington Post; there the editor of the newspaper was given an opportunity by the owner to establish a standard of excellence that has been maintained; and it would be very difficult for a new owner today to change that standard without paying a very high price. You've got to set that price fairly high, I think, for them, or for the owners to make changes to that reputation. You've got to begin to establish that reputation as a weapon, as an instrument.

**Q** — I wonder, in, say, Zaire, trying to keep a fledgling newspaper alive in the face of government intimidation, whether there is a channel that [a journalist] could reach to some organization in the United States that's interested in press freedom, never mind anything else, but just press freedom, that could ring a bell. Can we do more of that kind

of thing at this end?

**A** — Well, I think we certainly should.

**WINSHIP** — We established the Center for Foreign Journalists, which is dedicated to exactly that purpose, giving, encouraging, advising, how to, how to make the good fight. It's hard work, and it's long, slow work, only you people know, damn slow.

**HOAGLAND** — Tom, is ANPA doing very much about this?

**WINSHIP** — Very damn little. The editors are much better than the publishers. They really are.

**HOAGLAND** — I mean I think we should all perhaps keep in the back of our minds, or perhaps move it to the front of our minds that the American Newspaper Publishers Association —

**WINSHIP** — They've got all kinds of money to help.

**HOAGLAND** — . . . could do a lot more than they're doing.

**WINSHIP** — They really could.

**SCHECHTER** — I would like to see more effort made within professions — some of these corporations, giant media conglomerates, to devote some resources to this kind of work.

# Building Democratic Institutions

Daniel Passent

Sometimes you say in Poland it is my task now to talk and you're to listen and let me know if you are finished first.

I thought a few words about the press in Communist Poland would be proper here because I assume that some of you may have an oversimplified picture of what the press and media under Communists were about. The press under the Communists was not the primitive Soviet-style of propaganda, at least in the case of Poland. Poland is a country with a large intelligentsia where Communist propaganda could not have been done in such a simple and rude way as it has been done in the Soviet Union. The Polish people had always close ties with Western Europe, with the United

States, and had a liberal tradition. So the Communists sought to have 100 per cent government-and-party-controlled media and to keep the people brainwashed, isolated from the rest of the world and from thoughts, facts and ideas which the authorities would consider subversive. This effort never succeeded, although there was strong censorship, although there was a full monopoly of radio and television, and although about 80 to 90 per cent of the printed media was state owned and controlled by the party directly or indirectly.

Still, the Polish people were quite well informed about what was going on abroad. A certain level of discussion

took place. Between the lines some things could be written and published.

Thus I would say that from the professional point of view, ethical point of view, the level of journalists even under Communists was quite high in Poland and some outstanding newspaper women and newspaper men grew up in Poland. Many of them still work now in the Solidarity Press in the post-Communist era. Those most adhering to the Communist line, people who were party functionaries and known as propagandists who would conduct verification of newspapermen, have been dropped. Nevertheless the majority of newspapermen who worked under the Communist system still do

work, many of them with clear consciences. I would even say, for Solidarity or the free press now.

Secondly, the professional ethical standard of journalists in Poland was relatively high. As you know, politics and media are always about the control of the mind, control of the ownership, of censorship, and this fight took place under the Communist system too. So, whenever there were periods of more liberal censorship, more liberal political [positions] the press would immediately try to grasp the opportunity and independently thinking newspapers would appear — not necessarily new titles but existing titles would suddenly become lively, independent, attractive publications.

For instance in 1956 when there was an attempt of [liberalization] of Poland under Secretary of the Communist Party Gomulka, suddenly an obscure student newspaper called *Prostota* became very attractive in criticism of Stalinists and criticism of Communists to the degree that after two years it had to be closed by the authorities. Some people who established their names then as students played significant roles in the newspaper business and journalists for the next 25 or more years and are still active now.

After the emergence of Solidarity and in the late 70's when political opposition started to emerge in Poland, some people began to publish underground. This was a leftist but anti-Communist opposition which was the source of Solidarity and it was quite successful in publishing an underground newspaper called *Robotnik*, "The Worker." Other, less prominent, underground bulletins were published on copy machines, typewritten, or handwritten. They would carry general information about the catastrophic situation of the country in terms of economics, health, ecology. Plus they would list all arrests, disappearances.

When Solidarity emerged in the summer of 1980, when I was just returning from my Nieman year here, one of the 21 demands posed by Solidarity was that censorship be abolished and a free press established.

Now we have a completely different

situation. We are closer to the end of the huge process of privatization of the media. The Solidarity government is selling existing newspapers at auctions, but not always to the highest bidder. Sometimes to the bidder who represents more a political following or who gives better guarantees that he will continue a given paper on a, let us say, higher professional, or political, or ethical level. This immediately opens the possibilities for a new fight among new political forces. With the Communists practically gone (they have one or two publications that remain, one of them actually very successful) the new fight is among various political groups within Solidarity and, outside of Solidarity, to the right, Christian Democratic nationalists. I am sure you know this big deep division within Solidarity. They, of course, both accuse each other of enjoying monopoly of the media. As long as they accuse each other I think the situation is healthy and it proves that there is no monopoly and I wish they would continue these accusations because to some degree both sides are right. Like any true politicians they aim at monopoly.

New problems emerged. I will mention only two. One is the financial survival of the press and the threat of foreign domination. Some titles established under the Communist regime have been very successful and now private bidders and Solidarity bidders want these titles because they represent a huge value. It's a huge asset, much better than to start a completely new publication. So the biggest buyers were organizations connected with Solidarity, which have been awarded some titles due to political connections, let's say, and foreign corporations. In Poland the number one foreign press capital is France; then come the Maxwells the Murdochs and others of whom you are all too familiar.

The second threat is that huge domination by right-wing Catholic thinking. The Polish political stream is now moving fast towards a conservative nationalist Christian Democratic Poland. The Polish Episcopate Catholic (you know Poland is 90 per cent Catholic)

has asked that the clause on the separation of church and state be dropped from the Constitution. Most probably a large part of the press will support it for political and religious reasons. This is the current situation in Poland.

## Kabral Blay-Amihere

Let me begin my remarks by telling you about one of many sad truths the Nieman year has vividly confirmed for me — that the press all over the world, whether it claims it can seek refuge in First Amendments or other constitutional guarantees, is held in one way or other in some form of captivity. The captivity can either be through the influence of advertisers, international finance capital, cultural prejudices, racism, drug cartels or, in the case of my continent, through sheer display of power, through the long hand of corrupt and authoritarian regimes. What I consider the paradox of our times is the recognition of the central role the captive press will have to play facilitating development in Africa.

Somehow, even the very governments which oppress the press and people envisage a role for the press in the developmental process. Where I come from the government hypocritically spends lots of money each year organizing seminars which aim at making the press an instrument of development. Meanwhile, the same government passes decrees which make it impossible for the press to be what it should be. It is the proverbial case of the mouse causing the wound and gently licking it in order to continue inflicting greater injury.

I was born at the height of the struggle for independence from colonial rule in my country. A year after my birth, in 1951, a proto-nationalist government, headed by the American-educated Kwame Nkrumah, was elected into shared power with the British. Ghana became fully independent in 1957. In those days, freedom was quite a popular word that echoed all over Africa. Africans returning from the Second

World War with the promise of a new world order based on freedom, took the colonizers at their word and plunged into a battle for their lives, for their very dignity as part of God's creation. I was lucky to grow up in a free Ghana but it did not take long for freedom to become an illusion in the new Ghana, in the new Africa.

It is significant to note that the whole struggle for freedom from colonial rule was largely facilitated by the indigenous independent press, and it is no accident of history that most of the leaders of post-independent Africa had themselves either been publishers or journalists. But their passion for freedom ended as soon as they sat in the seat of power.

Thirty years after many African countries secured their independence from colonial rule, it looks like freedom, once the most popular slogan, has been forced into exile, by the new leaders. African freedom, looking at the last three decades, did not reckon with personal liberties. It was enough to kick out the whites. What happened to the indigenous people did not matter, which explains why many African dictators can, with no sense of guilt, demand one-man-one-vote majority rule for South Africa and deny their people the same right.

After our recent experiences with the Persian Gulf crisis we can agree with the saying that the first casualty of war is the truth. Ghana has fortunately not had any wars but we have seen a lot of political upheavals and so we say in Ghana that the first casualty of political change is the press. For the record, we have within our 34 years of independence seen three civilian regimes and four military governments. Each departing and coming regime has meant dismissal of editors and other senior editorial staff. The squeeze has obviously been higher when the soliders move in.

Almost all of sub-Saharan Africa is ruled by soldiers who did not submit themselves to the electorate like your Eisenhower, but through the barrel of a gun. Like the benevolent despots of the 18th Century these regimes and their civilian counterparts, like Felix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast

and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, see themselves as appointed representatives of God on earth. What that means as far as the practice of journalism is concerned is that nowhere in Africa except in Nigeria, which has its own problems, can the press report alternative views. The African press is nothing but an extension of the executive, no more, no less; and those who refuse to obey this cardinal rule pay a heavy price.

The latest newsletter of the Commonwealth Journalist Association tells of a Zambian journalist who has been deported from Botswana, considered by many political observers, as a bastion of democracy in Africa. The offense of this journalist was exposing corruption in the Southern Africa Development Conference and criticizing President Kaunda. Such is the divine status of many African leaders that both these leaders and their subjects would be amazed at the jokes made about your Vice-President Dan Quayle or cartoons which distort the personality of your leaders. I know the case of an editor who was summoned and reprimanded by Government officials using a photograph which did not enhance the looks of the first lady. Two Ugandan journalists were detained for months for asking "embarrassing questions" at a press conference held by President Kaunda during a visit to Uganda.

Kenya, the good guy and ally of the West, detains its writers and journalists all in the name of the state and gets away with it. The case of Kenyan lawyer-journalist Gitobu Imanyara, detained recently for seeking to report on the movement for multiparty politics in Kenya, is a case in point. In my own country, Ghana, a newspaper licensing law, which the Soviet Union has copied, ensures that no alternative press will ever emerge. I return at the end of the Nieman year to my country with no sign that I will be able to function as a writer for Ghanaians. I am not going to be able to tell Ghanaian readers the many things I have learned during the year. The tight control governments hold over the press does not only hold artistic expression to ransom but in a more fundamental sense holds the

development of the entire continent to ransom.

Let me not bore you any further with the statistics of African poverty, but just quote what the Economic Commission for Africa, in its report on Africa's development, said about this issue:

"The picture that emerges from the analysis of the African region by the year 2008, under the historical trend scenario, is almost a nightmare." This report was issued in 1983 but according to the former president of the World Bank, Robert S. McNamara, in a speech to African leaders at a conference in Nigeria in 1990, "The situation has worsened".

With all the respect that one should have for McNamara as former president of the World Bank, it seems to me a real paradox that it took him to remind an African audience that Africa was in terrible crisis. The lesson of McNamara's warning should not be lost on us. It is a clear message that, like Nero, most African leaders are playing fiddle while their countries get destroyed. I live in Africa and know too well the tragedy of living in that continent. Annual reports from the IMF and the World Bank do not depict the real situation. Figures cannot describe human suffering and African leaders should know this better. But do they?

I have travelled this far, trying to give you a sense of the politics and economics of Africa, in order to make you appreciate the difficult circumstances under which the press operates in Africa. There may not be body counts to depict the herculean task of the African pressman or presswoman, but the pressures are there all the same.

Is there a way out for Africa's suffering millions? Is there any glimmer of hope for Africa's press? I believe so. In spite of the encircling gloom, I am convinced that Africa's problems can be solved in the waves of the new struggle for freedom which is on the rise in many parts of Africa. If Harold MacMillan, the British Prime Minister who accurately predicted the end of colonial rule in a speech to the Parliament of South Africa, could be resurrected, he would repeat in clearer terms his

historic statement that a more devastating wind of change was blowing in today's Africa. This wind will shake the foundations of tyranny all over Africa. As the South African musical group Sarafina sings with so much optimism — at long last freedom is coming the way of Africa.

One may read a link between events in the East and developments in Africa, but I am of the opinion that what is happening in Africa, in Angola, in the Ivory Coast, Zambia and elsewhere, where one-party states are going multi-party, is a direct product of our own history. We were crying freedom long before countries of the East embarked on that path. At the time we were crying freedom in the 50's and 60's they were being drawn into the orbit of Soviet imperialism.

Let me not sound too optimistic. It will be no easy walk to freedom. Many regimes are still determined to fight against the main current of history, to cling onto power and will be all out to destroy all forces which seek to dislodge them from their positions of privilege.

What role can the African press play in the march towards a new democratic Africa? Will African governments allow their press to exercise any independent role, and is the African press prepared for that role at all? My impression is that most journalists in Africa, with a few exceptions, have developed a servile mentality which sees them at best, as footnotes to the narrow ambitions of politicians. The press in many African countries exists only to defend the status quo. The press in many cases has lost its independent existence and is happy to sing only its master's, the government's, sad song of betrayal of the dreams of African people.

We saw what the press can and will do in the matter of democracy in Ghana recently. Last July the Ghana government launched a so-called debate to decide the political future of Ghana. But as U.S. Under Secretary for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, rightly said, the leadership of the Ghanaian government is over-allergic to multiparty politics and decided from the onset that there would be no debate, or, at best, a one-sided

debate with a pre-determined winner — the government, which says multiparty politics is alien, although it embraces most things Western and alien, like the economic strategies of the IMF, Western arms and the standing army, which keeps the government in power.

As expected, the press played faithful and failed to report any alternative views, the fact that a movement for democracy was launched about the same time, arguing as many organizations, at least ten of them so far, including the National Union of Ghana students, the churches and trade union congress, that Ghanaians prefer multiparty politics, whether it is good or bad to military dictatorship. When the local press chose to report the formation of the Movement for Freedom and Justice, 72 clear hours after the event (which the BBC did within two hours), it distorted the news. It was not surprising that happened since the distortion was passed on from the government. The country's Minister of information kindly reported the news himself.

I was in the Ivory Coast in the summer of 1989 when students and workers took to the streets demanding political reforms. Those demonstrations and strikes eventually led to free elections for the first time in 30 years in that country. But those events, historic as they were, never got reported in the state-owned media, leaving Ivorians to rely on the BBC for any serious coverage of the crisis. I saw another form of the problem in Guinea, where the poverty of the country has such a negative influence on the development of a viable press system. The only weekly in Guinea, which is supposed to report on a national debate, has a limited circulation of only 2000. Radio, which has a more extensive reach, avoids politics, dwelling on what African leaders call developmental news, an euphemism for playing down the real issues which keep the countryside impoverished. Although many so-called media experts have made a career out of developmental journalism it is essentially escapist. A kind of Afghanistanism. I have arrived at a position of going by the principle — "Beware of whatever

governments endorse, like the call for a new international information order, for as long as governments of the Third World are the leading advocates."

But I am still optimistic about the future. Where I see hope for press freedom and democracy and therefore greater development in Africa is the knowledge that nobody can really stop an idea whose time has come and the idea of freedom has arrived in Africa. African leaders are today even paying lip service to the idea of democracy. On a more positive and encouraging note the very external forces in the West and in the East, which for both financial and ideological reasons propped up corrupt and authoritarian regimes in the past, are getting wise to the fact that democracy is on the ascendancy and that their investments in Africa cannot be guaranteed by tyrants but by a democratic culture which allows a free press, independent judiciary, greater accountability, institutionalized pluralism and other forms of participatory democracy.

I know I have not answered the real egg-and-ben question as to whether a captive press is in any position to facilitate democracy and development. All I can say at this stage is that as the floodgates for freedom open, a new press will automatically emerge in Africa to give true meaning to the word freedom. For some strange reason Africans and, for that matter African-Americans, love the Bible and Biblical images and so I will conclude by quoting a famous statement during the struggle for independence in Africa — "Ethiopia shall stretch forth its hands unto God," which means the press of Africa shall be free. The people of Africa shall be free. If I sound rhetorical, I say to you that it is this kind of idealism that keeps marching on.

## Linda Thrane

The remarks of my colleague, set the stage for what I wanted to share with you about what I observed last month in March, because it becomes more truly remarkable when placed in a context of his overview of the situation with the



press and the fight for political liberties in many African countries. What we saw was truly a remarkable experience. I contrasted it immediately with my visit throughout much of Africa in '88. In both cases I went more as an observer than as a working journalist. I just went to watch and to see what was going on. In '88 it was very much a trip devoted to looking at the effects of structural adjustment programs of the economic reforms that had increasingly been written into foreign aid.

There was very much the sense that these economic strings were an important part of turning around some of the cycles of poverty that had been so intractable over the years. But there was also a very strong sense that these strings, these reforms, were being imposed from the outside and within the structure of governance as it then existed. There were not a lot of questions being raised just as recently as three or four years ago about the nature of the governments, of the nature of the people who were in charge of executing some of these very difficult economic reforms.

The debate at the time, and the people I talked to in country after country, was the question of the trade-off of stability versus political freedoms or pluralism. That stability, that maintaining a somewhat peaceful atmosphere in a Zaire, was better than the civil wars that were going on in so many other parts of the continent. It was worthwhile to look away from the human rights abuses that were going on and becoming more and more pronounced in Kenya.

No one had yet taken the final step of questioning whether the price of stability was too high.

Come to Benin and in '91 and it becomes clear that all of the economic structuring in the world is not going to work unless the people themselves have a role in how it's carried out, and can impose their expectations on their leaders. This is truly what's been going on in that little country since 1989, when a group of citizens staged a peaceful coup, moved their long-time dictator into a ceremonial role and began the process of major political

restructuring. Their economy was pretty well shot. By the time that we rolled in for the first round of the presidential elections on March 10, the people had already voted on their local and state-wide and national representation. They had approved their new constitution, which extended a bill of rights to their people, that empowered all voters, men and women, regardless of educational status, economic status, religious status, to vote. One of the key things that I noted was how the democratic system had been inculcated in such a short time among the voters. And it was a truly exciting contribution from the Benin press, particularly the newspapers that just prospered and grew up and undertook their new role of reporting of the system, of reporting on the change, reporting on the leadership.

The vigor was typified by the kinds of complaints we heard from everybody. Among them was Monsignor deSouza, who was probably the spiritual leader of the democratic process going on in Benin. He complained about the excessive focus on some incidents of violence. The U.S. Ambassador was all up in arms because of some stories about whether the U.S. was hiring or providing money for security forces in order to keep down the incidents of violence.

I welcomed all that. I think if anything, after years and years of repression, to err on the side of excess is a sign of health and a sign of vigor and sign of life and to be welcomed. It certainly began to engage the population. I think the number of newspapers by the time we were there exceeded 20. They were on the streets, people buying them, people discussing them, and doing a major job as far as alerting and educating the population about the changes underway.

Questions abounded about whether the Mathieu Kérékou coup, the long-time leader, would, in fact, accept the results of whatever the election produced and not use the remaining military power in his control to subvert the process, but, nonetheless, the broadcast institutions, controlled by the

government, played, for their own part, a major role in educating the voters. They provided equal opportunities for the 13, 14 Presidential candidates to have five-minute periods of time, three or four times, to present their policies and make their cases.

They ran repeated voter education programs right up until the day of the election — where voters would go, how they could be registered, what they needed to do, to make sure that people were comfortable with the process. Assuring them of their privacy, and effort to get people to feel secure enough despite some of the reports of the violence, to come out and vote.

This, again, was largely limited by infrastructure. The television stations didn't reach into the northern parts of the country. Newspapers were limited by problems with illiteracy, particularly in some of the more outlying areas of the country.

Even Mathieu Kérékou, the dictator who leapt into the race at the last minute, was out in the days before the election in shirt sleeves, his security forces largely out of sight, shaking hands, talking to the people, making his case for election. That served him well because he did come in second in that first round of elections, only to lose to Nicéphore Soglo in the run-off.

This was a case where you can truly go in there and as an outsider watch what is being done from within to fill in the missing link as far as the reforms that everybody has hoped would take root there, the governance question.

I come from Minnesota, the heartland, and the newspaper is quite large with a quite large circulation, but the stuff I wrote on Benin. I was very grateful to see had a wonderful reaction. I had been on the rubber-chicken circuit, talking to everybody from third graders brought in by their teachers, on up to retired labor-union groups and teacher groups and civic groups, all prompted by the story of what is taking place in Benin. It's gratifying to see that this type of story, of a country that looks like it has everything in place to make it, has triggered that kind of interest. I guess, my challenge will be to try and sustain that by following it.

## Peter Anyang' Nyong'o

I really believe that there is good news from Africa. The good news is that the people are beginning to make their own history under very difficult circumstances. But the bad news is that the political dinosaurs are trying to roll that back. We're interested to see who is going to win. They're going to win because the environment, both domestically and internationally, favors a triumph by the people.

Sacrifices will have to be made, but I believe that these sacrifices are always made at such important historical [moments]. Indeed, as they have been made in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, they're going to be made in Africa. Indeed as they were made in this country, I think, in 1776 and during the Civil War that shaped the history of this country, they will be made in Africa. Not because I wish that civil wars come to Africa — God forbid that we should go to a bloody history so as to change our history positively — but I believe that that kind of sacrifice, in certain cases, might come to be so that a new society can be born.

Now, if you're talking about the press and the building of democratic institutions in Africa, I think we can remember the histories of those countries that have gone through similar [periods].

I think that what democracy is all about [is] that people should be able to discuss all aspects of life, and how the relationship between society and the state is going to be organized. We know that from classical political theory that people are always very suspicious of government. In actual fact, governments are regarded as necessary evils. In Africa, tribal independence has come down to this very day. This tension between the relationship of state and society has always been there. The only problem is that, during the last 30 years, governments have managed to triumph over society, and to convince, perhaps temporarily at least, [citizens] that people should have as little say as possible regarding how they are governed,

the whole idea of benevolent dictatorship.

Indeed, in Africa we have 30 years of benevolent dictators, as it were. Some very malevolent, in fact, in actual practice, and people — especially outside — got used to the idea that, well when it comes to Africa, well it is necessary to have stability and sacrifice every other thing that society demands. A point has come when that kind of lie can no longer wash. That's very important.

The other point I want to make is that all through this 30 years or so of Africa's independence, there have been constant struggles by the people to resist the domination of malevolent governors.

Democracy is the opportunity to participate in politics. Indeed, this is the role that I think the press in Africa has played under very difficult circumstances. The press, which during the repressive years, has always been underground or repressed, has always tried to put forward the right of the people to participate in politics.

I can give you the example of Kenya. When I was a kid in primary school, we had vernacular presses, published in the indigenous languages. In my own area, which is the lower country, we had two newspapers: one called Marobe, the other in English called Younger Times. These two papers existed until 1969. In 1969, the government moved systematically to ban or to strangle what they called regional newspapers. The idea was that if you have newspapers being published in local languages which are not controlled by the state that there can't be unity. You can only have national unity if you have state-controlled newspapers or newspaper written only in English and Swahili from Nairobi. Of course this was a very false argument. As if speaking a language is, in itself, a disuniting factor.

What really is important is establishing rules of the game which everybody respects. And that's the whole idea about democracy. If you have competition for offices, the winners and the losers respect the outcome. If the winners and the losers are organized on regional or linguistic lines, there must be rules of the game that recognize

indigenous conditions which will make the outcome of every political process respectable.

This difficult task is what our government did not want to do. They wanted to have a simplified formula, whereby the state determines everything at the center so that, as they are concerned, national unity is created. This has been a very false argument. It's an argument which now, under the present circumstances, both the press and the people are trying to fight.

Let me now come to very recent times. Let me give about four important qualities of democracy that I think, even in Africa, are important and how those relate to the role of the press.

One, I think democracy is about the importance of the individual in society, and the amount of individualism. Secondly, I think that democracy is about the enhancement of individual freedoms and community life. The two go together, because you really cannot have individual freedom in vacuum. It has to be within the context of community. Thirdly, I think democracy is about the need to be governed and yet to control our governors. Fourthly, I think democracy's about accountability of government to the governed, brought about through the following: a system of rules of the games, which lay down procedures and frameworks for that accountability to be realized; secondly, the right of the people, through institutional processes, to recall those who rule them.

This is where the press comes in. Because the press is the only medium — I'm talking about both the written and the electronic pages — to which the individual, as the individual, can express his ideas, both to his governors and to the process of participation in government. The press is the only medium through which communities can also put their points across. And the press provides a medium of exchange between the governors and the governed. In Africa what has happened is that for these 30 years there was only one-way traffic: the governors communicating with the governed, without the governed having the opportunity to com-

municate back. The press is now saying let us establish equality whereby that communication can be two ways.

Finally, I think the press plays a very important role in constantly building consciousness among the people about their systems of government, their rights and freedoms and so on.

**Q** — How about the underground press in Ghana?

**BLAY AMIHERE** — Well, I don't think we have anything close to an underground press in Ghana. What we have is a flow of dissident material, put together by Ghanaian exiles in London, which comes occasionally through the post and circulates in very limited sectors. Daniel Passent [mentioned] cultural silence, which means that nobody wants to get in politics, economics, and

would rather talk light, talk things like sports, drinks and things like that. You don't have an underground press.

**NYONG'O** — Let me put it this way. Most African governments today which have not started serious processes of political reforms towards democracy are on hold. They are on hold in the sense that the people who man government bureaucracies feel that their time is short, they're not going to be there for long. There's a tendency by these people to begin gross misuse of public institutions, in terms of corruption, in terms of not paying attention to their duties. This is not the time to put resources into the hands of these people, because the resources are going to be misused. This is the time to put a lot of pressure for political reform and

then let those reforms be taken in a short period so that the people can get into power responsible and accountable governments. I think this is a fact almost everywhere. In my own country, very recently, the government dismissed the whole board of Kenya Airways, an international flight carrier, after the newspapers revealed tremendous corruption. Well, dismissing the members of the board of directors is not the solution. The solution is to deal with the wider problem of corruption in almost all the government institutions, and that cannot come unless there is a process of reform which will make all government bureaucratic institutions accountable. That's why I'm saying that this period of time is a period for rapid reforms for accountable government.

