

# NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. 51 No. 1 Spring 1997

FIVE DOLLARS

## Welfare—Media Opportunity



Dershowitz on Reporters and Lawyers

*"...to promote and elevate the standards  
of journalism"*

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the  
Nieman Foundation.

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AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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## The Challenge of Welfare Reform

Testing the Editors .....	John Herbers .....	5
The Real Issue: Rich-Poor Gap .....	Dale Maharidge .....	7
The Real Issue: Not Enough Reform .....	Michael D. Tanner .....	11
The Real Issue: Impact on Lives .....	Edward J. Orzechowski .....	15
In Wisconsin, a New W-2 Form .....	Steven Walters .....	17
In Illinois, Twin Traps .....	Louise Kiernan .....	20
TV Sees Welfare Only as a Debate .....	Kathryn Kross .....	23
What to Watch For .....	David Ellwood .....	25
Possible Court Stories .....	Mark Greenberg .....	29
A Family I Know in Georgia .....	Vaughn Sills .....	32
No Scarcity of Resources on Web .....	Barbara Burg .....	38
A Tool for Measuring Income .....	J. J. Thompson .....	42
Why Do Stereotypes and Lies Persist? .....	Derrick Jackson .....	44
Will Tough Love Work? .....	Brent Coffin .....	46
Press, Experts and Welfare .....	Jerome G. Miller .....	49
In Germany, No Battle in Media .....	Martin Gehlen .....	52
In Japan, Health Care Is the Issue .....	Melvin Goo .....	54

## Dershowitz on Reporters and Lawyers.....57

Larry Flynt Movie .....	Joel Kaplan .....	62
Wine by the Numbers .....	Wesley Fiore .....	64
Tokyo Broadcasting and Aum Shinrikyo .....	Helen Hardacre .....	66
What About the Other Africa? .....	Folu Ogundimu .....	70
Assignment: Bosnia .....	Lindsay Miller .....	74
Media Rights in the New Hong Kong .....	Tsang Tak-sing .....	76
Foreign Correspondent in Manila .....	Rodney Tasker .....	78

Curator's Corner .....	2
What They're Saying .....	3
Letters .....	63
Technology .....	80
Books .....	81
Nieman Notes .....	91

*The photograph on the cover is by Vaughn Sills, whose picture essay of a poor Georgian family begins on Page 32.*

# 'Wake Up Angry Fund'

**K**atharine Graham's best-selling autobiography crossed my desk when Murrey Marder (Nieman Fellow 1950) and I were exchanging correspondence about the kind of aggressive "watchdog" journalism on which she built the reputation of The Washington Post.

Murrey was providing details of a gift of Washington Post stock he has made to the Nieman Foundation to create a fund to "elevate the standards and intensify aggressive and independent 'watchdog' journalism in the public interest on governmental and non-governmental activities." There were passages in Katharine Graham's book that made it clear what kind of journalism Murrey Marder had in mind in making the gift.

One episode was of a time when the first steps toward nuclear war were being taken in deep secrecy in what came to be called the Cuban Missile Crisis. Word of a crisis had begun leaking when Marder weighed in with what Mrs. Graham calls "a brilliant piece of reporting."

"At the time," she writes, "there was a check-in book at the State Department, which no longer exists because of this very story. Marder observed that two people from the CIA had just checked in. He thought this was odd on a Saturday night. Certain that a crisis was at hand but not knowing where, he raced around the department and found that the only lights on were in the Latin American Bureau and the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, which included the United Nations, and of which Harlan Cleveland was Assistant Secretary. Running into Cleveland, Marder had to think quickly of a question that might elicit a useful answer, which an open-ended one like, 'What's going on?' clearly would not. So he asked, 'How bad does it look to you, Harlan?' to which Cleveland replied, 'Well, pretty bad.'"

Marder surmised it might be Cuba. But how to determine that without revealing he was still only fishing? "Is it going to be like last time where you're going to be in on the crash landing but not the takeoff? Are you people in the loop this time on this Cuban thing?" he asked. On Cleveland's response, "I think we are," Marder broke the story that a major confrontation with Cuba was developing. As Mrs. Graham reports, "President Kennedy blew his stack; he had fended off The [New York] Times, which actually had about half or three-quarters of the story, and here, out of the blue, came The Post, to which nobody was paying much attention."

A decade later, with the Pentagon Papers at issue, Marder

argued, "If The Post doesn't publish, it will be in much worse shape as an institution than if it does because the paper's credibility will be destroyed journalistically for being gutless."

It is a kind of journalism that Marder says was "lastingly impressed" on him when he read a Nieman Reports article titled, "Wake Up Angry," by James Pope, then Editor of The Louisville Courier-Journal, during his Nieman year. The theme of the piece was that reporters should wake up angry every morning determined to expose corruption, fraud or malfeasance exploiting the public interest.

"I have literally followed that course for nearly a half century, and I believe that it still is the vital marrow in today's bone of contention over the nature and purposes of journalism," he says.

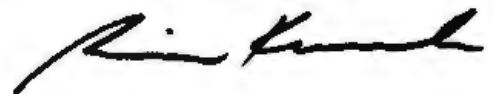
Marder recalls that after he returned from Harvard he was given 10 shares of Washington Post stock in lieu of a Christmas cash bonus.

"Since first receiving The Post stock, I never considered it to be my spendable money but instead, as it accumulated, to consider it my 'Wake Up Angry Fund,' reserved for a suitable journalistic purpose.

"My interest, in brief, is in keeping that spirit alive in an era in which journalism is undergoing the most sweeping reexamination in our lifetime. I have seen how much energetic, courageous journalism can do for the public, and I also have experienced the grievous costs of spineless, journalistic apathy."

So the Murrey and Frances Marder Fund has been established to elevate and promote the kind of aggressive reporting that lifted The Washington Post from the position of a struggling regional newspaper to compete toe to toe with The New York Times as the most important newspaper in the country.

And a footnote to press owners and managers of today who are obsessed with the quarterly profit margins: such journalism is good business. That kind of journalism practiced by Murrey Marder and The Washington Post over the past four decades made the stock, valued at \$10 a share when it was given to Marder, worth \$1.3 million today. ■



# What They're Saying

## Eli Reed Calm in the Center



You try to get yourself clear so you can see clearly what's going on. And if what you see clearly doesn't make sense with what you've seen before, good, you're ahead of the game because you are not repeating what's been done before. The biggest thing is to make yourself calm in the center. I can do things in a very stressful situation that I know other people can't do because at that point I don't give a damn any more. You don't care if you live; you don't care if you die; you don't care about anybody back home. None of that means anything to you at all or should mean anything to you. And yet at the same time all of this stuff is inside you.—*Eli Reed, a member of the international photojournalist collective Magnum, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, January 14, 1997.*

## Mary Chapin Carpenter Power of an Obituary

There was a song that I wrote called "John Doe No. 24," which was inspired by an obituary in *The New York Times*. Most obituaries don't have titles. It's just someone's name and age. And this one had a title. It said: Unknown since '45, John Doe No. 24 takes his secret to his grave. And I sort of went Hoo! What's that? And it was this deeply moving remembrance of this man who had been found wandering the streets of Jacksonville, Illinois, as a teenager in 1945 and no one ever knew where he had come from and he couldn't tell them because he was blind and he was deaf and was mute. For that era, the tests that they were able to give him seemed to indicate that he was severely retarded. And for the rest of his life he spent known as John Doe No. 24, as the 24th unidentified person in the Illinois state mental system. The people who took care of him for the rest of his life felt that he was much more intelligent than the tests could ever reflect. I just carried that piece of newspaper around in my back pocket for a long time, not because I thought I wanted to write a song about it but it was just this sort of story of somebody at the time I felt great sorrow for. After I finished this song, which attempts to sort of be in his head, it's from his perspective, so much sort of affirmation came about from that song. Every time I would sing it I would feel a sense of wonder and strength. I know that might sound goofy but... It was like he gave me a gift or something and wonderful things happened that you just don't ever imagine are going to happen. Someone got in touch with me. A journalist got in touch with me. He writes for *The Peoria Journal Star*. And he said that John Doe was just in a pauper's grave and we were able to get together and we got a tombstone for him. He has a grave now. You know, it's just stuff like that that fills your tent.—*Mary Chapin Carpenter, the singer, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, January 30, 1997.*



## Charles Peters Facts and Opinions



You want to let readers see your position develop out of your reporting. Let's not go into names but there are a good many opinion journalists who do not provide that link between the development of the facts and their analysis and the opinion they give. I find most of that work boring and not very useful.—*Charles Peters, Editor of The Washington Monthly, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, November 15, 1996.*

PHOTOS BY JAE ROOSEVELT

# Welfare Reform— A Media Opportunity



©ELI REED MAGNUM PHOTOS

*Eli Reed was cruising through downtown St. Louis one night with the Rev. Larry Rice, an advocate for the homeless, when he saw the woman, the children and the advertising sign, and snapped this picture.*

*With passage of the Welfare Reform Act, Congress changed the nation's method of dealing with poverty, turning away from a federal commitment and handing the problem to the states. Because such a fundamental shift requires newspapers and television to re-examine their coverage, Nieman Reports is devoting a major part of the spring 1997 issue to the situation.*

# Testing the Editors

*With Welfare Now in State Hands, Newspapers and Broadcasting Stations Must Find Ways to Check How Programs Work*

BY JOHN HERBERS

If President Clinton and Congressional leaders had plotted to stump the press on reporting how the poor fare in this country they could hardly have come up with anything more effective than the so-called welfare reform measure enacted last summer.

The legislation gives the states the major authority in shaping and running welfare assistance that has been under federal jurisdiction for six decades. Suddenly newspapers and broadcasters scattered across the country, which have little experience, and frequently no interest, in covering the subject, have a pressing obligation to dig for the facts and explain the impact of the change on those most affected by it.

Like it or not, newspaper editors and television news producers are going to be tested in the coming years. What priority will they place on determining how the new welfare system works in their states and in their communities? Of course statistics will be released at regular intervals showing declines in welfare recipients. Those are simple stories to produce and they are worth reporting. But will reporters be given the time and the resources to look beyond the statistics to determine the effectiveness of the new welfare programs in breaking the cycle of poverty? The test will come in decisions on freeing reporters for such difficult-to-cover stories as job training and the impact on children's health.

Moreover, each newspaper and TV station will have to do the job for its area; no national newspaper or wire service and no television network can cover for them.

Some media critics already are predicting that the press will fail to provide the kind of reporting and analysis necessary to keep the public informed. The 50 states make up a diversity both in their governance and politics and each will emerge with a different system of welfare, as they had early in this century before the federal government stepped in and guaranteed cash assistance for all of the nation's poorest children.

Covering state government other than scandal and political races does not, with rare exceptions, rate a high priority with the media on the state and local scene. The old papers of record that reported at length the operation of state houses, city halls and county courthouses have long since reshaped their coverage to make it shorter, livelier and less substantive. And the state capitols more often than not are staffed by less-experienced reporters who soon learn they are on a low priority beat and struggle to move on to something more exciting.

Some major newspapers and even more television stations make no effort at all to cover the inner workings of state and local governments, assuring that the subject is boring and must give way to news of crime, violence and entertaining features. There is a widespread perception among proponents of a strong central government that some advocates of the "devolution revolution"—the Republicans' name for turning federal programs over to the states—believe that under state control the programs will simply disappear from the public view and thus be diminished or eventually abolished.

Another view, however, is that the historic change in public welfare offers

a good opportunity for human interest stories that appeal to the humanizing trend in journalism—explaining abstract public policy and actions through the experiences of real people—especially children. According to many predictions there will be ample opportunity for such reporting. Will they be cast adrift or given a new lease on life?

First, though, the press must try to understand what is involved in the change now getting underway, and that will not be easy. Devolution is occurring but the entire process is entangled in several layers of ambiguity.



*John Herbers, Nieman Fellow 1961, covered federal and state social policy for The New York Times and Governing magazine. He was an editor and reporter for The Times for nearly a quarter of a century. After he retired he taught seminars on politics and the press at Princeton and the University of Maryland.*

The new law itself, which President Clinton signed last August 22, is complex and in many ways ambiguous, according to federal officials charged with trying to interpret it. New authority is in fact moving to the states but officials there are complaining that Washington is still trying to impose standards that should belong to the states. Federal officials reply that they are trying to make sure that the states spend both federal and state revenues in ways that will move people from welfare to work.

Robert Pear of *The New York Times*, the preeminent reporter of federal social policy, writes, "Republicans in Congress, who wrote the welfare law, had disparate goals. They wanted to move people from welfare to work, and they wanted to give states more power to run their own welfare programs. But many also wanted to advance a conservative vision of welfare policy, even if it meant limiting the discretion of state officials."

This raises the question asked many times over the years as to whether Congress should or would allow the lesser constitutional governments to spend as they see fit money raised by Congress. One attempt to do so ended in total failure: revenue sharing, which distributed billions of federal dollars each year to states and localities with virtually no strings attached during the 1970's and 1980's, was one of the first programs eliminated when federal funds ran short in the Reagan administration. The feds are a long way from being counted out as a major player in how both federal and state revenues are spent to assist the poor.

That is one reason why the great multitude of news organizations covering their own states and localities must determine on their own not only what is happening to the safety net that automatically protected the poor for 60 years, giving the media license to turn its attention elsewhere; they must determine whom to hold responsible. Thus the story cannot be written just from the state or just from Washington.

Under the new law the federal guarantee for poor children is ended, effective next July. Each state will receive a yearly lump sum of federal money: \$16.4

billion for all states until the year 2002, which is slightly above the amount spent in 1995 for Aid to Dependent Children, jobs and basic training programs and emergency assistance, all of which are terminated.

The head of every family on welfare must work within two years or the family will lose benefits. Lifetime welfare benefits are limited to five years, but states may set even stricter limits. Legal immigrants who have not become citizens are prohibited from receiving food stamps and most other federal benefits during their first five years in this country.

Unemployed adults ages 18 to 50 without children are restricted to three months of food stamps over three years, but if they go to work and are laid off they get three more months of stamps. Anyone convicted of a felony drug charge, except pregnant women and addicts in treatment, can receive neither food stamps nor cash aid, although their families can.

Enactment of the law followed years of debate about the wisdom of the welfare system first adopted during the Great Depression of the 1930's as a temporary means of helping the poor until they could find jobs. Both liberals and conservatives finally came to agree that the system was not sufficient in itself to pull people out of poverty, and a new approach was needed to bring

### Lyndon B. Johnson The War on Poverty

The war on poverty is not a struggle simply to support people, to make them dependent on the generosity of others. It is a struggle to give people a chance. It is an effort to allow them to develop and use their capacities, as we have been allowed to develop and use ours, so that they can share, as others share, in the promise of this nation. We do this, first of all, because it is right that we should.—  
*President Lyndon B. Johnson, in a special message to Congress, March 16, 1964.*

them into the work force. But the age-old controversy about the level of assistance and about what level of government should have the main responsibility for effecting a cure continues.

The new law is filled with so many restrictions that the American landscape is now littered with dire predictions of what will happen to millions of poor people. For example, an unmarried teenager with a child cannot receive federal welfare benefits unless she attends school and lives with parents or other adults.

And there are predictions that the new law will have unintended consequences. One area is federally subsidized housing, where most of the occupants are on welfare and where those units would be threatened by removal of renters from the welfare rolls. Leaders of the nation's cities, most of which have no role in welfare administration, are saying the new law will put an additional burden on their attempts to care for large concentrations of poor. The National League of Cities forecasts a "state disinvestment in the nation's poorest families that will impose harsh and expensive burdens on cities and towns, the providers of last resort and the home of almost every jobless American."

The new law permits the states to seek waivers from Washington of some of the restrictions the individual states consider over-burdensome. But some states, Mississippi for example, are not seeking waivers, saying they believe the law would work best for moving people into work without exceptions.

President Clinton is seeking to "fix" the most Draconian restrictions in the law, primarily those pertaining to food stamps and immigrants. But with Republicans still in control of Congress it is doubtful what he can achieve. Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala says that if a child anywhere is thrown into destitution it will be the fault of the individual state, not the federal government, but "we will watch to see that this doesn't happen."

Journalists, of course, cannot wait for that promise to be fulfilled. ■



# The Real Issue: the Rich-Poor Gap

BY DALE MAHARIDGE

Every journalist who works on Thanksgiving or Christmas faces a universal assignment—the “weeper,” a story on the places where the poor are fed dinner. This is bread-line journalism. Like the soup served by some charities, it is often not very filling. Something more meaningful is needed, but many newspapers don't do a very good job when reporting on social ills.

The reasons why are many. Some reporters are well paid and don't relate to the poor. Some newspapers are reaching for an upscale audience. Or these issues simply suffer benign neglect.

But now more than ever a “social issues” beat is vital, and welfare reform is just one reason. In order to succeed at this kind of reporting, one must cover not only the poor, but also the rich, as well as the middle. In a word: class.

“Class,” however, is usually preceded by the word “middle.” But the unpleasant truth is we've become like our progenitor, the British. Many issues seem disconnected: welfare reform, immigration, affirmative action, industrial downsizing, international trade policy, homelessness, even the way many people live in the suburbs.

But there are connections and we have to make them, because the gap between rich and poor will only grow wider, with troubling implications for all classes.

While database reporting can play a role, what is most needed is old-fashioned street reporting. Our job is two-fold: to educate readers and to present options to readers and policy makers. If we're doing our job, we should look at solutions and not just symptoms.

For a comparable period of societal change, the 1930's come to mind. It

was a rich decade for reporters, novelists, photographers. Some practiced what has come to be known as documentary journalism. Together, the documentarians made a difference. They shaped public opinion, kept issues on the front burner, recorded history. This might sound like activist journalism. But it's just really basic journalism—showing citizens the conditions of the society in which they live.

I began reporting about poverty at The Sacramento Bee in 1981. The following year I began a project with photographer Michael Williamson on the “new homeless.” Over the next three years, we traveled 23,000 miles around the nation, in boxcars, in a rusting \$600 car, sleeping in missions and under bridges.

The work led to “Journey to Nowhere.” As near as I can tell, ours was the first contemporary homeless book. It was followed by many. Most, including ours, failed for a variety of reasons.

A look at how we failed, as well as how we succeeded, mirrors my experience with newspaper reporting about poverty.

The success was in that we showed cause and effect—we began the book in Youngstown, Ohio, where tens of thousands of jobs were lost when steel mills were shuttered. We documented the forces that set people on the streets. A man or woman doesn't suddenly become homeless. There's a long process of decline for a person to become, as noted by the Russian writer Maxim Gorky, “a creature that once was a man.”

A failure was that I mostly showed just the good side of the people of whom I wrote. This doesn't mean I should have looked for stupidity or reasons they deserved their conditions.

But my subjects were missing a dimension.

What I'm talking about was summed up by Lionel Trilling in a 1941 Kenyon Review piece on “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,” by James Agee and Walker Evans, about Alabama sharecroppers. Trilling praised Agee, but he faulted him, too.

“The failure...is a failure of moral realism,” Trilling wrote. “It lies in Agee's inability to see these people as anything but good...he writes...as if there were no human unregenerateness in them, no flicker of malice or meanness,



*Dale Maharidge teaches journalism at Stanford University. He was also an Assistant Professor of Journalism at Columbia University and was a Nieman Fellow in 1988. From 1980-91 he was a reporter at The Sacramento Bee. His second book, “And Their Children After Them,” with photographer Michael Williamson, won the 1990 Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction. His first book, “Journey to Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass,” also with Mr. Williamson, inspired two songs on Bruce Springsteen's 1995 album, “The Ghost of Tom Joad.” His latest book is “The Coming White Minority: California's Eruptions and the Nation's Future.” Maharidge lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.*



WM. F. STEINMETZ

*Homeless men wash cars at one of many informal "car washes" that have cropped up on street corners in poor neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Although the car washes are illegal and unlicensed, city police often ignore them because they provide an honest day's work for the men and are a positive alternative to panhandling. As more and more poor people living in America's urban cores are pushed to the margins of economic and social life, they are increasingly turning to such unofficial, sometimes underground, enterprises like these to make ends meet.*

no darkness or wildness of feeling, only a sure and simple virtue, the growth, we must suppose, of their hard unlovely poverty. He shuts out, that is, what it is a part of the moral job to take in."

I call this the "canonization of poverty." The opposite is demonization. Some reporters fall prey to both extremes. But there is a middle.

The world of the poor is inhabited by people who are nice, funny, racist, mean, kind, etc. To twist something Ernest Hemingway once said of F. Scott Fitzgerald, the poor are just like everyone else, only they have less money. By smoothing over their rough edges, we do a disservice. Their stories don't ring true.

But we don't practice "moral realism" with the rich, some may argue. I wish we would. The rich, however, don't ask for our sympathy, don't ask to be explained. In short, they aren't broke.

Readers come to stories about poverty with a great deal of skepticism. They are often hypercritical.

Once I worked on a project on hunger in California. One story was about a young unemployed couple with a baby. I showed how they survived on rice and beans from a food bank; one night a

photographer and I watched the woman cook dinner.

When we were later choosing pictures, one was dominated by a six pack of Pepsi. I knew readers would question this. When I was younger, I might have urged that a different photo run. Instead, I interviewed a doctor, who explained that the poor will often crave soda, without knowing why, because it's filled with empty calories that make them feel full.

When the story ran, the phone was busy. I took countless calls from readers who were essentially saying "how can you expect me to feel sorry for them if they are stupid enough to waste their money on soft drinks?" I asked each if they had read the story. None had. They were looking for images to confirm their beliefs.