# Maintaining Media Independence

Margaret Novicki

In the 45 odd countries of sub-sahara Africa, there is really an independent press to speak of in only three countries in my view and those are Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal. We have representatives from Nigeria and South Africa on this panel who will also speak about the fact that although they have represented an independent press in the countries they themselves are not immune and publications are not immune from varieties of forms of interference.

In Ray Ekpou's case, his publication's (NewsWatch's) editor was murdered by a parcel bomb a few years back. There are other, more subtle, forms of harassment that we have seen and then of course a more blatant form of state censorship in South Africa under the state of emergency which Enoch Sithole will tell us about. Again, as Kabral pointed out, by and large an African journalist operates in a very hostile environment where governments really misunderstand the role of an independent media and hence have done their best to emasculate it, transform it or intimidate it out of existence.

Again we should remember our friend, Gitobu Imanyara, who was in

this room last year and is now in solitary confinement.

We have heard in the last panel the good news that, as Peter said, while we have this climate which is pretty hostile to the independent media, there are a good number of countries going through their own democratization processes and various stages of ferment and political transformation. The people themselves, have acknowledged, as they have in Central Europe and in the Soviet Union, that no nation can achieve development or inspire political accountability by denying freedom of expression. So we have seen in African countries that an independent media is beginning to sprout up in these countries and needs to be encouraged. We need to keep in mind as we're watching the political changes around the continent that the development of an independent media by whatever definition is truly key to the ultimate sustainability of these democratic systems. It's not enough to merely overturn dictatorship or to legislate freedom of expression, as the case in Kenya. This respect for that fundamental freedom needs to be inculcated in the minds of the leader-

ship and the citizens and that takes time, as we see in our own country.

## Ray Ekpou

You really cannot be a standard democracy without a free press because that is one of the important ingredients in a democracy. But let's turn the question around: can you build a free press without a democratic society? That's the question I want to deal with before I come on to the main question as to how the media can maintain its independence.

The problem in many parts of Africa is that there is really no free press to talk of and therefore their contribution to either creating or strengthening democratic institutions is close to zero. What is happening in many parts, like Nigeria for instance, is that even though the government is not democratic, the press is very strong, particularly the private press, and therefore it is able to make the government behave in a manner that you find in democratic institutions. It's possible to make the government begin to make the move towards democracy.

As you probably know, Nigeria was already, as far back as 1986, moving toward democracy. That was the case of the First Republic and the Second Republic of Nigeria. Each time the military takes over, soon after, the civil population puts pressure on the military to relinquish power to an elected government. This was already happening in Nigeria before the events of Eastern Europe. What that means is that the press in Nigeria is relatively free and it is using that relative freedom in fighting for democracy.

In situations where freedom is swallowed up by the government, then the movement for democracy is not strengthened. Of course you do find that in recent times, as the examples of Benin, Togo and Camerouns have shown, even you do not have free presses in these countries, the people have moved, in response to what is happening in Europe, in response to the internal contradictions in their societies, to ask the governments to move toward democratic systems.

Talking about the press in Africa, I think that we will be presumptuous to talk about maintaining independence. I think we should talk about having the independence first, or in fact, in some cases, having the press at all. While in a few cases you do have a few cases as mentioned — Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa — you do have presses that are relatively independent and strong, in many other cases of Africa. In fact, in more other countries of Africa, you do not have presses that are independent.

In some you do not even have anything you can call presses at all. One doesn't want to go through the various countries one by one, but in the West African sub-region, the press system has collapsed completely. In Liberia, even before the civil war took place, you didn't have a press at all. You only had newspapers publishing sports stories on Saturdays. I think the same is true to a large extent of Ghana.

So it is an issue that we really have to worry about — whether or how we can sustain the press in these various countries, how we can develop the press to stand on their feet.

In some countries, Sierra Leone and Gambia for instance, there is hardly any newspaper that you have which produces up to 2,000 copies. Of course the radio and television stations are owned by the government and so what you have is what one referred to as a one-way traffic. Whatever the government wants the people to hear, that's what they hear. The government is not allowed to hear what the people want them to hear.

In the other countries where you have relative degrees of press freedom — Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa — they have their problems too. In Nigeria, Ms. Novicki mentioned the case of my colleague who was assassinated through a parcel bomb in 1986 and in fact six months after our magazine, *News Watch*, was shut down by the government for six months. Soon after we came out, the government started a series of harassments. These harassments take different forms. Curtailment of your access to newsprint and other supplies which are mainly imported; harassment by security people; arrest and detention; shutdowns and so on.

In April last year, when there was an attempted coup in Nigeria, we would publish a report of the coup and what the coup [leaders] said and the hidden agenda, and so on. The press secretary to the president sent word to us and said we should not publish those details. We ignored him and published them and the next day they slammed on our paper and our reporter was banned from covering government house. It was only a couple of months ago that the ban was lifted. The last six months about three different newspapers have been shut down, albeit for brief periods.

But the beauty of the Nigerian case is that each time something like that happens, all of the papers, the journalists, you know, the guild, the bar association, or the civil liberties organization, will rise like one and fight it. That is what has helped in sustaining the energy in the Nigerian press. I don't think that you can say the same thing of some of the other countries, and I think that's where the real prob-

blem is, that you do not have other institutions that have developed like the bar association, like the civil liberties association, that are willing to fight for life [of an independent press] for its rights and for freedom of the individual. I think that we should worry at this conference about how those other institutions can be developed to strengthen the press.

I don't think it would be right for us to think that the press can do it alone, because the press, in many parts of Africa, is not strong enough to stand up to these pressures. One reason is that there are not many well-trained people in some of the media.

There's a shortage of manpower and some of the trained ones are not very highly trained and do not have the intellectual resources to deal with their jobs properly and therefore lack the courage to resist these kinds of pressures. I think that some kind of training gives the journalist the confidence and the courage to resist these pressures from the authorities.

The other problem is that some of the media do not have enough financial resources to do their work properly. That is affecting them and they have to rely largely on government, either government advertising or some sort of support from the government. In some countries, the government even provides communications facilities, telex, telephone, and so on, and as you are aware, that kind of heavy dependence on the government does not allow the press to be free.

One is not referring to the purely government-owned newspapers and magazines and radio stations. There isn't much one can do about it. If the government becomes democratic, then these institutions will be seen as institutions that have to serve the entire [population] and if they don't, then members of parliament will begin to ask questions. If you have a dictator or one-man rule, then there is considerable pressure on these institutions and there is hardly anything that you can do about it. In most of the countries in Africa, the radio and television stations are owned by the government and they go the way

of all such government institutions. They are an extension of the ministry of information and the government directs it on what they should broadcast.

We have 32 television stations in Nigeria and all of them are owned either by the state government or the federal government. There has been a lot of discussion about the possibility of privatizing television, opening it up to private entrepreneurs. But the government seems to resist it, because of the enormous powers it feels television has and might be used in a manner that the government does not like.

A recent example [of abuse of television] is when the government wanted one of the public officers removed, the guy who was heading the drug agency, because there had been some rumors, some stories that tended to discredit the drug agency, and the government wanted to remove the official. So it sent the press secretary to the vice president to get the story into television. The press secretary phoned the television station and wanted to dictate the story, and the television authorities said no, they would not take the story on the telephone, because they could not recognize his voice. The story wasn't broadcast that night. The government sent some soldiers, along with the press secretary, to go into the television station and broadcast the story. Simultaneously, they removed two of the senior television officials, because they refused to carry the story. Of course the next day the union journalists and the guild of editors rose up and challenged the government over it and happily, one can say, the two people have been reinstated.

This is the kind of pressure that you build from such government institutions. There has also been a running hustle with the government over a media council decree. The government wants to institute what is generally known as the press council. Press councils, as we know elsewhere in the free world, are organized by the journalists themselves. This one is an imposition by the government. The government wants to fund it; the government wants

to select all of the officers, and the government has prescribed all kinds of punitive measures. The various press organizations are opposed to it and even though the decree has been enacted, it has not been effected, because the journalists have refused to cooperate, to nominate the journalists, who are supposed to be on the committee.

I think there is an important aspect of the development of the press in Africa that we have to worry about. The structural adjustment program is affecting not only these countries, but the press in those places. Almost 40 countries in Africa have embraced the IMF-World Bank structural adjustment program, and as you do know, most of the press [uses] imported, paper, ink, plates and films and what have you. Because of the low exchange rates in these countries, it's been difficult for a number of the media to import these things and, therefore, it's affected their output; it has affected the quantity of the papers that they print. Even the public-owned stations, like the radio and television stations, in some countries, have not been able to perform their functions. Recently the Nigerian government shut down the Voice of Nigeria for several months because it could not buy [equipment] for its transmitter.

The poorer African countries are suffering from this kind of problem and the situation could have been helped if you had the Pan African News Agency being active. As you know, the Pan African News Agency is not well funded; it's supposed to be funded by all the governments in Africa, but the governments themselves are poor and they do not contribute their dues regularly. So the Pan African News Agency is just sitting there, not covering Africa properly.

We've had, in Africa, to depend, as we had always depended, on the five major news agencies that are based outside of Africa, that do not have the perspective of the African. Most of the coverage of the either Africa or countries outside of Africa, which are published in Nigerian, in African, publications, come from these news agencies.

The war in the gulf — I do not know

of any African publication or African media organization that was represented, because they did not have the resources to send their staff there.

These are the kinds of problems that many of the media are facing right now and the situation is that of survival. It's not even talking about dependence or maintaining independence or gaining independence; they are just trying to survive. I think that we must worry about how we can help them, if it is possible to help them, to survive, one way of doing it is to encourage them to have links with the organizations outside, to be able to attend forums like this and get the necessary exposure. Organizations such as this and others like, say, the Ford Foundation. I remember that the Ford Foundation a few years ago helped a publication in Senegal, a small publication that was crusading for democracy, to set up. This kind of help goes a long way.

If the press is unable to stand on its own feet, the government is happy. Even the ones that are able to stand on their own feet, the government tries to throttle, to march under its big boots. It is convenient, because it will not ask probing questions if it is weak, if it depends on the government.

I also think that we have to find a way of strengthening communications in different parts of Africa. You find that something happens in a neighboring country in Africa and the journalists who cover those countries are unable to get their stories across or, in fact, unable to get to the scene of the action.

You have, for instance, so many Western correspondents in Nairobi, Kenya. They go once in a while to scenes of conflict in Africa, but you do not have African journalists who go to these scenes. The foreign journalists who are based in Nairobi report these things back to their home organizations, who then recycle these stories back to Africa and we recycle these stories to our own people. I think that is a problem that we have to really worry about.

There is one other thing I believe the foreign reporters who are based in Africa can do to help strengthen the



hands of the African journalist working in these places. I know that they are running a great risk, the journalists who are in Nairobi, for instance. I know a few who have been either arrested or deported because they reported news that was not favorable to the Kenyan government. But I believe that if the local press is so suppressed that it cannot publish these things, it will help if the foreign press is able to publish what is happening in these countries.

I always have the feeling that many of the leaders in Africa are very afraid of the foreign press and in fact more afraid of the foreign press than the domestic press because they think that the foreign press is more credible and as soon as people hear the news on the BBC, they will know that it is the truth. The BBC has been a major force in Africa and a lot of Africans depend for news, even in their home countries, on the BBC and other foreign media.

## Enoch Stihole

The changes that have taken place in South Africa from last year, we haven't yet felt them in the journalist profession. We still have oppressive rules in the books that prevent us from doing our job. We are not able to perform fully to give our best in terms of covering the events.

When other parts of Africa talk about media which are completely owned by the state, in South Africa we have so many independent sections of the media. All those are independent as far as they're concerned. But what we've seen over the years is that they have been helping, one way or another, the status quo, and it was only maybe in the mid-80's that a few newspapers emerged and called themselves the alternate press. It's when the newspaper I represent here, *New Nation*, also emerged. We had a really defined policy because what we're saying is that information is being withheld. These newspapers and radio stations who claim to be independent label our heroes, those who are fighting for our freedom, terrorists. And all sorts of things. So, the alternative press emerged. Time went on, repres-

sion took place, and last year we came out from the cold, because death threats were no longer there. No longer can we be detained or strangled or our papers suspended.

But shall we in fact continue to exist? The reason being that the newspapers owned by big corporations have very big infrastructure; we rely on them for distribution, for example, so, our independence is not there. Well, it's there, but it's a survival kind of situation.

Okay, our road now is to try and help the process of democracy and show them that democracy in fact is a reality in South Africa and that does not end merely at the neglect of a government, that it starts from the grassroots level and it spreads all over the country. This is the role we hope we'll be playing from now, or from last year, onwards.

But our commitment is faced with financial problems, certainly, and also the fact that most journalists who are in the alternative press are not as trained as they should be to cope with these changes of countering this so-well organized network or media. For our newspapers to survive, and even other newspapers to emerge [we] need funding from foreign donors, training for journalists who need a lot of support from foreign donors. I'm talking about foreign donors because we do not expect the government to fund us because we are committed to maintain our independence.

About the other section of the independent media, which is what we call the liberal press, while they've claimed to be independent all over these years, they failed to put across the plight of millions of people. They've helped the status quo; they have, as I've said, ignored the plight of our people completely. If you were detained, they say it's obvious, why did you write that? All sorts of things. So what I'm saying is that okay, we're not moving to a new era, to a democratic era. We are not sure whether they are going to remain conservative, or are going to cross the border to the new government. We are pessimists. We will not become part of the official government, that's obvious,

and we don't know where they will be. Suppose they become part of the government and we are on the other side of the fence?

Advertisers are not attracted by our newspapers. There is a honeymoon with the big corporations and now the question is whether we will give up our role and open up for advertisers. It is the big question. Do we really stop reporting against apartheid, or if apartheid is gone, do we stop reporting or promoting democracy, so as to open up our doors for advertisements and ensure our survival? Will we have, or need some kind of aid from somewhere?

Those are the challenges facing the independent press in South Africa.

## Vladimir Vessenski

I would like to remind the people present that the glasnost that was announced in 1987 by Gorbachev fell on prepared soil. That is, more than 90 per cent of the people not only read and write but are used to reading. They catch up with the news every day. They subscribe. In the United States the newspaper that has half million of copies every day is a big newspaper. In our country, our newspaper, [*Literaturnaya Gazeta*] a weekly, is for intellectuals mainly. Circulation was six million. When we dropped this year to a million and a half, we said we were not existent. *Izvestia*, for instance, the government newspaper, and the party newspaper, *Pravda*, they have 10 million copies every day and more, *Pravda* had about 15 million copies every day. So this is a population that reads a lot. This is the strength of glasnost, because everybody catches up with the news.

Maybe it will be useful for our friends from Africa to talk about what existed before 1987. It is conceded that the mass media were controlled. In fact, when Brezhnev was in power the population was always developing some reaction to the totalitarian regime. We who worked in the newspapers called it double morality. You listen to a leader and applaud him and then go to your

kitchen and to your friends and say what a fool he is. There was no such control, in fact, from maybe the end of 70's and beginning of 80's.

Who prepared the changes of our country? Well, first of all, the economy, surely. Then ideologically, by heroes, heroes who edited samizdat publications. They prepared the bulletins and information and they spread it through the country. Then those heroes who smuggled information clandestinely to the West and the West broadcast news to our country. Some of these people were sent to mental hospitals; they were persecuted.

Then I have to say a couple of words about what my newspaper did, because *Literaturnaya* was maybe the only newspaper that was permitted to write about drawbacks of our country. We converted this permission of the party into the right to criticize the system, not separate cases, but the system. Even before 1985, when Gorbachev came to power, and before 1987, this newspaper played a very important role in the preparation of the people to changes. We criticized the economic drawbacks, as a system drawback. We criticized the powerful leaders of the party. So this was the legal way to prepare perestroika and prepare for changes in the country.

From 1987 we were permitted to criticize and everybody commenced to criticize. The more you criticized, the more you saw, the more influence you had on the population. A very good magazine dedicated its pages only to critics. History was wrong, the government was wrong, the ideology was wrong, the culture was wrong, the heroes were not heroes, etc. All of a sudden we lived in a country with another culture. Now people had to believe in a free market and capitalist way of life and democracy. And people believe it. Since last year we have had a law that is very progressive, that permitted us to not only criticize the government and the system, but also permitted us to own newspapers and media. But for television and radio, the government is the owner. It is permitted to organize new TV channels and also radio stations. At least in Moscow we have one indepen-

dent radio station owned by a group of young men and women who played very important roles in events like shootings in Lithuania and Latvia. They informed the public.

Now I have to tell you that I am very much impressed how the American press are preoccupied that American citizens should know all the truths and all the things that are happening inside their country and sometimes outside of their country, because democracy of the United States is based on the information of the public. It is classic, but it is also human.

I think that 90 per cent of the information that our public receives is criticism because only critics know positive information. If the press and mass media played a very important role in the destruction of the system that rules us, especially TV, I will tell you one instance. Even in France, with their democracy, they told me that they cannot permit themselves to transmit all the discussions of the parliament because people would be upset what their delegates or deputies are saying. The most important blow to the system was made by our TV, because they received the right to transmit all the discussion and people all of a sudden they knew what people were ruling us. They said, what fools are they.

So we are free, we have the right to have our newspapers, and my newspaper belongs to the people. In fact, maybe I would compare it with a cooperative of the people who work there.

Now we experience another very powerful pressure. The government, I think, is plotting against powerful newspapers, like ours. The government raises prices on paper four times higher, the cost of printing two times higher, and distribution two or three or four times higher, depending on the republic. In our newspaper we had to double subscription prices this year. My newspaper cost 10 rubles last year; this year it is 19 rubles. We are writing for intellectuals and intellectuals in my country have lower salaries than workers. These people were writing us letters saying, unfortunately, I was a

subscriber for 20 years but unfortunately I cannot subscribe anymore, because this sum permits one week of living of our family. So we lost subscribers — from six million copies we are not one million and a half.

What is the aim of the government? The aim of the government is to lead these big influential newspapers to bankruptcy and to make them dependent on the bank and to exercise pressure.

One would say that *Pravda* and *Izvestia* are in the same situation, but they are not. The Party gave *Pravda* hundreds of million rubles. You can see *Pravda* and *Izvestia* for sale here in Harvard Square, but not *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. There is another kind of pressure — delivery delays. For instance yesterday I received my newspaper for January 9. I want to say a couple of words on the happiness that my friends and diplomats and people who visit my country feel when they see that there is a free market of the press in Moscow and other cities — the small newspaper that sell 2,000 to 3,000 copies or 10,000 copies a week. These small newspapers produce an impression that the press is free.

These small newspaper cooperatives are permitted to pay journalists three times more than the big newspapers pay. For instance, my salary is 300 rubles a month. That's \$10 on the black market — a month. On small newspapers, they pay 1,000 or 1,500 rubles a month to a journalist, because they can sell these small newspapers at any price. So people from the big influential national newspapers are going to work on these small ones, because you cannot live. They are destroying the most important newspapers and magazine.

I think that this is the problem of Africa, Latin America, and of Central Europe. I warn you that I do not have an elaborate idea of how to help — maybe a hint of ideas. First of all, I think that American newspapers should establish relationships with important Soviet democratic newspapers and publish, for instance, once a week a page or an article saying, this newspaper still exists. It will attract public attention

to what is happening. I know that some newspapers in the United States prepare one or two pages every week about the world, like what is happening in Africa, to create the taste for international news. Maybe it would be better if there were an international media watch in the United States, because we are now always threatened that the law on press will be abolished or stopped temporarily.

**Q** — to what extent is the press in Nigeria and South Africa receiving foreign aid and is that helpful, if they are?

**SITHOLE** — In South Africa the alternative press particularly has been existing merely on foreign aid. And in the case of my newspaper, we have warnings that they will stop aid. As I've said, advertisements would force us to compromise our role. For example, we've had a meeting with one major multinational and we said, well, we would like you to advertise in our paper as you advertise in other papers. They said, but you promote strikes, you publicize strikes by workers. And then we said, well, but that is a democratic principle, that right to strike.

**EKPU** — I'm not aware that Nigerian media gets any aid in the forms of technical equipment or finances. The only aid I know of is something like a conference, like this, or fellowships or training programs.

**Q** — Do you see the danger in terms of the media having to compromise themselves if they would get foreign aid, or do they just not need it in Nigeria?

**EKPU** — I don't think so. I think that what one of the foundations did in Senegal rather helps the journalist or helps the institution to stand firm on its feet. It helped it to purchase some printing equipment, and instead of depending on the government press, the press was able to publish without fear that the government press might refuse to print for it. I really can't see how it's going to compromise them.

**Q** — I would like to hear from each one of the panelists the one single thing that would help them most in the way of help from the U.S. or so-called First

World.

**VESSENSKI** — This fight is our fight, so you cannot substitute for us. That should be clear. We have to do the job. But the attention, the American attention to this problem of press is very helpful. The influence of the American press is very big in our country and public opinion also. Maybe newspapers need some kind of financial help. For instance, my newspaper closed bureaus because we had no right to change our rubles for dollars [on the free market]; the bank didn't change our money in full. We are only in Bonn and France and we have a stringer in London and New York.

**EKPU** — I think that the media can do with a lot more help in training. I think it's a more useful area to concentrate on, both outside of their countries and within their own countries, to help them develop their skills and strengthen their confidence. Maybe the smaller newspapers and magazines can do with some kind of technical support, like printing equipment, which may not be needed anymore in the American press, to help small organizations be independent. I don't think that outright financial support is necessary.

**SITHOLE** — In our case, financial assistance is very important, because some of our newspapers will not be receiving aid beginning next year. That would mean that if we can not generate funds by that time, we'll have to shut down. The other thing is that we have to have our own distribution network, and it is not easy to establish a network through South Africa. We rely on big corporations to distribute our papers. In fact, they have even the [power] of controlling our price.

**THRANE** — I'd like to ask Ray if there are any plans or changes being made in the legal structure or otherwise so that after the next round of democratic elections do you hope that the press will be protected from shut-down, that a system will be in place that'll make for a more sustained kind of democracy other than another failed experiment in civilian government? Are there any changes that will come along to protect your ability to report, to

preserve the democratic process?

**EKPU** — Not that I know of. Actually, many of the things that the government does to throttle freedom of the press are not legal. They are extra-legal steps, like sending security people to harass people. When NewsWatch was shut down in 1987, there was no law that permitted the government to do that. It was in fact one week later that the government wrote up a decree to support the legal action that it had already taken. So it's not a matter of legality now, and I do not think that the situation will change until 1992, when the central government will be elected.

**NYONG'O** — I think one of the ways in which Western mass media in particular can help strengthen press freedom in Africa is taking up cases of individuals, or really championing their freedom. It would not just help the individuals, but also focus the attention on the condition of the press because when one individual is suffering detention or being removed forcibly, that is the kind of story that makes an impact on people. Another one way is for individual newspapers or radio stations in the U.S., West Germany, to pair up with a radio station or a newspaper in Africa so that they'll have this ongoing relationship not just in terms of material assistance but extended visits and so on.

**Q** — I wonder what the panel thinks of a world bank of newsprint from which countries who need it could draw on from the central supply.

**EKPU** — That sounds like an interesting idea. But the problem is, how do you get the newsprint to the person who needs it, because you still have to pass through the ports or the airport and the government is in charge of these places. So they can see the newsprint, they can block it and it doesn't get to whoever it doesn't want it to get to. The other thing I'd like to mention, in conclusion, is that we have to worry about, even though there is so much euphoria about the pro-democracy movement in Africa, we really have to worry about whether or not these democracies will survive if we do get there. And I use the Nigerian example to illustrate what I want to say. A number of people in

Nigeria are beginning to criticize the government, even though they support the movement toward democracy, but they are afraid that the government is spending a lot of money which could have otherwise been spent in developing facilities, water and electricity, roads and so on, for the people. The government in Nigeria has built party offices for politicians, for the two parties; it has given a lot of money to the different parties, and the philosophy behind it is that the government does not want the rich people to fund parties, so that the rich man does not hijack the parties. It wants the parties to belong to everybody, so the government is spending a lot of money. The government is

worried now that it doesn't have that much money to continue to spend in order to sustain democracy. One of the reasons why the government recently preferred the open ballot system, the queue system, people will just queue in lines behind their favorite candidates or favorite parties, instead of the secret ballot system, is that the secret ballot system is very expensive, buying ballot boxes and printing ballot papers. So the government has chosen the queue system, which was abolished in Kenya, I think, last year. And you begin to wonder what kind of democracy this is going to be if people are going to make their choice in the open and vote in the open. People in Nigeria call it junk

democracy. It's going to be a problem with many of the poor countries in Africa, how they can find enough money to sustain the big bureaucracies that come with legislators' salaries, to find residential accommodations for them, and in some cases, they ask for transport, all supported by the taxpayer.

**SITHOLE** — I would like to iterate that it is a priority that independent newspapers are kept in existence so that the process towards democracy doesn't fail. We can't have an election of a government and if there be no support from the press or other quarters, that will be the end. We will not see another election or we will not see a democratic process existing underground.

## The Role Of Electronic Media

### Danny Schechter

In the world today, information has been globalized. I think the gulf war may mark a new stage in global information on television. The emergence of Cable News Network as at least aspiring to be a global network and its role around the world. In South Africa, for example, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, which is still controlled by the government, has done a deal with CNN. And so CNN is now seen on South African television. But when South Africa now offered itself to South African television the response was, "We don't need this show, 'cause we have CNN." The only point that wasn't made, was that of course, CNN doesn't have a bureau in South Africa and doesn't cover South Africa, particularly. Except in major world crisis type situations. So the problem of the electronic media is usually a national, case-by-case study.