We have to keep in mind this skepticism. I had to deal with that six pack of Pepsi, even though it could justly be argued that the impoverished couple should not have been denied the simple pleasure of a soda in their otherwise difficult lives.

Skepticism is most pronounced with welfare stories. Some people think a majority of the poor take welfare, but they are dwarfed by the number of

working poor, who take few if any services.

In the late 1980's, I was at a charity food bank in Fresno, California. I struck up a conversation with a well-dressed woman, then followed her home, where she was rooming with a 53-year-old mother of a teen. This woman's husband had dumped her and she was unskilled. Her minimum wage job didn't cut it and their cupboards were bare at the end of the month. They were too proud for welfare, even food stamps.

Few could fault such people, who typified many of the one million California adults who were then working at or near the minimum wage. Not long after that project was published, the state legislature approved a minimum wage increase above the federal level. I can't say what impact the project had, but it did shed light on this problem.

And now there are even many working homeless. About a year ago, when Michael Williamson and I traveled across the nation to research an epilogue to a 1996 reissue of "Journey to Nowhere," we found a couple living in a crude hut along the banks of the Colorado River in Laughlin, Nevada. Frank and Frances were both employed in a casino across the river, but lived in the thick brush.

They'd become voluntarily homeless—so they could save to buy a used \$1,400 trailer. Otherwise, their wages went to rent and they had little left over for food. By becoming homeless, they'd already banked \$580 for the trailer.

"Only you can make the sacrifice if you want to get something," said Frank.

Such stories are now relatively easy to find. All we had to do was walk into the weeds. Houston was stunningly changed—there had been at least a 15-fold increase in the homeless in the dozen years since we'd last been there. Along the wooded bayous we found vast hut cities.

What is more difficult is covering the upper classes. Keep in mind that Charles Dickens didn't just write about the poor. The rich were equally important characters.

The suburbs, however, can be toughest of all. They are amorphous. Their very design—the box retail stores that are not much more than glorified trailers and houses on cul de sacs—create an utter lack of community for residents, while at the same time make it difficult for a reporter to crack them.

Yet in them is the story of the struggling middle class as well as that of the lower classes that are spreading from the inner cities to the emerging "ghetto suburbs" as whites flee ever outward.

Sometimes there are windows of opportunity offered with breaking stories, such as one that occurred in 1993, with the Spur Posse, a group of boys in the Los Angeles suburb of Lakewood. These boys scored points for the numbers of girls each of them had sex with and the police had charged some with rape.

New York Times reporter Jane Gross went beyond the surface. She revealed the emptiness and isolation of life amid tract housing, the marital and economic troubles. It was clear from the story that the Spur Posse was a result of larger issues.

News windows open in almost all suburbs. White teens form skinhead gangs. There are graffiti that rival the inner city and community leaders who fight it.

Where there are no obvious news hooks, there are stories of contrasts. In

1988, I wrote a piece about the richest and poorest suburbs in America, both near Chicago. This "rich man/poor man" reporting can be replicated by looking at the richest and poorest suburb around any large city.

Or you can localize a state or national story. To get at tension over immigration in the "Coming White Minority," I spent several years visiting Dana Point, a coastal city in California's Orange County. About half of the town's revenues come from two elite hotels, which use Latino labor in menial jobs.

It's essentially the same kind of feudal order that has long existed in California's farm country. The Latinos are crowded in a small area of apartments, while one third of the town lives behind walls with gates and guards.

There had been an ongoing low-level conflict. Some of the immigrant children were in gangs. When the immigration backlash erupted in 1994, Dana Point was a perfect microcosm.

I got behind the walls as well as inside the crowded apartments. I believe I succeeded in showing the two divergent worlds, in all their complexity, without canonizing or demonizing either side.

Some editors will suspect "social issues" stories. In the early 1980's when I started writing about the homeless, one editor contemptuously called me the "bum writer."

So perhaps it is best for reporters not to start talking about class, or say they are using an anthropological or documentary approach. But reporters should. It is important to have a point of view of looking at the larger picture. It's a mistake to write about the homeless, welfare clients, or the rich as separate and unrelated issues.

And it's not biased to offer ways out. Too often, journalists merely tell what is broken. It's vital that we show how to fix things by highlighting people and programs and ideas that offer answers.

We have the added duty of telling a good story. There are many great stories to be told. Just think what photographers such as Dorothea Lange or writers such as Charles Dickens, Jacob Riis, John Steinbeck would do if they were alive today. ■

## Background Reading

A broad understanding is important for a journalist who wants to write about class and societal ills. A few books that provide some insight:

To understand the genesis of welfare reform, it is important to read "Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980," by Charles Murray. Murray called for an end to welfare in this 1985 book and he has largely gotten his wish.

The liberal response can be found in William Julius Wilson's "The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy" and his most recent book, "When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor."

Also of value is "The Urban Underclass," edited by Christopher Jencks and Paul E. Peterson. Among this collection of essays, one that is especially important is Theda Skocpol's "Targeting Within Universalism," in which she argues that the only policies that will succeed are those that target all economic groups, not just the poor.

And to understand the decay of the inner city, Canilo José Vergara's recent book, "The New American Ghetto," shows how the American city has changed. Vergara, a photographer and sociologist, has for the past two decades been a one-man documentary project, photographing the same ghetto scenes. The work is striking and thought-provoking.

Out in the suburbs, their very design is responsible for some social ills, argues James Howard Kunstler in "The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape." After reading this book, you will never drive through a suburb and see it the same way again.

An excellent critique of reporting that demonizes the poor is found in the January 16, 1995 New Yorker, in the article "Ghetto Blasting," by Michael Massing. ■

## A CHECKLIST OF STORY POSSIBILITIES

In the 1930's, Roy Stryker was head of the government's Farm Security Administration's documentary photography unit, which showed Americans suffering from the Depression and Americans who were not. Some of the photographers became famous: Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans and Carl Mydans.

Stryker gave his photographers in the field a "shooting script" of things to look for. Many items on the list prompted the photographers to keep in mind the diversity of troubles facing the country. What follows is a brief modern counterpart.

### Welfare Reform

- ✓ Check to see if women turn increasingly to prostitution as welfare cuts are made. What other desperate things might former recipients do to survive?
- ✓ Watch for an increase in Dumpster diving and other ways the poor get food.
- ✓ Look for people committing crimes to get into jail and off the streets.

### Business & Economics

- ✓ Be alert to industries and ways of life that are dying? Some things that are significantly diminishing are small dairy farms, factories, shipping and timber jobs. Also small town hardware stores, diners, textile plants, family fishermen in coastal areas.
- ✓ Watch the minimum wage—how does it compare with what it used to buy?
- ✓ Look for middle class anger. Watch shopping malls and trends in consumer buying.
- ✓ Keep after housing costs, including rents as percentage of average incomes for various economic groups.
- ✓ Investigate profit-making from malaise. Check the salaries of homeless shelter operators, look for those who might otherwise make money off people's woes and fears, such as job scams.
- ✓ Survey shopping malls to determine which lack services to attract the lower classes and which cater to them.

### Watch The Walls

- ✓ Look at billboards and see who is advertising in different communities. (Cheap booze is often advertised in low income neighborhoods.) Graffiti is very telling as economic dislocation

increases. Especially watch the suburbs. Angry white suburban youths are increasingly common, and some join gangs.

### The Wealthy

- ✓ Report on how the rich are isolating themselves, much like a Third World oligarchy. There has been a large increase in the number of communities surrounded by gates and guards. Look at private school enrollment.
- ✓ Look for special treatment for the rich. In Southern California, a toll freeway is being built to service rich communities. In New Orleans, a rich neighborhood convinced the city council to erect barricades to keep people from an adjacent poor neighborhood from driving their streets.

### Decline

- ✓ Decayed infrastructure also tells about a community's problems. There is a growing tolerance for increasing shabbiness, litter, unkempt appearance of cities and towns.
- ✓ Who is fighting the decline? Focus on churches and community leaders who are doing things.

### Women

- ✓ Determine the kind of jobs women perform in suburbs and inner cities. Look for signs of political mobilization, the effect women have on local politics. Women tend to be much more political than men. But go beyond the obvious—report on union activity, especially among the poorest classes.

### Race

- ✓ Listen for anger between deprived race groups. Who is perceived to have the jobs? Always watch police attitudes.
- ✓ Explore funding patterns by government agencies in various communities.
- ✓ Look for hotels that advertise "American owned." Keep an eye on jingoism, carefully study the people making these statements and why they are making them.
- ✓ Investigate historic income patterns within neighborhoods. Go to key business establishments and determine how net income patterns have changed over the past decade.
- ✓ Find minority community leaders, those unheralded who are working to improve things.
- ✓ Subscribe to obscure journals where unpopular ideas are more likely to receive space. Pick up the papers that serve the minority community in your town.

### Suburbs

- ✓ Decay is increasing. Document suburban malaise—kids hanging on corners, lost people with no focus to their lives.
- ✓ Watch and listen to teenagers and first-year college students.
- ✓ Keep in mind that some issues that affect the poor often have an equal impact on other classes. Wages, education, trade policy, day care—these concern everyone, are part of a structural social change. ■—Dale Maharidge

# The Real Issue: Not Enough Reform

BY MICHAEL D. TANNER

Often when dealing with public policy issues certain ideas are repeated so often that they become part of the common wisdom, accepted uncritically by nearly all sides of the debate. Yet a more careful examination may reveal that the common wisdom is actually based on misinformation or a misunderstanding of the facts. This is particularly true in media coverage of welfare reform.

For example, it has been generally accepted that the 1996 welfare reform bill "ended welfare as we know it." Therefore coverage has focused on the results—beneficial or catastrophic—of the supposed major shift in welfare policy. However, in reality, the 1996 welfare reform bill contained so many exemptions, exceptions and restrictions that welfare will change little for many recipients.

The bill is supposed to establish a five-year lifetime limit for welfare benefits. One could be forgiven, therefore, for believing that after five years welfare recipients would be off the public dole. However, several states have waivers that would allow recipients to exceed the five-year time limit. Moreover, many state waivers guarantee a job after five years or provide for the continuation of benefits if no job is found.

Even without the waivers, few welfare recipients will actually be affected by the time limits. Most welfare recipients use the program for far less than five years and would never fall under the five-year limit. What about the small proportion of hard-core welfare recipients who do remain in the program for more than five years? That is the group that the time limit targeted. Yet, once again, exemptions limit the bill's effectiveness.

For example, the time-limit provision does not apply to about 17 percent of the current welfare caseload: minor children, but not their parents, who are receiving assistance. A substantial portion of that group is children who are U.S. citizens born to noncitizen parents. In addition, states are allowed to exempt up to an additional 20 percent of recipients from the five-year limit for hardship reasons.

Furthermore, the time-limit provision applies to only four of the nearly 80 federal welfare programs. A person who exceeds the five-year limit and has her cash benefits cut off would still be eligible for a host of federal welfare benefits, including food stamps, Medicaid, public housing, Supplemental Security Income, the Women, Infants and Children Health and Nutrition Program, free school lunches and so on.

Since most workfare efforts have been little more than expensive boondoggles, perhaps we should be grateful that the law's work requirements are so limited. When we hear of the "stringent" work requirements, we probably think of our own hectic work schedules and marathon days balancing work and family. Many of us may be surprised to learn, therefore, that for single-parent families the law's work requirement is 20 hours per week for the first two years, 25 hours per week for the third year and 30 hours per week thereafter. For two-parent families, the work requirement is a total for both parents of 35 hours per week.

Those "stringent" work requirements become even less so when exemptions from work and state waiver provisions are examined.

For example, welfare mothers with

children under age six will not have to work if they cannot find daycare. About 60 percent of current single-parent Aid to Families with Dependent Children households have at least one child under age six, so the size of this loophole is readily apparent. Moreover, at least 30 states have been granted waivers exempting recipients from the full impact of the law's work requirements. In many cases, states have defined work to include job search activities, job



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training and, in at least one case, drug rehabilitation.

One of the rhetorical centerpieces of the welfare reform legislation is the idea that it turns welfare over to the states, allowing them to run their programs as they see fit. However, in reality, the federal government will retain an enormous degree of control over state actions. For example, a "federal maintenance of effort" provision requires states to maintain their spending at no less than 75 percent of the 1994 AFDC level. So citizens will continue to send their money to Washington, Washington will take a cut off the top, and the states will be told how much to spend on welfare and on whom those funds should be spent.

From the howls of outrage from defenders of the welfare state, one might think that this legislation at least reduced welfare spending significantly. Unfortunately, exactly the opposite is true. The new law actually continues to increase welfare spending by more than \$70 billion over the next seven years.

The common wisdom accepts the idea that there must be some form of government welfare and argues over the details of reform. But is government welfare really necessary? Welfare may have started with the best of intentions, but it has clearly failed. It has failed to meet its stated goal of reducing poverty. But its real failure is even more disastrous. Welfare has torn apart the social fabric of our society. Everyone is worse off. The poor are dehumanized, seduced into a system from which it is terribly difficult to escape. Teenage girls give birth to children they will never be able to support. The work ethic is eroded. Crime rates soar. Such is the legacy of welfare.

Instead of "reforming" failed programs, we should eliminate the entire social welfare system for individuals able to work. That means eliminating not just AFDC but also food stamps, subsidized housing and all the rest. Individuals unwilling to support themselves through the job market should have to fall back on the resources of

family, church, community, or private charity.

As both a practical matter and a question of fairness, no child currently on welfare should be thrown off. However, a date should be set (for symbolic reasons, I like nine months and one day from now), after which no one new would be allowed into the welfare system. There are two distinct populations of welfare recipients. Those who currently use the system as a temporary safety net will be out of the system relatively soon. Immediately ending their eligibility would have only a minor impact on the system but would risk flooding the job market and private charities without allowing for a transition.

There are serious problems with expecting hard-core, long-term welfare recipients to be able to find sufficient employment to support themselves and their families. When we established the incentives of the current system, we may have made a Faustian bargain with those recipients. Now it may be too late to change the rules of the game. We should do whatever we can to move those people out of the system but recognize that success may be limited. It is far more important to prevent anyone new from becoming trapped in the system. That will be possible only if the trap is no longer there.

What would happen to the poor if welfare were eliminated? First, without the incentives of the welfare state, fewer people would be poor. For one thing, there would probably be far fewer children born into poverty. The availability of welfare leads to an increase in out-of-wedlock births, and giving birth out of wedlock leads to poverty. If welfare were eliminated, the number of out-of-wedlock births would almost certainly decline. How much is a matter of conjecture. Some social scientists suggest as little as 15 to 20 percent; others say as much as 50 percent. Whatever the number, it would be smaller.

In addition, some poor women who did still bear children out of wedlock would put the children up for adoption. The civil society should encourage that by eliminating the present regulatory and bureaucratic barriers to

adoption. Other unmarried women who gave birth would not be able to afford to live independently; they would choose to live with their families or with their boyfriends. Some might even choose to marry the fathers of their children.

Poor people would also be more likely to go to work, starting to climb the ladder that will lead out of poverty. A General Accounting Office report on women who lost their welfare benefits after the Reagan administration tightened eligibility requirements in 1981 found that, on average, the women increased the number of hours they worked and their hourly wage and had a significantly higher overall earned income. Two years after losing their eligibility, a significant minority of the women (43 percent in Boston, for example) had incomes as high as or higher than they did while receiving benefits.

Similarly, in 1991 Michigan abolished its General Assistance program, which provided cash assistance for poor adults without children. Two years later, a survey for the University of Michigan found that 36.7 percent of those people were working in the month before the survey. Of those with at least a high school education, 45.6 percent were working. Two-thirds of former General Assistance recipients, regardless of education, had held a job at some point during the two years before the survey.

It is important to recognize that job opportunities do exist for individuals willing to accept them. That can be seen in the experience of unskilled immigrants who enter this country with disadvantages at least as significant as those of welfare recipients. Many have less schooling than the average welfare recipient and many cannot even speak English. Yet the vast majority find jobs, and most eventually prosper.

Of course, it may be necessary for people to move where the jobs are. In some ways, the availability of welfare disrupts normal labor migration patterns by allowing people to remain in areas with low employment. If welfare had been in place at the beginning of the century, the great migration of black

sharecroppers and farm workers from Southern farms to Northern factories would never have taken place.

People forced to rely on themselves will find a variety of ways to get out of poverty. Richard Vedder and Lowell Gallaway of Ohio University examined the movement of poor individuals out of poverty. They found that 18.3 percent of poor people receiving welfare moved out of poverty within one year. However, 45 percent of poor people who did not receive welfare were able to escape poverty.

Of course, many people will still need help. As the Bible says, "The poor always you will have with you." Common wisdom says only the government can help these people. But private charity may be a better way.

Private efforts have been much more successful than the federal government's failed attempt at charity. Yet these efforts have often been ignored by the media. America is the most generous nation on earth. Americans already contribute more than \$125 billion annually to charity. In fact, more than 85 percent of all adult Americans make some charitable contribution each year. In addition, about half of all American adults perform volunteer work; more than 20 billion hours were worked in 1991. The dollar value of that volunteer work was more than \$176 billion. Volunteer work and cash donations combined bring American charitable contributions to more than \$300 billion per year, not counting the countless dollars and time given informally to family members, neighbors, and others outside the formal charity system.

Private charities have been more successful than government welfare for several reasons. First, private charities are able to individualize their approach to the circumstances of poor people in ways that governments can never do. Government regulations must be designed to treat all similarly situated recipients alike. Glenn C. Loury of Boston University explains the difference between welfare and private charities on that point. "Because citizens have due process rights which cannot be fully abrogated...public judgments



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*Teenage mother, on welfare, visits church in Hartford with her daughter.*

must be made in a manner that can be defended after the fact, sometimes even in court." The result is that most government programs rely on the simple provision of cash or other goods and services without any attempt to differentiate between the needs of recipients.

Take, for example, the case of a poor person who has a job offer. But she can't get to the job because her car battery is dead. A government welfare program can do nothing but tell her to wait two weeks until her welfare check arrives. Of course, by that time the job will be gone. A private charity can simply go out and buy a car battery (or even jump-start the dead battery).

The sheer size of government programs works against individualization. As one welfare case worker lamented, "With 125 cases it's hard to remember that they're all human beings. Sometimes they're just a number." Bureaucracy is a major factor in government welfare programs. For example, a report on welfare in Illinois found procedures requiring "nine forms to process an address change, at least six forms to add or delete a member of a household and a minimum of six forms to report a change in earnings or employment." All that for just one program.

In her excellent book "Tyranny of Kindness," Theresa Funicello, a former welfare mother, describes the dehumanizing world of the government welfare system—a system in which regulations and bureaucracy rule all else. It is a system in which illiterate homeless people with mental illnesses are handed 17-page forms to fill out, women nine months pregnant are told to verify their pregnancies, a woman who was raped is told she is ineligible for benefits because she can't list the baby's father on the required form. It is a world totally unable to adjust to the slightest deviation from the bureaucratic norm.

In addition to being better able to target individual needs, private charities are much better able to target assistance to those who really need help. Because eligibility requirements for government welfare programs are arbitrary and cannot be changed to fit individual circumstances, many people in genuine need do not receive assistance, while benefits often go to people who do not really need them. More than 40 percent of all families living below the poverty level receive no government assistance. Yet more than half of the families receiving means-tested benefits are not poor. Thus, a student may receive food stamps, while a homeless

man with no mailing address goes without. Private charities are not bound by such bureaucratic restrictions.

Private charity also has a better record of actually delivering aid to recipients. Surprisingly little of the money being spent on federal and state social welfare programs actually reaches recipients. In 1965, 70 cents of every dollar spent by the government to fight poverty went directly to poor people. Today, 70 cents of every dollar goes, not to poor people, but to government bureaucrats and others who serve the poor. Few private charities have the bureaucratic overhead and inefficiency of government programs.

Second, in general, private charity is much more likely to be targeted to short-term emergency assistance than to long-term dependence. Thus, private charity provides a safety net, not a way of life.

Moreover, private charities may demand that the poor change their behavior in exchange for assistance. For example, a private charity may reduce or withhold benefits if a recipient does not stop using alcohol or drugs, look for a job, or avoid pregnancy. Private charities are much more likely than government programs to offer counseling and one-on-one follow-up rather than simply provide a check.

By the same token, because of the separation of church and state, the government cannot support programs that promote religious values as a way out of poverty. Yet church and other religious charities have a history of success in dealing with the problems that often lead to poverty.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, private charity requires a different attitude on the part of both recipients and donors. For recipients, private charity is not an entitlement but a gift carrying reciprocal obligations. As Father Robert Sirico of the Acton Institute describes it, "An impersonal check given without any expectations for responsible behavior leads to a damaged sense of self-worth. The beauty of local [private charitable] efforts to help the needy is that...they make the individual receiving the aid realize that he must work to live up to the expectations of

those helping him out."

Private charity demands that donors become directly involved. Former Yale political science professor James Payne notes how little citizen involvement there is in government charity:

"We know now that in most cases of government policymaking, decisions are not made according to the democratic ideal of control by ordinary citizens. Policy is made by elites, through special interest politics, bureaucratic pressures and legislative manipulations. Insiders decide what happens, shaping the outcome according to their own preferences and their political pull. The citizens are simply bystanders."

Private charity, in contrast, is based on "having individuals vote with their own time, money, and energy."

There is no compassion in spending someone else's money—even for a good cause. True compassion means giving of yourself. As historian Gertrude Himmelfarb puts it, "Compassion is a moral sentiment, not a political principle." Welfare allows individuals to escape their obligation to be truly charitable. As Robert Thompson of the University of Pennsylvania said a century ago, government charity is a "rough contrivance to lift from the social conscience a burden that should not be either lifted or lightened in that way."