### Joe Ndifor

Well, it is nine months since I came over to the United States as a Benton Fellow at the University of Chicago, and today I feel happy, and at the same time I feel sad. Happy because after 11 years

of constant harassments, arrests and detentions, I finally had a psychological breathing space, and nine months have made me feel once more like a human being. On the other hand I feel sad, because after 11 years of relentless fighting with the authorities over the question of democratic change in Cameroon, a lot is happening back home, as I speak here now, and I am not there to see the fruits of the labor of a handful of other courageous colleagues, and myself. Over the last four weeks, at least 50 civilians have been shot dead by Cameroon's security forces and soldiers. More than 500 university students have been arrested and detained. Of that number, 56 are either dead or unaccounted for. All this in the struggle to force an autocratic end to a repressive regime, to open up the system, at least in terms of accountability.

Some of us journalists are proud, even if it took more than a decade to prepare the population psychologically for what is happening today.

Perhaps the grim situation in the practice of this noble profession until now, in Cameroon can be best explained by our experiences as young journalists-in-training, and later as professionals.

Most of us received a purely Western training in journalism back home. This was made possible by the fact that the journalism school was international in status, owned by 10 countries, which made it impossible for my country to dictate the terms under which this school would operate. This school was finally nationalized anyway.

I will never forget my first day at work, when the subdirector of news took me to the notice board of the radio, and asked me to read aloud two



Margaret Novicki Photo

key rules of the newsroom. One: military coup anywhere in the world should never be announced over state radio. Two: no student disturbances anywhere in the world should ever be carried in the news. After having executed my orders, I was made to understand that I was no longer in school, and should therefore forget whatever I learned as a student journalist, for, as he put it, and I quote him, "the situation now is entirely different."

Now let us come to Cameroon's Constitution with regard to the basic freedoms. They sound so good on paper: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, all of these are guaranteed by this constitution. But it is followed by a phrase: as long as it is within the framework of the law. This could still sound good, but these laws are unspecified, or are nonexistent, especially press laws. This makes working very tricky. Furthermore, we are always reminded that radio and TV are the personal property of the President of the Republic.

It is a rule that any national story going on the air must be in the form of a government department communiqué, whose contents are usually sketchy, or full of praises of the one and only president of the Republic. A good professional who decides to carry other stories besides official releases is usually left to grope in the dark. If he is right, in the view of the authorities, he is ignored. But if he is wrong, in their view, he is in big trouble. A few courageous colleagues, including myself, did the second option. By 1980 we were running some private shows on the radio, which could be criticized by the system. Such shows were closely monitored by the ruthless secret state police. The same applied to the almost non-existent private newspapers.

In our bid to challenge the system into breaking administrative red tape, a few colleagues have been physically eliminated. The latest happened three years ago, when the mutilated body of the editor of a Catholic newspaper was found near his home, in a local parish in the national capital. The greater part of us were simply arrested and detained

without trial for long and unspecified periods by the secret police. In an 11-year career, I have been thrown in jail five times. If I have survived this far, it has been due to a number of factors. First, the London-based Amnesty International; secondly, until recently, the New York International Committee to Protect Journalists; third, the Cameroon Bar Association, and its president, who happens to be my brother-in-law; and, fourthly, and surprisingly enough, my wife, a police officer, who has always been beside me whenever I'm arrested to make sure that her sadistic colleagues never touch me physically.

Other colleagues have not been that lucky. Most of them have been frustrated in one way or the other, and forced to go into exile, either to the United States, to France or to Britain.

Besides the Western-oriented training we have received as student journalists, we always look to Western society and its democratic institutions to eventually help us out of the quarter of a century political quagmire. We could read newspapers from abroad, as long as they contained nothing critical of the regime in power. Foreign radio has always been accessible, the BBC, the Voice of America, Radio France, which we saw as models in the shaping of our own media organizations in the future. Surprisingly enough, we met setbacks from unexpected quarters, like the American diplomatic mission. There have been occasions in which colleagues, including myself, have been punished. After all, the Cameroon government received complaints from American diplomats of our criticizing American foreign policy.

The worst case didn't involve myself, but the editor of TV news at the time. He does some reports for CNN these days. Well, this happened when our President was visiting the United States. That was sometime in 1986, and he was accompanied by the U.S. ambassador to Cameroon. On Cameroon TV we put on the air German productions, and this time, there was a production on surgery in Cameroon, and it coincided with the time when President Reagan had undergone surgery. *Charge d'affaires* of the American embassy lodged a bitter com-

plaint that we were actually making a mockery of the fact that Reagan had had surgery. This raised hell, and our editor-in-chief was arrested briefly by the police, and, after that, was suspended from his job for three months, which made us start wondering, because we looked up to America, as they have made us understand that they could help us in this struggle for independence.

We come back to the key question: Does the electronic media have any role to play in the movement for democracy? The answer definitely is yes. I have with me an audio cassette, which, because of time constraints, we cannot listen to here, of a debate on state radio, on multiparty politics, which I moderated on Sunday, the 10th of May, last year. It was a landmark in the troubled history of journalism in Cameroon. Involved were university lecturers, three of them and 10 other colleagues. Two days after it went on the air, we were all arrested by the secret police.

As I speak the current government has given in to reforms, but the population says it is not enough. The country's going through a terrible transition, which we hope will end successfully, because it is in such moments that soldiers are usually tempted to seize power, and we all know what they are not among the world's greatest thinkers. As other colleagues have said in earlier discourses, we are barely managing to survive, and we feel that it would be of much assistance if our colleagues in the Western media pay more attention to the plight of Africa.

## Peter Marek

The situation in Eastern Europe is very similar to that one in Africa and also Latin America, especially in the point that democracy there is very unbalanced, it's fragile. We can see it in ordinary people, how they react, especially now, when they have free access to information. They are, many times they are very confused also because of this fact, and it's much easier for any populist leader to win their



attention, and to win their popularity. We can see it in Czechoslovakia; we can see it in Romania; in the Soviet Union; Poland, also. I think this is one of the special features for any weak democracy. And democracy is still weak in Czechoslovakia.

I haven't been studying journalism because, as you know in Czechoslovakia, all, not only all universities, but all schools, practically everything, was 40 years controlled by Communists. So although there was faculty of journalism in Prague there was nothing much to learn there. I received my degree in economics.

I ended up in Czechoslovakia radio, three years before the Revolution. I had really some experience with the control of media by government, in this case by a Communist government. First, all the leading posts, all the leadership, was controlled by Communists. There wasn't access for anybody who wasn't Communist to gain any leading post in any state-run media, and all the media. I was working in the newsroom, but as a non-Communist, I was dealing with [news that] from their point of view was not so interesting: what is going in Argentina, or Southern Africa, and so on. Because of censorship, I started to contribute also to some so-called underground magazines, which were issued at that time in Czechoslovakia, not in large number of copies, but they were influential, especially among the intelligentsia.

[After] the Velvet Revolution one year and a half ago, the state-run media still weren't giving all the information. So, on the first dealings between Civic Forum, which was in that time a very broad revolutionary movement, [and] the Communist government, it was decided to establish Civic Forum broadcasting. I became editor, anchor, reporter, practically everything, of this program. It was broadcast a half hour in the morning and one hour in the evening, on one state-run federal channel. This program was very influential; it had the largest number of listeners in the last 20 or 40 years. Every day we received a large number of letters, of telephone calls, many visitors and so —

because we were given information which was accessible to the public as a whole, for the population of all our republic, for practically all those 40 years. Like what is the real environmental damage, for example, in Northern Bohemia, which is one of the most polluted parts of Europe. What is the real economic situation?

We presented for the first time such programs as political discussions with people of different opinions, something like CNN's Crossfire. This was quite new for Czechoslovak listeners and they were shocked, for example, at somebody's criticizing President Havel. Or they used to be so. People still have problems with this fact. It isn't like being here in the United States, that you can listen to somebody's different opinion, and everything is OK. In Czechoslovakia, for the people it still means you want to put somebody out of his job or something like that.

What is now most important for really opening the media in Czechoslovakia, it's a proposed law on broadcasting in the Czechoslovakia Parliament. The first draft was prepared — and it was prepared by governmental lawyers — and many people became unsatisfied with this first proposal, because it was still keeping that strong state control over media. I — with some of my friends — prepared a new draft, and many lawyers and many people came with advice. Also some from the United States were collaborating on the preparation of a new draft, which was just finished, and should be passed by the Parliament.

This new law will give the right to broadcast not only to a government, or a state-run media, but also to private broadcasters. Under this law the state-run media should be changed into a type of public broadcasting media, something like here in the United States. (you have PBS and, in the radio network, NPR). Already some licenses have been given to private, or let's say non-government broadcasters in Czechoslovakia. There are now more than 20 non-government broadcasters. There is a discussion in Czechoslovakia whether its broadcasting should be more similar

to a West European or an American model.

## Carol Jenkins

One of the things that we heard all day today, some of last night, was this talk of television and radio in Central Europe and Africa, and without exception, while there may have been some newspapers that were free and somewhat at liberty to report what they wanted, in almost every instance there was no television network or radio network that was allowed to do the same thing. That is because of this enormous reach that television has, the enormous power of immediacy that we have seen in so many instances recently.

Because I am a local reporter at NBC in New York, and our territory, if you will, covers New York, New Jersey, and parts of Connecticut, it is not too often that we can present a powerful case for going to Johannesburg and standing in Soweto and doing live remotes.

The station previously had sent me to Israel for one of the anniversaries, so I had been there. We, of course, have had reporters in Berlin for the collapse of the wall, but rarely do we get outside of the country. There had been some interest in it, and we had applied for a visa [to South Africa] in 1988, and as you well know, had been rejected at that point. The climate in the beginning of 1990 was somewhat different: we



Margaret Nowicki Photo

applied and we were approved. It was a time when South Africa was apparently quite willing to have people come to their country, including local reporters who would only be broadcasting to a limited audience. Now, even though we had applied for visas, and we applied for two technicians, camera man, sound man, two reporters, two producers, a huge battery of people to go to South Africa, when it finally came to pass, the only people who went, and the only reason that I went was that I was standing at the assignment desk like this, looking at the assignment editor in the eye.

It took perhaps 6 hours to make the decision to go, even though we knew that the release was imminent because, well should we go? Would the housewife in Queens be interested? Does anybody care about this story? Can we afford it? Maybe the network will cover it for us. We have everything that we could want from the local network. We don't need a local perspective. Well, simply by standing there at the assignment desk, and really embarrassing the person who was behind there, we were ultimately able to go. No crew. Just a reporter and a producer, which meant that we landed in Johannesburg at a time when every available cameraman had been snapped up by every news organization that was sent.

The place was flooded with people. So the camera crew that we got was usually accustomed to doing wildlife, intense close-ups of fish, animals, and whatever. In local news in New York, we do a lot of running around in the streets. That's the way we cover the news. It's not news unless we are racing down some street, breathlessly. We get to Johannesburg, finally hook up to this cameraman, and say, you've really got to move, and he would look at us and say, move? I'm going as fast as I can. So the man really did not know the difference between a leisurely three-hour shoot, a setup, to perhaps get a passing fish or an animal, and you've really got to get it now, or else Mr. Mandela is not going to be there. He's not going to stand outside of his house forever.

Well, my producer and I, Bob Weiner,

a very capable man, we managed to, through our camera person and through the graces of the NBC network, we were able to begin feeding live reports. The next day we were in Soweto, standing across the street from the Mandela residence, and as all of us in this room I'm sure would agree, this was a major story, the release of Nelson Mandela.

The news organization at home was not quite so sure. They knew it was important, but another local story was breaking at that time, and that was that Donald and Ivana Trump were having some marital troubles. The debate in the local newsroom was whether the release of Nelson Mandela or the divorce of Donald and Ivana Trump was more important. Well, a victory, that first day, we won. We led the show on a Sunday night, led the show on a Monday night.

From that point on, that was all we could get from our local news organization because it was clear the Donald and Ivana Trump were now certainly more important, because not only were they separating, but it appeared that she wanted his money. Certainly the housewife in Queens had an interest in that, as opposed to what was going on in South Africa.

We did reports every day, but every day it sort of slipped. By Friday Nelson Mandela and the population of South Africa and the enormous changes that were taking place in that country were slipping down the list of priority in terms of what was important in local news. You can imagine my shock standing in front of a camera with an earpiece, and I could hear the local news that was going on back there, and I could see the people dancing in the streets, and the excitement, and just the tremendous impact of this occasion, and I would hear: Carol Jenkins is in South Africa, and she'll be with us in just a minute, but first . . . Ivana and Donald Trump, the local murder, the murder of the day, the robbery of the day, the scandal of the day, and then finally they would get to us.

We in this room have all been through some version of that, so we understand it. When we got back to New York, we had quite a bit of material and we per-

sued the people at NBC to let us do — we only asked for, because our sights had been set too small — may we have a half an hour please to consolidate our material? I mean we wouldn't dare of thinking about an hour, although that's what we really wanted. We kept saying, we have enough material for an hour, should we ask for an hour? They said, no, they'll never give us an hour. Because of a programming snafu, it turned out that they had not only a half hour available, but an hour to put this on, and they gave us a prime time, from 8 to 9 o'clock on a Sunday night, which was the ideal opportunity to put on a broadcast about South Africa.

We put this hour on, and we had promotion, and what happened? It was almost as if the housewife test was failed, because we found out that there really were not, so it would seem, a lot of people in our viewing area interested in the subject of South Africa. [but what we] . . . discovered was that the NBC brass [did not come] in screaming, that's the last time we'll ever do anything that doesn't deal with what goes on right in our community because the people are not interested.

That, in a nutshell, is the experience, and I guess that, we're not talking about outright censorship in the sense of the state controlled, and somebody saying you will not cover this subject. But it is what we are run by often, even on a daily basis, on the kinds of stories that we do when we are trying to make the case for a story on Africa.

As I guess it was said last night about the recognizability of African leaders, that there were only two and they were Nelson Mandela and F. W. deKlerk. And after that, they sort of went off the visibility level. Certainly in the newsroom if you try to do a story about any other country, any other African country except South Africa, you are met with such a blank look. Starving children don't matter, education doesn't matter. Conceivably, if you're going to do an AIDS story, that might matter because there's enough sensationalism in that to get it on the air if you can pin it on someone in a country in Africa. Then it perhaps might be a way of

covering the continent. So not censorship, per se, but we are run by ratings, by who watches, by the documentation.

**Q** — Why is it that in the African-American community, there seems to be cultural degeneration insofar as identification with Africa, and how can African countries do more to promote their own needs agenda in the United States?

**JENKINS** — I'm not sure that I really have any formal answer for you, but your question speaks to one of the debates that is raging now within many sorts of academic circles about what kinds of history to teach. It is the kind of debate which looks at what we teach our children within the public schools. I think one of the reasons why the younger generation has not claimed really parts of Africa is that we have failed to pass on the knowledge and history of much of the Third World, and most of our education in this country has been, and still is, Eurocentric. As long as it is, as long as it remains that way, it's going to be very difficult for us to teach our children world history and world events. That, I think, is really what the key is — that we need to start teaching in the schools not only African-American children, but all children, so that there's a sense that we all share in this world, that we have all made a very significant sort of contribution to world society.

**BETTY BAYE** — I'd like to say something about the difficulty too that African-American journalists have, in our industry, in trying to tell the story, not just of Africa, but what's going on in Black America, and a lack of interest in our editors and the reputation that some of us have gained, because we want to write about, or see things on the air, where people are not interested. I mean that's what you talk about a lot, our own frustration and why so many African-American journalists are leaving the business because of the racism that we face in our industry.

**SCHECHTER** — I've been struck by the receptivity and interest in Africa among black youth in particular. Some years ago the cultural fashion on the streets of New York and in the inner

cities of America was to wear gold chains. A lot of those chains are gone now and people are wearing African medallions. There is an identification; there is an interest. The problem is that our public educational system is collapsing. I think African intellectuals, scholars, journalists, etcetera, have to make more of a concerted effort to target the United States, people would be predisposed to be interested in what's going on, in Africa, and particularly the African-American community. You can bet the Israeli government has done so in this government, in creating a constituency of both financial support, which affects American aid, and everything else. And I'm just stating the facts here. African governments haven't done so.

[About coverage of South Africa under restriction.] Our position from the very beginning was that you could cover South Africa, despite the media restrictions. That the problem of censorship was not simply the problem of some bad guys in Pretoria, but of news management and priorities of coverage in the United States. There were many stories that were done that never made air, that were put on the shelf in New York for whatever reasons. Once the press restrictions [were lifted] the reality of the fact was that the story went away in TV terms, by and large. Not everywhere — some networks were better than others, and some journalists were better than others, but as a whole, the perception of what was happening in South Africa declined, and it's declining once again, with CBS scaling back its bureau; other networks likely to follow. What we became advocates for was not any political party or group or anti-journalists, but for more coverage of South Africa, people who confirmed their experience to us time and time again, many of whom were afraid to go on camera, because they didn't want to criticize their own network, talked to us off the record about their frustrations and their experiences in getting the story on the air, and convincing [network officials] in New York that 30,000 children in prison [in South Africa] was a valid story even though there wasn't

violence in the streets. I think distinction has to be drawn between the intent and the competence and the consciousness of individual journalists who were trying to do a good job, and the reality that they were dealing with. People who were South Africans, like a fellow who worked for Reuters, told me that during the state of emergency, our lawyers became our editors. Everything we write has to be passed through our lawyers. There was a chilling effect; there was self-censorship. It wasn't me that made the statement, but Dan Rather's producer, who wrote an article in *The New York Times*, and he said there was virtual media appeasement going on in South Africa, that we crossed the line. Not one American correspondent was thrown out of South Africa to my knowledge.

It's not the same thing as the case in Eastern Europe or in the Soviet Union. There was a badge of honor for pushing the limits, and it didn't happen in South Africa. His conclusion was that if you can't do the job, you should get out. My conclusion was, no, go in there and demonstrate that you can cover the story.

It wasn't me that took the risks; there were a lot of journalists in South Africa that took risks in a very hazy area of continuing to cover the story, and we were able to report it, and other journalists were able to report it. But I think it's unfair to suggest that we were attacking our colleagues. We were trying to strengthen our colleagues, and show that there was interest in this story, and a demand for this story, because journalism happens within a context. What gets on the air is a set of priorities, it's the consciousness of the particular producer, and the people on the desk.

I was with Jesse Jackson in 1986, in Harare, and we interviewed the president of Zimbabwe, president Mugabe. We were talking about American military help, and Jesse Jackson was making the point that a Marshall Plan of some kind was needed for Africa and was suggesting that Zimbabwe should get military aid from the United States to defend itself against South Africa, which had dropped bombs in Zambia

six months earlier, as part of its de-stabilization effort. I asked Mugabe, would you be open to that? He said, you know you're the first person who's asked me that. Absolutely. And he made a statement. He said, I would welcome military aid because we could divert aid to agriculture and education and other things we need in our development. I thought it was an interesting story, and I had it on tape, and it was a good sound bite, so I called New York. I called the ABC foreign news desk, and I got one question from the editor there. And it stopped me cold, and it shut me up. And the question was, where is Harare?

**RAJ CHENGAPPA** — In a democracy like India, where we have complete state control of both television and radio whereas the press is free, television reaches 70 per cent of the people, and the press reaches just about 10 per cent. I think the press plays an important role in sustaining democracy, but how do we support the electronic media? What is the way we can break the stranglehold? Where most of the people are being informed badly, or biasedly, by the state-controlled media, and in no way promoting democracy. I think some examples have come up. I think Danny's video, which I saw the other day, is a great example. My magazine has also launched a video magazine [on cassettes] that tries to break the censorship. We cover events live. We're constantly in trouble. We showed a guy being killed on television. We need to support these kinds of programs. In fact, the election right now is being fought in India through the electronic media. It's not the press. We're just covering the spectators.

What we do, it's a very complex system at the moment and the government is only getting wise to it now. Under the law, all film, television and radio is open to censorship. So what we have to do is submit the cassettes to the government and the government then uses this kind of control to delay our program.

We are a monthly video and they have delayed it for a month or two months if they didn't like the program.

[We] go to the press council and get them to release it. Then we would send it out to libraries who would, of course, in India because the piracy industry is very high, then make copies and circulate it all over. In fact, it goes right down to many of the state capitals, the districts and parallel to that. India Today is not the only magazine that's down there. We've found this whole industry that's grown where you have the small producers and the small guys who just make programs and add entertainment and film and that kind of thing and sell it there. Africa is very similar to India in terms of education. In India, seventy per cent of people are not educated and it's this electronic media that will serve the purpose.

Oh, they may not have food to eat in India, or, you know, but they'll have a television set. And they'll have 2,000 rupies, which is the cost of a black and white television set.

**SCHECHTER** — It's a great story. When he says cassettes, it's not people throwing stuff together. It's actual. There's a program called Newstrack which has investigative reporting segments. These are distributed through video stores and in some cases outsell major movies. They have low-cost rentals. People rent them and there's a tradition of communal viewing. This has actually gotten around the closed nature of the Indian television system and it's an interesting model.

... there is a very valuable resource in South Africa, the alternative media. I can't claim a lot of our stories were being reported in New Nation, in the Weekly Mail, and the Sowetan that you didn't read in the New York Times, but [they] had a much different approach and a different perspective.

One very glaring one gets us into the question of content and democracy. The release of Nelson Mandela. Ted Koppel stood in front of the Presidential mansion in Cape Town and he said, [deKlerk] is the Gorbachev of South Africa, words to that effect. This is the man that freed Mandela. The power is here. The alternative media in South Africa was saying that, in fact, Mandela himself had initiated [his release] from

within prison and it reflected the movement within the country which had been building for several years. The democratic movement, the defiance campaigns and initiatives that were actually happening from within the movement, not from outside the movement. In a sense, the image would be that Mandela released Mandela, if you were looking for the headline on it in some way. It's a very different story. It's a bottom-up approach to journalism. It's an inside-out approach rather than an outside-in approach.

We can learn from African journalists and journalists from other countries, Czechoslovakia or anywhere else, by trying to find ways to see what's in their media and how they interpret their own situation, and by reporting that, we might get a better fix on things.

... it's true that the Mandela coverage tended to mythologize the man, and in a sense obscure and not really talk about the politics of his movement and concrete contradictions and realities that were going on there. The next story inevitably became does the hero have feet of clay? And we're going to chip away at that and show that he's not what we basically presented him as being. ABC World News Tonight did a piece on Mandela which was a, people-don't-like-him kind of story. But they interviewed people who were in other political organizations without really identifying who they were; the piece was a little confusing in that respect, but there hasn't been very much follow-up coverage. That's true of not just South Africa, but a lot of stories.

**NDIFOR** — If the question is what can now be covered in South Africa because there is that complicated situation, then my answer will be that of course there is a very complicated situation in South Africa. There is a wide coverage of the Winnie Mandela trial. OK, we don't say she's right or wrong, but - if we look at what is happening in South Africa at the same time — a deputy official of the government who is being accused of murder. That is not being given coverage. Our view is that the South African media and the foreign

media should, in fact, try to get to bottom of the issues instead of peeking in places within the whole political issue in South Africa. It also takes me to the question of the violence that's going on in South Africa. I read a paper yesterday in London and what I gathered is that well, the black on black violence was continuing in South Africa. All I'm saying is there should be an attempt to get deep to what is in fact happening in South Africa and not explain the violence in a very simplistic way. It's a situation whereby foreign journalists can try and find out from the relevant people in South Africa what is in fact interesting at the particular time. With relevant people I mean, maybe the victims of the violence that they would tell you exactly who is attacking them. I'm not blaming them, but what has happened is that most journalists have relied on press releases from the South African police or on the 8 o'clock news of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the TV . . .

**VIVIAN LOWERY DERRYCK** — I want to go back to the question about building a constituency for Africa. I just returned from a conference in Abidjan which brought together about 500 Americans and Africans, the predominance of the Americans being black. This was a direct effort to build a con-

stituency for Africa between Africans and Black Americans. There were thousands of cameras there. CNN was there and I'm assuming some of the networks. And none of that, as far as I understand, was ever played on television here in the United States. The print coverage was very, very limited, maybe three or four articles. So the question is, what is required for this to be on television in the United States? I mean, here you have the most eminent civil rights leaders in the United States, you have issues of debt that are discussed. You have six African presidents, granted, not the largest African states, but you don't see anything about this in the United States. So I said that it was a clear failure of Black Americans to make their case known. But I'm not sure that that's not too much of an indictment of us. And then secondly, did this get any coverage on any African networks or in any African papers outside of Cote d'Ivoire? So that's my question and that's my indictment.

**KOVACH** — I think you've touched one of the most important points about what makes news in this country. And I'm not sure I really know, but I've got some ideas and I'd like to try them out on you and I'd like you to think about them. What touched them off was seeing the President of Turkey on the

Brinkley show more often than a black official. Well, about five or six years ago, the Turks were concerned about their lack of image in America. They hired Frank Mankiewicz, who is a former Press Secretary to Bobby Kennedy, who is now in public relations and asked him how in the world the Turks could get a better break on American television and in the American media. And he said, oh, well that's simple. Go back about four generations and send thousands of Turks to live in the United States and their grandchildren will see that you get on the air. This may be the most simplistic thing in the world, and I may be telling you something you already know, but most blacks in this country don't know who their relatives are back home. A Polish third generation resident of Chicago knows who his great granddaddy was back in Poland. And the minute something happens back in Poland, he lets the system, the news media, the government, everybody in his town know that he's interested in knowing what's going on in Poland. And it's not so much that white democracy is more attractive to journalists in this country than black democracy, it's that the whites in this country who came from Poland and Czechoslovakia know what's going on back there.

## Legal and Constitutional Issues

Tom Morgan

One of the points that we have been making all day in the various sessions that we've had is the role of the constitution in actually protecting press freedoms. We have focused quite a bit on the nations within Africa, but I think this is an issue that has a lot to do with the developing press in Eastern and Central Europe, as well. I want to ask a number of questions before we go on to other members of the panel.