That is the essence of the civil society. When George Washington warned that "government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is force," he was making an important distinction. Government relies on force and coercion to achieve its objectives, including charity. In contrast, the civil society relies on persuasion—reason and eloquence—to motivate voluntary giving. In the civil society people give because they are committed to helping, because they believe in what they are doing.

Thus private charity is ennobling of everyone involved, both those who give and those who receive. Government welfare is ennobling of no one. Alexis de Tocqueville recognized that 150 years ago. Calling for the abolition of public relief, Tocqueville lauded private charity for establishing a "moral tie" between giver and receiver. In con-

trast, impersonal government relief destroys any sense of morality. The donor (read taxpayer) resents his involuntary contribution, while the recipient feels no gratitude for what he receives and inevitably believes that what he receives is insufficient.

Perhaps the entire question of government welfare versus private charity was best summed up by Pope John Paul II in his recent encyclical "Centesimus Annus."

"By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the welfare state leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase in public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need. It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is not material but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need."

Better yet, consider this simple thought experiment: if you had \$10,000 available that you wanted to use to help the poor, would you give it to the government to help fund welfare or would you donate it to the private charity of your choice?

By focusing exclusively on government policy rather than the successes of private charity, the media gives the incorrect impression that government is the only possible solution to poverty. Moreover, a government focus overstates the impact of legislation such as the 1996 welfare reform bill. Reporters interested in real welfare reform should look beyond the common wisdom. ■

## Tolstoy on Work

Work is the inevitable condition of human life, the true source of human welfare.—Leo Tolstoy, "My Religion."



# The Real Issue: Impact on Lives

BY EDWARD J. ORZECZOWSKI

The journalist's task of evaluating the success or failure of welfare reform is no easy task. The long term goals purportedly are to reduce poverty by placing people into jobs and ending chronic dependence on the public dole. However, if the media are to assess the impact on people's lives, they must look much deeper than simply the reduction in welfare rolls, or the number of welfare recipients who have obtained employment. They must try to measure the ability of families to lead stable, productive lives while meeting their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter.

Evidence already documents the fact that welfare rolls have been declining for three years. Some argue that this is the consequence of heightened awareness of impending welfare reform, while others argue this is the natural consequence of a vibrant economy with a significant increase in available jobs. Most would agree these reductions were the easy ones, with the more challenging and difficult ones still to come. Herein lies the real test of welfare reform and its impact on the lives of children and their families.

The single greatest complicating factor in determining the success or failure of welfare reform lies in the fact that there is no longer one system from which pertinent data can be ascertained. Each state now is constructing its own system within broad parameters set by the federal government. Evaluation must now take place on a state-by-state basis with all the concomitant limitations and political realities with which to contend. The inability or unwillingness of states to obtain important information and follow-up data on welfare recipients and former recipients will certainly exacerbate the difficulties in measuring outcomes.

So, given this environment, how do journalists begin to assess the consequences of reform beyond anecdotal stories? What role can the media, human service professionals, social scientists, policy advisors and others play in constructing a data bank of information for effective evaluation? How can those who report the consequences and experiences to the public at large communicate the real story without falling prey to partisan rhetoric, doom-day prognostication, or self-righteous perceptions through rose-colored glasses? Here are a few ideas.

1. A basic understanding of *social indicators* can generate a wealth of potential information on social outcomes. Like the Consumer Price Index, which attempts to measure the increase of inflation and consequent decrease in purchasing power, social indicators, when correlated with other social conditions, can provide significant clues to the consequences of any given condition over time. How will the changes brought on by welfare reform possibly correlate to the rates of homelessness, poverty, child abuse, infant mortality, school absenteeism and truancy, etc.? Since many variables can be attributed to a given condition, these measures should be considered *indicators* and not *causes*.

2. Regular communication with key members of state and federal social service agencies, social research groups and "think tank" institutions can offer insights into current studies and analysis that will eventually help evaluate welfare reform. Given the future time frames within which the full impact of reform will be felt, it will be some time before any outcomes can be effectively measured. For example, Wisconsin began welfare reform three years ago through federal waivers and is just now

analyzing data to assess results. One such result announced by Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson in January of this year was the substantial expansion of daycare subsidies since former recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children could not afford the nearly 46 percent of their income some were required to pay on daycare fees. In many areas federal and state agencies, social research groups and institutions (such as the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Urban Institute, both in Washington D.C.) are beginning to plan studies and social indicators for future assessment. Now is the time to learn and understand how welfare reform outcomes will be researched and evaluated.

3. Private social service agencies can



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offer a wealth of information on their experiences and those of their clients. Although fearful of an onslaught of new requests for services from welfare recipients, these agencies will, by necessity, play a pivotal role in providing essential support and training to former and current welfare recipients. Certainly private agencies will never fill the gap left by the reduced role and funding of government. It is estimated that total charitable giving would have to more than double in order to make up for the loss of public financing support. However, with hopefully increased volunteerism and private contributions, as well as refocusing resources on outcomes emphasizing self-sufficiency, private agencies can reduce the incidence of dependency on both public and private support.

In the current environment some new agencies may emerge with their sole mission to administer state projects; others will redefine their programs to better support and assist those leaving welfare. Several local Catholic Charities agencies, for example, are experimenting with a "welfare to work" curriculum to assist AFDC recipients in their transition to successful employment. In the Washington area Catholic Charities has submitted a proposal to the State of Maryland to conduct a demonstration project with eight other private social service agencies to assist 1,000 AFDC recipients in a successful transition to work. Establishing relationships with some key agencies will offer insights into the obstacles and challenges of clients trying to become self-sufficient.

Whether one agrees with the latest welfare reform legislation or not, the fact remains that our country has embarked on a grand social experiment. And like any such experiment, the results are likely to be a mixed bag—some striking successes and some painful tragedies. If Wisconsin maintains its investment strategy, it may prove to be one of the success stories. However, *sbell game* strategies like Hamilton County, Ohio, will most certainly prove to be poverty's revolving door. (Hamilton Co. announced plans to eliminate childcare subsidies to 1,450

## Welfare Coverage Not an Issue in Hartford

By Elissa Papirno

If I were to list the concerns I've heard in two-plus years as reader representative, welfare coverage wouldn't even make the top 100.

First, welfare was one of the beats that went uncovered after The Courant's 1995 voluntary buyout and newsroom reorganization. Until this year, when we began to cover the subject through a team approach, there have not been all that many locally produced stories to draw reader reaction.

Meanwhile, federal and state welfare reform have enjoyed increasing support in Connecticut. Under the leadership of Republican Governor John Rowland and a Republican legislature, the state in 1995 enacted a 21-month limit on Aid to Families with Dependent Children, one of the toughest in the country.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents to a poll conducted by the Institute for Social Inquiry at the University of Connecticut in 1995 supported such strict time limits on welfare. The number supporting comparable federal reform had increased to 75 percent by last December, the end of the first year of an intensive state effort to shift recipients from welfare checks to paychecks.

Even most advocates of the poor have not argued with the effort to find jobs for recipients.

An article earlier this year about the dilemmas of one welfare recipient trying to go to work drew this reader comment: Where is the father of her children? Why isn't he supporting them? Why is she on welfare? The reporter agreed that a welfare story should address all of these questions.

Similarly, articles about efforts to find and prosecute deadbeat parents, generally fathers, have prompted calls from divorced men, suggesting that the mothers seek employment outside the home instead of child support.

(Interestingly, the deadbeat parent effort is being led by the Democratic attorney general, a possible 1998 gubernatorial candidate; welfare politics are alive at the state level, too.)

In two years, I don't think I've heard from any recipients or advocates of continued assistance. For starters, welfare recipients don't regularly call the reader representative; plus public support for welfare has been minimal, as the poll results in even this liberal state indicate. (That The Courant editorially has been a strong supporter of reform may also have discouraged supporters.)

Meanwhile, no one has made the connection between President Clinton's early campaign for health-care reform and subsequent effort to cut back on welfare benefits.

They are inherently contradictory. Remember the 37 million, or as many as 40 million Americans, without health insurance? Weren't many of them the "working poor" who couldn't afford to pay for medical care? Won't most people dropped from the welfare rolls ultimately find themselves in that category? Jobs with healthcare benefits have not been part of the mantra for reform. Similarly, in the national rush to managed care, what has happened to the community clinics that once served welfare recipients and the working poor? If many have gone out of business, as suspected, who will provide health care to the new working poor, and who will pay their bills?

These are some questions that those covering welfare will need to raise and answer as reform becomes reality. Once the full implications are explored, welfare coverage might well make that list of top 100 reader concerns. ■

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working poor families in order to provide childcare to welfare recipients who move into jobs.) Through a careful communication of both successes and failures, we can learn much, correct the mistakes and reinforce those dimensions which contribute to positive outcomes.

The failures and successes, however, are not determined by numbers alone, but by the quality of the daily lives of those who can no longer rely on the entitlement of public support to help meet their basic needs. *That* is the real story—the experiences of real people and their children. ■

# In Wisconsin: A New W-2 Form

BY STEVEN WALTERS

**T**hat low growl you hear in the background is not a Wisconsin trademark, a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, approaching. Instead, it's the journalistic engine of Wisconsin's largest newspaper, The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, gearing up to cover welfare reform in the most comprehensive way yet.

When the roll call of the states that pioneered welfare reform is called, Wisconsin's number is always near the top. But that's largely because of the state's First Cheerleader, the never-shy Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson, and the Legislature he has dominated for 10 years.

Here, from Thompson's 1997 State of the State speech, is the latest Wisconsin welfare body count: "We've already cut our welfare rolls by more than half. We started with 98,000 cases and are down to 45,000. That's more than 53,000 families who are better off because we cared enough to help them."

Politicians get paid, elected and re-elected to say those things. The reporting challenge lies beyond the rhetoric, in the hearts and dreams of the 45,000 families still on the welfare rolls and the 53,000 families on the rolls no longer. And what about those numbers; can they be trusted?

There are good stories on both sides of the welfare-reform scythe: families off welfare, where have you gone? What jobs do you have now? How well do they pay? If getting off welfare merely landed you in another sociological category of working poor, do you prefer being "sentenced to life in a failed welfare system," as the governor calls it? Families remaining on welfare, how are you doing now? May we follow you as the full welfare reform-storm hits this year?

Coverage of welfare reform in Wisconsin by both newspapers and TV stations has been a three-year series of fits and starts, depending on the shifting priorities of editors and news directors. But 1997 is the year it gets much better, promised Journal Sentinel Managing Editor George Stanley, who has assigned two reporters to go to one of the counties that will begin W-2, the governor's plan to require everyone—everyone!—now on welfare to work in some way as a condition of continuing to get state grants, childcare and health care.

"Welfare reform is a huge deal, and [The Journal Sentinel] will attack the hell out of it," Stanley pledged. Past coverage can't be compared to the current game plan, he said, because W-2 will officially start only this year. Welfare reform is one of the issues Stanley will cut his managing editor's teeth on, since he got the job in January.

But welfare reform is very hard to cover meaningfully, Stanley added, because of the continual mix of recipients who are on welfare one month, off it the next and back on it again later. Also, welfare recipients tend to move often, so the only way to cover them well is to live in the community where they do, shadowing their lives, families and choices.

To understand the welfare-reform coverage challenge, a little history is necessary.

In 1994, Wisconsin's Republican governor stopped nibbling at welfare reform and opted for a full bite. He adopted the slogan for his campaign—"Wisconsin Works," or "W-2"—invented by the public information officer for the state's human services bureaucracy, and declared war on welfare in an economically booming region of the state, north

of Milwaukee County. He did not pick the fight right in Milwaukee County because it's home to 59 percent of the state's welfare cases—up sharply from the 39 percent when the governor first set his political gun sights on the issue.

W-2 stands for this: to keep getting aid grants, everyone must work in some way. Those with disabilities can do community service work, maybe for a non-profit agency. Those with no job skills can work in subsidized "transitional" jobs while they learn about the workplace, to get along with co-workers, to



THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

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# No Tug on Heartstrings in San Diego

By Gina Lubrano

When the subject is welfare, some readers are impatient. They are impatient with the topic; they are impatient with the newspaper. There is no tug on their heart strings.

Last December, a front page article about changes in the welfare system that could impact homelessness in San Diego County resulted in a single telephone call to the ombudsman but in a number of letters to the editor.

The caller said all the stories in *The San Diego Union Tribune* about the homeless or people on welfare "are lacking. You don't cover the whole story. It's usually about women deserted by their husbands, always overweight who haven't finished high school. Your stories don't explain why they are all alone. Where are the husbands, fathers. They should be in jail for non-support. Where are their parents, siblings, relatives?"

The story the reader criticized did not have any of the clichés she mentioned. It described a 48-year-old welfare mother of four sons whose ex-husband left her penniless five years ago. It also said she had graduated from the University of Mexico and that she is trained as a medical assistant. She wasn't working because she has had "no luck finding a decent-paying job." It's hard to tell from the photo if she was overweight.



JOHN NELSON/THE SAN DIEGO UNION TRIBUNE

The most prominent picture, however, was of a married man. Together, he and his wife have seven children. Neither he nor his wife are overweight. They are without childcare and without a car. The husband wants to get on-the-job-training in plumbing and refrigeration but has been unable to find any jobs that pay more than \$5 or \$6 an hour, "hardly a livable wage for a family of nine."

A reader who wrote he has had a 30-year relationship with the newspaper, first as a newspaper delivery boy and then as a subscriber, said he has never seen a blank space under "want ads." He calculated the family's income and then computed the deductions, concluding the net would be

"well short of their existing 'earnings'" from welfare. He said the couple needed a reality check.

Another letter writer concluded that the article was intended to make readers feel sorry for the families profiled but said the response probably would be the opposite. The writer said the article urged readers to let the County Board of Supervisors know their

feelings. His were that he did not want to read about "able-bodied parents with large families" who are on welfare.

Another reader called the article a tearjerker. She suggested that some of the welfare recipients might take two jobs at \$5 or \$6 an hour. The newspaper should do a story on people who work at menial jobs to support their families and who watch their tax dollars go to support people who won't work, she said.

Out of the six letters, five found fault with the recipients. One writer, who also faulted the welfare recipients, criticized the system and said it needs to be changed. ■

*Gina Lubrano is the Reader Representative for The San Diego Union Tribune.*

be on time and to get job training. W-2 is a Cheesehead version of "tough love" championed by Thompson, the son of a grocer who grew up in a rural part of central Wisconsin and who brags that his first job as a boy was shining eggs in his father's store for nickels.

The public information officer who invented the name W-2 later got a promotion. It was perfect: naming a program that gets rid of welfare "as we know it" for the stub that tells workers how much they've earned on the job. W-2 was short enough for headline writers, yet catchy and substantive enough for all those Bigfoot reporters from both coasts and the TV networks who tromped to the governor's office in the East Wing of Wisconsin's Capitol in Madison. "Governor get a job," chortled one national report. And if the

Bigfeet also wanted to handicap the upcoming 1996 Republican presidential contenders, so much the better. Privately, Thompson wondered if the governor from a small state like Arkansas can be president, well, why couldn't he? After all, like all those others, he thinks Deep Thoughts. Welfare reform, for example.

In the beginning, the W-2 media strategy was simple: roll it out somewhere that Milwaukee and Green Bay-area TV stations could drive to fairly easily, although not in their backyard. And stage the photo op and words on the morning newspaper cycle, so it could be heralded in the news columns of the conservative Milwaukee Sentinel. The Sentinel got a lot more excited about state government news—and war

is news, after all—than the more jaundiced, moderate-to-liberal Milwaukee Journal.

Like a new puppy, The Sentinel got real excited—yap! yap! yap!—about everything, but just for a day or so. The afternoon Journal often took days or weeks to research, ponder and—finally—report. It's a cycle that has been repeated often in the bygone, two-newspaper-per-city era of journalism: one paper would banner something, while the paper on the following news cycle does a classic "knockdown" piece. But The Journal had the biggest franchise in Wisconsin newspapering, a Sunday paper that owned its market.

For years the "half full"/"half empty" cycle of schizophrenic newspaper coverage greeted all the earlier welfare

reforms of the governor who insisted that they have cute names: Learnfare cut the welfare benefits of families whose children were chronic truants. It earned the Milwaukee school district an F in attendance, because district administrators had trouble determining who was in class and who was absent on any given day. Bridefare said there would be no cut in welfare benefits to a household if the father married the mother of their child. Two-Tier gave a welfare family who just moved to Wisconsin the same benefit in the states they left, if they moved to one of the test counties. Work Not Welfare was actually the pure predecessor to W-2, because it required welfare recipients in two counties—the same booming one where W-2 was later announced and one suburban county across from Minnesota's Twin Cities—to work and get financial planning or their welfare benefits would end. The fact that the two test counties for Work Not Welfare had only a tiny fraction of the statewide welfare caseload was underreported, even by "half full"/"half empty" standards.

Republican Presidents Reagan and Bush issued waiver after waiver of Federal welfare rules for "governor get a job" in the late 1980's and early 1990's. But when Thompson rolled out W-2, the game got serious. Legislators, who had also heard the grumbling about "welfare mothers" in county fair beer tents back home, couldn't vote against it. Wisconsin, the land of dish-to-pass Lutherans and fish-on-Fridays Catholics, finally had its beer belly full of welfare. It was time to change it. So when poverty-industry professionals, pure liberals and elected officials in the state's two largest counties finally ran out of ways to slow W-2, it sailed through the Legislature. That put it on the desk of Democrat Clinton, who wavered and waffled and wished it would go away. Finally, with his own reelection only months away, even Clinton had to issue waivers to allow W-2 to begin. Clinton's waivers drove two senior poverty industry savants to quit Clinton's administration, however.

But, back home in Wisconsin, W-2's war correspondents had fallen apart. The state's most experienced reporters had a new concern: will we have jobs?

January 1995 brought news that the conservative Sentinel and liberal Journal would merge, throwing panic into all the "half full"/"half empty" chroniclers who were to chart W-2, its reforms, reformers and reformees.

In the newsrooms of Battleship Journal and Mine Sweeper Sentinel, reporters worried. Everyone must apply for three jobs and, yes, there would be layoffs. Who is that going to lunch with that senior editor? Why? What does that mean? What do you mean, you heard I once expressed an interest in being a copyeditor? No, I'm an "investigative" reporter; it says so on my business card. Cover the suburbs? And leave the downtown newsroom and power lunches? They would never do that to me.... Oh, here I am in the suburbs, but at least I have a job.

For part of 1995, reporting paralysis set in—on W-2 and other major public-policy issues. When the rubble cleared, and all the part- and full-time reporters who were dismissed or accepted buyouts had cleaned out their desks, two types of journalists emerged: specialist reporters and editors who were part of the nice-sounding "issues" team—since disbanded—and generalists, who banged out stories for the daily paper but who almost never paused to sort out what they had just written actually meant. Soon, the tension between the two types of reporters and editors was palpable. Madison-based reporters covering the Capitol would churn out daily stories on welfare reform, only to be second-guessed by specialists back in Milwaukee who suggested that the Madison reporters were being naively used by Thompson and his aides. Milwaukee-based reporters would get calls from Milwaukee County social workers and other local officials, saying W-2 would end all life as we know it. To start 1997, a new edict came down: State Capitol reporters would write W-2 stories cleared and discussed with a veteran Milwaukee-based editor who has supervised coverage of the issue.

Stanley's assignment of two reporters full-time to a county where W-2 is scheduled to begin March 1 took away the Madison-versus-Milwaukee dialogue. And it has one goal, to "put a face" on welfare reform and those whose lives will soon be rewritten by it. There are plenty of faces to put on the issue, since W-2 will formally begin in Milwaukee County and across the rest of the state in September.

Besides the people-as-flotsam stories, major questions must be answered: How will former welfare recipients get health care, once their initial eligibility lapses? Will they work themselves into higher-paying private jobs that allow them to buy health insurance like other workers? What political changes in the program will be made if a baby freezes to death next winter and Milwaukee County poverty workers leap to blame W-2 for the death? Can the same suburban businesses who loudly complain that they cannot find enough qualified workers be prodded into giving jobs to W-2 clients, or must those businesses be bribed with tax breaks to do so? Should taxpayers subsidize special buses that run solely to haul inner-city workers to suburban jobs in the morning and take them back home at night? W-2 is more expensive than the old welfare system, at least initially, but how much more costly? And who—the governor's appointees, legislators bent on reelection, Federal patronage workers named by Clinton, or outside consultants—should monitor whether W-2 actually works? In the bureaucratic endgame, who should keep score?

That's a whole newsroom full of questions, involving reporters who cover everything from City Hall to the Courthouse to the Capitol to the business desk and back again. We must do more than keep score on welfare reform, Cheesehead style. And, although getting from there to here hasn't been easy or pretty or fun so far, things are looking up. This time next year, you can look it up.

After all, our state motto says it all: "Forward." ■

# In Illinois: Twin Traps of Coverage

BY LOUISE KIERNAN

**L**etitia Lehmann is an anecdotal lead. White, 30 years old, with three children and a decade's experience on public aid, she has become an unpaid spokeswoman of sorts for how to work your way off welfare.

She has been broadcast on CBS (twice), quoted in *The Chicago Tribune*, interviewed by *The Associated Press* and sound-bited by local television stations covering a panel discussion she took part in.