One is whether the U.S. model is the model that is most appropriate for the nations in Eastern Europe, in Central Europe and throughout parts of Africa. The other issue is whether there needs

to be a pretty detailed press law. Is no press law better than a press law that can be defined as overly restrictive? Certainly within countries in Eastern and Central Europe, there's a great debate as to how should the press be restricted.

The other point that I'd like us to think about is the role of the individual within society versus the needs of society itself to get certain kinds of information told, certain points made. I raise that because there was a reference made on one of the panels this morning about how the press in some African nations focuses on the needs of people who live in the neighborhood or peo-

ple within a society rather than the needs and the rights of the person. I think that we need to think about that because the notion in this country is very different. We tend to focus more on the needs of the individual or the rights of the individual within the context or the framework of the rights of society at large.

**Terry McGuire**

It's essential when looking at the law that governs the operation of the press, especially the printed press, to recognize



the importance of the economics involved in maintaining an independent and free press. We, in fact, in our association have a mission statement, and it always had been to advance the cause of a free press. A couple of years ago our board of directors added that it was essential that newspapers maintain the economic independence necessary to preserve that free press. I think those two are really intertwined in terms of preserving, in the end, freedom of the press.

When we talk about the law and government and constitutions with respect to freedom of the press, it's an easy matter when we're talking about an individual country. It's a much more difficult matter when we're trying to talk on a continent-wide basis or a region-wide basis. There really is no international law of freedom of the press. There are several covenants and the universal declaration of human rights that exist out there. Countries have signed them. We have rarely ratified many of them here. They have a lot of qualifiers, and in fact, you're going to see a debate emerge, in the next couple of months in Washington about whether the United States should ratify a couple of those covenants. They have enough holes in them to drive most of what we fought for in this country over the last 200 years solidly through them and out the other side. Some of the words that were mentioned this morning about defending public order and public good are in some of those covenants that have come out of the United Nations. I think there are reasons to be quite concerned about them.

I do think that we're at a high point with respect to a recognition of freedom of the press.

It was only a short time ago that many of us were involved in a debate, with UNESCO. That was not a pleasant household word among free press aficionados in the United States and elsewhere. There was an awful lot of ink that was spread over newsprint in this country and elsewhere criticizing UNESCO for its efforts to shackle the free press in Africa and throughout the developing world generally. The Soviets,

of course, were involved in a large part of that. The fact is, that UNESCO has, despite our involvement in it any longer, done quite a remarkable turn-around and only last February conducted a conference in Paris on behalf of freedom of the press in Eastern and Central Europe, and that was followed up by other UNESCO actions. Just this week, UNESCO, various other United Nations agencies, our own international publisher's association, are co-sponsoring a program in Namibia, the very first continent-wide conference sponsored by UNESCO and free press organizations dealing with an independent press, and the ways in which that independent press can be advanced in Africa.

There are a lot of issues relating to freedom of the press that move from that international sphere to the national level. That has always been where the action has been in the United States. And it has been indeed where I see the action today and continuing on into the future in all of the countries is both Eastern and Central Europe and in Africa.

One of the things that's always struck me is that we've tended to look at the continent of Africa or everything in formerly Eastern or Central Europe as some sort of undifferentiated mass of people and countries with no real differences among them. When we get down to the level of what the law is and what constitutions say and how rights get enforced and how people are able to practice journalism and the newspaper business and carry out broadcasting, those differences become absolutely critical. We need to recognize them and to treat each situation on its own. There are some common principles that are worth talking about, but I think when it comes to looking after press freedom in individual countries, we have to go the extra mile to look at what the situation is in that country, what its legal history is, for example.

In Africa, if you take into account the entire continent, there are probably half a dozen principal legal systems that were either imposed upon the countries within the continent or grew up within

it. The ones I've always tended to focus on are the differences between French-speaking Africa and English-speaking Africa. The question of enforcement of rights and the establishment of press freedom flows differently in France than it does in England, and therefore it flows very differently in a country that comes from French rule versus one that has come from English colonial history in Africa. Those things are absolutely essential to keep in mind. Let me just say a word about Mr. Imanyara. We have, through our international organization, awarded him the golden pen of freedom, which is generally the highest award that can be given within the newspaper publishing business each year. He's scheduled to receive that in May and I wrote [the Kenyan] Ambassador saying basically he had two choices: he could either demonstrate that Kenya was prepared to commit itself to freedom of the press and release Mr. Imanyara, or he would have several hundred newspaper publishers in Athens in June taking a very negative picture back to their readers and to their countries. I think we need to continue to put a lot of pressure on him.

One of the interesting things about the way the law works, like the situation here in the United States, in a country like Kenya, is that I wrote to the Ambassador last October on behalf of Mr. Imanyara, and I said, look, I'm upset about this. We're all upset about the fact that he's been arrested and charged. What we'd like to know is, why did you do this? We'd like to give you a chance to explain why you did it. And he wrote back, and his letter talks about the fact that the articles in the paper were clearly meant to incite the public against their popularly elected and legitimate government, that Mr. Imanyara had the aim of creating chaos and despondency. And that government had little choice but to proscribe it in order to maintain and enhance public security and smooth operation of good government.

I faxed this to Mr. Imanyara's fax machine in Nairobi, and immediately [received] a note saying, thank God somebody has finally told me why I have been arrested. It was the first time

that the Kenyan government had ever put on paper what it was that they were charging him with, which I find absolutely astounding. It's something we wouldn't long live with here in the States, but there you have it.

Let me just comment on one other thing. It goes to the point that I made initially about publishers and journalists and all. The fact is that, here in the United States, one can say that we have the First Amendment, and it says Congress shall make no law. And therefore we have no laws. Well, that's not exactly true. Because if you look at the newspaper business as a business, there is a lot of law. There are a lot of statutes, there are a lot of regulations that govern the operations of newspapers, whether it be something as simple as postal rates, or the employment of kids under sixteen in delivering newspapers. I mean, that's federal regulation that governs how young kids can go out on the street and deliver newspapers in the morning. So we do have a lot of law. It's just that it virtually always happened here that the law has tended to promote freedom of the press. We've had fights about some of those provisions over the years, and continue to have some disputes.

But when we talk about a lot of the law in Eastern and Central Europe and Africa, the fact is that those same laws relate to the import and export of newsprint, things that relate to taxation. We have taxes in this country that range no higher — there are a couple of exceptions with a few major cities, but, you know, 10 per cent is about all we tend to tax things around the United States. Well, it's not uncommon to see taxes imposed in other countries of 20, 25, 30 per cent — things that we would view as crippling with respect to the operation of newspapers in this country. There are laws that grant monopolies in Eastern and Central Europe. One of the ones that we encountered when we took a trip there is the whole issue of the postal and distribution monopoly. Those laws that give the government control over those sorts of things that, to me, are as important in the end as to whether there's going to be true freedom of the press as any provision

that says that anybody can say anything they want to say. Because if you put into constitutional or into statutory form the fact that somebody has total freedom of expression, and then you move to the next collection of laws in that particular country, and it says, but only the government post office can distribute what anybody puts on paper, you haven't got much of a right protected in the course of things. So I think those laws are important.

I guess in the end, what I would say is what I'm hoping to do in the development of law in Africa. I think we've got a lot of lawyers out there in the newspaper and other media business in this country who would be anxious and willing to help work on some of the developments in law, in legislative and regulatory law in Eastern and Central Europe and in Africa. I'd like to sort of throw open the idea that maybe it would be worth trying to put together, not a newsprint bank necessarily, but maybe a lawyer bank to see if we couldn't provide, not a way to do it, because each country, I believe firmly, has got to decide how to approach these issues on its own in the end, but certainly to the extent the American experience is useful, is a helpful guide, is something nobody should fail to understand before they go and write a law governing freedom of the press in another country. There are some things that we could make available that might very well prove useful.

## Makau Mutua

Any discussion on press freedom in Africa must begin with acknowledgment that press freedom is a legal right under domestic law. That it is not a privilege that is conferred upon by the state, but is indeed a right — that is owed to the people by the state. Under international law, press freedom is a human right through the various covenants that have been passed. In particular I'm thinking of the international covenant on civil and political rights. These are legal rights. And legal rights do not exist in and of themselves. Legal rights grow out of a culture. A political

and economic and a legal culture that respects diversity. Respects difference. And allows the expression of different views.

The history of Africa, such as it is, is not one that has developed in time, in living memory as far as I know, or experienced this culture of tolerance. You can go back, as far back in history as you wish, and particularly in the modern era we had several centuries of colonialism in some countries lasting 400 years as in Mozambique or Angola. Or other countries, such as Kenya, lasting about 70 years. In the colonial state, the right to express oneself was, of course, denied. Because the ethos which drove the master was to maximize the exploitation of the natural and personal resources of the colonial. We arrived to the independence decade in the late '50's and '60's, without a tradition of tolerance.

Yes, there was resistance. As the examples in Kenya will tell — for example, the Mau Mau resisted. Within Angola and Mozambique there was resistance — but there was no tolerance. When the colonial state was replaced by the independent state, there was utter euphoria in Africa about change and what was expected. And the people hoped a new dawn had come to pass and that good government would be established. That the government would be a government of law and not of man. It would be a government that would have an accountable executive, would have an internal judiciary, and would have a legislature that was freely elected. This is what the people of Africa hoped for — 30, 40 years ago. This did not happen. By the mid-'60's, the political, economic and moral bankruptcy of African states has come to the fore.

The evidence of this bankruptcy essentially was a combination of the creation of a one-party state. And under the one-party state, all basic freedoms as we know them today — expression, association, press, assembly — was oppressed and denied. Under the one-party state, millions of Africans have been killed, have been tortured, or have been exiled to other countries. Then the changes in Eastern Europe began to take

place. Beginning in 1987, '88 and, as well, in South Africa. The African states, used to get a lot of comfort; both philosophical, material and political comfort from the Eastern European one-party state.

The story is told in Zaire of Ceaucescu, being taken by Mobutu to go to hunt in Goma, and Bukavu. And how the people of Zaire developed a parallel between the two names — Mobutu-cecescu and played word games with those names. Then Ceaucescu was executed. The media in Zaire blacked out the news of the execution. But the people found out, because they listen to Radio France International. They listen to the BBC, they listen to VOA. They found out. And a process that has become irreversible began, in Zaire. Mobutu was forced to announce something called, Consultation Populaire — or Popular Consultation — in which he went around the country soliciting the needs of the people about what form of government they wanted. This scenario was repeated time and again across the continent. Even in Kenya, the government of President Daniel arap-Moi instituted a review committee, whose purpose was to go around the country again soliciting views and recommend changes within the party-states.

Throughout this current renewal, throughout this democratic renaissance that is sweeping through Africa today, several factors come to the fore. Number one, what are the people asking for? The people are asking for the same things that they were asking for at independence. They are asking once again for an accountable executive. They are asking for the right of the people to hold the leadership accountable. They are asking for a government of law and not man. The various debates that have taken place, throughout Africa — and I'm sure you have noticed this — have benefited substantially from lawyers. The story is repeated time and again.

Now the question that we are being asked to address is the media and the law. The media in Africa. And I'm trying to put forth to you the perception that the freedom of the media cannot

exist absent this political and legal culture of accountability. The problem in Africa has not been the legal instruments that we have inherited. Look at, for example, the Kenyan Constitution. It guarantees a wide range of basic rights. It has a Bill of Rights. And those rights are ideal. But where has the country gone wrong in suppressing the Bill of Rights? The Parliament, which is a rubber-stamp parliament, has passed legislation, which in essence, contravenes the Constitution. Legislation that contravenes the Bill of Rights. For example, Section 2A of the Kenyan Constitution, as amended, says that, there can be no other party but Section 8 of the Constitution says, that look, you have the right of association and assembly. A clear contradiction. But the judiciary in Kenya is not independent and therefore the judiciary cannot hold unconstitutional this particular amendment of the constitution.

I am saying that in order for freedom, including of the press, to be upheld and to be sustained, these three forms of government must be informed and must develop out of a culture of tolerance. There is no way you can seek press freedom in isolation from these other factors. The freedom of the press would not exist unless the conditions for the creation of responsible and good government exists. That is why today the move towards multipartyism in Africa, the right of a people to freely choose their leadership, is crucial in the process.

There have been a few legal developments in Africa regarding press freedom which are interesting. Because the press is going to be called upon to set and define the agenda for the 21st Century of Africa. In Zambia last year, President Kaunda for the first time agreed to give in to a competitive political process. He agreed that other groups and individuals could form and organize publicly, political parties to oppose his own political party. This was after numerous, massive demonstrations across the country which attracted upwards of 300-400,000 people in a country of seven or eight million people.

One of the things that Kaunda did,

after legalizing political parties, was to ban the government-owned media from reporting on the activities of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, of the MMD. The lawyers for MMD went to Lusaka High Court and filed a petition asking the court to declare unconstitutional President Kaunda's ban on The Times newspapers of Zambia, which includes The Times of Zambia and the ZNBC, of Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation, from covering the MMD. Two weeks ago the Lusaka High Court held, in a first for Africa, that President Kaunda's ban on these instruments of mass media, on covering the activities of the opposition political parties was unconstitutional.

This is a first for Africa. It has never happened anywhere before. The court held that the state has no right to use publicly financed institutions for political purposes to the exclusion of other citizens. This was a concept that if the public finances the media, then the public surely must use the media. And the state cannot determine and cannot dictate that only it can use the media. I think the Zambia example is instructive and I think it's a milestone for press freedom in this age.

I think that other advocates for change, and for press freedom in Africa, ought to explore ways of exploiting that particular scenario experience to the advantage. Obviously it appears that the High Court in Zambia was quite courageous, and that may not be true, of course, in Cameroon and elsewhere. But I think at least the challenge ought to be mounted.

The other country that I would like to talk about just briefly is Zaire. I went to Zaire for the first time in August '89. This was before Ceaucescu was killed. And this was before anyone would want to speak to you in the streets of Zaire because no one knew who you were. If they were seen speaking to you they were liable to be detained or disappear. I was there on a fact-finding mission.

We managed, with a few people who went underground and a few lawyers, to track down a few people. Some of the people we tracked down were reporters from an independent news-

paper which had been publishing I guess about 1,000 copies every week. These people could not come to our hotel to talk to us. We could not meet in daylight. We had to meet at midnight in some location that I would not be able to identify today, even if you took me back to Zaire, because I was blindfolded before I got there. I asked him if he had any information about people who had disappeared or people who had been detained. Or people who had simply been killed by security forces.

He looked at me and he said, "You know, if I tell you this information you must promise never to tell anyone or to use this information when you do your report." He gave me a long list of names, about 200 names of individuals who had disappeared or else who had been killed. And he said, "We have held onto these names for the last two years and we cannot publish them." We went back and forth and talked and eventually I asked him if I indeed could use these names and not attribute the information to him. Eventually it was agreed upon. Even the press, let alone the people in the streets, could not speak to you openly in Zaire, in August 1989.

I went back to Zaire in March 1990, and Ceausescu had been killed at that point. As soon as people heard that we were in Zaire, they come to our hotel and essentially mobbed us. People would wake us up at about 2 in the morning to give us their testimony about what had happened to them and their relatives and the children.

In May, the same year of 1990, the government of Zaire killed at least 300 students in cold blood, students who had been demonstrating and demanding a modern political process. Although people were beginning to become more outspoken, not one single newspaper reported this incident. The Times of Zambia, the following day, reported the incident. BBC reported it. All international media reported this atrocity. It was not until June 11 that the reporter whom I had met in private, in August '89, broke the story and charged that a massacre had taken place a month before.

This was a first for Zaire. In the past,

journalists in Zaire had to have a press card to be able to operate as journalists. As soon as this report came out, of the killings, other newspapers picked it up. People began to defy the use of the press card, as a source of legitimization to be a reporter in Zaire. Since that day, June 11, 1990, the press in Zaire is competing for the distinction of being one of the most critical presses in Africa. It is critical, I am sure, more than the press in Nigeria, at this point. They have opened the court for the overthrow of Mobutu, which was unheard of. They have all run all kinds of personal interest stories, casting aspersions on his morality. Things that could have happened barely a year ago are happening today and the press in Zaire is recapturing its freedom.

You will notice that I have not spent a lot of time talking about the law. I have not done so deliberately because I think the law is irrelevant in this particular case. It's irrelevant in large measure because in Africa, under the governments that we have had over the past 30 years, the law has not given as good as the people. You may have a grandiose constitution, but unless this political culture of tolerance exists, no freedom, no right is guaranteed. And that is why I think for the press in Africa to be able to accomplish freedom, it must fight for, and support the current democratic process that is taking place in Africa. It must fight for political pluralism in society. It must fight for modern political process. It must fight for the respect of human rights. That is the only guarantee that the press will have that it will be free.

## Joe Thloloe

The problem is: what is apartheid? Some people look at it as the separation of black from white, and now that black can mix very easily with white they believe that our problems are over. In fact apartheid is much much more than that. I mention just a few figures, and they will tell the story of apartheid. Per capita income of an indigenous African in 1987, was 1,246 rand. Per capita income of a white South African was 14,880 rand. Look at another set of

figures, what the government spends on the education of a child. On an indigenous African child the government spends 595 rand in 1987, '88. On a white child it spends more than five times that, 2,722, rand. This obviously creates a self-sustaining system, where bad education leads to very low income, leads to less education and the whites are getting better and better. The whites in the country own 87 per cent of the land. And they are just 14 per cent of the population. Of the indigenous Africans, 75 per cent of the population are squeezed into what is left of that land, 13 per cent. That is what apartheid is. It is a racial hierarchy.

There's a whole legal and constitutional system that sustains this ugly state. Some people believe that apartheid is either dead or dying, but if you look at the most recent budget which was published mid-March, you will find there is still the same discrepancy between black and white. A whole legal system has been created to sustain this.

A few months ago I was in a task force that was looking at the restriction of the media. This task force was created by the Media Council at the request of the government. Our brief was very simple. They said that they had asked the Law Commission to look at the possibility of a Bill of Rights for South Africa. The Law Commission had recommended that in fact this Bill of Rights should be adopted by the country. It should be. What's the legal way



Margaret Nowicki Photo

to justice here?

I don't know what the right way is. I am not a lawyer. All the same, the Law Commission recommended that before this Bill of Rights is actually turned into law the government should review all laws that would be in conflict with this Bill of Rights. That is why we ended up in this task force, looking at the laws that restricted the media. We looked at more than 80 laws. Each one had some sort of restriction on the media.

There was one, for instance, that is related to tissue donations. It says you cannot identify a donor, nor can you identify the person who gets the donation. There is the Police Act, a whole law, that restricts our reporting on police action. We have not been able to write about police torturing people. We have not been able to write about what happens when people are detained under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. We have not been able to write anything about the South African police that is worth reading. There is the Prisons Act, which says you may not write about what happens in prison unless you can prove that it is true. There is the Defense Act that says you may not write anything about the movements of troops, about the activities of troops, etc., etc.; which gives the army a whole area to operate in secrecy.

We went very systematically through these laws, and we said each one of these needed to be amended. Now these are little bits and pieces within bigger laws. So you can imagine what the law makers are going through now, trying to extract these little bits and pieces from bigger laws, and trying to get the whole jigsaw puzzle making sense.

The Bill of Rights had also raised very serious problems. The black liberation movements are saying, you don't deal yourself the aces first, then invite other people to join you in a game of cards. A very particular example: the government is saying it is going to repeal the Land Act, it is going to repeal the Group Areas Act. People will be able to buy land wherever they want to buy land. The problem is there are very few indigenous Africans who can afford to

buy that land. So, we have run into problems with the Bill of Rights.

The government hasn't acted on restrictions on the media. The only thing that it has done, it has lifted the state of emergency. It has lifted some restrictions on the media, but not all restrictions. And immediately they lifted the state of emergency, the international committee applauded that particular act. They felt that de Klerk was in fact moving forward. And that has been the crux of our problem, that de Klerk is passing out concessions that don't threaten white privilege and power. Every time he does this, the international community applauds, when, in fact, the system remains essentially the same.

Up to this point we haven't had any substantial negotiations on the Constitution. All the discussions between the ANC and the government have been on creating a climate conducive to negotiations. In these talks about talks, the ANC has given away almost everything, even before the substantive negotiations start. It has suspended the armed struggle and de Klerk has been able to erode the sanctions campaign, simply by giving these bits and pieces of concessions. By the time we actually sit down to negotiate we will have absolutely no leverage to use. I'm sure each and every one of us knows negotiations is a game of power. You don't go into negotiations when you don't have power to back you.

The question would then be, what does de Klerk intend doing? My personal view is he's looking at a more sophisticated way of retaining white power, white privilege. White South Africa has come a long way. They can afford to give concessions. They can afford to do away with the grosser legislation, apartheid legislation. But at the same time they will still be able to keep their economic power and they will still be able to control the country because of their economic base. It is in this context that the media have to act.

I will echo what was said earlier, that the majority of the publications in South Africa are behind F. W. de Klerk. The black community has very little to

say. Let me put it another way. Almost all the publications are owned by whites. I worked for a black newspaper that is owned by a white company. That is why we can boast of being the second biggest newspaper in the country.

The few attempts at getting a black publication flounder because there is no advertising for black publications and the whole structure of apartheid is designed in such a way that those publications cannot succeed. There is no way that the international community is going to continue pouring money into publications that cannot sustain themselves. So the black community is without its own medium. The international community has been seduced by de Klerk. And, as far as everybody is concerned, the South African story is dead because F. W. de Klerk is making progress. But for my mother, for the women in my street, there is no progress. They starve. A child can still not go to the white private schools that have even been reopened and for them apartheid is alive and is kicking.

**MORGAN** — Can we depend upon the courts in some cases, in some countries, to help, sort of protect an emerging free press?

**MUTUA** — I think so. What I was giving was a general scenario. We have specific countries in which the courts have a tradition of a certain degree of independence, and I mentioned Zambia as one case. Those people who have been detained without charge can challenge detention before the courts. People have been released in the past. But that isn't a unique situation. In Nigeria you have a fairly strong judiciary that has in the past depended on press freedom. Even in Kenya, you know, Gitobu Imanyara's publication, when banned for the first time, applied for an injunction in the high court and got it. The central issue that I am concerned with is that, all these loopholes in Nigeria and in Zambia and in Kenya do not and cannot guarantee press freedom. They're still relying on the gratitude of one good judge, in a bench that is rotten for the most part. If your case happened to go to the wrong judge, then, you know, that's it for you.



**BETTY RAYE** — I just want to say that listening this morning a lot of what you have to bring about African leadership is bad news. It's sort of the way a lot of black Americans feel. There are things that they want to talk about in the family and not to put that out for public consumption, because then people use that to prove the point that you cannot govern yourself. Whether it's in South Africa showing the ballots, or in Kenya the repression of the journalists. It just seems like a tremendous dilemma. If it's written about in Europe, that people are repressing press freedoms or the freedom of the people, it is more like an aberration. In Africa it is seen as almost genetic that you just are out of control. So we have this dilemma of wanting to raise these issues and at the same time understanding that what it also brings along is the notion that Africa is out of control.

**MCGUIRE** — My letter to the Ambassador was addressing that very point. Because what I said to him last week was, "Look, Mr. Imanyara is going to get this award and if he is not let out of jail to go to Athens where the award is to be given the first week in June, there is going to be a lot of very, very bad publicity about Kenya, about your government, about its contempt for freedom of expression, freedom of speech. On the other hand, if you will let Mr. Imanyara out of jail, and let him go to Athens to receive that award, it is going to reflect very positively on your country and on its willingness to accept and protect dissent." I do think that there have a number of situations where good things have happened. My guess is that the conference in Namibia is not going to get very much attention despite UNESCO and other best efforts and yet that's a very good news story about Africa. Because people do tend to think that the African press is going to be thought to be one that isn't worth very much and certainly doesn't have much independence. Well this meeting in Namibia this week is fundamentally dedicated to the idea that there is a tremendous amount of independence among the African media, and a tremendous opportunity for growth in serving

readers in individual countries.

**A** — Let me just say that I know no one who is interested in issues, of managing, objectively, who's not upset by the U.S. media and its coverage of Africa. I do not know anyone of moot conscience, who is not upset. The classic story about Africa, has to be about famine. Has to be about repression. Has to be about killings of animals. The story of Africa seeking to build their own societies is not being told by anyone. And to that extent I think we have a right to ask of the Western press and the U.S. press in particular, to be more responsible in reporting about Africa. There's just no question about that. At the same time of course, I think it's very important that the stories about what was going on in Zaire with the killings of students and incarceration must come out too. There has to be a balanced coverage of these issues.

**A** — Can I just mention one incident that got me very angry last week? There was a very historic meeting likely to change the future of South Africa, a meeting between the ANC [African National Council] and the PAC [Pan Africanist Congress] in Harare. The most that that meeting got in the media here in the United States was a line in a story about Winnie Mandela's case. It just said, "Nelson Mandela was not at the trial because he was at a meeting in Harare." It didn't even look at the historical importance of that meeting. I don't think American readers have a different sense of news than South African readers or than English readers. But the British publications do a much more decent job of covering South Africa, essentially. I don't know about the rest of Africa.

**EKPU** — Though there are some good laws being passed, these laws are being violated, or the government uses extra-legal methods to circumvent the law. I just want to point out that in some of the countries, Nigeria is an example, the government also uses even legal means to circumvent that law. You have a situation when many military governments come to power. It suspends the constitution and rules through edict or decrees. Somewhere along the line it

finds out that these edicts and decrees are not in order. Somebody takes the government to court. The government quickly announces another edict or decree, ousting the jurisdiction of the courts. In other words, you take the case to court. You feel that the constitution or the laws protect you and you go there and the judge says, "Oh my hands and feet are tied." This is happening regularly. They use the law to also circumvent it, to make sure that your rights are circumvented.

That's what they did to Imanyara. What they did was to arrest him on a sedition charge, because the sedition law is so widely framed that it's overbroad, and ambiguous. So they can use that to lock you up. That's a legal method, to suppress press freedom.

**A** — In fact, right now, there are more than a dozen cases in court in Nigeria. Nigerians like to go to courts. In almost all cases we do realize that the case is not going to go anywhere. The judge will say, "Oh, my hands are tied."

Those who take the cases to court bank on the fact that the press will be able to report those cases. At least there is some bit of propaganda value from the trial itself. And, then the issue would be capitalized, because the press reports it. I remember an incident in 1984. The government had this law called the "prefor." It said that you cannot publish the truth if it's going to bring the government or any of its particulars into disrepute. Two reporters were actually jailed for one year. They wrote a report which the government thought brought it into disrepute. And what was it? That the government had posted some ambassadors to some countries. The government then eliminated one of the men and the boys got it wrong. The government said this report had published a false report which was intended to embarrass the government and so on. The two reporters served a term.

In fact it was the finest hour for the press in some tragic sense. Because the jailing of those boys liberated the press in Nigeria. They published a lot of outrageous things about the government and the government couldn't do any-

thing about it at the time. One of these things that they wrote about was that a high-ranking military official had stood in somebody's way. The government couldn't jail everybody. So there was this use of that kind of psychological situation to put pressure on the government.

**Q** — I thought that Mr. McGuire might have some thoughts particularly on what the American newspaper industry might do, or might be doing, in order to sort of help people get off the ground.

**Q** — When you answer that can you talk about what's being done for the press in Central and Eastern Europe as well as what's being done for the press in Africa?

**MCGUIRE** — I think there's tremendous opportunity here and I don't know quite what button to push. I'm hoping that people like Bill Kovach and Tom Winship can figure out how to help us do it. It's the idea of the twinning or the sister or brother newspaper relationship. It's been tried once only in a serious way, anywhere in the world to which I'm aware, and that was between The St. Petersburg Times, and a newspaper in Nairobi. I've not checked with the people in St. Petersburg to know whether it continues in effect or not, but I sense it's gone. They sent some people back and forth and did a few things, but I don't think they quite had it set up or it was their intention to develop it in a global way. My thought has been for some time, and there are a few people who seem to agree with the idea, that what we need to do is to begin to get some one-on-one relationships set up that would allow for a newspaper in South Africa or in Nigeria, or in Bucharest or in Prague or any place really in any of those regions, an opportunity for newspapers to hook themselves together and be able to talk about some of the common issues and problems.

We had an interesting discussion in a management program last September in Budapest with the advertising director of one of the largest newspapers in Budapest. He had never really thought to himself why PanAmerican Airways

would ever want to advertise in his newspaper. And yet, PanAm serves Budapest. He came into the meeting saying, "We don't have any advertising, how are we ever going to support ourselves?" I think that is best done on a one-on-one basis.

To further answer your question about what we're doing in both regions, we're trying to focus to the maximum extent possible on helping associations similar to ours. More and more we're trying to be an association of newspapers regardless of who the owner or the person holding the publisher title is. What we're trying to do is to help associations of newspapers get themselves started in both regions. We'd like to try to establish some brother-sister association relationships between some of those national associations in Africa and Eastern Central Europe and some of the state associations in this country.

**Q** — There's a lot of talk today about — we're not covering democracy in action in Africa — which I have no doubts about. I'd love to hear from some of the Africans, where are some good stories on democracy in action?

**A** — The political map in Africa over the past year has changed dramatically. Beginning first of all the election held in the Ivory Coast. That is one story that could have been told. In Zaire today, incredible process is taking place where political parties are organizing for the

first time in 30 years. We have every indication that Mobutu cannot stay longer. In Zambia, the same case, in a country of seven million people. I was there in January and I saw a rally of 400,000 people coming out to support the MMD, the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy. Now Jane Perlez of The New York Times has done a few stories about this, but, the essence has not been captured. I have not read quintessential piece, talking about this renaissance in Africa. I have not seen that piece. This same situation in Gabon. It's taking place. Angola just announced that they would hold an election. Mozambique, Mali, the Cameroons. There is not a single country on that continent which is not in a turmoil, in a positive sense. Every country is a story.

**A** — I cannot overstress the seriousness of what is going on. I'm afraid that Americans are going to miss this renewal that is taking place, which has not taken place in over 30 years. Africa has not undergone such convulsions since independence. This story is not being told by anyone.

**A** — In defense of my hometown newspaper, I will hold up the Washington Post from a week and a half ago, which includes in the third graph, the sentence, "since March the pace of change in West Africa has been breathtaking."

## Concluding Remarks

### Vivian Lowery Derryck

It seems to me that there have been several tasks that have hopefully been accomplished today. One is that the task of journalists is the interpretation of change that's going on. We've been talking about this in terms of democratization. Between Eastern Europe, Central Europe and Africa there are certain phases or stages that these changes seem to take on in virtually every instance.

The first is this popular agitation for change. The second is the transition and

One is the expectation that the government is going to periodically be changed if necessary at the hands of the people. It's the ability to wait, to know that the opportunity is going to come. The second is the strong NGOs, non-governmental organizations, and that includes political parties. The third is a strong judiciary and we just this afternoon have been talking again and again about the very special role that the judiciary plays vis a vis the press. The

fourth is civilian control over the military. We don't even need to go into that one today. The fifth is the idea of loyal opposition. That you can disagree but that you are still a patriot. Again that's something that's so important for journalists to talk about because in so many African societies the idea that you can complain, that you can disagree, that you can be critical but still believe fervently in the value and of your country and have that patriotism is something that is not very well messaged. You as journalists have a good opportunity to do that. And the last and for us here the most important is the idea of an independent press. Again it's a tradition in Africa that we're seeing change, but as so many persons have pointed out today that if you've been a one-party state, the idea of having a free press is really an oxymoron.

There are also some parallels to what we see happening in Africa with what's

The day before [Mandela's] arrival [in New York] three geniuses sitting around a swimming pool in Bel Air, California, who had agreed to finance a home video pulled out. They felt that nobody would turn out to welcome him, that it was going to be a very low-profile event.

What happened, of course, is that a million people turned out in New York City alone and Yankee Stadium was filled. I don't know who else could fill Yankee Stadium. Maybe Norman Schwarzkopf now, but very few politicians probably could. This was a case from coast to coast, and in fact in New York City CBS local news decided on a Thursday night to go live to the Mandela events at Yankee Stadium and they out-rated Cosby, which is one of the top-rated shows in the United States.

—Danny Schechter

happened in Eastern Europe. There are these questions that many of us have asked in lots of countries around the world that have gone through this process. You remember in Haiti that the question that we kept asking was how do you come to terms with the old regime. It's a question that again is being asked now in so many African countries.

Then the second question is, how do you lower the expectations about democracy? You know, everybody comes to the new government and says that this is the paracea for everything that's been bothering us. Well democracy isn't. There are still all the intransigent, intractable economic problems. There are still problems of social integration, there are still ethnic problems in many countries. So how do you lower people's expectations of what democracy can bring? Thirdly, how do you interpret the economic changes to make clear to people what their responsibilities are? You know we've got the case of Poland. You've got the case of Egypt. You've also got the case of Nigeria. And, people are talking about structural adjustment programs. SAP is sapping me. The point being that you've got to help people understand and interpret the economic changes that go along with democratization.

Lastly, how do you as professionals strengthen your profession? You're the journalist. You're the carriers of the creed. You are the people that are going to really shape the information that people have to make their decisions. That's true whether you're in Eastern Europe or in Africa.

But there's one big difference between Eastern Europe and Africa, and that is this whole question of a constituency. I'm sorry to go back to this, but I'm just seized by the need for Africa to have a constituency. There's not the same vulnerability for Eastern Europe. I don't think that there's very much of a chance that if something important happens in Poland, that it's not going to be reported in the front page of virtually every newspaper in the United States. Or in Italy. Or even perhaps in any place in Central or Eastern Europe.

But that is not true for Africa.

Again I go back to my hobby horse of Liberia. This a travesty that has happened in a country with which the United States has particularly close relations. The U.S. dollar is the currency of the realm. The country was founded in 1822 by the patriated African slaves going back to Africa from the United States. The capital is Monrovia, named after President Monroe. The flag has thirteen stripes and one star and is called the Lone Star State. Now, if this had happened any place else in the world where fully half of the population is displaced, when 20,000 people have been killed, you know that we would hear more about it in the newspaper. It's our failure as Americans to develop a constituency for Africa. So I take your point, that you made earlier, Bill, about our need to make sure that we do develop that constituency. I don't know precisely how we do it, but it's something that we at the institute are going to be thinking about.

Last two points. One, what can Africans do? We have talked at the institute about success stories. And convinced World Paper to do an issue that talks about African success stories. It's again a matter of how you interpret what's happening. Terry talked about the international coalition - the EC ministers that signed on to the letter to President Daniel arap Moi. Well that's a success. You look at Benin, that's an obvious success. You look at the meeting in Tanzania in February of 1990. That too is a success. This was a meeting on popular participation, which brought together 500 nongovernmental organizations in Africa, to talk about ways of democratizing and ways that ordinary citizens could be involved. Well that's the success in and of itself.

I view as a success the incredible renaissance that we seek. We don't have to know how all of these countries are going to turn out. Because I doubt that you would have 100 per cent success rate any place in the world. But the point is that you have an opportunity for people to become involved. That's the essence of building a civil society. A viable one is that individuals feel that

they have some efficacy in talking about what they want and that they are going to be able to do it with impunity. They aren't going to end up in jail for having made a statement. So that in and of itself says to me that Africa is a success. There is also a new generation of leaders. That's a success in some cases. Many of them we feel a special pride in because many of them were educated in the United States on programs that AAI was involved in. I think that there are African success stories and what I would urge is that you, as journalists, when you have a good success story, then send it to a colleague here. And if you don't have a colleague to whom you can send it, send it to AAI.

## Kovach

Lastly, what can all of us do? I think that this dialogue among journalists is so important because of the cross-fertilization and the Nieman program is so important because I assume that friendships are formed here that extend beyond the time that persons are here. To build Africa it is important to have colleagues in unexpected places. The colleague from Prague or Budapest is important in terms of Africa, as well as the colleague from the United States.

I've just come from a meeting of nongovernmental organizations and the contrast from coming from there and Annapolis to here is like night and day. These are really two communities that should be able to dialogue a little bit more closely because these are persons who are involved in making success stories, in this case around the world, but a lot of NGOs, strong NGOs from Africa, who are committed to development in the way that we have been discussing it, and it would be wonderful if they had an opportunity at some point to get together with journalists. Since this was a worldwide meeting, there was a lot of interest also in Eastern Europe, so I would suggest we think about ways that we can bring together those persons who are involved in development activities with persons who are journalists, so that it's a two-

way street. You can popularize what they do and they need allies in what they do.

Then I'd go back to the idea that someone raised about twinning. That seems to me particularly useful; it's certainly been tried in a lot of other dimensions of development and worked very, very well. This might be an opportunity for black journalists to get together and choose an African country of an Africa association with whom

they can particularly, specifically work.

So that's what I think that we can see — the future to me looks very, very bright. I think that Africa is becoming almost continent-wide, with a few notable exceptions that we have mentioned today, a success story, because people are involved in their own futures and that the essence of the rights we all know expect as citizens in the new world that we hope that we are creating. □

## The Queens Housewife Test

The executive producer of NBC Nightly News, it was reported, had to make a decision one night about whether to carry an in-depth report on educational problems in South Africa. There had been a lot of coverage about Nelson Mandela, and his visit to the United States. Apparently, the producer decided there'd been too much foreign news in the previous week and did anybody really care about this particular story? He decided he was going to kill this story.

Some people on his staff said, you can't kill this story, they've been working on this for over a week, they've got great interviews, really compelling footage of what's happening in the townships in terms of the educational crisis, please run it.

The executive producer said, well, how can you prove to me that anybody really cares about this story? He said, look, I'll run it on one condition. If there's one house-

wife in Queens who would want to watch this story, I'll consider putting it on the air.

In the back of the room there rose the hand of a young woman who was an intern in the NBC news operation. This woman said, well, my mother lives in Queens. The executive producer said, well, can you bring your mother in here? We'll show her the story. And so Mrs. Martinez, or whatever her name was, was actually brought to NBC News and not really told why. The executive producer was making a side bet that she couldn't care less about what was happening in South Africa. The woman watched the story and she said, "well, it's about children, it's about real problems, very interesting." This was dutifully reported and the story ran on NBC News. This is known as the Queens Housewife Test.

—Danny Schechter

# Economics 101

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come to think that they know more than they really do. All this community is loosely yoked in a great hierarchy at whose pinnacle are the great university departments.

Economics is not the only explanatory game in town. Lawyers, historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, linguists all have something to contribute. A good many independent thinkers and gadflies dwell on the outskirts of the fields as well, latter-day mercantilists with strong positions on the issues but few ties to the academic traditions.

These persons tend to obey Paul Samuelson's dictum: over time, they either grow closer and are assimilated into economics or they grow much farther away and are forgotten. But at any given moment, they — and not the professoriat — may be right. A prime example is Jane Jacobs, whose insights into the economics of cities have been for the most part slowly confirmed and adopted by technical economists. Other major heterodox thinkers, from Henry George to Thorstein Veblen to Walter Isard to Jay Forrester can expect similar treatment. And of course the "supply side" thinkers who raised a ruckus over taxes in the late 1970's are another example of how grassroots outside challengers can have a major influence on the field.

Indeed, for journalists and political types, who need right answers to serious problems in real time, the lesson from the constant tension between insiders and outsiders is a sobering one. It is that the lost key is often to be found some distance from the lamplight. The economists are at all times full of certainty. But a little knowledge, excessively depended upon, can be a very dangerous thing — a fact that is, happily, well-known to most practicing politicians.

For all these reasons, there is a vast difference in point of view between the successful journalist and the good

economist. Economists are those who have been "hit by the meatball" (as Robert Crumb once described the experience of conversion). Reporters will take a more agnostic stance toward economic knowledge, as it is communicated by the texts and in the seminar rooms. The basic distinction here is between those who see the story as being somehow entailed by the theory they have learned and those who don't

embrace the theory. For economists, the outlines of the map are already known; in some sense they already know the answers. Good journalists are good precisely because they don't.

So professors will continue to stream down to the AP office with their press releases. Wise journalists will continue to scratch their heads and ask each other (and not their academic advisers), what's this story worth? □

## Can Big Stories Be Told?

*continued from page 8*

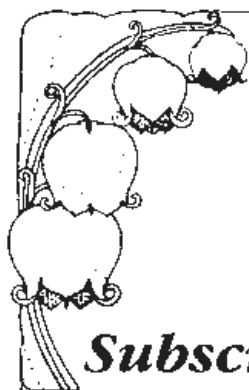
the right instrument to take the picture without the theory.

My argument is that reporters need to be more scientific. They need to learn which generalizations or concepts for organizing events are deemed by practitioners to be currently useful. They need to understand the history of what they are observing. And when they have a sense for the patterns and the history, then they will know how to put the data they are recording in context.

### What Would You Expect Of A Professor?

It should not be surprising that a professor would think that better education was an important cure. But the matter is a bit deeper. Farmers in small Midwest towns know that the weather around the world and Japanese rice politics are important to their family income. That instinctive appreciation for how things come together is what is missing from much of our schooling and hence our reporting of most matters, including local, state, federal and bureaucratic politics. But since better educated reporters really means a vast change in assignment patterns, and since a practice of increased specialization might lead to economies of scale in news

gathering, I believe that I am actually calling for a very different way of thinking about the organization of the news business. Until changes of that magnitude are made, news of the economy will continue to be entertainment. □



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## Curator

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attribution is acceptable.

"If any aspect of a wire story reflects reporter initiative or exclusivity, then attribution is required at the appropriate place in the story."

This and other rules to protect the credibility of a news report require extra diligence because of the impact of the computer on the copy desk. The enormous spurt in increased productivity, and thus profits, which accompanied the computerization of the newsroom was in adding typesetting to the duties of the copy editor.

The new technology clearly is a major factor in the erosion of ethical standards but, based on discussions with reporters and editors in newsrooms large and small, it seems the underlying cause of the erosion is much easier to explain. These discussions reflect two basic problems:

The first is the traditional lack of any consistent, organized system of training for news room staffs. Almost none could remember a serious, structured discussion of ethics in general or plagiarism in particular. Many of them were never given guidelines on these subjects.

The second factor is pressure for increased productivity. This problem grows by the day as news organizations meet the current economic decline by reducing staff while increasing the volume of production of information for new marketing outlets such as 900 number telephone services.

One reporter had difficulty accepting the notion that he could not report something he had seen on television as if he had been present to witness the event: "Why, my editors encourage us to monitor stories on television rather than go to the scene. It saves time and money."

But don't they tell you that you have to think about attributing what you

report off of television by telling the reader it was reported on channel X?

"Are you kidding?" he said. "My editor hates to credit the opposition. They steal our stuff every day."

A 30-year career in newspapers attests that few things are as consistent as the cries of anguish from senior editors who have to attribute an important element of a story to another news organization. When cornered they place the attribution far enough down in the story so it could never appear on the front page.

By accelerating the process the new technology has put pressure on the system by which we do business. As pressure is wont to do, it has revealed the weakness of the system. And that weakness rests with the managers of the system — the editors. They are not preaching ethical standards just when preaching is most important; when the pressure to produce and the ease of production have fuzzed up the lines.

The burden is on the editors to restore and maintain credibility for a press which is in danger of being overwhelmed by social, political and economic forces which are shaking its foundations.

It begins with clear, simple rules. Like the one I first heard from Tim Pridgen, the editor of a country weekly in Jonesboro, Tennessee. Tim reported, wrote and edited all the copy for his paper. He sold all the ads, made up the pages and helped set the type. He also looked everyone he wrote about in the eye, both before and after the fact. His notion of reporting was simple. Reporters reported what they knew first hand. What they wrote could be verified by anybody who took the time to do the same work.

"Level with the reader," Tim said. "You can never go wrong when you are honest with your readers. Tell them what you know and don't try to fool them about what you don't know."

That has always seemed a good foundation upon which to build the credibility of a reporter and a news report. □

## Lower Pay

*continued from page 22*

television news was more likely to cover and devote more time to changes in economic indicators such as the unemployment rate when the figures were deteriorating. Shanto Iyengar found that of the 98 stories on the CBS Evening News during 1981-85 that focused on poverty (e.g. social programs, poor people, hunger) 57 per cent used case studies to focus on a particular poor person. He found that the way the media frames coverage of poverty, however, affects people's explanations for social outcomes. Viewers shown coverage that focuses on national outcomes tended to view poverty as part of a systemic outcome, while viewers shown coverage of poverty that focuses on individual outcomes tend to view poverty as the result of individual dispositions and situations. In this respect, the manner of coverage can become the message.

The public's demand for privately useful and entertaining information and willingness to forego information on public affairs creates a fundamental problem for coverage of economic news. Journalists who supply the privately profitable demands may end up neglecting the public affairs side of coverage. Though individually rational, this goes against the Jeffersonian notion of journalists as monitors of government action. The problem is a new twist on an ancient phenomenon. The satirist Juvenal put it thus: "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes," — "Who will watch the watchers?" Normally this is interpreted as the problem of who will monitor the monitor. Yet in the case of journalists, the economics of information results in a perverse outcome. For here the watchers, the press, wish to be watched, that is, read, an incentive that serves demands for private information well but the provision of public information poorly. □

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## Commitment

*continued from page 5*

business section into a personal-finance rag. Investors are natural readers of the business sections, but editors should not become slaves to their desires for ever-expanding portfolios. Pamper them, yes, but don't overdo it.

This is not an argument to permit our coverage to be dominated by economists. To the contrary. While economists have developed a rigorous way of looking at the world, too many of them reject the human element and are content to view the world through their formulas. Let them do what they do best: Input. But it's up to us to provide the output. Our emphasis should be on telling the economic and business story through human beings. I know this may sound too simple, but I firmly believe that it is the way to attract the short attention span of readers. Tell the story of the Mexican trade agreement through the eyes of those affected. Do the same with Europe 1992, and the crisis in the Soviet Union. The more people we interview, the closer we will be to the economic story going on out there every day. To me, it's not nearly so mysterious as some make it out to be.

Washington economic coverage can deliver facts, figures and quotes by politicians, but it can't get out into communities to see the effects of policies. I am keenly aware of the limitations of writing about business and economics from the vantage point of the nation's capital. The city has its own peculiar perspective on the economy, and it often does not gibe with what's going on in other regions. One of the aims of Washington coverage is to use the information available in aggressive fashion to understand our own communities, or to expose problems that often are kept under cover at the local level. The savings and loan scandal is one such problem.

With the country in economic trouble, the press has a major responsibility to help Americans see the problems clearly and guide them through it. In

my view, this will require more than the usual slap-it-on-the-business-page routine. It will require the press to exercise a higher level of vigilance in spotting economic problems and explaining the changes that are going on each day. It will require that editors improve the quality of business and economic coverage, and humanize it in a way that people will find it impossible to ignore.

And it will require time. One of the most difficult things for modern editors to do is to free some of their best journalists from their daily routines to do

more thoughtful reporting. One of the problems is every journalist wants this kind of job, but not all are capable of delivering the goods.

Considering the way the U.S. economy is changing and the way in which many communities and jobs are threatened by today's harsh economic climate, it would be irresponsible if editors failed to rise to the challenge and helped a bewildered public understand and cope with the problems ahead. Understanding can create solutions. □

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## The Pro-Corporate Tilt

*continued from page 33*

Times and The Washington Post. In the year ended in April 1990, for example, The Journal reported on federal charges of major knowing and willful safety violations in the workplace by Phillips Petroleum, the John Morrell unit of United Brands, Lockheed, Zinc Corporation of America, General Dynamics, Du Pont, Cargill, and General Motors.

William Allen White said in his 1938 speech: "But I suppose in the end newspapers cannot be free, absolutely free in the highest and best sense, until the whole social and economic structure of American life is open to the free interplay of democratic process." Reporters can help move us toward that "free interplay." Indirectly, at least. Bill Greider was encouraging them to do so when he said in his op-ed piece: "Individuals who wish to be free must make their own freedom, especially inside large organizations, because no one is going to confer it on them."

I will go further. It is a cheap shot and erroneous to imply that blame for the pro-corporate tilt lies entirely on owners, outside directors, managers, or the economic imperatives of the mass media entities that are themselves big business. Reporters do not deserve to get off so easily. Those who attempt serious coverage of corporate governance and misconduct often break through, even when they inflict pain on personal

friends of the owners and managers. Too many reporters don't even try. Given the present state of the economy, that's understandable. It's also a shame.

About a decade ago, in a Washington Monthly article about The Washington Post, where I was a reporter for 29 years, I was described, perhaps accurately, as "the biggest pain in the ass in the office."

My obviously self-serving explanation is that I became a pain in the ass in pushing at the frontiers, and that I got a good deal of grief in return. But often enough to make the grief worthwhile, editors helped me break through, and owners and managers — certainly including Ben Bradlee — supported us. For more than a quarter-century, starting with the baby-deforming drug thalidomide, I was able to do often time-consuming, costly, and (I would like to believe) useful reporting. For what I hope was good reason, I antagonized leaders of a broad spectrum of industries, including pharmaceutical, medical-device, automobile, oil, natural gas, pipeline, insurance, household-appliance, chemical, tire, food, tobacco. And, yes, the newspaper industry.

I am not — and have no right to be — self-righteous. I hung in, was tolerated and survived. I don't even have an ulcer. I had good luck and I am damn thankful. □

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# Explain, Explain

*continued from page 13*

served, I believe, by understanding the basic themes of business and economics. They really aren't that difficult to understand; it's just that their practical consequences are so hard to control or predict.

So what I try to do in my own work is keep an eye on the themes, explaining daily events in a larger context. Always, the emphasis is on explanation: trying to make basic sense of the subject. Always, the emphasis is on

simplicity, because it's the soul to understanding.

Stylistically, I kid around some (to make the subject less forbidding); I'm always on the lookout for memorable metaphors, because TV and journalism are both so easy to forget. I think that follow-up and repetition are keys to learning, so I incorporate them when I can, though not nearly enough.

Sometimes, jokes die; sometimes, I oversimplify; occasionally, I obscure;

and always, there's the danger that explanation becomes justification or apology. But for all that, I think I'm being about as useful a journalist as I know how to be.

Is it what I'd want of everybody in the profession? Nah. There'd be too much competition, and no one left to keep an eye on IBM, much less blow the whistle on the crooked bankers. On the other hand, if explanation were the rule, rather than the rarity, when that whistle did blow, a lot more people would understand what had happened. And maybe, just maybe, just maybe, things wouldn't have been allowed to get quite so out of hand to begin with. □

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## German View: U.S. Myopia

*continued from page 34*

overs in America there were, for instance, many reporters that seemed to be awed by the bare size of the newly forged conglomerates and by the dynamic dealings of the attackers. There were hardly any stories on the thousands of working people who became victims of the ruthless monopoly games — and the players weren't intensively scrutinized, either.

One of the reasons for the different perspectives of economic reporting in the United States and in Continental Europe are rooted in the different systems. Basically it is a capitalist market in America versus a so-called social market in most of the Western European countries. If European journalists quite often overemphasize the social and moral aspects of economic developments, their American counterparts as often neglect it.

Another difference concerns the perspectives. The American economy, it seems, is dominated by the quarterly reports of big companies and the fickleness of the stock-market. This is mirrored in the press.