Her story is, as they say, a natural. Four years ago, she got a flyer under her door for a childcare training program in the Chicago public housing complex where she lived. She enrolled, completed the program and got a job as a part-time aide in a daycare center. Now she works full time as a daycare teacher and takes college classes toward an associate's degree in education. She celebrated her first anniversary of financial independence last summer. In November, she moved out of public housing and, with a friend, bought her first home. The family just got a puppy. The kids want to name it "Lucky."

All these achievements make her happy, of course. But she remains frustrated by how the many threads of her struggle toward self-sufficiency get snipped into neat sentences and sound bites, by how *simple* it all sounds. Nor is she unaware that being white in a society that often depicts the face of welfare as black makes her story more palatable to some. She is not particularly satisfied with the media's coverage of welfare reform.

"They use whatever they need to back up their viewpoint," Lehmann says of her experiences with reporters. "Everything else they ignore. Although they might put it down on paper, I'm not

sure they take it all in."

Her comments, echoed by others familiar with the welfare system, reflect the dilemma of covering welfare reform: how do you humanize this extraordinarily complex issue and make it understandable and interesting to a general audience without oversimplifying it or fragmenting it into so many bits that it loses context?

Just as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 shifted power to the states to run their own welfare programs, local media must assume the responsibility of monitoring, questioning and evaluating those efforts. Illinois, which has one of the country's largest welfare systems, is typical of many states in that it has already made a few stabs at revising its system but will face dramatic challenges in the years ahead. So far, coverage of welfare revision here has been piecemeal and sometimes superficial. However, there are some promises of a shift toward more substantial analysis as changes take effect.

To date, the larger newspapers have mostly focused on small pieces of the puzzle. As a result, several aspects of welfare reform, like childcare issues, have received a fair amount of detailed coverage, but the broader picture remains a jumble. Local television has done very little with welfare reform as have, with a few exceptions, radio and small newspapers.

"I don't see it as a topic that's getting much attention at all," says Carol Fowler, Managing Editor and acting news director of WGN-TV in Chicago. "It's one of those back-burner things that's more a function of public policy, and policy-driven stories are always

underrepresented on television."

In August, when President Clinton signed the welfare revision bill into law, the Illinois Department of Public Aid received more than 100 media requests, compared to its usual monthly rate of 20. Since then, inquiries have dropped back to their normal level except for the occasional blip when various implementation dates



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come up, according to the department's spokesman, Dean Schott.

One reason for the lack of coverage is that not much has happened yet in the way of traditional, event-based news. The state has until July to get federal approval for its plan implementing the changes involving needy families on Aid to Families With Dependent Children (to be renamed TANF—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), the largest population affected by the re-vamping of welfare. As of mid-January, Illinois had not yet released a draft of its proposal.

Even when deadlines hit, they don't create measurable change for months or years. "Things aren't going to change overnight," says Karan Maxson, the Public Aid Department's Director of Planning and Community Services. "There's this misunderstanding that come July 2, things are going to be different than they were the day before."

Because events are in flux, stories about the impact of pending cuts can often do little more than give a snapshot of a situation at any given time and hazard a few predictions. In December, The Chicago Sun-Times did a three-day series on welfare, which included a story about single adults who receive food stamps. The new law limits single adults to three months of food stamps within any three-year period unless they work, get job training or perform community service.

The person profiled in the story was a 27-year-old Chicago man who had been on food stamps for most of his life. The story did not note that the man's volunteer work might have exempted him from the cuts. But it didn't matter anyway. Soon after, the state won a waiver from the federal government exempting those single adults who live in Chicago. Waivers had already been granted for single adults living in a dozen other areas.

"Here's a guy who wasn't sure what was going to happen to him, and two weeks later, there's no problem," says Sun-Times reporter Tim Novak. "...In the end, no one really knows what's going to happen to almost all these



JOHN KRINGS/ THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

*Letitia Lehmann with one of her students at Erie Community Center in Chicago, where she is a full-time teacher.*

populations until the cuts go into effect. I think the story is yet to come from a human aspect."

Using the experiences of an individual to illuminate a broader issue is a mainstay of journalism. Given how complicated this particular issue is and the fact that, at its heart, welfare reform is about what is going to happen to poor families, there is a great need and desire to tell the story through anecdotes.

But reporters too often seek out people who fit preconceived ideas about welfare or narrowly defined themes and just plop them, like a cherry, atop 15 inches of policy and statistics.

"They'll call and say 'Get me a cyclist (someone who cycles on and off welfare)," says Toby Herr, founder and Director of Project Match, a welfare-to-work program that has been operating in Chicago since 1985. "They want people who fit a category, and no one exactly fits a category."

Also, Herr says, the search for examples can create an overemphasis upon success stories, minimizing the challenges in putting people to work. "Always, always, when the media comes, I try to give them a failure, but it's not so easy to say to someone we're going to show you off as a failure," she says.

Addressing stereotypes about welfare recipients presents another sticky issue in selecting individuals to write about. In downstate Champaign, when News-Gazette reporter Mike Monson used an example of a black woman on public aid to illustrate a welfare reform story that ran as part of a series about campaign issues in October, several readers complained of racism.

Ami Nagle, project director for Voices for Illinois Children, an advocacy group in Chicago, says she frequently gets requests from the media to interview a "welfare recipient who isn't a minority, who has two kids and doesn't live in the inner city. The fact of the matter is in some areas, the typical welfare recipient is a minority, single parent, young mother. I think we do have to say that sometimes, but from an advocate's point of view, well, those are the people the public doesn't like."

Reporters should be careful, though, to avoid painting a portrait of poverty that depicts a greater gulf between the middle-class and the poor than exists, says Rebecca Blank, an economics professor at Northwestern University in Evanston and Director of the Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research.

"I get an image of poverty on television and in newspapers that is blacker, more concentrated and more overlapping with gangs and crimes than I see when I look at the national numbers," Blank says. "That bothers me more than anything else because it makes people think the poor are really different than them."

Another area of coverage vulnerable to oversimplification is the success or failure of programs to get people off welfare. "There's no middle ground," complains Natalie Pardo, a reporter with *The Chicago Reporter*, a monthly publication noted for its investigative work on poverty issues. "Either it's a puff piece on a program or how something went dreadfully wrong in a program. There's only a handful of people who do analysis."

Politicians can try to turn the pressure to do quick-hit stories to their advantage. In November, Illinois Governor Jim Edgar conducted a press conference at a United Parcel Service facility in Chicago that had put 27 welfare recipients to work and promised to hire 23 more through a pilot project in the Grand Boulevard neighborhood, one of the city's poorest areas.

The governor touted the program as an effort that needed to be duplicated throughout the state. At the time of the press conference, the project was less than six months old and, although officials spoke of a 93 percent retention rate among the program's workers, nine out of the 27 had been on the job only a week.

While several articles pointed out these facts, the program garnered positive editorials in both the city's major papers and a smattering of other mentions in the media. The governor introduced one of the workers during his State of the State address in January.

All this attention makes the program's executive director a little uncomfortable. On one hand, it has sparked interest from other potential employers and charitable foundations. But he fears it may raise expectations too high and set the stage for highly critical coverage if the program doesn't live up to its promise.

"I do think the articles underplayed

the difficulty we face in building upon this successful first step to reach the goal of making these families self-sufficient," says Greg Washington, Executive Director of the Grand Boulevard Federation, a community group working with the state government on welfare issues.

"So far, we've been very successful in getting people out into the workforce, but these jobs are entry level, they're part time and the real value of the program will be reflected in how many people in two years are earning enough money to sustain themselves and their families in a real decent way."

The true test of how well reporters cover welfare, too, won't come for several years. But there are certainly steps the media in Illinois and elsewhere can take now to improve their work.

Illinois, along with more than 40 other states, has waivers from the federal government that allow it to continue certain programs whether or not they comply with federal law. Among them are two initiatives that require the parents of older children to begin looking for work or risk losing their benefits. Because those waivers are already in place, the affected families will likely feel the impact of reforms well before the federal requirements go into effect. How the state succeeds with these groups may serve as a predictor of the broader reforms.

Also, the story doesn't end when someone gets a job or gets booted off welfare. Studies show welfare recipients usually go through several jobs before they stick in the working world. Investing the time to follow some people over the long haul, not just periodically rounding up a few anecdotes, will pay off in greater understanding of what's happening and a richer story for an audience.

"It's not about cutting off checks in two years, it's about all the things people need to do, how we're going to do it and who's going to support us along the way," says the much-publicized Lehmann.

Institutions are as much a part of the story as individuals. State agencies, as well as welfare recipients, face dramatic changes in what the government ex-

pects them to do. Reporters should track how states use their new discretion over funds. How do they respond to financial pressures? Where is money going and what is it buying?

Other places to look for stories are social service agencies, food pantries, homeless shelters—all places that will likely shoulder some of the burden when people come off the welfare rolls.

Some intriguing ideas may come from the new media. During the Democratic Convention, the *Internet Chicago Tribune* interviewed and shot footage of people who live in the Henry Horner Homes public housing complex. Visitors to the Website can watch still images of the people and listen as they talk—some for as long as 10 minutes—about welfare reform and how it will affect them.

"Bringing people's voices and video of them before an audience brings them alive that much more," says Cornelia Grumman, an Assistant Internet Editor who reported and compiled the package. "It's a little more engaging or easier to access these people and their lives." ■

## Poor, Black And Female

I'm a woman. I'm a black woman. I'm a poor woman. I'm a fat woman. I'm a middle-aged woman. And I'm on welfare. In this country, if you're any one of those things you count less as a person. If you're all those things, you just don't count, except as a statistic.

—*Johnnie Tillmon in "Welfare Is a Woman's Issue," The First Ms. Reader, Francine Klagsbrun, ed. 1972.*



# TV Sees Welfare Only as a Debate

BY KATHRYN KROSS

The unsolicited fax arrived at the office on Valentine's Day, straight from the Republican Governor's Association. "Republican Governors Drive Welfare Reform," the article boasted, claiming credit for the 18 percent national drop in welfare rolls. President Clinton had claimed the statistic as a valentine of his own a few days earlier. He credited the decline in part to the experimental state welfare programs approved under his administration.

Journalists worry. What's happening to the people, the statistical 18 percent? Is their drop from the rolls a measure of real success or clever book-keeping? How do we find them and where do we look? These questions point toward considerable obstacles in future reporting, but television journalists should know they face additional hurdles; recent history shows that welfare has barely been covered on television at all, except when it is de-

bated within Congress. And among the three networks, there are wide variations on how much detail viewers are provided.

(See graph, below)

This recent history of television coverage of welfare suggests that the surest way to land an issue on the network evening news is to tie it to legislation. Lots of legislation. During his 1992 presidential campaign, then Governor Clinton had popularized the idea of ending "welfare as we know it." Yet welfare stories comprised a scant 32 minutes of airtime among the three networks. In June of 1993 Clinton appointed a 27 member task force to develop a welfare plan. In November of that same year 160 House Republicans unveiled a proposal that included "workfare" and block grants. Still the issue remained largely absent from the TV screens, garnering only 37 minutes of total network airtime.

In 1994 the issue gathered legislative momentum. No less than eight separate welfare reform bills were introduced in both houses of Congress in 1994 and the television coverage more than doubled. When the 104th Congress included welfare reform within their Contract with America, that heralded the biggest spike in coverage in 1995; a whopping 155 minutes.

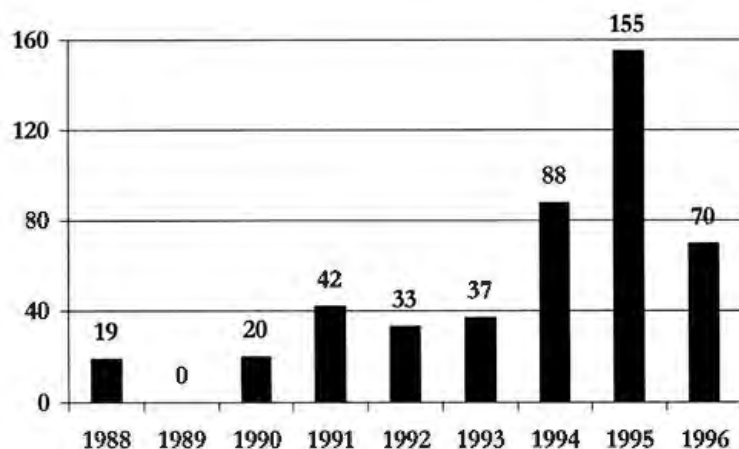
(See Table 1, next page.)

According to Andrew Tyndall, who authors a newsletter tracking the time networks devote to issues, welfare reform was one of the top 10 stories of 1995. The list was led by the O.J. Simpson trial, Bosnia fighting and the Oklahoma City bombing.

"Welfare received more attention in 1995 when Bill Clinton vetoed the GOP's bill, than it did in 1996 when he signed welfare legislation," Tyndall said. "It's the debate that gets the news coverage."

Welfare reform dropped from the "Top Ten" chart in 1996.

Total Network Coverage of Welfare  
measured in minutes on the evening newscasts of  
ABC, CBS, NBC



Welfare Stories on the Networks

	Nov 94 - Dec 94	1995	1996	Total
ABC	4	19	9	32
CBS	5	15	7	27
NBC	6	15	6	27

What was the nature of all that coverage when welfare reform was hot? In the 27 month period beginning with

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**Table 1: 1995 Top 10 News Stories  
(measured in minutes)**

	Total	ABC	CBS	NBC
O. J. Simpson trial	1673	417	570	686
Yugoslavia Wars: Bosnia fighting	1292	476	442	375
Oklahoma City bombing	546	173	198	176
Federal budget balancing dispute	467	192	149	126
Medicare budget faces cutbacks	193	65	45	83
104th Congress convenes	186	65	67	55
Russia-Chechen fighting	156	62	51	43
Poverty, welfare reform	155	70	40	45
NYSE-NASDAQ action	145	46	51	50
Israel-PLO peace plan	127	52	51	23

**Table 2: Chronology of Events in Welfare Reform**

		Network Stories		
		ABC	CBS	NBC
11-22-94	Repubs unveil Personal Resp Act	1	1	1
01-13-95	House hearings begin	1	0	1
03-21-95	Repub bill moves to full House	1	1	1
03-23-95	House debate continues, Congressional Budget Office issues report	1	0	2
03-24-95	House vote	1	1	3
06-06-95	President attacks Repub proposal	1	1	0
07-31-95	Pres candidates address Gov's Assn	1	2	1
08-07-95	Senate begins debate on welfare reform	1	1	1
09-13-95	Out-of-wedlock births vote	1	1	0
09-19-95	Senate passes welfare reform	1	1	1
07-23-06	Senate passes its new bill	2	1	1
07-31-96	Clinton announces he will sign welfare reform	3	2	1
08-01-96	Senate passes HR 3734	0	1	1
08-22-96	President signs welfare reform bill	2	1	1
08-27-96	Democratic convention	1	1	1

the election of the 104th Congress (November 1994 through January 1996) the networks three nightly newscasts devoted a total of 86 stories (packaged reports) to welfare reform. ABC News led the pack with 32 stories, CBS and NBC followed with 27 each.

This story tally *does not* count anchor "voice-overs" (which can be a significant source of information) as packaged stories. However, when newscasts are later analyzed for content, anchor introductions are included to measure the amount of substantive detail. Many of the stories were political in nature, following the maneuverings of Democrats and Republicans. A nearly equal

amount were allocated to feature stories, examining states like New Jersey or Wisconsin that had tried their own brand of welfare reform.

The newscasts on which these stories aired were analyzed to determine whether substantive details about welfare reform were revealed, within the story or elsewhere in the newscast. From the time that House Republicans unveiled their proposal in November of 1994 through the end of 1996, ABC's newscasts included details of welfare reform 57 percent of the time; CBS's newscasts included substantive details 24 percent of the time; and NBC 45 percent.

In the case of CBS, details of welfare reform were not revealed until Bob Scheiffer's report on March 21, 1995—more than four months into the debate.

"If TV coverage is primarily a set of 90-second reports spread out over a period of months it is not likely to add to public understanding," said Mark Greenberg of the Center for Law and Social Policy.

While there is a disparity among the three networks on precisely what to offer their viewers in the way of facts, there was much agreement on timing. The 15 events in Table 2 were used as pegs for coverage by at least two of the networks, while all three networks covered these events more than 65 percent of the time.

Although the days of federal legislative action on welfare reform seem to be over (and with them go the pegs many news executives feel justify coverage), some decision-makers feel welfare coverage won't necessarily disappear. Television, after all, loves a microcosm, a set world in which to examine issues.

"Welfare going to the states makes it easier to cover," one former decision-maker said. "Now you can go to a specific place and see how it works." ■

## 'Should I Go Back?'

As far as quality of life goes, it was a lot better on welfare. I work all the time. I never see my children. And every day I think, should I go back on welfare or not? Every day.—*Tanya Kitchen, 32, of Des Moines, mother of three, who was on welfare for eight years and now works 50 hours a week at two jobs, as quoted by The Boston Globe.*

# What to Watch For

*An Architect of Clinton's Original Welfare Revision Provides Perspective on New Law and Suggests Coverage Ideas*

David Ellwood, Professor of Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, spent 3 1/2 years in Washington helping draft the Clinton Administration's welfare reform proposal. He left when it became clear that his ideas were not going to be followed. Here are excerpts from a seminar he held at the Nieman Foundation on February 4, 1997.

**I**t's really hard to find anyone nowadays who thinks it's a good idea for welfare mothers not to work outside the home at least part-time. A number of values underlie any discussion of welfare: work, responsibility, dignity. One could make the strong case that nurturing a child is the most important thing society can do. Then it would be necessary and desirable for us as a society to give people sufficient resources so that they can stay at home and work at raising children. It turns out that 93 percent of the public doesn't agree with that view, and so from a political point of view it's a non-starter.

Most people do have real misgivings about the notion that someone might spend, as they sometimes do, his or her entire childhood in a family receiving public aid. Those are values that are widely shared. The goal of giving short-

term aid to people when they're really in trouble seems widely accepted, but the public over and over again seems to say: we're willing to help you if you're willing to help yourself. But we are not just going to give you a check for doing whatever you think is best. We want to impose some rules on you in exchange for offering aid.

The related value is responsibility. If you parent a child, you have some responsibilities. We have some responsibilities as a society, but you have some as well.

Finally we also want to treat people with dignity. Sadly, when you look at what we've actually got in our welfare system is the worst of all worlds. It unambiguously doesn't reinforce work. It unambiguously doesn't reinforce responsibility, and it unambiguously treats people horribly. So we have something that has managed to come in conflict with all of our values.

The best programs really are preoccupied with making the welfare office into a work office. The goal becomes moving people to work, not determining eligibility and writing a check.

The new welfare reform is a very bold experiment we're engaged in. And one that makes me nervous. And it doesn't make me nervous for the reasons that most liberals sometimes talk about it. It doesn't make me nervous primarily because I distrust the states. I actually think a lot of the states are going to do good stuff.

It also doesn't make me nervous because quote "the entitlement was ended" unquote. The entitlement in Mississippi was up to \$120 a month. That wasn't it. The issue is the mixture, the federal-state partnership. That's what's ended. The Federal Government is now in a different business. It's giving



JAE ROOSEVELT

the states a fixed bloc grant that I'm not convinced is going to last that long anyway.

That's what's over. The federal government role is over. That's scary. That means that states really are left to their own devices. And so the really hard challenge for all of you in covering this story is that most of these changes are abstract involving changing fiscal incentives and roles.

Why are block grants a bad thing? It's very hard to explain that. And that's part of the reason why President Clinton signed the bill. What he signed was wildly different from the original conception, wildly different. In the end this is federal welfare repeal, not reform. States can do anything they want. And so I think the goal of reporters is going to have to be to follow the individual states, to keep track of the people, to see what happens to them, and keep your eye on the ball of where things are succeeding and where they're failing.

Because there are going to be some real successes. There are going to be some great stories to tell. And there are going to be some real failures.

And unless people understand the successes as well as the failures, we'll once again turn on the recipients and say, "what's wrong with them," as opposed to "what did we do wrong?"

Q.—Could you talk about one state program in particular that you think is a model for success?

A.—There are two or three states that are worth looking at hard. Oregon is doing some very interesting things. Utah is another one. In both cases, they are heavily oriented towards working with a new recipient from the day she walks in the door, and the goal is unambiguously, work. They're not states that say come on in, here's a menu of choices, by the way, maybe you could think about your GED [high school General Equivalency Diploma], do this, college, whatever.

They say we're about work. We're going to move you quickly to work. We understand that there's a lot going on in your lives. Very complicated. And we're going to work with you to solve that and do that. Iowa is doing some interesting things. Wisconsin is doing the most innovative, the most bold, and therefore the most terrifyingly risky. They are basically privatizing a big part of their system, or at least putting it out for bids and the current providers, which are the government folks, can bid for it.

When you walk in the door, they're going to say to you, it's not two years of aid. It's zero days of aid. If you need help, and you want child care, we'll get it for you. If you want some health care, maybe we can get that for you. But if you want money, there's only one way to get it, and that's to work for it. And we'll find you a job for awhile. A subsidized job if necessary.

So there's none of this cash at all. It's really work oriented. And so there are parts of this that are interesting as well as terrifying. We're going to privatize it, we're going to put it out for bids. In theory you're supposed to guarantee someone a job if they can't find it, but it's not clear that there really is a guar-

antee. But it's a very interesting, innovative thing for the future.

Michigan has a very different approach. Michigan has an approach that says look, our goal isn't to cut people off. Our goal isn't to change everything. Our goal is to make sure that anybody who gets aid really is doing something. And they say, we're not going to create millions of private sector or public sector jobs. We're going to insist that recipients do something. And if that means volunteering at the local nursery school, that's great. If that means working with the local health clinic, that's fine. But you've got to do something. It's almost forced volunteer work on some level, and use that as a stepping stone.

Each of those are different models. Each of those has some advantages. All of them have led to caseload reductions. My guess is that the Oregon and the Utah approach, which is really trying to work closely with you from day one, but doesn't sort of force you into this sort of sink or swim instantaneously is the one most likely to lead both to caseload reductions and reductions in poverty.

The Wisconsin approach is likely to lead to the largest caseload reductions, but may also increase poverty substantially.

Q.—How do we get to the part of the equation which was making work pay if we're not talking about giving people skills and making them marketable in some way?

A.—If you really want to get people good jobs you have a huge problem, because the fact of the matter is our training programs are all short, typically 4- to-26-week training programs. Or they're GED programs, neither of which, on average, has shown very good results. You don't take someone who's had 25 years of limited success in the labor market and 15 years or 10 years of poor performance in school, send them back to school for three months and solve their problems. You know, it's not surprising.

The programs that do work the best are often the ones that are hardest for the government to do. They are the ones that are very closely linked with employers with specific concrete jobs

or a couple of jobs at the end of the line. So moving towards more private placement is important.

The culture gap is enormous between what happens in government offices that are interested in checking eligibility and the employer who says, "Send me someone who will work hard, and I'll train him." The very best of these training programs talk about welfare recipients as their "product." It may sound somewhat offensive, but that's the attitude it takes.

Still the problem is larger than training. I think the really big issues are what's happening in the labor market and what's happening in families. We keep getting a widening gap between rich and poor, if full-time workers are earning less, there are fewer good positions to support a family each year, those who play by the rules are in real trouble. If working people can't make it in America, where is our future headed?

And on the other hand, we have more and more single parent families. And whether it's two parents or one parent, the parents have to work. Those are profound changes with enormous implications for the well-being of our kids, and to say nothing of our political future.

And I think one interpretation of the events in the last 20 years is we have been preoccupied with this little dinky program called welfare. That's on the left and the right. Welfare has unbelievable symbolism linked to racism and politics. Oh, it's just a great issue if you're interested in people throwing chairs on talk shows. People go so crazy about it. Meanwhile the larger changes to work and family have been ignored.

I think in the long run welfare will become a less interesting issue and the much harder question becomes, what are we going to do with all these folks who are looking for work and what are we going to do with all these people who are working at the minimum wage and unable to support their families? Those are the real challenges we have.

Q.—How would you draw a link between the growing gap between rich and poor say over the last 20 years and growing support for welfare [reform]?

A.—Well, I do think they're some-

what related. Part of what happened on welfare is that the public became disenchanted, angry and frustrated. Especially, they felt they were working harder and harder for less and less. More and more parents were having to go into the labor market and not stay home and nurture their kids. So they perceived welfare as a program where people don't have to work, can stay home, and be paid for by taxes on the working folks.

And part of the reason I think we were able to swing so wildly from a situation where we basically wrote checks every month to one that we're saying, there are checks for a few years, and then recipients will be cut off is precisely that we ignored these political issues.

Liberals for years just said, don't talk about welfare. It's too dangerous. Bad things are going to happen. And now they say, I told you so. Why didn't you listen? My reaction is that's precisely why we got where we are. We got to the point where there was absolutely no support, where the public literally said any change is a good change. And the angrier the liberals are the better.

Now, if you sit down in focus groups, if you do surveys, and ask what people really want, they don't want to cut kids off. They want people to work.

Q.—So put yourself in our place. You're the editor of a responsible newspaper. What marching orders do you give to the staff on how to cover this?

A.—I'm not a reporter. I don't have all the answers. If I did perhaps I would have enjoyed greater success in Washington. You have to start by recognizing that the public generally isn't very interested in stories about welfare. And they are least interested in stories that talk about welfare's complicated mechanics or financial arrangements between states and the federal government. So you obviously need a hook. Three of the most common hooks are not helpful: the political scorecard (Did President Clinton get beat by the Republicans on this one? Are the liberals angry? Will voters rebel?), the outrageous recipient (this woman had five children by four men and she is pregnant again and you are paying for hous-

ing, food and clothing), and the absurd government program (this program pays for fertility treatments for unmarried women on welfare who are having trouble getting pregnant again). These can be great stories, but illuminating they are not.

These stories merely reinforce the impression that welfare recipients are different from everyone else and that welfare is merely about politics and not real people. One of my greatest frustrations is that welfare has become so much about us versus them: "What's wrong with these people?"

The best hope still remains the human face, the real story of ordinary people struggling with adversity. The only way to really understand welfare is to spend time with several different welfare families, to follow them into welfare offices, to understand what gives them joy and what leads to despair. If the families are not stereotypes—neither too perfect nor absurdly disconnected from the mainstream—the great reporters help their readers understand what the welfare struggle really means "up close and personal." And when changes are contemplated, they pick out a family and graphically illustrate what the changes will mean for that family. It is critical that the families be real—openly scornful of welfare as nearly all are, and acknowledging that welfare leads them in some bad directions, while also genuinely struggling to find some way to make a life for themselves and their family.

Every year in my class, students arrange for a small group of welfare recipients to come and address the class.

## Spiritual Death

Welfare kills a man's spirit. It may give his body the vitamins to make him big and fat and he may be happy, but he doesn't have the spirit of initiative.—Samuel Fuller in Studs Terkel's "American Dreams: Lost and Found." 1988.

It is the most important class of the year. And years later people talk about how important it was. Because once you see the human complexity and the reality of what change could mean, one can no longer settle for simple nostrums.

My missive to reporters: find a few families now and then follow them over time. Watch what happens to them as welfare reform gets implemented. Who makes it? Who fails? When people get cut off, what happens to them? How do they feel about the legitimacy of the actions? And please give me more than one family and more than one small precious program. One is never representative.

If you cannot afford to track people over time, be aware of the critical program moments: be there when people hit a two-year time limit and interview them. Also, go beyond the usual subjects: ask employers if they are willing to hire recipients and why or why not. Ask other workers how they feel about the competition from welfare recipients in the labor market. Ask soup kitchens and churches their experiences. Ask public unions about workfare jobs.

Q.—What would you tell your Washington bureau?

A.—Shut down for about a year or two. It drove me nuts. Welfare reform for most, even in the Washington bureau, is inside baseball. Not very many people are interested, and the only way you cover it is who is saying what to whom. The Republicans went through three wildly different bills. They had the original work reform bill, then they had Contract with America, which was conservative micro-managing, then they had pure devolution. You would never have known that this issue had three completely totally different views.

Somehow or other, you've got to get beyond the personalities, and maybe pick a few people, you know, then you've always got to have a hook in there, and I wish I had it, but maybe pick some of the few members that are pretty thoughtful about this issue. Stay with them. Reporters will actually learn something about the issue. But few papers can afford to assign someone

long term to the issues.

I understand the problem. I look at polling on what people read. When health reform was really hot, everybody was reading about health reform. When welfare reform was really hot, everyone was reading about health. Welfare is just is not an interest of readers so papers do not invest in it.

But I would at least say get to know the issue well enough that you can get beyond the personalities and can distinguish at least a little bit between wildly different bills. Most reporters don't realize how unbelievably different where we ended up was from where we started.

Q.—Is anyone in Washington thinking about what is going to happen, what must happen when this quote unquote "million" job seekers hits the market.

A.—Well, remember, it's not, a fact—we don't whether a million job seekers—

Q.—I understand that. But clearly it's a large number.

A.—Well, in theory that's why we're going to create a million new jobs by giving employers \$3,000 for hiring [a welfare recipient]. I don't think people have thought very hard about the real policy responses to these larger issues I've talked about. It's not just the welfare recipients. We have a low wage labor market that's in real trouble. I mean, we're in real trouble, anyway.

I think the much more fundamental question than what happens to these million is what happens to all the low-skilled workers who are earning less and less.

That's going to be a tough problem.

That doesn't mean we can't work on the problem. We have to do it. It's got to be some kind of combination of education policy, more support for workers, labor policies, immigration policy, trade policy. You're going to have to figure out a way to package it in an environment that is not good in dealing with packages. A combination of all of those.

The growing problems of working class workers can bring us together or they can tear us apart. If the next President doesn't think about it, it's going to make welfare politics look tame.



Single father applying for assistance in Denver.

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Q.—Do you have a prediction for four years in the future? What's the bottom line on these people who go through two years, and they're off? Are they going to be roaming the streets? What are we going to see?

A.—Well, first of all, I don't think in the end very many states will go two years and you're off. And none of the welfare recipients believe that they're going to be cut off after two years. If you just talk to them, they say, "They can't do that. There's too much suffering, and that won't happen." They may be right.

So I think it's much more likely that we're going to see a slow drip, drip, drip. We're going to do a little less this year, we're going to be less willing to do training and childcare next year, fewer jobs the next year—drip, drip, drip.

And in bad times we'll slash the programs even more than before, because we used to get extra money from the federal government in bad times. And in good times we'll restore it sort of half way.

Q.—And the cumulative effect is going to be worse than what we have now? Or better?

A.—Worse. If you spend any time with welfare recipients, a lot of them do say, I really think welfare is bad and

there comes a point where we really should be pushed. They believe that. I believe it. But if you also ask them if they think everybody can find a job, they simply laugh. My prediction is that it's going to be highly variable. And my prediction is the federal government will be doing less and less for awhile. Because the budget is going to be much tighter in the future years than it is now.

I can't imagine any Democrat getting up and saying let's cut Medicare to save the welfare bloc grant. I think some states will do some innovations and some folks will be better off. And the final thing is I think people will be very creative. Understand that this particular part of aid is not anywhere close to 100 percent of what people make in general. Everybody has food stamps. Many of them have some sort of public housing. They have relatives. They have friends. People survive in Mississippi at \$120 a month. But if you visit their homes, some of them, they don't have floors. But unfortunately, the better outcome would be two years from now all hell breaks loose. It's not an easy story to write.

But in the end this might be like a forest fire. Perhaps after the damage and struggles something better will eventually emerge. I hope for the best. I fear the worst. ■

# Possible Court Stories: A Preliminary Guide

BY MARK GREENBERG

Almost as soon as Congress enacted welfare reform under the rubric of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, journalists and others began to ask whether the courts might stop the law from being implemented. With few exceptions, the answer is that it would not be possible for the courts to do so.

That is not to suggest that there will be little litigation for the news media to cover; rather, it is to suggest that the great bulk of what Congress did was clearly within Congress's authority to do. There will likely be plenty of welfare stories in the courts, especially challenges to the approach taken by Congress in two critical areas: treatment of legal immigrants and separation of church and state. Otherwise, most of the legal controversies will not involve challenges to the law itself, but rather disputes about the specific policy choices elected by states in exercising their new discretion. Depending on how states exercise those choices, the courts may be called upon to answer a difficult new set of questions about the nature and extent of constitutional and other safeguards for poor families.

The new law involves numerous changes to a broad array of programs affecting low-income families and households, including statutory changes affecting income support for poor families (the elimination of the AFDC Program and enactment of TANF block grants), childcare, the Food Stamp Program, the child support enforcement system, the Supplemental Security Income program, Medicaid and immigrant assistance for numerous public benefits programs. While much of the public discussion focused on the end of the entitlement to cash assistance for poor families, the law's \$54 billion in federal spending reductions

over six years is concentrated in three primary areas: curtailments in assistance to immigrants, reductions in the Food Stamp Program and a narrowing of the circumstances in which children who had previously been considered disabled will qualify for Supplemental Security Income.

There is no serious dispute as to the constitutional permissibility of most of the reductions in federal spending. For example, the law generates \$5 billion in Federal savings by modifying the rules of the Food Stamp program so that benefits will not be adjusted to keep pace with inflation; Congress is constitutionally free to take such an approach. More immediately, the law generates an estimated \$5 billion in savings by providing that, with limited exceptions, able-bodied individuals aged 18 to 50 without legal dependents will be eligible for food stamps only for three months in a 36-month period unless they are working or participating in a work program. It may (and will) be asserted that it is troubling public policy to terminate food stamp assistance to individuals who are willing to work simply because they have been unemployed for three months, but the fact that it is troubling public policy does not in itself create a constitutional question. Another principal area of reductions in projected Federal spending (of \$7 billion over five years) involves narrowing the definition of disability for children under the SSI program. Here, there may be disputes about the specific application of the rules to particular children, and there could be a dispute if the federal government's regulations appear impermissibly restrictive, but there is no doubt that Congress has the constitutional authority to narrow the definition of disability.

The part of the law generating federal spending reductions that also generates serious constitutional questions concerns the sharp curtailment of eligibility for public benefits for legal immigrants. Even before the new law illegal immigrants were ineligible for virtually all public benefits. However, the new law makes most legal immigrants ineligible for Food Stamps and Supplemental Security Income (income support for the aged, blind, and disabled), makes most immigrants who enter the country on or after August 22, 1996 ineli-



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gible for federal means-tested benefits for their first five years in the country and allows states to deny Medicaid and TANF assistance to most immigrants who are not otherwise barred from receiving assistance under these programs.

The restrictions on assistance to legal immigrants present a range of constitutional questions, including questions about whether the federal government may constitutionally deny such assistance, whether states can do so, whether Congress may delegate the issue to states as a matter of state option. Constitutional questions have also been raised as to whether Congress may compel states to report information about immigrants residing in the United States unlawfully and whether Congress may bar state and local governments from enforcing their own laws regarding when information about the legal status of immigrants is reported to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Because the termination of assistance under state programs was permitted as early as January 1997, and termination of assistance under federal programs is scheduled to begin within the year (April for the Food Stamp Program, during the summer for the SSI program), it is reasonable to expect that the constitutional questions regarding denial of assistance to legal immigrants will begin to be considered by the courts this year.

Apart from issues relating to immigrants, the other principal area in which there will likely be challenges to the federal law itself concerns a set of church-state issues presented by a provision often referred to as the Charitable Choice provision. Generally, this provision says that if a state elects to contract with private entities for any program services or activities, the state may not discriminate against religious providers, even those of a pervasively sectarian nature. Under long-established Supreme Court decisions, it has generally been recognized that government involvement with entitlements of a pervasively sectarian nature results in an impermissible entanglement of church and state. Thus, if states begin to contract with pervasively sectarian

organizations (or, if pervasively sectarian organizations seek to challenge the failure of a state to contract with them), the constitutional issues presented by the Charitable Choice provision will be squarely faced. Since some legislators have already conveyed an interest in significantly expanding the role of religious entities in the provision of social services, the resolution of these issues will have considerable importance for future policy directions.

While there may be serious constitutional challenges to the immigrant and church-state provisions of the law, there is not likely to be a serious constitutional challenge to the basic decision by Congress to repeal the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program and replace AFDC with a block grant to states. States have broad discretion in determining whom to assist with the block grant funds, but no individual or family will be entitled to assistance as a matter of federal law. Hence, as is often noted, the new law ends the Federal "guarantee" of some level of cash assistance to needy families. While this may be momentous, it does not, in itself, present a constitutional question, because it has been repeatedly recognized that there is no underlying constitutional right to income assistance or subsistence support. Congress may choose, and has chosen, to eliminate the entitlement that until now existed under Federal law.

At the same time, the elimination of the federal entitlement to assistance means that each state must now design its own program and establish its own rules, and there will likely be numerous constitutional questions presented by state choices. Under the legislation, there is no Federal requirement to assist any family or category of families for any period of time. Thus, states will be free to restrict who is eligible for assistance and the circumstances under which assistance is provided, subject only to constitutional protections. Among the constitutional questions that may arise:

- Can a state provide lower benefits to new state entrants?

- Can the state deny assistance altogether for some period of time to families recently arrived from other states?

- Can a state deny assistance to legal immigrants who are recently arrived from a state that elects not to assist legal immigrants?

- Can a state impose drug testing requirements on all applicants for assistance?

- Can a state deny assistance to children because they are born out of wedlock?

While the above issues may present constitutional disputes, they are *not* likely to present disputes as to whether a state has violated the new federal law. This is because it will be difficult or impossible for a state to violate the new law by denying assistance to poor families. As noted, the new law does not require states to provide assistance to any family or group of families for any period of time. In fact, there are only two provisions of the law which might be thought of as offering any safeguards:

- First, a state's TANF state plan must "set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how the state will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a state administrative or appeal process."

- Second, the law provides that a state may not reduce or terminate assistance to a single-parent family of a child under age six if the parent has refused to engage in work because needed child care was unavailable. (There is no similar protection for families in which the youngest child is age six or over.)

Because the statutory protections under TANF are so minimal, one should anticipate that any lawsuits brought challenging state conduct in a state's TANF program will likely either be based on alleging a constitutional violation, a violation of some other federal law (e.g., anti-discrimination law, minimum wage law) or state law.

Some of the most dramatic approaches that will be taken by states will probably not raise constitutional questions at all. For example, the law provides that a state may not use fed-



eral TANF funds to provide assistance to a family for more than 60 months (subject to limited exceptions). However, there is no requirement that states provide assistance to qualifying families for 60 months, and it is clear that some states will elect to impose time limits far shorter than five years. Under the waiver process in effect before the new welfare law was enacted, the Clinton Administration had permitted states to implement time limits, but required that a state must have in place provisions under which assistance would be continued for a family when a parent had fully complied with program rules but had been unable to attain employment despite the parent's best efforts. Under the new law, there is no requirement that a state provide such an exception, or any exception, to its time limits, and it is not clear whether there could be any successful constitutional challenge to a state that elected to impose a time limit without providing exceptions for those who were unable to attain or maintain employment.

As states implement their TANF programs, there may be extensive constitutional litigation around the question of basic protections for applicants for and recipients of assistance. Until now, federal law has provided that states must accept applications for assistance; act on applications within a reasonable period of time; provide written notice when an application is denied; provide written advance notice when action is taken to reduce or terminate assistance; provide assistance to those who qualify under program rules; and provide for a right to a fair hearing when assistance is reduced, denied or terminated. The new law eliminates all of these federal protections. A state might choose to retain provisions of this type as a matter of policy, but it is already clear that some states wish to narrow the circumstances when families can receive fair hearings or advance notice of action taken on their cases. There are major unresolved questions concerning what, if any, procedural protections apply to families in a context where Congress has declared that there are no entitlements to assistance. The courts will likely ultimately be asked to decide whether there are constitutional limits

on the ability of government to act arbitrarily.

Apart from constitutional questions, a particularly interesting area for reporters to watch for litigation will concern the issue of work programs under TANF and the minimum wage. The TANF legislation generally requires that a state risks federal penalties unless the state meets a federal "participation rate." With limited exceptions, participants can only count toward the federal participation rate by working or engaging in certain work-related activities for at least 20 hours a week. An individual compensated for 20 hours a week at the Federal minimum wage would earn \$408.50 a month. However, the basic cash grant for a family of three in the median state is less than that amount and in some states is far less—in Mississippi, a family of three with no other income receives an AFDC/TANF grant of \$120 a month. Thus, many states will be faced with the choice between increasing the amount of assistance a family receives in return for a 20-hour work obligation, or simply imposing a work obligation that involves compensation at a rate below the minimum wage. If (as is generally expected) some states take the latter approach, there will likely be extensive litigation to determine whether federal minimum wage requirements apply to state work programs.

Implementation of the new law is also likely to raise child-support issues. The law increases child-support cooperation requirements and penalties for non-cooperation for families seeking TANF assistance. Some families—through no fault of their own—will be unable to meet the requirements. Others will be reluctant to cooperate in pursuing child support because the non-custodial parent has been abusive. States which do not provide for or implement exceptions for these kinds of situations will likely face legal challenges. In addition, many of the collection techniques authorized by the new law involve seizure of income and property through automated computer systems. Affected parents may challenge such seizures if there are not safeguards consistent with constitutional due process require-

ments. Finally, the new law authorizes the creation of state and national directories of child-support orders and state and national "new-hire" registries. Some people have raised concerns that these data bases will create personal privacy issues and are likely to raise these concerns in legislatures and in the courts.

Finally, in considering the array of legal issues that may arise under welfare reform, it is also important to appreciate that other action taken by Congress may reduce the likelihood that litigation is filed when individuals have legitimate claims or that journalists and members of the public will hear about significant problems in program administration. In the same session in which Congress enacted the new law, Congress approved changes affecting the operation of legal aid programs funded by the Federal Legal Services Corporation. Over the last 30 years, legal aid lawyers have had a significant influence on federal and state welfare policies through class action and individual litigation, representation in welfare administrative hearings and in advocacy before legislative and administrative bodies. However, action taken by Congress in 1995 substantially reduced federal funding for legal services programs (from \$400 million in fiscal year 1995 to \$283 million in 1997). Further, under Congressional restrictions effective April 1996, LSC-funded legal service programs are now prohibited from bringing class actions, engaging in most lobbying and rule-making and prohibited from challenging "welfare reform" laws, even when such programs are using private and non-federal funds. As a result, it may now become substantially more difficult for a claimant who has been denied assistance to find a lawyer who is able to represent her. Similarly, it will be far more difficult for those lawyers who see poor clients each day to talk with legislators and administrators about the problems they are seeing.