Common wisdom states that Japanese entrepreneurs plan long term, German medium term and their American

counterparts short term. To some degree American economic reporting reflects this breathlessness. Next week seems to be much more interesting than next year, the present performance of a big company seems to be more important than its potential in the near future. This often results in a lack of deeper analysis and structural observations on the economic pages.

These differences will become more apparent as the national economies more and more merge into an internal economic environment. Here the American media probably will meet their greatest challenge. With European Community developing into a genuine common market and Japan with its neighbors becoming the leading economic superpower, the demands for journalistic knowledge and insight grow dramatically.

Up to now neither the United States nor the Continental press has answered these challenges. Economic reporting about Japan and rising nations like South Korea and Taiwan is mostly unsatisfying. Of course there are the barriers of language and strange traditions. Because it might become a matter of economic survival to understand the

secrets of the East Asian economies, the demands for thorough and knowledgeable reports will be growing.

The European Community on the other hand apparently is taken more serious by the American than by the Continental press. The trends and developments within the E.E.C. are more carefully watched and better analyzed in some American papers, especially the Wall Street Journal, than in most Western European papers.

In the new age of detente the coming battles will be fought in the international market. The victors will be those who are better informed. From the papers this demands broader and deeper international reporting. It should not only be aimed at the stockholder who might want to invest in a certain company abroad. It should also satisfy the average reader who wants to know more about the economics of competing nations, their strengths and weaknesses, because it could affect him personally. At the moment this task is not being met by most print media on either side of the Atlantic. □

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# Cheering on the Scoundrels

*continued from page 18*

Fortune 500 adversary had changed his name twice in his life and he told the adversary what I told him and never ran the story.

A client of mine I came to mistrust and parted company with got in trouble in New Jersey misreporting earnings. His deceptions got adequate coverage but he left his wife, who had multiple sclerosis, and moved the company to the West Coast where he married again — this time to a younger woman. A new bureau chief for the paper that had exposed him hailed him as an exciting entrepreneur.

Boone Pickens, who purported to be a friend to all stockholders, put up all kinds of barricades against a takeover into his own by-laws, then dipped into the company coffers to award himself a giant bonus and went on to accuse the management of adversary companies of being entrenched and greedy. He got a few lines for his own transgressions but he got big stories when he put on his halo and attacked the managements of companies he was trying to take over.

A naval warrant office once pointed out to me that a turn of the screws cancels all debts. Should the media have continued to remind the public of the character of the men and women in the financial news? After all, it was old news. Besides, one fraud case settled with a nolo contendere plea, it might be argued, is far from a damning character reference. Everybody makes mistakes. Should he pay for them all his life?

Herein, it seems to me, lies the difference between a good reporter and a bad one. A good reporter, confronted with a suspicion, doesn't brush it off. He takes it as a starting point from which to conduct further investigation.

This raises a question: are the media really watchdogs? Should they alert the public to danger before it happens? This presumes approaching a story from a different point of view than simply telling one's audience what is going on

now. Assuredly it presumes aiming at more than merely entertaining one's audience. The 80's were entertaining. Raiders and leveraged buyout artists and their trophy wives became almost as entertaining as rock, TV and movie stars. But how often did we read in news stories the connection between the high-priced life-style of business leaders and what went on at their companies? How often did anybody dig into the impact of a billionaire's fortune on the world around him?

True, there was a lot of interest in his eccentricities. That was entertainment. Entertainment built media audience and audience growth made money. Entertainment works. An actor was elected President. It's hard to imagine the closely reasoned Lincoln-Douglas debates taking place today with sound bites. Shouldn't the media join the party? Can they afford not to? In today's bottom-line culture — control of a media company can depend on whether

the audience is entertained. If the earnings aren't there, the depressed stock price may invite takeover attempts. As the communications industry continues to consolidate with cross-ties to the companies on which they are supposed to report — often advertisers — will they want to go beyond puff pieces on business leaders and bust measurements?

Moreover, it's easy to argue that the historical context for the news should be dealt with on the editorial and op-ed pages and the news should be confined to the here and now. But a reporter with a sense of history approaches a news story differently from a reporter who thinks of what is happening as spot news without a future and without a past. He or she doesn't take it for granted in news coverage that position in society bears a direct relationship to a person's integrity. The good reporter asks more questions, follows more leads. Who is to say that digging reporting can't be entertaining as well as informative?

As the 80's suggest, we are going to need all of this kind of help we can get. □

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## About Journalism

**This Is CBS: A Chronicle of 60 Years.** Robert Slater. Prentice Hall. 1991. The Time magazine reporter in Jerusalem tells the story of the network from its beginning in the 1920's to its current troubles.

**Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion and Public Support.** Richard A. Brady. Stanford University Press. 1991. \$22.95. Stanford professor surveys dynamics of Presidential popularity.

**Hitler Diaries: Fakes That Fooled the World.** Charles Hamilton. University Press of Kentucky. 1991. \$24.95. How a petty German thief pulled off the hoax, convincing the German magazine Stern, historians and handwriting experts of their authenticity.

**Inside the Beltway: A Guide to Washington Reporting.** Don Campbell. Iowa State University Press. 1991. \$24.95 hc, \$15.95 pb. A textbook by the former Washington editor for USA Today, now the director of the Washington Journalism Center.

**Journalism for the 21st Century: Online Information, Electronic Databases, and the News.** Tom Koch. Praeger. 1991. \$17.95 pb. How computers, by making enormous amounts of information available, are transforming the news.

**Live From Capitol Hill: Studies of Congress and the Media.** Stephen Hess. Brookings Institution. 1991. Volume 4 in this knowledgeable observer's series on the Washington press corps questions the media's power to influence elections and lawmakers' power to manipulate the media.

**Preserving the Press: How Daily Newspapers Mobilized to Keep Their Readers.** Leo Bogart. Columbia University Press. 1991. \$10. An account of The Newspaper Readership Project, which generated special sections wide use of graphics and changes in distribution and promotion in an effort to reverse the long-term downward trend in circulation.

# BOOKS

## Scotty Reston's Personal Stories

### Deadline Memoirs

James Reston  
Random House, 1991, \$25

by James M. Naughton

On the night in 1971 that U.S. Attorney General John N. Mitchell sent a telegram asking that the New York Times stop publishing the Pentagon Papers, Times executives located James Reston at a Washington dinner party.



They read him the draft of a reply respectfully declining Mitchell's request while saying the newspaper would obey the courts. Reston wrote it down and asked New York to wait a minute. Then he showed the Times draft to the man who happened that night to be his host. The host "thought it did not make clear that the Times would obey an order from the Supreme Court — not just any court," but when Reston conveyed that advice the Times "stuck to its promise to obey 'the courts' and suspended publication of the paper for a few days."

Reston's host and adviser that evening was Robert McNamara, former Secretary of Defense, the very person who had initiated the secret Pentagon study of the Vietnam War that the Times was printing in defiance of the government.

The anecdote epitomizes "Deadline," for in recounting it Scotty Reston draws no particular journalistic moral. He does not call attention to the irony. He merely tells the tales. "Deadline," he cautions,

is "merely one reporter's personal stories from the past."

So many of the stories are like the McNamara episode that the book could easily be read as the diary of a consummate insider. Reston in London with Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, who "never met a man or woman for that matter he didn't think he could conquer, but he couldn't keep his mouth shut or his pants on." Reston critiquing Senator Arthur Vandenberg's draft of what, thanks to Reston, became a momentous speech on postwar Europe., Reston watching a telecast of the 1952 GOP convention with Ike in the candidate's Blackstone Hotel room. Reston seeing John Foster Dulles "frequently at his timbered house in Cleveland Park" to get backchannel information. Reston putting his trousers on over his pajamas to go meet Adlai Stevenson after midnight and discuss whether he should run for the White House: "I said I didn't think he had a choice — when your number comes up in a democracy you have to go, especially if the President asks you." Reston in the Vienna embassy with John Kennedy as the President, in a cold fury over Nikita Khrushchev's threat to clamp down on Berlin, said "it was now essential to demonstrate our firmness, and the place to do it, he remarked to my astonishment, was Vietnam!" Reston telling widowed Katharine Graham what she should do after the suicide of Washington Post publisher Phil Graham: "'Take the joint over,' I suggested, and she did with remarkable courage." Reston reacting angrily to a Soviet plan to turn the estate across from his house into an embassy and going, to try to quash it, directly to House Speaker Sam Rayburn.

For all that, this is not just or even

principally an insider's tale. What's intriguing — and important — about these memoirs is that they show a Reston who never was very comfortable on the inside of events, a Reston like the rest of us, insecure and creative.

In 50 years of writing for the Times he was so sensible in print and serene in person it took this book to show how he fought all through his career to overcome his own devilish insecurity. Reston's family brought him as a child from Scotland to Dayton, Ohio, where he was ridiculed in school for not having the right clothes, and never forgot. When Reston was made an aide in the '40's to Times publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger, he felt out of sorts, a newsroom spy. When Sulzberger rewarded Reston by obliging Arthur Krock, then Washington bureau chief, to take Reston on as a writer, Krock was so chilly at first that it "revived my old immigrant's dread that somehow I didn't fit or wasn't wanted." Though he was often a guest at Washington dinner parties, Reston was "never at ease in such gatherings, usually discussing such momentous subjects as how long my dinner partners had been in Washington, and where their children went to school." In retirement, he writes that he looks back on "the thing I hated most — the fear of being rejected, of being ridiculed as an outsider, different, and even absurd."

Many of us, if lucky, discover at some point that we're not unique in being insecure, even if we don't project concern. I've never yet met a top-flight journalist — especially at the Times — who didn't come to work each day fearful it would be the last because, surely, the folks who run the place were on the verge of discovering the journalist's flaws. If anything, journalistic insecurity is both commonplace and necessary. It's part of the creative spirit. Bosses don't need to whip reporters into line with



dumb devices like "creative tension," because reporters already are flagellating themselves, trying to be better at their work than they think they can be. What reporters need is support, encouragement and editors who abet their best instincts. Editors who operate humanely, running the kind of shop Reston ran in Washington — and didn't run in New York.

When Reston took over the Times Washington bureau in 1953, he understood that enterprising reporting was not a quality imposed by editors but the result of hiring the best people available — he speaks proudly of bringing in Russell Baker, Tom Wicker and Tony Lewis — and then getting the hell out of their way. It was the same principle, Reston wrote, as Casey Stengel's notion of success as manager: you're a lot better when you've got Joe DiMaggio or Mickey Mantle in center field.

"I respected the judgment of the editors," Reston writes in an unduly mild reproof of the Times's institutional stiffness, "but believed then, and still do, that the critical question is not how editors direct reporters, but what kind of reporters and copy they get to direct."

Reston's failure in New York — "I was not a successful executive editor" — is thus all the more lamentable because this memoir suggests, probably correctly, that he might have turned the Times's main office into a more tolerable place to work if only Reston had had the courage to follow his instincts:

"I thought at the beginning that the executive editor should sit out in the city room near the reporters, where I could be closer to the staff, hear the gossip, and handle the gripes. [Managing Editor E. Clifton] Daniel felt this was carrying democracy too far. I also had the equally silly idea that I could apply to the very large staff in New York (over 700 reporters, editors and attendants) the chummy informality that worked with the much smaller staff in Washington."

Silly? Not really. It may have been impractical to gather 700 people for a chat about coverage, but the informality and collegiality that Reston had encouraged in Washington would have worked

wonders in New York.

Reston writes that New York's demands, plus the rigors of continuing to write the column, wore him down, and he doesn't explain why he so readily gave up trying to treat the 700 people in New York much the same as he had his small Washington staff. There's a lot left unsaid in this book.

Indeed, of 517 pages Reston commits fewer than two to the massive internal brawl in 1968 that led to his becoming executive editor. Reston was by then a fulltime columnist, having arranged the Washington command for Tom Wicker. When told by Turner Catledge, then executive editor, and Arthur Ochs (Punch) Sulzberger, the publisher, that it had been decided Wicker would be replaced by James Greenfield, Reston reacted with typical bluntness and clarity: "I said I thought it was the dumbest idea since Eisenhower chose Nixon as his vice president."

Reston lamented that the Times, "like most other big institutions, occasionally pays more attention to who's doing the job than to what job it's trying to do," but says his arguments made no impression on Sulzberger and Catledge. His account is so sparse that he brushes off the rest of the bloodletting in a single sentence: "Wicker came to see me and said that he was going to quit before he was shoved, and he so informed the publisher, who then reflected on the consequences, ordered a cease-fire, and called the whole thing off." Gay Talese built a whole book-writing career out of that sentence.

There's not much New York Times kiss-and-tell in this volume. Maybe a little smooch-and-hint, such as Reston's declaration that Amory Bradford, the former general manager of the Times, was "a tall, well-educated preacher's son whose vanity was matched only by his belief in his own effortless superiority." Or the tantalizing unexplained statement that the CIA "tried, occasionally with success, to recruit Times reporters overseas to serve as secret agents . . ."

Nor is there much effort to expand understanding of the extraordinary contribution Scotty Reston made to explanatory journalism. It was he who pioneered and perfected the analytical

story — called, in Times headline jargon, the "Q-hed" — in which perspective was added to straight reporting. Reston alludes, in passing, to the resistance his analytical style met at first within the Times, but he does not give himself the credit he deserves for having demonstrated that the most important of the five W's is *Why*. This is lamentable; at a time when some publishers think they can compete with television by dumbing down their newspapers, Reston could have used his remarkable skills to build the case for winning readers' respect with depth of information.

Another hole in "Deadline" is the absence of any ethical insight. Reston records but does not ruminate on the propriety of practices in which he and the press once blithely took part. As an Associated Press writer in New York in the 1930's, he recalls being "a welcome unpaying guest all over town, with tickets to the shows or the opera and even the run of all the big restaurants."

And his comments on Walter Lippmann, whose work Reston admired, could perhaps be turned inward:

"He was always lecturing me on the virtues of detachment — of avoiding personal involvement with influential officials or politicians. 'Cronyism is the curse of journalism,' he would say. But actually he was more involved with them than any other major commentator I knew."

Mostly "Deadline" is a collection of stories about collecting stories, told with Reston's straightforward manner and occasionally his liting contrapuntal style ("I saw the young Richard Nixon, and the new Nixon, and the old Nixon, but I don't think any reporter ever saw the real Nixon.") The book, like its writer, has no footnotes. "No doubt," Reston says, "They are permissible and even essential in a work of history, but this was not a work of history — it was a work of love."

*James M. Naughton, executive editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer, was a reporter in The New York Times Washington Bureau for eight years, from 1969 to 1977.* □

# Pulitzer Winners Reminisce

## Winning Pulitzers

Karen Rothmyer  
Columbia University Press, 1991, \$29

by Rick Tulsy

Two days after the Pulitzer prizes were announced in 1987, the New York Times offered a sobering warning to all winners:

"Winning a major prize like a Nobel, a Pulitzer or an Oscar is generally regarded as an undiluted moment of glory," said the lead of the article, "but winners of such awards reckon that there are some bittersweet dividends as well."

The Times talked about anxiety, disappointment and puzzling emptiness. It described the difficulties in trying to live up to higher expectations. As Lanford Wilson was quoted as saying, "Type 'This is the next play by last year's Pulitzer Prize winner' at the top of a page and try to write something underneath it."

The article seemed to privately warn each winner: Don't let yourself be defined by the prize. Yet, in that very same edition, The Times reported on its front page that Richard Wilbur has been named the country's poet laureate. Wilbur, 66, was identified on first reference as a "Pulitzer prize winner," having won the award in 1956.

In her book "Winning Pulitzers," Karen Rothmyer calls the prizes "a yardstick of excellence" in journalism. There are more than 1,500 entries each year. Certainly winning a Pulitzer, as two-time winner Gene Miller is quoted as saying, can involve "politics, freak chance, dumb luck and uneven categories." Certainly historically, as Rothmyer notes, the board has been dominated by white males from the Eastern establishment.

But "Winning Pulitzers," published by Columbia University press 75 years after the school first bestowed the awards, is not really a study of the board and its politics. It is not so much about the

history of the prizes or about the future of journalism, though Rothmyer offers two brief essays. Nor is it the place to read prize-winning articles. Rothmyer publishes brief extracts from 20 prize-winning entries; but in most cases they are too cursory to be satisfying.

At the heart of this book are interviews with 16 award winners ranging from former New York Times military correspondent Hanson Baldwin, who won during World War II, up through Alfonso Chardy, a member of the Miami Herald team that won a 1987 award for its reporting on the administration support of the Nicaraguan contras even after Congress had banned direct support.

Ultimately, this is not so much a book with a single conclusion as it is a collection of brief glimpses of prize-winners and their work. Rothmyer has chosen 20 winners over the history of the Pulitzers: four winners before 1940, and three or four from each succeeding decade. The sampling, writes Rothmyer, offers a "ringside seat at some of the major historical events of the 20th Century;" omitted, however, are such journalistic landmarks as the New York Times coverage of the Pentagon Papers or the Washington Post coverage of Watergate.

Rothmyer did not choose either the "typical" winning entry or the "typical" winner. She attempted instead to include a range of winners reflecting diversity of winner and of subject matter. Rothmyer found that "far and away" the most frequent type of article to win the Pulitzer was the expose of government corruption or wrongdoing.

What conclusions can we draw?

- The prizes can be awarded to all kinds of articles.
- The prizes can be awarded to all kinds of people.
- Many of them have fascinating things to say, years later, about their work and their award.

Stanley Forman recalled shooting the

Boston Herald American photographs of a woman and baby falling from a fire escape in 1975. As they were being developed, recalled Forman, the Pulitzer was beyond imagination: He was thinking about winning the Boston Press Photographers Association Contest. Yet before those photographs had won the Pulitzer, Forman already had taken a photograph of a white Boston teenager using an American flag as a weapon against a black lawyer, a picture that would also win the prize. As he said, "I didn't really get to enjoy the first one because I was already worrying about the second one."

Mary Lou Werner Forbes joked that the prize was "going to look great in my obituary."

David Halberstam called the Pulitzer he won for Vietnam, an award given in the face of intensive criticism of his reports, "as if the Supreme Court of our own profession had ruled in our favor."

Rothmyer's book is at its thinnest in its effort to include early prize winners. At its best, the book offers brief but compelling interviews with prize winners.

There is Homer Bigart talking about walking into Hiroshima while a correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune. It is "very easy to look back and express shock and horror," said Bigart "but the fact is that at the time we thought it was just a hell of a good raid, just another big bomb."

There is Ed Guthman, then a reporter for the Seattle Times, describing his 1949 investigation that showed a state legislative committee had falsely charged a university professor with Communist activities. The article appeared only after the university president had called a press conference clearing the professor, based on Guthman's findings. "People find it unusual that the paper hadn't printed a word up to that point," said Guthman. That was a decision made by the publisher and editor, who fully supported Guthman's efforts. "This was, as they saw it, the way to do things."

And there is Halberstam in Vietnam, being told by his Times editors that he should cancel a planned vacation. Presi-

dent Kennedy had just attempted to pressure the new publisher, A.O. Sulzberger, to reassign Halberstam, the author recalled, and his editors did not want Kennedy to think that the newspaper had responded to his pressure.

Contrast Halberstam to Baldwin, the Times correspondent in the Western Pacific during World War II. Baldwin recalled that there "wasn't the adversarial attitude between correspondents and government officials that was created in Vietnam and exists today. The correspondents I knew put their American citizenship and winning the war first and being a correspondent second."

So what, in the end, do we learn about winning Pulitzers from "Winning Pulitzers?"

1. There clearly is no ready formula for the kind of story that will win a Pulitzer. But don't bother trying to copy past winners. Originality and daring are rewarded; repetition is not.

2. Courage counts for a lot. Reporting in the face of danger to personal safety would help. Bigart described going on a raid over Germany after "the Air Force got this crazy idea of letting correspondents go on every major raid over Germany."

3. If risking personal safety is too much, at least put the financial security or reputation — of yourself or at least your institution — on the line. Consider Albert and Marjorie Scardino, who for seven years published the Georgia Gazette. They published for seven years under the philosophy, said Al, "The minute you start considering the consequences of a story you begin compromising whatever it was you had to say. They ultimately were forced to fold."

4. Hard work pays, perhaps more than anything else. "There weren't any secrets to what I did," recalls Gene Miller, whose work helped free two black men in the Florida Panhandle who had been wrongly convicted for killing two gas station attendants. "It was just a lot of hard work, running down absolutely everything, checking and checking again. I'm very thorough and very persistent."

5. So, too, does learning to watch

what is going on and paying attention. Harrison Salisbury describes reporting for the New York Times from Russia at the height of the Cold War, a period when the weather bureau would not tell him the forecast, classifying the information as a state secret. "Techniques of observation and watching and looking in ways reporters don't ordinarily do were very helpful," said Salisbury. He would watch closely the people, the sights, the streets, and he would notice small changes.

6. Add to that hard work a healthy dose of luck. John D. Paulson described the staff of the Fargo Forum all contributing after the 1957 tornado ripped through the town. "A lot of it was that we were in the right place," Paulson recalled. "If a tornado hits 20 miles down the line, well, you'd do a good job but you wouldn't have the same influx of staff."

7. It pays to spend your time and resources reporting and writing the entry, rather than in packaging the weak entry into a nice presentation for the judges. If big papers are more likely to win Pulitzer prizes than small papers, contends Rothmyer, likely that advantage comes from having the resources in money and staff to spend on the reporting of the story. She quotes Rick Reiff, a member of the Akron Beacon Journal staff as saying, "You want a shot at the prize, buddy? Ante up a few thousand dollars and you get to play. Many papers lose before they start."

At The Philadelphia Inquirer, with which I have familiarity, the newspaper at times is criticized as a "prize factory." Certainly, The Inquirer has demonstrated its willingness to pour time and money into worthy projects. But hopefully, the point is to pursue projects because they are worthy, not for the sake of prizes.

*Rick Tulsy has been a staff writer at The Inquirer for 12 years during which the newspaper has won 12 Pulitzer prizes. Tulsy, NF '89; Dan Biddle, NF '90; and Buzz Hissinger, NF '86 jointly won the 1987 Pulitzer prize in investigative reporting.* □

## Overcoming Male Bias

### Fighting for Air: In The Trenches With Television News

Liz Trotta

Simon and Schuster, New York, \$22.95

by John Hughes

As a long-time print man who has paid a few bills over the years from radio and television reporting, I don't have the fervent antipathy toward electronic journalism of many of my print colleagues.

Both newspapers and TV news have their roles. Both convey information, TV through images, sometimes explosive, and newspapers through words and ideas, usually more subtle and sophisticated.

For the sheer drama of, say, a moonwalk, not much can match live pictures from space. But a New York Times executive told me that the Times had record sales the day after American astronauts walked on the moon; viewers saw the story unfold live, but still needed the background, the amplification, that only print can bring to a great story.

During the Persian Gulf War, CNN and the briefings on C-Span ran just about round the clock in our house. But the newspaper brought depth and perspective without which our understanding of what was going on would have been imperfect. After the war, when television news, with its short attention span, had moved on, it was print that brought analysis and thoughtful retrospective.

It is trite to dismiss TV news as mere flash and glitz. True, I am as irritated as anybody by some of the morning blather on the news segments of our network TV shows. I'm not enchanted with what Liz Trotta calls the "Dan Rather in Afghanistan" school of journalism, and the promotional campaigns that turn

journalists into celebrities and make them larger than the stories they are covering.

But there are good people and good moments in television journalism. There is diversity and there are alternatives to the networks' nightly headline service. There is Robert MacNeil, who wryly terms his MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour the "program that dares to be dull." There is CNN, spare and lean, all business in its pursuit of news around the world. There is Koppel. And even on network news there is Jennings, the thinking man's anchor, who within the narrow parameters of 22-minute (after commercials) evening newscast is prepared to devote time to serious stories.

TV news certainly has flaws enough to answer for.

It is way behind newspapers in devising mechanisms for correcting and amplifying stories it gets wrong. (Try getting a correction on the air while evening network news is under way. Try getting the networks to carry a correction the next night).

In my view NBC news chief Michael Gartner made a poor call when he decided to broadcast on network TV the name of the alleged victim in the William Kennedy Smith rape case. But the print profession makes mistakes enough too. It was The New York Times that compounded NBC's misjudgment by publishing the alleged victim's name again.

There has been plagiarism of a story about plagiarism at Boston University.

Earlier there was the complete fabrication of a Janet Cooke story that won a Pulitzer prize for the Washington Post. I was one of the Pulitzer board members voting unanimously for that award. To its credit, it was the Post that later decided something did not smell right, conducted a belated investigation, and withdrew the submission.

Liz Trotta has been on both sides. She started as a reporter for the Chicago Tribune and the Associated Press and Newsday, but spent most of her career in TV news, with NBC and CBS.

It was tough going.

She was a woman in a man's world. She was a serious reporter in a world

of television news showboating. She was a conservative in a generally liberal atmosphere.

These days women are doing somewhat better in the news business than in the years in which Liz Trotta was starting out. Gannett has made a serious effort to hire women publishers. The Christian Science Monitor sent women overseas as bureau chiefs — Elizabeth Pond to Moscow, Charlotte Saikowski to Tokyo. The New York Times has women foreign correspondents and the Times and the Washington Post have women columnists of distinction.

At the onset of her television career, Ms. Trotta had to overcome a lot of male prejudice before she got to Vietnam as a war correspondent. After Vietnam she worked in London and Hong Kong and Singapore and Israel and Granada, and back in the United States covered the Chappaquiddick affair and the von Bulow and Jean Harris trials. In the course of her career she won three Emmys and two Overseas Press Club awards. But in the end she was sidelined by what she calls the networks' emphasis on "blondes under 40" when looking for on-camera reporters and anchors.

Her reflections are at times barbed, but not bitter. She offers devastating critiques of such TV personalities as Dan Rather, and of former CBS news executives Van Gordon Sauter and Ed Joyce.

But basically this is a book about one woman's struggle — an uphill struggle to make it professionally, a traumatic struggle with her emotions over the horrors of war, a fight to keep her job as a reporter amid the tides of celebrity journalism and a struggle with the realities of rejection when the network discarded her.

It is a useful chronicle of the strengths and weaknesses of television journalism in our times.

*John Hughes is a nationally syndicated columnist and Director of the International Media Studies Program at Brigham Young University. □*

## Galbraith In 200 Pages

### SPEAKING OF GALBRAITH: A Personal Portrait

Peggy Lamson

Ticknor and Fields

Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 1991, \$21.95

by Tom Regan

Pasha Gibb, the English military officer who spent much of his life in Arabia and became the Western world's "biographer" of Mohammed, once said that if you wanted to understand the Koran, you had to understand Mohammed. The same might be true of John Kenneth Galbraith and this entertaining little biography. If you want to understand the mind behind "The Affluent Society," or any one of a number of other seminal books by Galbraith on economics, then this will open a few previously sealed doors. Not that Galbraith has had quite the same effect on the world as Mohammed, but from everything Peggy Lamson says in this book, it would no doubt be a comparison of which he would approve.

Biographies generally fall into two categories: the portrait variety and the photograph variety. The portrait biography painstakingly goes over every detail, every shade of light and darkness in its subject's past. Like a Copley painting, it can be as important as the actual subject it examines. The photograph biography is the quick snapshot of a subject's life: superficial in an entertaining way, if done properly. "Speaking of Galbraith" falls into the latter category. Only it's something more than a snapshot. You might call it a photo album of snapshots: Galbraith growing up in Southern Ontario, Galbraith in Washington during World War II, Galbraith at Harvard, etc. The result is an intriguing glimpse (just a little over 200 pages - the perfect length) of a very private, very confident, yet very

complex man.

The other secret to this book's success is its author. Peggy Lamson is the perfect storyteller: relaxed, confidential, close to her subject, yet far enough removed to be able to remark on his flaws, often with a hint of mischievous irony. She likes her subject, and that, of course, affects the tone of the book but does not hamper it. The result is something like a warm and cosy dialogue between author and reader. It is as if you and Ms. Lamson were sitting some lazy afternoon in a bright, comfortable room in a house in Cambridge, sipping tea, as she relates stories about her friend "Ken" Galbraith, being careful to add the slight note of dubious puzzlement at appropriate moments. She captures not only his accomplishments well, but also his personality.

If there is one flaw in the book, it is that the snapshots fail to truly reveal the soul of the man. That may be a result

of either brevity or his reluctance to speak on topics like his father's death or his son's death from leukemia. But I found myself annoyed at the number of times Ms. Lamson remarked that Galbraith could not bring himself to speak on any subject involving deep emotions. While that reveals much in one way, it does not satisfy the reader's desire to probe a little deeper.

Still, this one flaw does not greatly disturb the book's flow. "Speaking of Galbraith" is a lively, interesting read. And it is the perfect antecedent; that personality that shines through in this book casts a strong light for those who wish to read, or even re-read, his great works. Or even if you just want to get a better look at one of the most important economists and personalities of this century.

*Tom Regan is a Nieman Fellow of 1991-92. He is a columnist with The Daily News in Halifax, Nova Scotia. LJ*

## Only The Facts About Hoffa

### Hoffa

Arthur A. Sloane  
The MIT Press, 1991. \$24.95

by Edwin Guthman

By any reckoning, James Riddle Hoffa, the Teamsters Union's all-powerful but ultimately ill-fated general president, stands shoulder to shoulder with Samuel Gompers and John L. Lewis as the dominant labor leaders of their times and who most left their mark on America.

Gompers's legacy is the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which he formed in 1886 and led through the first two decades of the 20th Century. For Lewis, the United Mine Workers' gruff chieftain, it is the Committee of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

Hoffa rose from a hard-scrabble childhood and early years as a two-fisted labor organizer in Detroit to

become the dominant Teamster in the Midwest and then general president of the union from 1957 to 1971.

He was tough physically and mentally. He was demanding and controversial. He was indefatigable in working for the union. He was a tenacious, effective negotiator in winning higher wages and better working conditions for his members.

Rank-and-file Teamsters followed him with gratitude and uncritical praise. A galaxy of major organized crime figures supported him — and used him. He supported them — and used them. The U.S. Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Field and the U.S. Department of Justice targeted him as Public Enemy No. 1 in labor.

Ultimately, he went to prison, convicted of trying to fix a jury and of defrauding the Teamsters' Central States Pension Fund. Paroled on Dec. 23, 1971 after serving four years, nine months

and 10 days in the federal medium security prison at Lewisburg, Pa., Hoffa set out to regain control of the union. It was not to be. On July 30, 1975 he vanished. Circumstantial evidence pointed to a mob hit. His disappearance remains unsolved.

Was Hoffa the model of a modern-day union leader, as thousands of union members believed? Or was he, as my old boss and friend Robert Kennedy believed, a symbol of corrupt forces that, if unchecked, threatened "to end up owning the country?"

In "Hoffa", Arthur A. Sloane, professor of industrial relations at the University of Delaware, has written an even-handed biography. He deals dispassionately with Hoffa's life and the action-packed controversies in which he was embroiled, from the "strawberry" strike in which Hoffa was a leader in Detroit when he was 18, to his untimely, mysterious and presumed murder.

It is to Sloane's credit, for he knew Hoffa and admired much, but not all of what Hoffa did. As Sloane sets forth in the preface, he decided to write his Harvard Business School doctoral dissertation in 1962 on Hoffa.

"With the brashness of youth," Sloane wrote, "[I] asked him if I could follow him around the country. For the next several months I was basically a full-time Hoffa watcher and the written product of this experience got me my doctorate the following year.

Three years ago, students, according to Sloane, motivated him to expand his thesis on over-the-road bargaining into a full-length biography. The result is a tight focus on Hoffa the *man*, but devoted husband and father, the charismatic, workaholic teamster boss, the defiant defendant, but only skimpy exploration — beyond Hoffa's beliefs — of why Kennedy went after him, or why Frank Fitzsimmons, Hoffa's designated caretaker of the union, so opposed his attempt to return to power.

Sloane limited his research to "most of the key people in the Teamster leader's life still around," Senate committee and court records, other books about Hoffa and newspaper



reports that appeared on Hoffa between 1952 and 1975.

A definitive biography would have required lengthy interviews with government officials, Teamsters and others who opposed Hoffa and an effort to examine unpublished records. Thus, such an account remains to be written.

Hoffa never admitted that he did anything wrong. He claimed to be the victim of a vendetta-driven "foul conspiracy" to jail a labor leader.

When convicted of jury tampering in Chattanooga, Hoffa said the trial jury "did not return a verdict against Jimmy Hoffa, private citizen; it returned a verdict against Jimmy Hoffa, president of the Teamsters Union."

For that and other calamities that befell Hoffa — and for his triumphs — Sloane provides the facts, but no judgments of his own. And his reporting suffers from a repeated failure to identify sources he quotes or say whether they asked for anonymity.

Even so, readers who are unfamiliar with Hoffa will get a well-paced, detailed account of his life and perhaps be motivated to delve deeper into the complex circumstances of his rise and fall.

At the book's end, Sloane, finally disclosing what he thinks, concludes:

"Despite his reputation, he was no more a study in black or white than anyone else: as with all of us, shades of gray apply. He was stronger willed, more hard charging, more powerful and more notorious than most people. But he was, in his many strengths and his many weaknesses, no less human."

*Edwin Guthman, Nieman Fellow '51, is a professor of journalism at the University of Southern California. He was Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy's press secretary in the Department of Justice during RFK's campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1964 and the early months of his Senate term.* L

"The Way" is not just for the tweed and chino set. This is an exceptional book and anyone who loves fishing will find Mr. Montgomery's recollections and observations a joy to read.

For those who think fish were meant for catching let the record be clear: The fish was not created by The Great Maker to be caught. It was created to be endlessly written about by self-indulgent authors equipped with the duldest of recollections about their first fishing trip with dad, their first catch, their first rod, their first plunge into the lake wearing chest waders. You get the picture.

What distinguishes Mr. Montgomery are the depth and range of his observations and his skillful pen.

Sure, he can't help replay many of his "firsts" (how do these guys remember every turn in the bend since they were five, anyway?). No good fisherman-turn-writer can because much of what the love affair with fishing is about is the indelible relationships formed and nurtured while in the process of searching for the right, fruitful spot of the stream.

Mr. Montgomery's sojourns with his Uncle Gordon and his Aunt Ruby in Montana are warm and tender revelations.

"I'm not sure I can explain just how important, how manly a boy can feel when, clad in hip boots, a creel strapped over his shoulder and bouncing on his hip, carrying a genuine fly rod, he walks down to the river behind his uncle," he writes, reflecting on one of his boyhood trips out West.

"I have crossed a lot of thresholds, but I don't recall taking bigger steps."

In addition to being a good story teller, Mr. Montgomery's also a good reporter and writer.

With grace and authority, he can relay some of the more technical aspects of the sport. Throughout "The Way," Mr. Montgomery passes along worthy insights about everything from casting to reading the proverbial trout stream, from the difference between the rainbow and cutthroat to how and why your kid's goldfish is a stronger fish than the ol' fighting trout.

He's not afraid, either, to debunk

## Tales And Philosophy Of An Angler

### The Way of the Trout

M.R. Montgomery

Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, \$22

by Patrick A. Yack

First, a confession: I'm not M.R. Montgomery's kind of fisherman.

To catch trout, I've used worms, Rooster Tails, spoons, Rapalas, canned corn, Velveeta cheese, salmon eggs and yes, even the beloved dry fly.

Not only have I used just about anything that might work, I've actually eaten some of my catch. What's more, I've bought cookbooks that contain recipes for grilling, baking and sauteing trout.

Unlike Mr. Montgomery, who claims trout are "bland and bony," I find trout quite tasty, especially as a breakfast dish with hashbrowns and scrambled eggs.

I'm sure Mr. Montgomery will consider my habits vulgar, ruthless,

unnecessary, pointless and flaunting, but I wanted them on the record, direct and up front.

It would be easy for a guy like me to wade into say, two pages, of a book such as *The Way of the Trout* and wade out.

I mean one of the cover's subtitles, which foreshadows some of the tone of "The Way's" inside pages, is too much: Principles of Fly-Fishing Drawn from Personal Experience, Historical Sources, and the Advice of Companions, Guides and Strangers to which are added Anecdotes of Angling in North America (are you still with me?) and Great Britain including the Author's Return to the Bitterroot and Blackfoot Rivers of Montana, (hang on, we're almost finished) and Expeditions to New Rivers Created by the Construction of Water Reservoirs and to Old Streams Newly Discovered.

Whew!

But you know what they say about book covers.

some of fly fishing's most cherished myths: Fly fishermen never fall in the water or snap a line or snag a fly in the bushes behind them. Ha! And get this: it doesn't take that much patience, according to Mr. Montgomery, to tie your own flies!

He has a special, thought-provoking message for those of us who like to keep some of their fish: "... As long as people think trout are born to die in a creel, as long as beer commercials end in a frying-pan fade-to-black, it will be a long struggle to return fishing to that wildness which really is the preservation of the world."

Although he claims he's not a good teacher, he passes along some worthy tips. When you are on a guided float trip, ask your guide to stop and allow you to wade a bit. It's a simple thing, but a nice twist to the book. And if you ask the local tackle operator for the latest fishing report, have the *decency* to actually *buy* something.

Mr. Montgomery may be at his best when writing about the humorous nature of trout fishing. And fishing can bring out the oddness of man and woman.

I've often wondered what a Martian might think, for example, if it hovered off the Oregon coast during a salmon season. What it would see are scores of boats, with rods pointing skyward, bouncing up and down, zig-zagging to and fro.

It would see men and women eating sandwiches and drinking coffee or beer who paused only to regurgitate or urinate over the side of their boat or to pull a big fish out of the water. It would hear through the crackle of the boats' radios how Joe had just hooked a big one or how Sally had just gotten the skunk off her boat or what had happened to Bill just minutes ago over by a certain buoy.

Mr. Montgomery passes along his own witty version of my Martian observation.

"It can be amusing, if you are easily humored to watch a section of river where both wading and floating anglers are working," he says.

"If the river is large and fairly even, flowing straight along without much bend or change in depth, or interesting rocks and eddies, the float-fishermen will all be looking at the river edge,

casting right up to the grass, bouncing flies off the bank.

"The wading fishermen will be in up to their waists, throwing flies out to, or past, the course taken by the drifting boats."

Mr. Montgomery can border on overdoing it at times, but he is accurate to focus on the true beauty of trout fishing.

Bass fishing is rock and roll: powerful, punchy. Trout fishing with flies is chamber music: Poetic. Rhythmic. Bass fishing is about casting and reeling. Trout fishing with flies is about laying down a fly, watching and waiting.

Mr. Montgomery has it right when he says, "To be successful, fly-fishers, must live in a floating world away from the routine duties and schedules of life."

"They adjust to the flow of the water, the way of the trout. They are wholly preoccupied with finding a fish that will, for a few minutes, join them in the dance. It is a ballet between partners — angler and fish — and set to the pace of the fly above and the trout below."

*Yack is a native of Arkansas and the managing editor of The Register-Guard in Eugene, Oregon.* □

## Friendly Talks With Professors

### Q and A Conversations With Harvard Scholars

Peter Costa  
Harvard University Office of News and  
Public Affairs, Cambridge, MA 01895, 1991

These 35 interviews, Derek Bok, the just-retired Harvard president, says in the foreword, demonstrate the range of interests of Harvard scholars and the depth of their inquiries. Range of interest, yes, from the first, Robert Coles's discussion of children's concepts of God, through Persi Diaconis's discoveries of card shuffling, to the end, Seamus Heaney's reading of an untitled

allegorical poem. But depth? Not quite.

The problem with the interviews, which first appeared in the official Harvard Gazette, is that the questioning is so gentle. Peter Costa, Director of the Office of News and Public Affairs at Harvard University, throws one soft ball after another at his learned subjects. Such as asking Nobel Prize-winner Dudley Herschbach, "When did you fall in love with chemistry?" Or asking acting dean Henry Rosovsky, "Why does higher education cost so much?" Scidom are they asked hard questions or pressed with any energy to defend their concepts.

Nevertheless, Costa accomplishes with his friendly questions what an ordinary journalist would fail to do. By

letting the scholars set their own agenda, he gives them the opportunity to lead us into areas that would not be revealed in an ordinary interview. The scholar knows that his statements will not be filtered through a critical word processor and strives to make points that he — not the journalist — views as important. As a result the reader often feels he is sitting in a living room listening quietly to a brilliant mind range over a favored subject.

It's a pleasant and rewarding book to browse before going to bed. □

# NIEMAN NOTES

—1947—

JACK FOISIE sends a letter reminiscing about Homer Bigart

He was the longest-serving copy boy ever to put in time on The New York Herald Tribune. His editors were slow to learn that behind his intense stuttering was a stubborn talent.

As a Stars and Stripes reporter I remember taking Homer out in Sicily on his first look at ground combat. Until then he had been based in London, one of the first correspondents to fly bombing missions.

I took him to the Third Division HQ where he was briefed, then to regiment, then to battalion. "That's about it, Mr. Bigart," I said. "We can go up to an OP and you can see some fighting." But oh no, the newcomer insisted on going forward to a company. Then he made a bent-over dash to a platoon outpost. Where he and his reluctant guide took a bout of German mortar fire. This guy isn't going to last long, I decided.

His cabled report to the Herald-Trib that day skipped any personalization. But the home front readers gained a good idea of what combat is all about.

The rest is legion. When The Herald Tribune folded, The New York Times grabbed him.

It took me some time before I realized Homer also had acting talent. When the press camp was about to move, Homer always seemed bewildered. I or other colleagues always found ourselves doing his packing, rolling up his sleeping bag. While Homer pecked out another dispatch!

It was the same ambling Bigart in Korea. Our paths did not cross there. But they did again in the early days in Vietnam. What a remarkable man. Although they will be Nieman citations, perhaps your idea of recognizing journalistic excellence could be called Bigart Awards.

—1957—

WILLIAM WORTHY sent a postcard July 22 from the Kosar Hotel in Tehran saying:

Back here for the fourth trip (1980, 1981, 1983) since the revolution — with all the many tangible as well as atmospheric changes in the aftermath of two wars.

Quite a different clan from what I reported in the Autumn '85 Nieman Reports.

Hope to proceed to Syria and beyond before returning for a second academic

year as a visiting prof in Howard U's School of Communications."

—1962—

JAMES V. MATHIS, president-publisher of The Edinburg (TX) Daily Review for 26 years, died of cancer June 28 at the age of 67.

Mathis was the Washington bureau chief of the Houston Post from 1957 to 1961 and later served as Washington and White House correspondent for the Newhouse newspaper group. In 1965 he bought The Daily Review and The Rio Grande Herald. He retired in 1989.

In July, Brigham Young University announced the appointment of JOHN HUGHES as a professor in the Department of Communications, where he will teach classes in advanced reporting as well as graduate courses. Hughes also has been appointed Director of the Department's International Media Studies Program. According to BYU's news release, the new "International Media Studies Program will conduct studies of radio, television, newspapers and magazines throughout the world. . . . It will invite journalists and broadcasters from abroad to visit BYU and will play host to distinguished visiting professors while preparing students for careers in international communications."

Hughes, a Pulitzer Prize winner in 1967 for his reporting on political upheaval in Indonesia, writes a weekly column for The Christian Science Monitor, which is distributed through the Los Angeles Times Syndicate to 160 newspapers. He chairs President Bush's Task Force on U.S. Government International Broadcasting.

—1964—

WAYNE P. KELLEY, JR., was named Superintendent of Documents of the Government Printing Office on April 15. Kelley is the 18th Superintendent of Documents, a position created by Congress in 1895. He will be responsible for an operation that distributes millions of Federal publications to more than 1,390 depository libraries in the U.S., supplies documents through the International Exchange Program of the Library of Congress, and oversees 23 bookstores nationwide and a publications mail order program that processes over 5,500 orders daily.

Kelley was publisher and executive vice president of Congressional Quarterly from 1980 until 1990. He also served as executive editor, managing editor and associate editor during his more

than 20 years with the publication. His accomplishments at Congressional Quarterly include the revitalization of two reference periodicals that raised revenues 250 percent in 10 years.

Prior to joining Congressional Quarterly, Kelley, a graduate of Vanderbilt University, served as the Washington correspondent for The Atlanta Journal from 1965 to 1969 and as city editor for The Augusta Chronicle from 1960 to 1965. He earned several Associated Press and Sigma Delta Chi awards for his work with the Georgia publications.

Kelley headlined the news release on his appointments which was received at the Nieman office via Morton Mintz, "Jobless Nieman Finds Work."

—1967—

RICHARD H. STEWART has taken the money and run into retirement. Dick was one of three Boston Globe news executives who accepted a buyout offer for early retirement. Over the years he had been a reporter in Washington, a roving New England reporter, National Editor and eventually Public Relations Coordinator. He was press secretary to Edmund Muskie during that Senator's ill-fated run for the Democratic Presidential nomination.

At a retirement party July 19, Dick was ribbed unmercifully, but at the end of his speech he brought tears to the eyes of scores of well-wishers with a story of a trip to the Soviet Union as a correspondent during the Cold War. Visiting a church, he was kissed by an old man, who wished him peace. That, Dick concluded, was what he wished everyone.

In an article in a mock Page One of the Globe, Dick's reputation as a portrayor of various characters, from a Maine philosopher stupifying city folks to an RAF Squadron Commander barking orders to Spitfire pilots, was recalled. The article went on:

"When Editor Tom Winship decided that he'd had enough of Stewart and his silly accent, he did what many Globe editors have done over the years with problem people — he encouraged him to apply for a Nieman Fellowship."

"However, the Nieman experience only magnified his affectations."

In retirement Dick is thinking of building on his character roles and his singing to go into acting.

WILLIAM F. WOO, editor of The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, served as one of the 1991 Pulitzer Prize nominating jurors.

H. BRANDT AYERS, editor and publisher of the Anniston (Ala) Star, spent two weeks in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe May 10-25. In Prague he found symbols of change:

One night a student painted a Soviet war-memorial tank a truly shocking shade of Pepto-Bismol pink and draped on it a sign, "Trojan Horse." When the tank was repainted olive drab, 20 deputies of Parliament painted it pink again in broad daylight.

Then there was the plump, balding pianist who entertained during a final dinner in Prague with invited guests. One of the guests was Voltech Hueber, editor of Svobodne Slovo (Free Word) which had been the first to give a front-page endorsement of the demonstrations which brought down the Communist government. When the pianist played, "As Time Goes By," Hueber said, "I know that man. He used to be the deputy chief of the KGB in Czechoslovakia."

From Leningrad Ayers filed the following impressions:

When citizens here voted to scrub the name of the founder of the Communist Party from the face of the city where V.I. Lenin went to school, they also raised a question about the soul of a nation: When a religion begins to die, the civil religion of Communism, what then will feed Russia's soul and nurture the pride of its people?

The recommendation of voters here to return to the Westernized name, St. Petersburg, coupled with the electoral triumph of Boris Yeltsin over the Communist Party candidate, surely means the old faith is losing its grip.

Lenin's face may be fading but it hasn't disappeared as a week of interviews with editors of both official and unofficial newspapers and officers of journalism associations here and in Moscow clearly reveals.

What one finds in the editorial office where Lenin's name and image are still honored and where Communist symbolism is either ignored or despised is intellectual combat of a vitality that was unimaginable when this reporter first visited the Soviet Union in 1975.

In those years, the Soviet Union seemed to be joined by rivets of steel ideology. The catechism of the old-time religion was drilled into elites at universities, in the media and at the only forums for the career-minded ambitious, Communist Party meetings.

Disciples raised on the old-time religion may try to adapt but find change spiritually hard to take. For instance, at the Union of Journalists in Moscow, the deputy chairman had been speaking about the new status of the professional association — independence from any political party or agency of government.

Moments later an American publisher noted a picture above the speaker's head and asked, "That fellow in the cap there, didn't he used to be Vladimir Ilych Lenin?"

What's he doing here?" The deputy chairman stiffened noticeably and replied evenly, "Lenin is part of our history, a founding father. No Russian would make joking remarks about your George Washington."

In a similar vein, the editor of the respected government newspaper, Izvestia, explained Lenin's image on the masthead, "As the United States has respect for its Stars and Stripes, so we should have respect for our symbols. Although we have kept symbols on our front page, we feel free to criticize... we're not afraid of anything."

At the Institute of Politology in Leningrad, a hulking, white marble Lenin greets a visitor before he is told about the independence of the journalism curriculum there. Asked about the apparent contradiction, a professor of Soviet history rambled angrily, "Only barbarians ruin portraits. He is our history. We don't think democracy means the death of Marxism-Leninism. There were difficult times in the history of various religions..."

There are other academic and editorial offices where the great Communist icon is not to be found, where Lenin is dismissed as irrelevant or bitterly denounced.

At the top of the grand staircase leading to the office of the immensely popular newspaper, Argumenty y F акты (25 million circulation), a startling icon greets visitors — a multi-colored plaster statue of a woman whose face is half dark blue and half white, a sort of Madonna of the Hard Rock Cafe. Lenin doesn't sleep here.

The editor of Moscow Komsomolets, a new paper aimed at young adults, which is gaining while most large papers are losing circulation, scowled at the mention of Lenin, "I took down his picture a long time ago. Lenin was the criminal of the century, the murderer of a nation."

Most ironic of all, is the word from the journalism faculty at Leningrad State University — the university from which journalist V.I. Lenin graduated in the city that bears his name. At the request of the students, Marxism-Leninism is no longer taught there.

The relics, the icons, the holy sacraments of the old-time Communist faith are disappearing, one by one. What will fill the empty places where the image and the idea of Lenin once stood? Asked the source of Russian pride, the editor of Moscow Komsomolets answered brusquely, "being Russian."

To be Russian means having come an excruciatingly hard way across the steppes of history, alone, isolated from the more fortunate peoples of Europe and America. The very burden of that history is a better source of pride than Lenin's imaginary "New Soviet Man." It has shaped a religion, the Russian Orthodox Church, to which many are returning, and inspired many of the world's greatest writers and composers.

An artificial religion is dying in Russia. Perhaps tomorrow the soul of the Russian people will be refreshed by an older, more authentic religion and they can take realistic pride from the pain they have borne and the great art it has produced.

GERRY C. LAFOLLETTE came out of retirement briefly to write a feature for the Indianapolis Star and a revision for his old hometown newspaper, The Corning (N.Y.) Leader. The article, about the death of a friend on Heartbreak Ridge in the Korean War, drew much favorable reaction. Here is the article, titled "Another War, Another Ernie":

Desert Storm has come and gone and so have the parades, but not the memory of other wars.

The first war in my life was World War II.

Some people called it Ernie's War. That's because Ernie Pyle was the best correspondent in that terrible conflict. He wrote stories about the men who won that war, best summed up by the title of one of his books "Brave Men."

For me, when I was old enough to go, there was another war and another Ernie.

It was Korea and his name was Ernie Nitsche.

He was in my class in high school, Corning Free Academy, and he was one of two men in the class of 1950 who would die in that far away land no one knew much about.

We found out quickly on a Sunday in June, the 25th, when North Korea invaded South Korea. It was also graduation day. It was also my parent's 23rd wedding anniversary.

Ernie was of medium height, with blond hair combed carefully as boy's or men's hair was in those days. He was quiet, with an occasional wide smile that gave the impression he might be up to something. He walked with a kind of bouncing step.

Ernie wasn't all that fired up about school, but then few of us were. Most of all, he liked to go fishing in the little streams around Corning, our hometown in western New York state.

In the yearbook, the quote after Ernie's name, picture and school activities was "you ought to see the trout..."