As this article suggests, there will not be one large case challenging "the new law," but there is likely to be extensive litigation concerning many different aspects of implementation. ■

# A Family I Know in Georgia

BY VAUGHN SILLS

While traveling in Georgia almost 18 years ago, I stopped at a small, shabby millworker's house to photograph two children playing in the front yard. Soon Tina and Jo-Jo's mother, Lois, came out and joined in the picture-making; on that day and the next, and since then, I have photographed Lois, her husband, Joel, their seven children, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As I returned almost every year, bringing pictures and making more, the Tooloes came to accept me, the "picture lady," as part of their lives. Over the years, I have tape-recorded their words about themselves, collected poems written by Tina, and come to know much of the family story.



RACHEL DEW

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*He did the best that he could. I realize that, you know, because you try and raise seven kids on a meager income, you've gotta stretch a dollar. And he kept us all clothed...shoes. We were taught to take care of what we had. We'd get home from school and pull our school clothes off and put old clothes on. Then you go run and rip if you wanted to, and tear them up. But that's all you had. You had school clothes in the fall and you had to make do. And the whole family was like that.*

—Jerry, Tina's oldest brother

That story includes nothing but unrelenting poverty. The family has continued to work at extraordinarily low wages, only barely managing to survive. Other than the occasional use of food stamps, Lois's widow's disability allowance and Aid to Families with Dependent Children that Mary, who is unable to work, receives, their ethic is to support themselves. For years I wondered what kept them going, what kept them together. Ultimately, I believe, it is as simple and as complicated as their loyalty and love for each other. What others look for from friends and nurses, service people and employers and, yes, family, they get from each other. They form their own community, as if the nuclear family were a small town.

The photographs and words here are culled from the book about the Tooloes that I am currently finishing. While I have photographed everyone in the family and formed different attachments to each of the children, I have a special feeling for Tina—perhaps because she was young when I first met her, perhaps because she was clearly smart and curious and shy, perhaps because like me, she was a girl, perhaps even because the scar on her face seemed emblematic.

Tina was nine when I began photographing in 1979. When I last saw and photographed her, last June, she was living with her daughter, Tasha, and her mother in a small house as run-down as the one where I first met her. Tasha was just about to finish the second grade; Tina, now divorced, was working at a Golden Pantry and planning to enroll



Joel with his daughter, Tina, and four grandchildren, 1981.

in courses at a local college in the fall; Lois, who stays at home all day by herself, has survived colon cancer, suffers from diabetes and is medicated because of severe emotional problems. In her most recent letter, Tina told me of the latest happenings: her niece Amy would be married on Valentine's Day, Tasha's teacher has recommended that she be placed in a class for gifted children next year, Lois was having another difficult time with her nerves. Her oldest sister, Mary, lives sometimes with Tina and their mother, sometimes with her boyfriend, and works in the 7-Eleven. Tina herself is now working for her older brother, Mickey, doing masonry, carpentry and roofing; and she has a boyfriend, whom she feels she was fated to meet.

Lois and Johnny Joel Toole married young: she was 16; he, 19. Joel's father, a tenant farmer, fathered 22 children by three wives (each named Mattie!). Shortly after his mother's death, seven-year-old Joel quit school to plow and seed and harvest for his father. Lois, whose father was also a tenant farmer, was one of seven children (three of

whom died in infancy) born to Wylie and Ruby Chambers, who were uncle and niece to each other. The family blames Lois's emotional instability on her parents' blood relationship. Whatever the cause, Lois's schizophrenia and depression (called "nerves" by her family) has shown itself intermittently in episodes of rambling, angry verbal abuse and physical violence toward her husband and children. But her family didn't seek medical or psychiatric help, for fear that Lois might be taken away from them, until they became afraid she might injure someone.

At first, after Lois and Joel married, they lived with Joel's family, and he continued to farm with his father but when he was 21 his father cheated him out of his share of the proceeds of a season's work, and he quit farming. After that Joel worked as a carpenter and handyman and with difficulty supported a family that grew quickly. One year in the 70's he reported an income of a little over \$5,000 on his tax return.

Together Joel and Lois had nine children, two of whom died quite young. In the years

that I have been photographing the family, the children have grown up, marriages have taken place and broken up, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have been born. Joel, an alcoholic, died ten years ago of emphysema brought on by smoking and by breathing poisonous fumes while working as a handyman.

Since I have known them, the Tooles have moved frequently, always within an area of



Tina, 1981.



Tina and Lois, 1979.

*I was six and a half. But I still remember that night because Daddy came home . . . it was New Year's Eve. Daddy came home, bim and my Uncle Jack, and he said "Everybody come on. We're gonna get something to eat." So we all got in the car—well, me and Jo-Jo and Lynn did—and when we first got in the car, we had a station wagon, and I think it was a Aspen or something like that—it was a new car, I think it was the first new car we ever had. And I was sittin' in the back, Daddy had all his tools back there and the Skil saw kept stickin' me in the back. So I moved it. So I got in front.... I was sittin' in Mama's lap in the middle. It was Daddy, Jo-Jo was standin' up in the seat, and Mama holdin' me, and then my Uncle Jack. Lynn was laying down in the back. I remember we was goin' down the road and I was thinking, I said, "God, please don't let us wreck." And we hadn't got down the road two miles I know and then I just seen headlights comin' straight at us.*

—Tina

Northeastern Georgia that is made up of woods on rolling hills, small farms, small towns, winding roads and, increasingly, suburban-style housing for the middle class. Most of the children have moved frequently after they left home, but always within the same area. Lois and Joel never lived in town, and their children have seldom lived in town, either; but they have tended to stay close together, sometimes living in trailers side by side, or sharing the houses they rent. They help each other find places to live, fix each other's cars, work together, borrow from each other, watch each other's children. When politicians use the phrase "family values" they're not thinking of the Toolles, but the Toolles, for all their difficulties, are very much a family. They may get on each other's nerves, but they don't move away.

Even after almost 18 years, I continue to be struck by the poverty that pervades the



*Tina, 1984.*



*Lynn and Batman with their one-week old baby and Kerry.*

lives of the Tooles. I see, just as clearly, the strength that they must have in order to get through their lives — a strength that I think derives from family. The bond that ties each family member to the others can be witnessed as they gather on their front porch each night and weekend to talk and laugh, to drink and fight and cuss. Children ride their bikes close by, then stop to play with a puppy, drink Kool-Aid, check on what's happening among the adults. The newest baby is cuddled and handed around from woman to woman for all to enjoy. The love is as palpable as the struggle to survive. The Tooles, who are scorned by practically everyone around them, are loved immoderately by each other, and I believe it is this that enables them to keep going from day to day and year to year. ■

*Mama told me the other day she needed \$20 for her medicine, so I gave her \$20. They left going to the store. I thought they were going to get her medicine. They came back and they had all kinds of sandwich stuff and candy and junk. Noodle soup, Pepsi Colas... just junk.*

*I said, Where's your medicine? Oh, I didn't get it. She said, I'll have to get it tomorrow. She came back the next day and said she needed 10 or 15 dollars to pay the doctor so he would give her a prescription. I said, Can't you call the doctor and tell him to call in a prescription? That's the way they usually do it. No, can't do that. I got to pay him before he'll do it. So, I gave her more money.*

*Mama gets money from everybody. We were sitting out here drinking a beer the other night and she got \$19 from everybody. I said, What'd you do with it? She said, I spent it. She's been going to get medicine for the last week and hasn't got it yet. I don't know whether she needs it or not, but it'll get to the point where I don't know whether to believe her or not. You don't know if she really needs it or doesn't or what.*

*I told her the other day to give me the damn prescription and I'd go get her medicine. But I wasn't giving her the money. I give her money, but then I tell her, you've got to pay me back. Then when she gets a check, I tell her just to keep it and pay the bills with it. The next thing I know she's done give it to somebody else.*

—Mickey, Tina's older brother.



Lois, Tina, who was pregnant, with Mike, and Jo-Jo on the front porch, 1988.

*I don't remember being a little girl and playing with toys. I remember being a little girl and babysitting and washing diapers and washing dishes standing up in the chair to reach the sink. And haul in water, and bring in wood, wash clothes, and I don't remember being a carefree little kid.*

—Mary, Tina's older sister.

1986

*They said she'd never find love,  
that she just wasn't the type.  
She almost believed them,  
until he walked into her life.*

*She had a life of pain,  
a life of heartache and anger.  
She had no reason to hope,  
and no reason to fear danger.*

*He lived in a world of crowded homes,  
and hostility.*

*He had no education,  
no ambitions, no abilities.*

*She learned the hard way,  
that life isn't fair.  
She began to feel resentment,  
and eventually to not care.*

*He fought his way through the world.  
Many tears slid down his cheek.  
He swore to never give up,  
as long as love was left to seek.*

*It was ironic that they should meet,  
on a rainy day at that.  
For doomed lives were no longer  
the fact.*

*They know now that the world  
was not meant to hate.  
For they were brought together by fate.*

*The woman and man  
whose lives were filled with sorrow,  
love their lives today,  
and go to bed each night,  
looking forward to tomorrow.*

—Tina



Mike and Tina with their niece, Courtney, 1990.



Tina and Lois, 1993.



Tina and Tasha, 1994.

*The rocks hurt my feet  
cause I don't wear shoes  
I guess this old road is like me.  
It's used to being used.*

*I walk on and on  
not knowing what  
led me to walk down  
this old road.*

*All I know is that  
I'm used to walking alone.*  
—Tina, 1993



*Tina, and Mary, 1996.*



*Tasha and her grandmother, Lois, 1996.*

Just at dusk one Sunday evening, Tasha, Lois and I were out on the front porch waiting for Tina to come home from work. I asked Tasha, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

She gazed at me thoughtfully, taking her time.

*"I want to be everything. I want to be a lawyer. I want to be a cop. I want to be a fireman."*

*Looking up at the fading light, she said, "I want to be the sky. I want to be trees. I want to be blue . . . and green . . . and I want to be red."*

Finally Tasha looked back at me. "I want to be a grandmother," she said. "I want to be pictures."

—Vaughn Sills, 1996

# No Scarcity of Resources on Web

BY BARBARA BURG

The World Wide Web portion of the Internet may be the best place to begin for journalists writing on welfare reform. Generally, in the areas of public policy and public affairs, the Web offers visibility and direct access to a variety of government agencies, in-house publications, data and community-based initiatives, the kind of material that often takes many phone calls, visits and much patience to obtain. Within moments you can view the requirements of the "West Virginia Works" Project, find the per capita income of residents in Escambia County, Alabama, or the meetings and agendas of the Anchorage Assembly.

This is not to imply that identifying worthwhile sources on the Web will not take time or try your patience. But if you do not have sufficient amounts of either to go through the 200,000 hits you will retrieve by doing a search on Alta Vista (search engine) for "welfare reform," perhaps the following "Webliography" will serve you well.

**Welfare Information Network: A Clearinghouse for Information, Policy Analysis and Technical Assistance on Welfare Reform**  
<http://www.welfareinfo.org/>

The best place to start. WIN offers access to most of the important welfare-related sites.

**Highlights:** Calendar of Welfare Reform Events, List of States with Submitted TANF State Plans, Weekly Top News Stories, Summaries and Analysis of HR 3734, links to many welfare-related Websites.

An electronic version of this article with active links to all the sources cited can be found on the following Nieman Web Page:

<http://www.Nieman.harvard.edu/Nieman/welfare.html>

Remember, though, that www addresses often change.

## Legislation

### THOMAS : Legislative Information on the Internet

<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Sponsored by Congress, this site includes the full text of major legislation passed in the 103rd-105th Congresses. Bills can be searched by topic. Choose "Welfare" in the Topic Section of the 104th Congress. Then choose H.R. 3734 to link to the legislative history, committee reports, amendments and the text of the law PL 104-193.

### Welfare Reform Bill—Final Passage: HR3734 Personal Responsibility, Work Opportunity and Medicaid Restructuring Act of 1996

<http://libertynet.org/~edcivic/welfarebill.html>

Direct and easy access to the complete text version of the enrolled bill.

## Statistics

### U.S. Bureau of the Census—Poverty Statistics

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty.html>

### Highlights:

- Poverty in the United States: 1995—The complete Current Population Survey Report P 60-194 (the source of official poverty estimates)
- Percent of Persons in Poverty, by State: 1993, 1994, and 1995
- Income and Poverty Statistics: 1994, 1993
- Poverty Measurement Reports
- Detailed Historical Tables from the Current Population Survey: 1959-1995
- Preliminary Estimate of Poverty Thresholds in 1996
- Poverty Thresholds by Size of Family and Number of Children: 1995
- Dept. of Health & Human Services Official Poverty Guidelines
- Poverty Areas Statistical Brief
- Census Historical Poverty Tables: 1959-1989
- Definitions of Terminology

### CenStats

<http://www.census.gov/mp/www/index2.html>

All Census Bureau publications released since January 1, 1996 are in CenStats. CenStats contains electronic images of more than 1,000 Census Bureau printed reports featuring statistical information on population, housing, business and manufacturing



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activity, international trade, farming and state and local governments. In order to read these reports the Adobe Acrobat (TM) free reader software is required and available from this site. Includes alphabetical topic index to publications.

#### 1996 Statistical Abstracts

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2/gen/96statab/96statab.html>

Valuable reference compendium of statistical tables produced by federal government departments. A wide range of subjects is covered.

Additional Statistical Tables and Graphs can be found at these sites:

#### Housing and Household Economic Statistics

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/index.html>

*Highlights:* American Housing Survey Data, Homeownership Data, Housing Affordability, Residential Segregation—1990

#### Income Inequality

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/incineq.html>

*Highlights:* A Brief Look at Postwar U.S. Income Inequality (P60-194); Tables from the report: Share of Aggregate Income Received by Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of Families, 1947 to 1994; Average Income-to-Poverty Ratios for Families, by Income Quintile, 1967 to 1994.

#### Income Statistics

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income.html>

Includes income and poverty statistics for 1993 and 1994.

#### Poverty Graphs

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/pov95/graphs95.html>

*Highlights:* Poverty 1959-1995, Poverty Rates by Age: 1959-1995, Poverty Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1994-1995 with pie chart showing proportions by race, Poverty by Definition of Income: 1959-1995.

## Federal Agencies

### U.S. Federal Government Agencies Page

<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/gov/fedgov.html>

*Highlights:* One-stop shopping. Provides access to the Websites of most federal agencies organized by Executive, Judicial, Legislative, Independent, Boards, Commissions and Committees, and Quasi-Official.

### Dept. of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children and Families

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov>

### Dept. of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children and Families-Welfare Reform

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/welfare/index.html>

*Highlights:* Provides access to DHHS publications: State Guidance for the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) Program, TRIBAL Guidance for the Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) Program, TANF State Plan Submission Table, State Welfare/Social Service Pages, Estimated State Family Assistance Grants, State Maintenance of effort levels, State Allocations for Child Care and Development Fund. Includes topical information and government welfare pages.

## State Government

### National Association of State Information Resource Executives

<http://www.nasire.org>

NASIRE represents information resource executives and managers from the 50 states, six U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia.

### StateSearch

<http://www.nasire.org/ss/>

*Highlights:* Provides a subject directory for state government information. The following are examples:

### •Health, Human Services & Welfare

<http://www.nasire.org/ss/SThealth.html>

This category deals with state health, human services and welfare services and lists the Web page links for each of the states.

### •State Homepages

<http://www.nasire.org/ss/STstates.html>

This category deals with state homepages and lists the Web page links for each of the states.

### National Conference of State Legislatures—Welfare Reform Connection

<http://www.ncsl.org/statefed/welfare/welfare.htm>

*Highlights:* Provides information about state and federal actions and analyses of key welfare reform issues.

### National Governor's Association Welfare Reform

<http://www.nga.org/welfare/WelfareRecentDevelopments.htm>

*Highlights:* State Information on Welfare Reform, Links to States Home Pages on Welfare Reform, State Maintenance of Effort Levels Required Under P.L. 104-193, FY 1997 TANF allocations by state, FY 1997 Child Care allocations by state, Press Releases on Waivers from HHS.

### Estimated FY 1997 State Family Assistance Grants under P.L. 104-193.

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/welfare/staloc/sfag-amt.htm>

*Highlights:* List of federal assistance grants given to each state.

### National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) State Reports

<http://cpmnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/state/state0000.html>

*Highlights:* Reports on the availability of support services for children by state.

### Selected Features of State Welfare Plans (Children's Defense Fund)

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/stateplans.html>

*Highlights:* Assistance to Non-Citizens under TANF, Penalties Against Families Specified in State Welfare Plans,

Time Limits as Specified in State Plans, Family Violence Provisions in TANF.

#### Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (Intercensal Estimates)

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saie.html>

*Highlights:* Provides updated income and poverty statistics at the state and county level.

#### Welfare News in the states (American Public Welfare Association)

<http://www.apwa.org/statenew/textonly.htm>

*Highlights:* State-by-state description of welfare reform initiatives.

#### Welfare Reform State Links

<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/welfare/stlinks.htm>

*Highlights:* Links to all state welfare, children and families Web pages.

#### Map Stats

<http://www.census.gov/datamap/www/index.html>

*Highlights:* Provides demographic profiles and access to census maps by state and county.

#### U.S. Census State Data Centers

<http://www.census.gov/sdc/www/>

*Highlights:* Links to state census bureaus.

#### Capital Research Center—Welfare Reform in the States

Part 1: <http://www.townhall.com/crc/ap/ap-0496.html>

Part 2: <http://www.townhall.com/crc/ap/ap-0596>

*Highlights:* Articles about state welfare reform by analysts from 10 state think tanks.

#### Welfare Reform in Individual States

##### California State Association of Counties—Federal Welfare Reform

<http://www.counties.org/welfare.html>

##### Colorado Welfare Reform

<http://carbon.cudenver.edu/public/cwr/>

**Masslink Welfare Reform** <http://www.slw.neu.edu:80/public/home/clinics/uli/policy/po03000.htm>

##### Wisconsin Welfare Reform

[http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/notespub/AboutDWD/2152\\_126.htm](http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/notespub/AboutDWD/2152_126.htm)

#### City and County Governments

##### Local Government Home Page

<http://www.localgov.org/>

*Highlights:* Links to the official homepages of many city and county governments. Sponsored by the National League of Cities (NLC), The National Association of Counties (NACo), The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and Public Technology, Inc. (PTI).

##### National Association of Counties

<http://www.naco.org>

##### National Internet Clearinghouse—Welfare Reform

<http://www.naco.org/nich/index.htm>

*Highlights:* Exceptional site which provides links to state legislation, court cases, local actions, news stories. Access to data about all counties in each state. The National Internet Clearinghouse Program has been developed by the National Association of Counties (NACo) to "provide both citizens and government officials with insight into how government programs are actually working at the local level and the impact of both approved and proposed changes."

##### County Income and Poverty Estimates 1990 Census Estimates

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saie/1990cen.html>

*Highlights:* Provides data for every U.S. county; percentage and number of all persons below poverty level and percentage and number below poverty level who are 65 and over.

##### Government Information Sharing Project—USA Counties 1996

<http://govinfo.kerr.orst.edu/usacostateis.html>

*Highlights:* Provides a Web interface

to U.S. County census data. Enables the compilation of statistical profiles for every U.S. county. Includes poverty data by race, age, family composition.

#### Research and Policy Institutes

Except where noted, most of these sites include publications, reports, schedules of seminars and conferences.

##### Policy.com

<http://www.policy.com>

*Highlights:* provides access to policy organizations organized by Think Tanks, Advocacy Organizations, Universities, Associations, Business, U.S. Government, Other Governments and Media.

##### Brookings Institution

<http://www.brookings.org>

##### Cato Institute

<http://www.cato.org/home.html>

##### Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University

<http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/cupr/>

##### Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

<http://www.cbpp.org/>

*Highlights:* Links to all state Websites; reports such as "How effective are government programs in fighting poverty?" by Wendell Primus, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services in the Department of Health and Human Services; analyses such as The Time Line For Implementing The New Welfare Law—Revised 12/5/96; Bearing Most of the Burden: How Deficit Reduction During the 104th Congress Concentrated on Programs for the Poor—Revised 12/4/96, The Safety Net Delivers: The Effects of Government Benefit Programs in Reducing Poverty—revised 11/15/96, A HAND UP: How State Earned Income Credits Help Working Families Escape Poverty—Summary of 1996 Edition, An Analysis of the AFDC-Related Medicaid Provisions in the New Welfare Law—9/19/96, Analysis of Census Bureau Income and Poverty Data—9/26/96, Senate Sharply Reduces Resources for Welfare Reform

Research—9/19/96

### Electronic Policy Network

<http://epn.org/index.html#text/>

**Highlights:** A project of the American Prospect, the site provides access to the American Prospect, Political Science Quarterly, and a variety of liberal policy institutes and foundations, including; Economic Policy Institute, Center for Media Education, and Families USA.

### Welfare and Families

<http://epn.org/idea/welfare.html>

**Highlights:** The topical on-line magazine portion of the Electronic Policy Network includes these articles in the February-March issue: Welfare's Fatal Flaw, Securing Food Security, The Future of the Welfare State, EPI Family Income Data Series, and Understanding the New Welfare Law.

### Heritage Foundation

<http://www.heritage.org>

### Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP)

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/>

### National Center for Children in Poverty

<http://cpmnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/>

### Russell Sage Foundation

<http://epn.org/sage.html>

### Twentieth Century Fund

<http://epn.org/tcf.html>

## Nonprofit Organizations

### American Public Welfare Association

<http://www.apwa.org/>

APWA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization of individuals and agencies concerned with human services.

### Child Welfare League of America

<http://www.handsnet.org/cwla/>

### Childrens Defense Fund

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

### CLASP (Center for Law and Social Policy)

<http://epn.org/clasp.html>

CLASP is a national nonprofit organization with expertise in both law and policy affecting the poor.

### HandsNet

<http://www.handsnet.org>

HandsNet is a national, nonprofit organization that promotes information sharing and advocacy among individuals and organizations working on a broad range of public interest issues.

**Highlights:** Welfare Reform Watch provides extensive coverage of current welfare reform efforts at the national, state and local level. Includes reports such as "Welfare to Work Strategy Recommendations." Chicago Jobs Council provides recommendations for an effective welfare-to-work strategy under the new welfare program."

### National Association of Community Action Agencies

<http://www.nacaa.org/>

**Highlights:** Information and report about the National Dialogue on Poverty.

### National Association for Welfare Research and Statistics

<http://ucdata.berkeley.edu/NAWRS/index.html>

The purpose of this organization is the promotion of, and the exchange of, ideas for the betterment of research and statistics in the field of public welfare.

## Conferences

**Community Action Today: National Dialogue/State and Local Solutions-1996 Annual Conference**  
<http://www.nacaa.org/96conf.htm>

**Conference on Evaluating Comprehensive State Welfare Reforms**  
<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/w2abs.htm>

**Evaluating the New Welfare Reforms: A Working Conference 11/21-22, 1996—Madison, WI**

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/nov2122.htm>

### Monitoring the Effects of the New Federalism on Children, Families, and Communities

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/newfed/newfed.htm#stateind>

## Publications

**Bane, Mary Jo. "Welfare as We Might Know It," The American Prospect no. 30 (January-February 1997): 47-53.**

<http://epn.org/prospect/30/30bane.html>

**Blank, Rebecca M. "Changing Policy: America's Efforts to Provide a Social Safety Net."**

This article is extracted with permission from the book, "It Takes a Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty," published by Princeton University Press and the Russell Sage Foundation, 1997.  
<http://www.library.nwu.edu/publications/nupr/blank.html>

**Caraley, Demetrios. "Dismantling the Federal Safety Net: Fictions Versus Realities," Political Science Quarterly 111 (Summer 1996)**  
<http://epn.org/psq/psdism.html>

**Downs, Anthony. "The Devolution Revolution: Why Congress is Shifting a lot of Power to the Wrong Levels," Brookings Policy Brief No. 3.**  
<http://www.brook.edu/es/policy/polbrf3.htm>

**"The Impact of Federal Welfare Reform on Medicaid," (Washington: Families USA, August 19, 1996)**  
<http://epn.org/families/faimwb.html>

**"Timeline for Implementing the New Welfare Law"**  
<http://www.cbpp.org/TIMELINE2.HTM>

This paper by Jocelyn Guyer, Cindy Mann and David A. Super reviews the dates by which the major changes in welfare, Medicaid and the food stamp program must be implemented, or

could be implemented at state option. "Welfare Reform: Can the States Fly Solo?" Policy Review: The Journal of American Citizenship, November-December 1996, Number 80.

[http://www.heritage.org/heritage/p\\_review/nov96/symp.html](http://www.heritage.org/heritage/p_review/nov96/symp.html)

Policy Review asked four state welfare officials—Eloise Anderson of California, Vance McMahan of Texas, Don Taylor of Mississippi, and Jason Turner of Wisconsin to comment on what the welfare-reform legislation of 1996 will mean for their states. ■

## Derek Bok The Ultimate Test



JOE WRINN, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Turning from individual to collective responsibility, the ultimate test of a nation—as Samuel Johnson pointed out—is the concern it displays for the plight of the poor and disabled, especially those who cannot help themselves. Large majorities of the American people acknowledge this point and insist that they support efforts to assist those in genuine need. Yet our record falls far short of these aspirations. Higher percentages of Americans, white and black, remain officially poor than in any of the other countries we have surveyed. Even after food stamps and all other types of in-kind benefits are counted, poor people in the United States fall further below the average standard of living for the nation as a whole than needy citizens in any of the other countries we have considered.—Derek Bok, former President of Harvard University, in *"The State of the Nation,"* Harvard University Press, 1996.

## A Tool for Measuring Income Inequality

BY J. J. THOMPSON

Income inequality—that gap between the haves and have-nots—is a topic that begs the use of data-based reporting. Because the gap grows slowly and unevenly, no one has the same perception of it. If you live in Washington and witness dark-glassed, stretch limousines zipping past down-trodden homeless folks, the gap seems to be huge and growing every day. But if you live in Hot Springs, Ark., where the differences are more on the line of Cadillacs sharing the roads with years-old Chevy pick-ups, inequality may seem less daunting.

Listening to the various opinions and forecasts on the topic issued by politicians, economists and social philosophers often does little to clarify the issue for the average Joe or Jane Public. So data-based journalists, once armed with a formula for the Gini coefficient of inequality and the appropriate income data, can provide a real service by telling their readers if income inequality is growing in their area and if it is better or worse there than elsewhere. What's more, they can do it in a way that is both easy to understand and quite precise.

Why is using the Gini coefficient easy? Several reasons. One, the formula—named for its Italian developer—is pretty simple for journalists to plug right into a spreadsheet program such as Excel. Two, the computed results are even easier to compare and explain because the coefficient is a single number between 0 and 1, with 0 representing complete equality of incomes and 1 signifying complete inequality. Three, income data at any level can be used, from country on down to county or even census tract. I analyzed county level data for the state of North Carolina; USA Today looked at county level data for the entire United States for its September 1996 series on the income gap.

The Gini formula's precision also gives it a huge advantage over other

common methods of talking about income inequality. For instance, some efforts have tried to explain income inequality with a comparison of median incomes, a number that can be misleading because it ignores specific information about top and bottom incomes. Others have looked at changes in income in the top and bottom quintiles of a population. While explaining it this way is valuable for describing changes in income distribution, it is a bit unwieldy for measuring and especially comparing inequality. Because the Gini formula involves cumulative proportion of income earned by cumulative proportion of the population, it does a much better job of detecting changes in distribution in the middle as well as at the ends of the income ladder.

The formula for the Gini coefficient of inequality is:

$$\text{Gini coefficient} = 1 - \frac{\sum(X_i - X_j)(Y_i + Y_j)}{\sum Y_i + \sum Y_j}$$

where:

X is the cumulative proportion of households;

Y is the cumulative proportion of income;

i is a particular income category;

j is i - 1, or the preceding income category.

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The easiest way to conceptualize what is being measured is to picture a graph in which the final points on the X and Y axes are 100 percent, or 1.0. Points are graphed based on cumulative numbers; therefore, in a completely "income-equal" county, 10 percent of households would take in 10 percent of that county's income, 20 percent of households would take in 20 percent of income, and on up to 100 percent of households, which would account for 100 percent of income. The points in this unusual county would form a straight, diagonal line from 0,0 to 1,1—think of it as the "line of equality."

In reality, however, 10 percent of the overall households may account for only two percent of income; 20 percent of households only five percent of income and so forth, so that the points would form a curve below the line of equality. The formula measures the space below the curve (by dividing it up into a series of triangles) and subtracts that amount from 1, with the resulting number being the Gini coefficient of inequality.

To put the Gini formula into a spreadsheet, I put the following data and equations into Excel columns:

• Column A: Income Amount (for Census data, I used the midpoint of the category)

• Column B: Total Number of House-

holds in Income Category

• Column C: Weighted Income. This was achieved by multiplying the midpoint by the number of households for each category, which was done by entering " $A2*B2$ " in the C2 cell and copying down the column.

• Column D: Total Income for County. This is the sum total for column C. I found that it worked best to enter the formula for the sum in a separate cell, say C40, and then copy " $=C40$ " for the entire D column.

• Column E: Total Population for the County. The instructions are the same as for total income, except using the sum of column B.

• Column F: Proportion of Population in Income Category. This is obtained by typing " $=B2/E2$ " in the F2 cell and copying for the entire column.

• Column G: Cumulative Proportion of Population: This is obtained by typing " $=F2$ " in the G2 cell and " $=F3 + G2$ " in the G3 cell. The formula in G3 is then copied for the rest of the column.

• Column H: Proportion of Income in Category. This is obtained by typing " $=C2/D2$ " in the H2 cell and copying for the rest of the column.

• Column I: Cumulative Proportion of Income: This, again, is the same idea as for cumulative proportion of population. This time type " $=H2$ " in the I2 cell and " $=H3 + I2$ " in the I3 cell. Copy

the formula in I3 for the rest of the column.

• Column J:  $(X_i - X_j)(Y_i + Y_j)$ . In the J2 cell, type " $=G2*I2$ ." Then in the J3 cell type " $=(G3 - G2)(I3 + I2)$ " and copy the formula in J3 for the rest of the column.

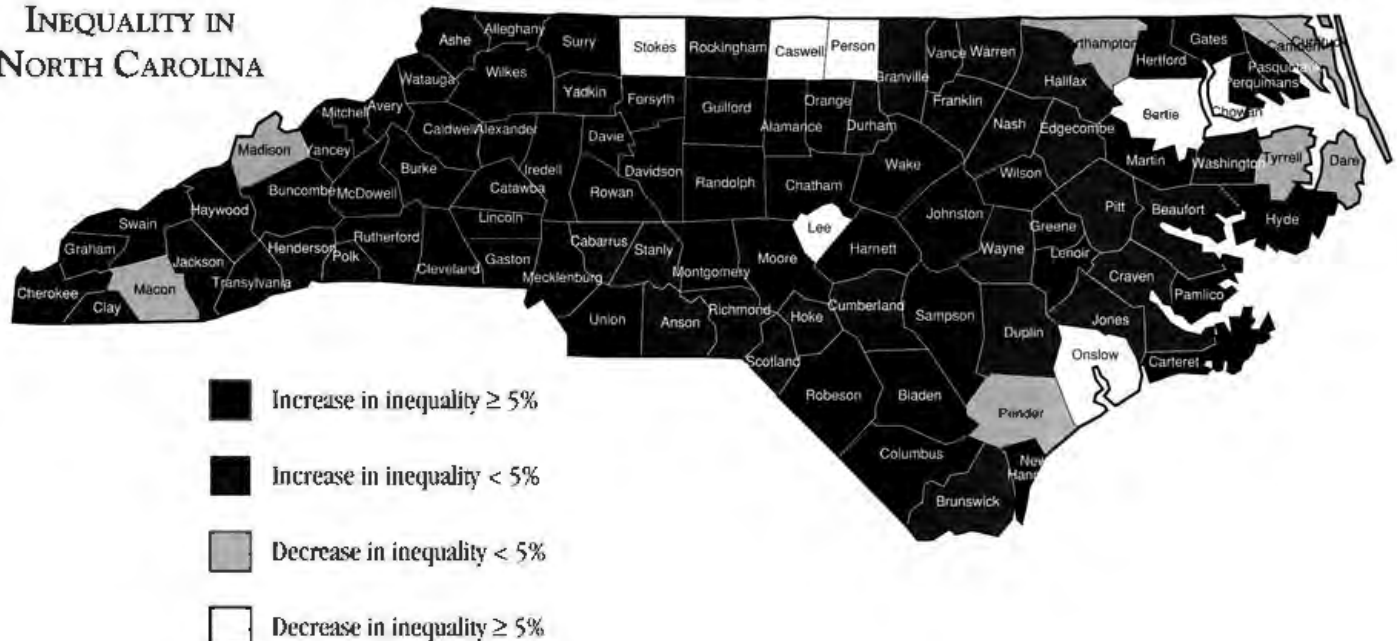
In a separate cell, subtract the sum of the J column from one. If the last income category was listed in cell J18, then the formula would look like " $=1 - SUM(J2:J18)$ ". The number that appears will be your Gini coefficient.

Some of these steps can be skipped or combined with others. For example, it is possible to use only one column for calculating proportions and cumulative proportions.

If income data are in columns, they can simply be cut and pasted into column B. Or, with later versions of Excel, the pivot table function can be used to move the data into the Gini formula spreadsheet.

After measuring income inequality and making the desired comparisons comes the fun part—reporting to find out why income inequality exists in the magnitude it does, what is causing it, and what its consequences are. By approaching this topic both quantitatively with the Gini coefficient and qualitatively with comprehensive research and reporting, the data-based journalist can provide useful, concrete information about this fairly nebulous topic. ■

## INEQUALITY IN NORTH CAROLINA



# Why Do Stereotypes and Lies Persist?

BY DERRICK JACKSON

One of my favorite exercises in speeches and college journalism classes is to ask my audience, "What percentage of the federal budget do you think is spent on welfare?"

The answers almost always range between 15 and 50 percent. They are shocked when I tell them that Aid to Families with Dependent Children is only one percent of the federal budget, and even adding other benefits also used by the working poor, such as food stamps and disability, the figure is still no more than six percent. I tell them that spending on welfare, in real dollars, is 20 percent less than 20 years ago.

"So why do you think welfare takes up so much of the budget?" I ask.

Their answer: they learned it from television and newspapers.

Few issues betray the media's unwillingness or laziness to discern between politics and reality as the debate over welfare. Our coverage not only cuts the heart out of any contention that we cover the news with neutrality, it reveals a newsroom that—despite its vast array of informational resources—can be just as prone to hysteria as a blubbing yahoo on Rush Limbaugh.

Welfare for the poor has dominated the news for 30 years, beginning with Senator Patrick Moynihan's "discovery" of what he called "welfare dependency." It picked up particular steam in the mid-1980's with the double whammy of Charles Murray's book "Losing Ground" and President Ronald Reagan's mantra of "welfare queens." Welfare has become a bipartisan devotion on Capitol Hill, with Republicans like Rep. Clay Shaw of Florida saying it has "destroyed responsibility," and President Clinton declaring that the biggest problem facing the nation is teenage pregnancy.

In comparison, welfare for the rich has received relatively little notice. In their 1994 book, "America: Who Really Pays the Taxes," Pulitzer Prize-winning reporters Donald Barlett and James Steele laid out a corporate tax break structure that—at the same time welfare was actually shrinking in real dollars—deprives the Treasury of \$250 billion a year.

That figure was seven times the figure for welfare for the poor. But can any mainstream media outlet claim to have investigated tax breaks and CEO's with seven times the resources of investigating welfare and poor women? Of course not. In The Boston Globe's newspaper data base, the phrase "welfare reform" for the poor appeared 14 times more than the phrase "corporate welfare."

We in the media find poor folks on stoops, street corners and cacophonous welfare offices far more easy and colorful prey for our notebooks and cameras than executives who can throw up a gauntlet of elevators, secretaries, security guards, insomnia-producing public relations staffs and intimidating lawyers. In explaining in 1990 why African Americans, who consume 13 percent of illegal drugs, make up 74 percent of those sentenced to prison for drug offenses while white Americans consume 80 percent of illegal drugs with little fear of jail, Charles Ramsey, head of the Chicago police narcotics division, said:

"There's as much cocaine in the Sears Tower or in the Stock Exchange as there is in the black community. But those deals are harder to catch. Those deals are done in office buildings, in somebody's home, and there's not the violence associated with it that there is in the black community. But the guy standing on the corner, he's almost got a sign on his back. These guys are just arrestable."

In the same spirit, poor women, particularly low-income African American women, are far more easy to blame for the growing gap between rich and poor than influence-peddlers in the White House and corporations who have either sent overseas many of the jobs that many of the poor's fathers and mothers used to have or shrunk blue-collar payrolls with technology. While politicians justify draconian cuts in welfare by making examples of the deficient character of recipients, the media did not question, with the same veracity, the notion that it was ludi-



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crous for a Louis Gerstner of IBM to chair a national education summit after his prior mission of dealing death for R.J. Reynolds cigarettes.

While welfare recipients bear the public responsibility for destroying responsibility, news organizations give comfort to CEO's who fire thousands of workers by buying into the sanitized corporate-speak of "downsizing." Diane Sawyer of ABC all but prejudged teen welfare mothers by asking them "Why should taxpayers pay for your mistake?... Answer their question." No CEO faces that kind of barrage.

While politicians demand that welfare recipients get a job, the media did precious little during the heat of the debate on the welfare bill to tell the public that in reality, the jobs are currently not there. A university study in Chicago found that four percent of entry level jobs in Illinois pay a livable wage for a family of three, while the pay for nearly 40 percent of the jobs is below the poverty line. The media was too late to use ample university-based evidence that the best way to get off or avoid welfare is to get an education. Instead, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani went ahead with welfare cuts so severe that he is forcing college students to leave school to take any job they can find, or lose their benefits.

While every news reporter surely knows who Charles Murray is, how many know the name of an actual researcher on welfare? In a look at welfare reporting, the watchdog organization Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting found that in a three-month period in late 1994-95, 71 percent of the sources for stories on cutting welfare for women were male. Only nine percent of the sources were researchers and advocates for women on welfare. One Sunday in which all three network talk shows discussed welfare, no woman on welfare and no person of color was allowed to provide a counterpoint to a George Will or a Gov. Pete Wilson of California.

A media that relies almost exclusively on a steady diet of Shaw, Murray, Newt Gingrich, Clinton, Robert Rector of the conservative Heritage Foundation and welfare-slashing governors like Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin and

## Aristotle

### Traits of the Wealthy

The type of character produced by Wealth lies on the surface for all to see. Wealthy men are insolent and arrogant; their possession of wealth affects their understanding; they feel as if they had every good thing that exists; wealth becomes a sort of standard of value for everything else, and therefore they imagine there is nothing it cannot buy. They are luxurious and ostentatious; luxurious, because of the luxury in which they live and the prosperity which they display; ostentatious and vulgar, because, like other people's, their minds are regularly occupied with the object of their love and admiration, and also because they think that other people's idea of happiness is the same as their own. It is indeed quite natural that they should be affected thus; for if you have money, there are always plenty of people who come begging from you. Hence the saying of Simonides about wise men and rich men, in answer to Hiero's wife, who asked him whether it was better to grow rich or wise. "Why, rich," he said; "for I see the wise men spending their days at the rich men's doors." Rich men also consider themselves worthy to hold public office; for they consider they already have the things that give a claim to office. In a word, the type of character produced by wealth is that of a prosperous fool. There is indeed one difference between the type of the newly-enriched and those who have long been rich: the newly-enriched have all the bad qualities mentioned in an exaggerated and worse form—to be newly-enriched means, so to speak, no education in riches. The wrongs they do others are not meant to injure their victims, but spring from insolence or self-indulgence, e.g. those that end in assault or in adultery.—*Aristotle's "Rhetoric" as translated by W. Rhys Roberts.*

John Engler of Michigan is consigned to plow ahead with apocalyptic visions of teen mothers having babies to get a check. Ignored are researchers who point out that there is no universal correlation between welfare and pregnancy. In her book, "Teen Mothers," North Carolina Sociology Professor Kathleen Mullen Harris wrote how European countries have far more generous social welfare benefits for single mothers "and yet their rates of teen childbearing are only one-eighth to about one-half of the U.S. rates."

The comparative failure to quote researchers and advocates meant that few Americans were made aware that the so-called rise in teen pregnancy has less to do with unmarried teens having babies than married women having far fewer babies. The failure to look up simple statistics helps fuel stereotypes.

Last year The New Republic, in urging Clinton to end welfare as we knew it, used the photo of an African American woman smoking a cigarette and holding a baby. When Clinton signed the welfare bill, the woman closest to him in photographs was a large African

American woman. While it is true that African American women are disproportionately on welfare, the majority of women on welfare are white.

It has been proven time and time again that if an issue can be painted black, it can be demonized to an extent white people would not allow if the issue was white. When African American youth are the focus of reporting on drugs, the solution is the Crime Bill and prison. When white youth are the focus of a rising drug rate, the talk suddenly switches to counseling. The debate over Proposition 209 in California was painted so black, white women, the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action, voted against it.

In welfare, women are painted black so they can be removed from the rolls and forgotten about. It is early in the welfare "reform" game and Massachusetts and New York both admitted last year that they have no idea where the majority of the people dropped from the welfare roles have gone. The media would do a much better service if it reported on the stereotypes and lies about welfare before they become permanent truth. ■

# Will Tough Love Work?

BY BRENT B. COFFIN

One factor adding to the cynicism and disengagement Americans are experiencing is that we no longer know what to expect. The problem is more than uncertainty about the future. Of course many Americans feel uncertain about their future in a post-Cold War global economy where American economic vitality means perpetual job insecurity. But also many are uncertain about what binds us to our fellow citizens. The benefits and obligations of democratic membership have never been a matter of tidy consensus. Yet today, as we find ourselves doubting the fiscal solvency of Social Security and its moral compact, we are far from clear what we expect and owe to one another as citizens, if anything at all.

Members who don't know what to expect find it difficult to stay involved. We may be experiencing a contracting of public moral space that corresponds to the time allotted to stories on the evening news. Those who want to be heard on the news know their message needs to be short and clear. Sound bites are the art form of public articulation. Similarly, if citizens are going to pay attention to important public debates, we find it necessary to orient ourselves as quickly and clearly as possible. Not infrequently and not accidentally, public debates themselves generate the root metaphors and formulations which we use to gain our ethical bearings.

For example, the recent debate over reforming criminal laws was framed by the formula "three strikes and you're out!" The metaphor not only offered a winning campaign theme in several gubernatorial elections, it also defined the politically viable options of policy reform. This need to define complex debates simply may be cause for even deeper cynicism when we consider the enormous amounts of money required to sell the dominant images and formu-

las that frame public choices. President Clinton's "bridge to the 21st Century" did not come cheap, nor did Bob Dole's bridge to the past.