As I recall, his Dad, like mine, worked in the Corning Glass Works.

Ernie lived a couple of blocks south and west of our house, farther up the hill than we did, at the edge of a valley that led to higher ground. His house wasn't too far from the small stream that had helped form the valley.

Above his house was the Powder House Road where we sometimes walked after school. Or, on other afternoons, we shot baskets at a rim on the front of his garage.

School always started right after Labor Day, except in 1944 when a polio

epidemic kept all children quarantined on their own block into October.

Just as predictable as school starting was the junior and senior high schools getting off that Friday because of the country fair in Bath, N.Y., about 17 miles northwest of Corning.

Not many kids went. But it was an excuse to maybe walk around Spencer Hill or at least up in the woods, the trees showing the first hints of fall.

I didn't graduate with Ernie because I went away to school, to get ready for college. Ernie was probably going to go to work in one of the factories as other members of his family had done before him.

Then, along came Korea.

Our high school class, like those all across America, and like the West Point Class of 1950, was swept up in the first United Nations action on that scale.

I received a draft deferment because of my education. So, I didn't serve my country until 1955, until after I graduated from college, until after the Korean War was over, until long after Ernie was dead.

We weren't the best of friends, but we were friends.

As the years have gone by, I have thought more and more about Ernie. About what I have done with my life that Ernie couldn't do with his — marriage to a wonderful woman, three fine daughters and now a granddaughter, a job that I liked.

I have thought about the other things that Ernie only briefly had a chance to enjoy, much less appreciate — the taste of home-cooking, the smell of blossoms in spring, the sound of children laughing, the sight of leaves changing color in autumn, the quiet of a snowbound winter night.

I have thought about the chance I had, that Ernie didn't, and the chance I had, because of Ernie. I have thought about the chances we all have had, that all the Ernies didn't, and the chances we all have had, because of all the Ernies.

It makes you hope that what you did with your life was worthy of them.

I was a newspaper reporter for 30 years, first on the Old Indianapolis Times which folded, then on The Indianapolis News. I covered politics and government and many of the other areas a newspaper should, writing stories that were important for people to read.

It's a debt I feel I owed to Ernie and I like to think I made good on it.

Among the letters LaFollette received was one from Ernie's brother, Joseph, and one from the parents of Ernie's bride. In a P.S., Joseph added: "we feel our debt to Ernie was truly paid."

LaFollette has been working "not too diligently" on a book on newspaper humor.

—1974—

As of August 1, photographer STEVE NORTHUP became Assistant Managing Editor

for Graphics for the New Mexican, a 22,000-circulation daily in Santa Fe. Steve said that since he turned 50 and survived, "rather than getting a mid-life crisis I got a full-time job." As a "daily journalism junkie, it's nice being back."

Steve and his wife Lee are also getting their annual fall crop of dahlias ready for the state fair. So far, they have a "shoe-box full of ribbons," and will keep it until they have "enough for a quilt."

Steve just finished a book on Zuni, Navajo and Hopi silversmiths and jewelers in pueblos along the Rio Grande. He took 22 black and white portraits of the native American artists, a second photographer took photographs of the work, and Dexter Cirillo wrote the text. It is being published by Abbyville Press and will be out in the fall of 1992.

—1977—

Alexandra Dor-Ner, wife of Nieman Fellow ZVI DOR-NER, died of brain cancer on Wednesday, June 19, at Youville Hospital in Cambridge, MA. Alexandra, 43, was a photographer and writer. Her obituary in the Boston Globe described her in this way: "Ms. Dor-Ner's award-winning photographs have been exhibited in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and her articles and pictures were published in books, periodicals and newspapers around the world. She also produced educational programs about child development. . . Ms. Dor-Ner lived for 17 years in Israel, where she joined a group of photographers documenting disappearing neighborhoods in Jerusalem. She was awarded first prize in the 'Israel Through the Camera's Eye' competition in 1977. She also taught English and photography in Israeli high schools. Ms. Dor-Ner traveled extensively on photographic assignments. Early in their 22-year marriage, she and her husband circumnavigated the globe on a freighter, producing a documentary film on the voyage."

Alexandra is survived by Zvi and two daughters, Tamar and Daphne. A graveside service was held in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

—1981—

GERALD BOYD has been making changes since he became Metropolitan Editor of The New York Times in January. Some of them:

- Inviting reporters to a weekly enterprise meeting — a preview of big-story coverage and anything else anyone wants to talk about.
- A late morning metro meeting to get a better idea of the stories planned for the next day's paper.
- Letting experienced reporters direct specific projects or pairing them with newer reporters.

Writing about these changes in Times Talk, the newspaper's house organ, reporter James Barron says of Boyd:

"He talks about making metro reporter-driven and about wanting metro reporters to feel that

they play a significant and meaningful role. . . . What he says he wanted for the metro desk was a system in which decisions could be made in a clear and logical manner. This reflects his belief in setting clearly articulated goals."

Barron poked a little fun at his boss:

"He talks about trying to raise our level of play. Apparently this is not the same as raising our level of pay."

DANIEL SAMPER has been named society editor of the Hispanic newsmagazine Cambio 16. Cambio's society editor isn't limited to weddings and teas. Samper will cover topics ranging from science to education to people.

Samper and his wife, Pilar, have been living and working in Spain since being forced to leave Colombia five years ago. They hope to return to Colombia in a year or two. In the meantime, they are enjoying Spain and strongly recommend it for a "colorful vacation."

—1983—

Magnum photographer ELI REED contributed to an unusual July 4 op-ed page in The New York Times. Fred Ritchin, author and photography editor of The Times, set the scene: "To mark the Fourth of July weekend, the op-ed page asked several photographers to comment on the state of the nation by selecting one of their recent images and explaining its relevance."

Eschewing the more typical July 4 photos of fireworks, cookouts and the flag, the photographers submitted work about the roles of female soldiers in the Persian Gulf War, domestic violence and AIDS. Eli's photograph of a weeping woman was taken at the funeral of Yusuf Hawkins, who was killed in Bensonhurst, Queens, this year. His caption: "I had not wanted to enter the church and witness the continuing saga of another drama of racial bias. I felt angry and upset over the death of this young man, Yusuf Hawkins, killed by young white males, whom I hadn't known but whom in some ways I had known too well. . . . This photograph gave me reason enough to enter the church. For one brief instant I saw a society in the midst of self-observation at an uncomfortable time. I saw one face of grief representing us all. I felt at that moment that the people around me, including those in power, were realizing that we will not get any better until we recognize how very ill we are."

—1984—

Three Nieman Fellows from The Boston Globe recently won awards from the National Association of Black Journalists during the NABJ convention in Kansas City, Mo.

According to the Globe account, "Derrick Jackson (NF '84), who writes a column on Thursdays and Sundays, was awarded first place for commentary in a newspaper with a circulation over 75,000. Reporters Delores Kong and Eileen McNamara (NF '88) and photographer Michele McDonald (NF '88) tied for first place



in the hard features category for newspapers with circulations over 75,000. . . . The series examined the high death rate of babies born to poor women — most of whom are black or Hispanic — and the death of health services available to those women."

#### —1988—

BOBBY HITT and his wife, Gwen, have a new boy, born May 7 in Columbia, S.C. Robert Paul, named after his grandfathers, weighed 7 lbs 13 ounces at birth. The Hitts also have a 12-year-old son, Lucas.

Bobby recently resigned as managing editor of *The State*, a paper he had been with for 20 years. For now, Bobby and his family will stay in the South Carolina area.

Three classes of Nieman Fellows were represented at the wedding on Sunday, August 18, of Boston Globe photographer MICHELE McDONALD and writer Adam Schwartz in Harvard, MA.

In a yard filled with summer flowers and under the growing clouds of a thunderstorm, family and friends gathered. Among them, Mike ('85) and Monique Pride, Eileen McNamara ('88) and Peter May, Ellie Brecher ('88) and Marc Woolfson, Dale Maharidge ('88), Lindsay Miller ('88) and Peter Ambler, Stan Grossfeld ('92), and Lois Fiore from the Nieman office.

After the ceremony and reception, guests went indoors for the traditional cutting of the wedding cake. Once safely inside, a storm broke, and the celebration continued to the sounds of thunder, lightning and pouring rain.

About 30 minutes later, as people started to leave, the rain stopped and a light fog settled in. Perfect timing.

Michele and Adam spent their honeymoon in Scotland.

#### —1989—

ROD NORDLAND faxes from Rome, where he is *Newsweek's* bureau chief, the following Proustian account of his courtship and marriage:

I met Sheila Webb in Bahrain as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, on a 115-degree evening just after a Hash House Harriers run, while I was sitting hare-bottomed on a block of ice and drinking beer as part of the Hash's compulsory downs ritual. We had lunch once, dinner twice, and played squash three times before she returned to Ecuador, where she was then living. After a courtship that visited five countries on four continents, during the interstices of the Gulf conflict, we were married not long after the reinvansion of Kuwait, and only days after I returned from that country, on March 17, 1991, in Philadelphia, and then embarked on a honeymoon that visited six countries — most of them as far away from the Middle East as possible, i.e. Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, etc., and in each of which we played at least one game of squash, followed by an extended visit to Iraqi Kurdistan, which had not been planned to be part of the honeymoon, and where there are no squash courts, followed

directly (by one day) by a second marriage ceremony in Brighton, England. Sheila's hometown, where there are squash courts, which however we were unable to use as I had picked up second-degree burns to the hands, and Sheila had dysentery. Our overall squash standing at this point is (in matches) 110 to 109, in Sheila's favor. We're very well-suited to one another. I like to describe her as a migrant fruit picker, but she has also planed wood, mixed cement, crewed sailboats and stomped grapes for a living, as well as working in diverse places as a Foreign Language teacher for the British Council, all of which has taken her to nearly as many countries as me. She is now setting up a satellite telecommunications concern, and we make our seldom-visited home in Rome.

JOE TILOLOE, managing editor of *The Sowetan*, was in New York in June as part of what he called his newest fellowship. Joe apparently is trying to emulate the example set by ROSNAH MAJID, professional fellow from Malaysia.

Joe's classmates used his presence as the excuse to stage a reunion in New York. MARTHA TREVINO of *El Norte* won the weekend's longest journey award. CECILIA ALVEAR demonstrated her talents as a producer, arranging activities from a Saturday visit to Ellis Island to dinner that night. NORMAN ROBINSON, Mr. New Orleans, stunned everyone when he appeared in a bow tie. MIKE CONNOR, who remains in his hold job as the *Syracuse Post-Standard* managing editor, and Barb Connor, the class doctor, surprised no one when they arrived too late to visit Ellis Island.

CYNTHIA TUCKER, Atlanta Journal-Constitution editorial columnist, took time off from MacNeil-Lehrer to schmooze with her classmates. RICK TULSKY, still of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, was there, of course. Kim Tulskey brought the family credit by showing up Saturday evening, after a full day of work, despite having to return to her law firm for more work Sunday morning. (Kim was in the early stages of pregnancy.)

The group found it quite easy to reunite with the same old warm feelings; the fellows spent all weekend drinking wine, eating and telling stories about classmates who failed to show up. The group avoided pita sandwiches, ensuring a good time was had by all.

MOELETSI MBEKI returned to South Africa in September of 1990 from exile in Zimbabwe. Shortly thereafter, he became Head of Communications for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the largest trade union organization in South Africa. He is working to develop a mass media program to communicate with affiliates in the country and also is working to find a way, via radio and newspapers in particular and television whenever possible, to report union matters and to exchange information with members and the public. COSATU hopes to establish its own radio station — a

critical concern as this would be accessible for a large percentage of its members and the public and would also serve to promote literacy.

Moelosi finds the position very challenging and rewarding. His spouse, Miriam Patsanza, continues to produce television documentaries and also is doing some work with progressive organizations in the country. As a board member of the International Media Women's Federation, she plans to travel to Washington for a meeting in October. Their daughter, Kuda Hatendi, is a high school senior.

The International Advisory Board Committee to Protect Journalists includes a former Nieman Fellow and two members of the Nieman Class of 1991-92. They are LIU BINYAN (NF '89), former investigative reporter for *China's People's Daily*, now living in the West; ISAAC BANTU (NF '92), a Liberian journalist and president of the country's press union, and MARIA JIMENA DUZAN, columnist and former foreign editor of Colombia's *El Espectador*. Gitobu Imanyara co-winner of the 1991 Louis M. Lyons Award for conscience and integrity in journalism is also on the board.

SUNIL SETHI, a syndicated columnist in India, wrote a "New Delhi Postcard" for the September 2 edition of *The New Republic*. The article discussed the possibility of the widow of Rajiv Gandhi's running for office. The article ended this way:

In New Delhi the Circus has a long history of survival. As long as those regal sandstone buildings survive, there is time in this city for palace intrigue. When the scorching heat is finally doused by the monsoon rains, who knows what the deluge will bring? The shrewdest bet is on the coming out of Mrs. Gandhi III.

#### —1990—

JOHN HARWOOD has joined the Washington bureau of *The Wall Street Journal*. He'll cover the White House and the 1992 Presidential campaign. He's excited about the new job but also sad to leave *The St. Petersburg Times* after 13 years there.

Frankie has a new assignment too, as special assistant and all-purpose troubleshooter for the executive director of the low-income housing agency where she works in suburban Maryland. Mary Jeanne, now approaching her second birthday, is more fun than ever. She's just about grown out of her "Nieman Baby" t-shirt.

GOENAWAN MOHAMAD, editor of the Jakarta news magazine *Tempo Weekly*, has spoken out, along with others, against Indonesian press restrictions. "To revoke someone's driving license you must go to court," he told Parliament in June, "but there is no court for revoking the [publishing license]. There is no chance for journalists to argue." The Ministry of Informa-

tion has defended its power to revoke the licenses of publications, saying that without it there would be anarchy. But Goenawan asked: "Is the government automatically right? Does the government assume it is infallible just like the Pope? It's not that we want to be irresponsible or stir up trouble. But we want to know the limits of responsibility."

DICK J. REAVIS presented the Nieman Library with a new book, "Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant," by Ramon Tianguis Perez. An illegal alien, Tianguis Perez tells of his time in Texas, California and Oregon. It is, as far as Reavis knows, the only book of its kind ever written. Reavis translated the book gratis because "I believe in the subject and in the writer." He adds "I'll be happy if my epitaph reads: He discovered Tianguis Perez." The book was published by Arte Publico Press, the chief publisher of works with Mexican-American themes.

—1991—

KATHERINE M. SKIBA returned to the Milwaukee Journal from Harvard in time to play a major role in coverage of Jeffrey L. Dahmer, the serial killer. She filed the following to Nieman Reports:

Of course it was tough to return to journalism. I had expected it to be tough. I deliberately left the interstate on the trip back to Wisconsin, stopping by the Amish of northern Indiana.

There seemed little joy in the lives of Amish women. Their days were marked by drab clothing, homely men and spine-bruising labor.

Boston, the Athens of America, was a thousand miles behind me now. I instructed my companion on how to respond when I lunged too hard for the beguilements of Cambridge, Harvard and Savenor's Market.

"Shut up," he was to say. "You could be Amish."

Five weeks back on the job, any professional doldrums I had vanished. Jeffrey L. Dahmer's arrest in July saw to that.

The 31-year-old Milwaukeean possessed a cunning efficiency. He picked up young men in shopping malls and gay bars, lured them to his apartment, drugged them, had sex with them, strangled them and cut them into pieces. Sometimes he kept their skulls and sex organs. He saved body parts the way some of us keep old license plates and picture post cards.

Supposedly he ate human flesh, too.

This was news — unthinkable, sensational, an aberration of the abnormal — not the elegant, tweedy discourse of Faculty Club lunches and Kennedy School forums.

My first major contribution to the Dahmer coverage was a psychological portrait, a Sunday story that was based on interviews and public records. It was completed four days after his arrest. Many sources eagerly contributed — from his prom date to one of his

psychologists, who spoke off the record.

The psychologist, by rights, should not have talked to me because of medical confidentiality provisions. Already a few health care professionals who treated Dahmer had turned me down. I pursued the psychologist because of the fundamental principle: Never anticipate a rejection. Nike says "Just do it." Journalists know "Just ask it."

The crimes were so new, so shocking and of such enormous interest that it seemed cathartic for the psychologist, as for others, to speak to me.

Early on I caught myself feeling sorry for Dahmer, the archetypal quiet loner. A gay misfit from an unhappy home, he was crippled by shyness, impaired by an alcohol addiction and without doubt mentally ill.

My sympathy dissolved as I read through court records from his prior convictions for molesting a 13-year-old boy. In 1988 Dahmer had enticed the boy to his apartment by offering him \$50 to pose for pictures. He drugged, photographed and fondled the teen before the boy could make a woolly escape.

Dahmer, in a letter to the judge, proved a formidable liar. "What I did was deplorable. The world has enough misery without my adding more to it. Sir, I can assure you that it will never happen again."

In similar fashion Dahmer had conned police officers, probation agents and mental health professionals for years.

"Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer had an insatiable sexual hunger for men — and he hated them," my story began.

There are few professional pleasures greater than padding to the front porch on Sunday, hoisting the paper and seeing you've made the banner. That day street sale boxes were fitted with placards: "Life of Jeffrey Dahmer. Exclusive!"

Because his 17 confessed killings involved sex acts, dismemberment and cannibalism, questions of restraint immediately arose. Most editing for reasons of taste was minor, but in two instances The Journal held stories. One was a detailed account of the instant photographs seized from Dahmer's apartment; he had taken pictures, for example, of a decapitated head looking up from Dahmer's bathroom sink, with a penis and pair of hands aside the basin. Another story dealt with some of Dahmer's victims and their own prior arrests, some from prostitution and sexual assault. In the latter case editors made the judgment not to run the story, hoping to spare victims' families additional pain.

The crimes drew reporters from around the globe, with German reporters showing an early interest because Dahmer's misspent Army years had had him stationed in West Germany. Now Dahmer was being probed there in connection with various unsolved killings, even one involving a woman who had been stabbed. Wrong gender, wrong

modus operandi — but no matter. Suddenly dead people, missing people and missing body parts were being revisited to see if they had been Jeffrey Dahmer's quarry.

Gallows humor punctuated our days — even a staffer from the archbishop's office called in with jokes. Literary agents phoned us seductively. Journalists from Canada, Britain and Australia hastily visited or called.

Reporters from throughout the U.S., particularly those from television and radio stations, seemed to think nothing of calling the Journal newsroom and interviewing reporters. Most of the calls I had from broadcast reporters began without so much as "Good morning" or "Are you on deadline?" The callers seemed to think that I had nothing better to do than to hand out Dahmer nuggets and make available my Rolodexes.

Wrong.

Dahmer's murder spree spawned another generation of stories on the criminal justice system and its failings. Among the stories:

- Milwaukee police had had contact with the serial killer late in May when they returned a nude, intoxicated 14-year-old boy to Dahmer's apartment — a story broken by local television. Police thought the two had had a lover's quarrel. Dahmer says he killed the boy — a brother to the 13-year-old from 1988 — as soon as police left.
- A probation agent had received permission not to make home visits to Dahmer's apartment — dubbed the "Little Shop of Horrors" by The Washington Post — because she had had a heavy caseload.
- A psychiatrist for the Probation Department had been prescribing tranquilizers for Dahmer, who may have used the drugs on his victims.

Three Milwaukee police officers were suspended. The police chief was assailed by the rank and file. The mayor wrung his hands over Milwaukee's image. The state's top lawyer probed the police department. A small chorus of lawmakers clamored for the death penalty.

It's been a highly competitive, challenging and evolving saga. No doubt there is more to come on Dahmer, whose candy factory job had had him mixing chocolate two blocks from our newsroom.

Ah, re-entry after the Nieman year. And re-entry without — my Nieman colleagues may be happy to know — the trips I used to make to the cigarette machine. (A vice shed in Cambridge.)

I miss all of my classmates, and hope their returns to the "real world" were smooth, fulfilling and buoyed by the abundant joy we knew as Niemaners.

More ink for TIM GIAGO. The July 22 edition of *People* magazine featured a picture of a brooding Tim against a backdrop of the carved faces of Presidents Washington and Jefferson on Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. The accompanying story explained how Tim and the state's nine Sioux tribal chairmen rejected invitations to attend a celebration at Rushmore of the Nation's 215th birthday. President Bush spoke at the ceremony. "We were invited for window dressing," Tim is quoted as saying. "No Indian was asked to tell the other side. I guess the government doesn't want the world to know what was done to us." The Sioux want part of their Black Hills back instead of the \$263 million the government holds in a trust fund set up after the Supreme court ruled in the Indians' favor.

Tim published an editorial in his *Lakota Times* labeling Rushmore a shrine of hypocrisy because it memorializes "Presidents who committed acts of atrocity against our people." Tim did send a reporter to cover the event. "We wouldn't be doing our job if we didn't cover it."

People ran a letter to the editor a few weeks later that urged Tim to "open his eyes . . . Take advantage of the money. Life goes on, don't let stubborn pride stand in the way of a better one."

KABRAL BLAY-AMHERE, freelance journalist and former publisher/editor of *The Independent* in Accra, Ghana, was honored by the National Association of Black Journalists during its con-

vention in Kansas City in July. Kabral won NABJ's Percy Qoboza Award for his tireless commitment to journalism despite repressive press laws designed to still his voice. He was nominated for the award by Alexis Yancey George of the Boston Association of Black Journalists, and received it during ceremonies attended by about 1,000 people. BETTY WINSTON BAYE, a Nieman classmate and chair of NABJ's Special Honors Committee, made the presentation. For the first time this year, NABJ awarded two Qoboza Awards. The other went to Kenyan journalist Gitobu Imanyara, editor of the *Nairobi Law Monthly*, who is one of two journalists selected by the Nieman Class of 1991 for the Louis M. Lyons Award. (See back cover)



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## Nieman Appointee Blocked

Dai Qing, chosen for the Nieman Class of 1991-92, sent the Foundation the following fax on September 3: "To my very great regret. . . my country has declined to issue me a passport. I am thus unable to leave. It is my misfortune and also the misfortune of my country people."

## 2 Africans Win Lyons Award

Max du Preez of South Africa and Gitobu Imanyara of Kenya have won the 1991 Louis M. Lyons Award for conscience and integrity in journalism, the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University has announced.

The 22-member Nieman Fellow Class of 1991 selected the two journalists for their courageous efforts to gain democratic freedoms for their countrymen — even as each man faced grave threats to his life and liberty.

Imanyara, editor of the Nairobi Law Monthly, has been imprisoned three times during the last year by the regime of Kenya's president, Daniel arap Moi. Imanyara, 37, was freed May 28, nearly three months after the state jailed him on sedition charges.

Du Preez, 40, continues to face lawsuits and threats of violence for the work in his *Vrye Weekblad* (Independent Weekly Journal), South Africa's first ever independent Afrikaans-language newspaper.

The Lyons Award, named for former Nieman curator Louis M. Lyons, was first given in 1964. The award carries a \$1,000 honorarium.

Last year's Nieman class honored journalists in Colombia — living and dead — for their coverage of that nation's drug wars. Other past recipients of the Lyons Award include Helena Luczywo, an independent Polish journalist; Monica Gonzalez of *Analisis* in Chile; Tom Renner of *Newsday*; American correspondents who covered the war in Indochina; and CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow.

This year's award marks the fourth time that the Nieman Fellows have recognized work in

South Africa. Past Lyons Award winners there include Zwelakhe Sisulu of *New Nation*; Allister Sparks, correspondent for the *London Observer* and *The Washington Post*; and Joseph Thloloe of the *Sowetan*.

Du Preez founded his weekly in November 1988 after concluding that Afrikaners represented the biggest barrier to democracy in South Africa — and that Afrikaans-language newspapers, so closely associated with apartheid and the ruling National Party government, were doing little to stimulate change. Afrikaans is Du Preez's native tongue; he grew up in a conservative, rural Afrikaner community.

Today *Vrye Weekblad*, with a staff of 28, sells 15,000 copies. "Despite a very limited resources base, the *Vrye Weekblad* has time and again come up with reports of corruption and brutality on both sides of the political fence," Richard S. Steyn, editor-in-chief of *The Johannesburg Star*, wrote in nominating du Preez for the Lyons Award.

"From exposing the existence of SWAPO torture camps in Namibia to revealing wide-scale corruption in black local government and in the homelands system, du Preez has been at the forefront of South African investigative journalism. Most notable, however, has been the newspaper's exposure of South African death squads in the police and military," wrote Steyn.

Du Preez's enemies have tried to intimidate him. Right-wing whites tried to blow up his office in July 1990. He continued to receive threats by letter and phone, he says. And government officials have attacked his weekly with state-sponsored lawsuits alleging defamation and pro-

secution for supposedly breaking government restrictions on what the press may publish.

Imanyara's law monthly, founded in September 1987 and now selling 20,000 copies, offers a platform to critics of the one-party regime of President Moi. The monthly has pressed for an end to Moi's single-party state and it has called attention to abuses of legal and human rights in a nation once thought of as a model African democracy. For that, the law monthly has found itself fighting for its life.

Imanyara spent three weeks in detention in the summer of 1990 and another week in September 1990, and yet he continued to challenge the government with the law monthly. In the spring of 1991 its articles prompted Imanyara's arrest once again, the third in a year's time. He was imprisoned nearly three months, spending half of it in solitary confinement in a damp, dimly lit cell and the other half in a hospital where he had been taken after suffering an apparent seizure. Although the most recent sedition charges against him were dropped on his release May 28, he still faces criminal prosecution by the government on an accusation dating back about seven years. The government has confiscated his passport and refused to allow him to travel abroad. And Imanyara must continue to stave off the Moi regime's year-old effort to ban his publication, which has a staff of about seven.

"We shall continue to provide the forum through which Kenyans may debate the kind of society they want to live in," Imanyara said in a telephone interview June 18 from his office in Nairobi.