However, it is unwise to dismiss these formulas too quickly. Winning formulas catch on, in part, because they tap into deeply held and widely shared moral convictions. Citizens use them to get their moral bearings and to pay attention, thus to remain involved. The "three strikes" metaphor framing penal reform was a brilliant sound bite evoking the great American pastime. It also drew upon two widely shared moral principles. Most believe that someone who commits a serious failure deserves another chance, even two. But no one deserves unlimited chances, especially when total disregard for the rules ruins the game for everyone. The moral logic: after remediation has been tried, public safety takes absolute priority. "Three strikes and you're out!"

Reporting important public debates in an era of contracted citizenship requires attention to the moral formulations that citizens use to stay involved. However, it does not require transmitting those formulas uncritically. "Three strikes and you're out" makes moral sense, but requires scrutiny when it leads to prisons with no space for truly violent offenders because they are providing geriatric care for lifers. In an era of contracted public life, moral sentiments need to be taken seriously and, precisely for that reason, also scrutinized.

Consider the ongoing welfare debate. The vast majority of Americans regarded the old welfare system as badly broken. Most believe that Aid for Dependent Children has encouraged out-of-wedlock births and long-term dependency. The best research shows otherwise, since these trends have increased as welfare benefits have declined substantially. Nevertheless, the

old welfare system has done very little to curb such problems. As a result taxpayers have come to despise a system that they believe perpetuates intergenerational poverty; and welfare recipients hate a system that often offers no way out. In 1996, when the Republican Congress wrote the new federal law that "ended welfare as we know it," it did so in part to balance the budget, taking 93 percent of entitlement cost savings from programs for the poor. It also did so in response to public expectations about what Americans deserve and owe one another. Welfare politics is riddled with race, gender and class bigotry. It is also driven by legitimate moral expectations.

Tough love is the rationale often used by advocates of the new welfare law. "A few more children will suffer for the conduct of their parents," summarized Congressman Clay Shaw, who helped write the federal legislation. "But they suffer far more now. What we are trying to do is solve the problem of



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poverty so there will be fewer poor children." Tough love asserts that welfare reform aims to enhance the well-being of poor families themselves. It also asserts that greater personal responsibility—staying in school, getting a job, paying child support—is a fair and effective route to a better life.

Like all ethical formulas, tough love depends upon a certain ethos. Few today would enlist in such a grandiose cause as Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," and Newt Gingrich's call to "renew American civilization" has quickly fallen on deaf ears. The prevailing mood seems to be one of chastened expectations in the face of complex problems. Tough love captures this mood well. Drug and alcohol counselors tell of the need to let addicts "hit bottom" before they are ready for help. Families agonizing over whether to remove a teenager from the house or live with unacceptable behavior are advised to clarify and follow the rules of tough love. Criminologists use the phrase to define a third way—hard boot-camp programs—between the unacceptable extremes of ignoring youth offenders or locking them up and throwing away the key.

Applied to welfare, this formula combines two widely shared convictions. Most Americans want to help others who are going through spells of poverty due to changes in family structure, illness or unemployment; and to do so through the agencies of government as well as charity. Most also believe that people should do all they can to take care of themselves and their dependents. Especially when they feel themselves running harder just to stay in place, people deeply resent those they perceive to be getting a free ride. Social responsibility reflects our sense of compassion and interdependence. Personal responsibility is rooted in our sense of autonomy and dignity. Translated into a vision of American society, most citizens do not want two nations of children. But neither are they willing to drop their kids off at daycare and go to work so that others can sit at home.

The double-mindedness in this reasoning is not necessarily illogical. Social responsibility and personal initia-

tive may fit together in a pattern of reciprocity, as implied by the notion of "fair equality of opportunity." As political scientist Hugo Hecló has written, the overwhelming preference among Americans is for policies that "support—and not replace—people's taking responsibility for themselves and for those dependent upon them."

What this formula means in practice has varied greatly. When Aid to Dependent Children was first created in 1935, it meant supporting a small number of widows whose work was to raise their children. In 1965, with 21 percent of America's children living in poverty during an era of economic growth, it meant expanding eligibility requirements and increasing income support to lift families out of poverty. Today, with 20.8 percent of American children still living in poverty, it means requiring welfare recipients—typically single mothers with two children—to hold down a job and to raise children.

The new federal welfare law pursues this aim most dramatically by ending the nation's 61-year commitment to guarantee cash support to needy children whose parents are unable to provide for them. The new block grant program replacing AFDC, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, allows states to experiment with tough love strategies by making available two kinds of resources: funds and flexibility. Federal block grants are pegged at the 1994 level when welfare rolls were about 2.5 million higher than today. This initial surplus, along with healthy tax revenues and low employment, will allow states to pursue welfare-to-work strategies more vigorously. In addition, the new law provides broad flexibility for states to pursue their own experiments with few restrictions and almost no federal oversight. The new Massachusetts law, for example, requires new recipients to work or perform community service within 60 days, denies added benefits for babies born to mothers already on the rolls and limits benefits to two out of every five years with a federally mandated five-year cap. With 47 states already developing their own blends of "carrots and sticks," a wide array of tough love strategies is sure to

unfold.

Thus, if reporting on public issues involves careful attention to the moral formulas that frame options and drive change, it also requires close attention to the outcomes those formulas promote. Governors and politicians now devising tough love strategies will be eager to declare their reforms a success by using two measurements: welfare roles and cost savings. Reduced caseloads will demonstrate that "welfare is no longer a way of life." And corresponding cost savings will allow state officials to allocate resources to far more powerful interest groups than low-income families. The new national welfare law cuts spending nearly \$55 billion over the next six years. In addition, it permits states to withdraw and divert nearly \$40 billion without reductions in block grants. Once states have done so, it is unlikely they will significantly increase support for low-income families during recessionary times when revenues are down. These incentives may well generate what critics call "a race to the bottom" in welfare reform. An effective tough love program will be one that not only moves recipients off the rolls but moves them out of state. The net effects, according to the Urban Institute, will likely push over a million more children into poverty and increase the overall depth and severity of child poverty by 20 percent.

An important, even urgent story to be reported in the next three years is what actually is happening to low-income parents and their children after they leave welfare. Demonstration programs have repeatedly shown this transition is extraordinarily difficult. Seventy percent of welfare recipients leave the rolls within two years, but half return. "Cycling" reflects a desire to work and be self-supporting. It also reflects the enormous challenges to be overcome if a single mother with a poor education is to hold down a low-wage job and care for her children.

Strategies that make this transition possible will combine a reasonable opportunity structure with vital support networks. To make it, a single parent requires an entry-level job, reliable child support, and Earned Income

## Documenting the Journey Out of Welfare

Too often the welfare reform debate gives in to cultural and political pressures to generalize about the poor and render them invisible. Journalists need to find stories about efforts like Project Match at Cabrini-Green in Chicago and examine the role they may play in the future of welfare reform:

At Project Match no one is permitted to disappear, not even welfare recipients who are making little or no progress moving toward economic independence.

Founded in 1985 by members of Northwestern University's Center for Urban Affairs and Public Policy, Project Match began as a demonstration program to offer lessons for national welfare reform. The project provides a transition to economic independence for residents of Cabrini-Green. But it recognizes that most welfare recipients are unlikely to leave public assistance successfully either in two years or after only one job placement. Such a demand can perpetuate failure, economic insecurity and family instability. At Project Match, the ladder that participants must climb to get out of welfare preserves some lower rungs for those not instantly ready to take the larger steps toward independence.

The project's guiding philosophy is that for those families least able to function independently, moving off welfare is an unpredictable process; they must be able to follow multiple routes, not one sole route.

Kelly, a high-school dropout with no work experience, came to Project Match to get help finding a job. But she also needed to be available to her children. Her counselor felt she was not ready for a full-time job and helped her find a part-

time volunteer position in a parent support program. After a positive volunteer experience, she returned to school to get her GED and was offered a part-time position at the agency where she had volunteered. Now she works full-time for \$7 an hour and she has kept her job for two years.

Project Match fits support systems to each client and serves as a proxy social network for welfare recipients. It acts as the broker, connecting participants (77 percent of whom are female) not only to job opportunities and social services but also to participation in civic associations and social organizations outside the program. All of its clients lack the skills and "social capital" (the networks of trust and reciprocity) necessary for economic independence and meaningful social engagement. Writes founding director Toby Herr: "From the very beginning I always said, if a client comes in drop everything. I wanted Project Match to be a place where people felt important and welcome. I wanted it to provide family-like support. We'll visit you in the hospital, we'll send you a card when your father dies, we'll come to your graduation, we'll come to your wedding. We'll be there for you."

This is what keeps Project Match participants attached to the network it provides and willing to work toward success even when deeply embedded patterns might pull them away. First it meets them at their current skill level and in their crisis-ridden circumstances; then it begins to integrate them into a milieu of realistic achievement.

The project is committed to long-term support, as much as three to five years.

Sometimes there is no measurable success, and sometimes there are steady steps that lead a client to stable, full-time employment in an unsubsidized job outside the program. The project tries to redefine inevitable setbacks so they are not confirmations of failure but occasions for growth that will still lead to incremental steps forward. Transformation is always the goal, however modest or incomplete.

But the project directors are also realistic: "For a handful [of welfare recipients] self-sufficiency is indeed 'just a job away.' For the majority, leaving welfare is a long and difficult process. This process involves forging or renewing connections with mainstream norms and institutions; reworking basic dispositions toward self and world; becoming ready to struggle to acquire basic skills that should have been acquired in childhood; developing the capacity to construct a future for oneself."

Indeed, half of those participants who have remained in the program for three to five years made unsteady or no measurable progress; 57 percent of Project Match participants lost their first job within six months, 70 percent within a year. But the program's social networks also made it possible for 70 percent to find another job or enroll in education/training programs within three months.

Getting off welfare *and* fostering social capital may not yield the efficient, predetermined outcomes sought by public officials who mandate "two years and you're out." The public needs to know what becomes of people who fail to live up to that sort of norm. If journalists don't tell their stories, who will?—*Brent Coffin*. ■

Tax Credits to bring home a living wage. She also needs affordable and reliable daycare, otherwise she is living up to her responsibility but neglecting her children. And beyond a one-year extension of Medicaid benefits, a working parent requires medical insurance; without it, she and her children are an illness away from catastrophe. Even with this basic opportunity structure in place, it is extraordinarily difficult for low-income, single parents to earn a living and raise a family when they too often lack a support network. Government

agencies may have very limited capacity to provide such networks. Thus, churches and nonprofit organizations, like Project Match in the Cabrini Green Neighborhood of Chicago, will provide an essential complement to the basic opportunities only public programs can provide.

At this point it is far from clear where the various state experiments in tough love will lead. Some may give rise to genuinely innovative strategies, making it possible for more low-income parents to achieve economic indepen-

dence while caring for their children. Hopeful examples need to be seen widely, analyzed and replicated wherever possible—especially in a time when chastened public expectations are treading in a rising tide of cynicism. Equally crucial will be news reports that bring to public attention tough love policies forcing parents and children deeper into poverty and further from genuine membership in American society. Such reporting may help us consider how we measure success and what, if anything, we expect of ourselves as citizens. ■

# The Press, Experts and Welfare Reform

BY JEROME G. MILLER

As the federal "reform" welfare law takes effect in the coming months, we can anticipate a surfeit of human interest stories in the press describing the plight of this or that mother, child, or family thrown into destitution, homelessness, or worse. The paradox is that the legislation with which we are now saddled arose neither from compelling facts nor public demand. The steady deterioration in the situation of the poor will stand as testimony that journalists had it wrong from the start—suggesting that we might have been better served had the press made an equal effort in determining just how welfare and the single black mother became a dominant political issue of our times.

At the risk of being counted an ungrateful guest of Harvard's Nieman Foundation, may I suggest that some of the confusion attending current reportage on welfare stems from the press's increasing adherence to a questionable standard suggested by Walter Lippmann himself earlier in the century.

In a 1920 essay, "A Test of the News," resurrected by the late historian Christopher Lasch, Lippmann criticized press coverage of the recent Russian Revolution as a "breakdown of the means of public knowledge." If the news is not trustworthy and relevant, "all that the sharpest critics of democracy have alleged is true." Lippmann later proposed his own remedy for this virulent kind of "mass journalism." It lay in demanding of journalists a professionalism to match that of an emerging progressive movement—exemplified, according to Lasch, in the likes of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Robert LaFollette, and William Jennings Bryan—a new breed of politician bent on "efficiency," "good government," "bi-partisanship," and "scientific management"—all un-

der a banner of replacing "bossism."

So long as the rules of fair play were followed, Lippmann did not see it as being in the public interest for the press to get involved in lawmaking. That should be left to the experts. The public would acquiesce so long as "the experts delivered the goods, the ever-increasing abundance of comforts and conveniences so closely identified with the American way of life." As Lippmann summarized it, "The public is interested in law, not in the laws; in the method of law, not in the substance."

Lippmann's analysis was a response to the "mass journalism" of his times—"trafficking in sex, violence and 'human interest.'" The nation's current immersion in what TV critic Janet Maslin describes as "escapist trivia as a means of avoiding real discourse," would have scandalized Lippmann further. As National Public Radio's Garrison Keillor put it: "Every murder turns into 50 episodes. It's as bloody as Shakespeare but without the intelligence and the poetry. If you watch television news you know less about the world than if you drank gin out of a bottle."

We have come to expect this of contemporary mass media as the lines between news, entertainment and kitsch are muddled. Meanwhile, those who would consider themselves as "serious" journalists who deal with public policy have moved in precisely the manner proposed by Lippmann—focusing on the legalities and rules of the game, while leaving the substance to "experts." Certainly, that is what we now see "inside the beltway." Street-pounding reporters of the past have been replaced with economics majors, lawyers and former political advisers who seem obsessed with process, graphs and elegant mathematical formulae, which in the end signify little.

Patronizing toward, if not openly contemptuous of the narrative—the rationale for public policy is seen as best removed from the public and placed in the hands of experts. All this is highly evocative of the kind of research which guided our policies during the Vietnam War—again generated by "think tanks" funded by the Pentagon—the kind of research which treasured "body counts" over on-the-ground observation as the means of measuring victory.

The welfare bill arose in this kind of reportorial environment. The national coverage focused on the method, while the substance was handed over to "experts"—most of whom were granted a pass not to be individually or politically scrutinized with the fortitude which would prevail had they been in Congress or in the administration. It made an odd sort of sense from another point of view—ensuring that in covering the process, the press mavens of the Washington establishment didn't have to trek through the uninviting neighborhoods and tenements upon which the effects of the legislative "method" would be visited. As a result, the public was misinformed and the democratic process was distorted.

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The reliance upon "experts" for the "substance" of the welfare legislation is a case in point. Experts get less dependable to the degree that the issue is politically volatile—crime and welfare virtually always fit this description. They surface as issues when more profound things are happening in a society. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim once said that when a country is not united in a war against an outside nation, it will turn inward for new threats around which to unify—usually focusing on the poor and the criminal. The experts will be defined and sorted to meet the needs of the times. The press must therefore be chary of those trotted before legislative committees.

In this sense, we are reiterating the relationship which existed between certain experts and ideologues in Lippmann's heyday. Tracing the roots of the eugenics movement (another legislative foray focused on the poor) early in this century coinciding with the waves of immigration, historian Stefan Kuhl concluded that there was virtually no separation between politics and expert scientists of the time. This coupling resulted in a series of sterilization laws directed at the poor, the retarded, vagrants, the mentally ill and other marginal groups—many of which laws were only undone with the exposure in Europe of Nazi eugenic obscenities.

As Kuhl remarked, "The complex interaction between science and politics within the various branches of the American eugenics movement made it impossible to separate eugenicists into groups of 'scientists' and 'pseudoscientists'...eugenicists perceived themselves as both scientists and social activists. Most believed that there should be a close relationship between their research and its political implementation." These are precisely the kinds of relationships we saw in the preparation and marketing of the reform welfare legislation—particularly in the most recent Congress.

With the proliferation of conservative think tanks across the nation—producing research-policy-politics tomes in abundance, spending as much time in the halls of Congress as on their

research efforts, the "experts" who educate the press and inform the substance of legislation have become indistinguishable from the political or ideological interests they serve. More troubling, the influence of this new breed of "experts" goes well beyond the realm of simply giving legislative testimony. In the case of the welfare legislation, they had to first ensure that welfare would be seen as an immediate and overwhelming social problem which required draconian legislative efforts.

A quarter century ago, the great American "symbolic interactionist" sociologist Herbert Blumer observed that we decide what are "social problems" in vague and wispy ways. As he put it, "(t)he societal definition, and *not the objective makeup* of a given social condition, determines whether the condition exists as a social problem." Problems are not problems until we decide they are—and this process is not dependent upon either their seriousness or incidence. Blumer noted, for instance, that racial injustice and exploitation in our society were far greater in the 1920's and the 1930's than they are today; yet the concern they evoked was little until the Supreme Court decision on school desegregation and the riot in Watts. Similarly, the social problem now so vigorously confronted regarding the status of women was of peripheral interest relatively few years ago. One could list a host of other problems of varying seriousness which were hyped by the press into national crises—"missing children," "serial killers," etc.

In figuring out how a society comes to pick its social problems we need to evaluate the influence of interest groups either in creating or heading off the recognition of a problem; the ability of politicians to foment concern with certain problems and to put the damper on others; the role of associations and corporations in doing the same thing; the impotency of powerless groups in our society to gain attention for what they believe to be problems; and probably most importantly, the role of the media in selecting problems for attention, (often the result of an incident that shocks public sensitivity). Welfare had elements of all of the above.

Shortly after his inauguration, President Nixon brought Harvard professor Daniel Patrick Moynihan into the White House as his Special Assistant for Domestic Affairs. As an Assistant Secretary of State in the Johnson Administration, Moynihan had produced an internal report entitled "The Negro Family," which called attention to what he saw as the disintegration of the black nuclear family into a "tangle of pathology."

Though heavily criticized by African American leaders, Moynihan's controversial thesis conditioned the national debate on welfare over the next two decades. A Democrat, and occasionally uneasy in the role in which he had been cast, Moynihan became something of a hero to the newly burgeoning neo-conservative movement which would reach its apotheosis in the Reagan administration. It was also a time when the idea of a "city life cycle" infused most of the debate on urban policy. (Who can forget Vice President Spiro Agnew's comment that when you'd seen one city, you'd seen them all?) The "city life cycle" idea found favor among modern conservatives who, in journals such as *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*, paired the "city life cycle" idea with a more vague urban death thesis.

In this context, the failure of the cities to redistribute goods and services was hardly a cause for alarm. Rather, things should be allowed to take their course. Journalist Roger Starr coined the term "planned shrinkage": "We could simply accept the fact that the city's population is going to shrink, and we could cut back on city services accordingly, realizing considerable savings in the process." Another journalist, Marvin Stone, proposed that the big cities be left to die, while the British magazine *The Economist*, in discussing the deterioration in the South Bronx, opined "The bleak truth is that this is the natural and inevitable consequence of a shrinking city. The destruction, poverty and hopelessness that cluster around the burnt-out wrecks is abhorrent. That something should be done to stop it is the immediate reaction. That something should be done to

speed it up is nearer the mark. It was within this intellectual and historical context that Moynihan made his call for "benign neglect."

The defining moment for these discussions came with the publication in the mid-1980's of Charles Murray's treatise on welfare and the under-class, "Losing Ground." Journalist Sydney Blumenthal noted that Murray's book was slated to set the terms of the national debate on welfare long before it was written and its findings gathered.

According to Blumenthal, the Manhattan Institute, a neoconservative New York think tank (whose former expert on health care now sits as New York's Lieutenant Governor) set out to make Murray, appraised by the Institute's president William Hammett as "a nobody" who could be somebody, the centerpiece of the national debate on welfare. As Blumenthal wrote, "After some reflection he decided to take 'a flier' on Murray. In short order, \$125,000 was raised to support him while he turned his idea into a book. Irving Kristol's connection with the Olin Foundation accounted for \$25,000...in a private memorandum [Hammett] described 'the Making Of A Classic'—Every generation produces a handful of books whose impact is lasting; books that change basic assumptions about the way the world works (or ought to work)...Charles Murray's 'Losing Ground' could become such a book. And if it does it will alter the terms of debate over what is perhaps the most compelling political issue of our time: the modern welfare state."

"Losing Ground" set the stage for what was to become a common strategy of neoconservative think tanks—one which all but guaranteed that by the time academic researchers got around to replying in professional journals, they had already lost the day in the media and in political debate. Bookish scribes were left in Murray's dust. As Hammett put it, "Marketing is fun, and we're marketing ideas." Although Moynihan disavowed Murray's view that the antipoverty programs of the Great Society had in fact, *caused* most of the problems in the urban areas, Murray's draconian prescriptions flowed directly

from Moynihan's earlier misplaced diagnosis. It was a classic example of what happens when the press leaves the "substance" of government to the experts, retreating instead to the rules and legalities of the process.

Lost in discussion was the fact that Murray's central thesis rested upon the ostensible explosion of out-of-wedlock births among welfare, particularly African American, mothers—from 23 percent in 1960, to 28 percent in 1969, to 45 percent in 1980 to 62 percent in 1990.

The clear implication was that inner-city black women were having more children out-of-wedlock because of the availability of welfare. In the good old days when welfare was not available illegitimacy rates were lower. The problem was that the thesis was not true.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 1995 that "the rate of babies being born to unwed black teenagers—about 80 per 1,000 unmarried teenagers—remained virtually the same from 1920 through 1990." As Michael Lind summarized matters, "The rise in the number of illegitimate births from 23 percent in 1960 to 62 percent in 1990 reflects, not greater fertility by poor blacks, but a significant decline in the number of legitimate births among the non-poor black majority." In fact, Christopher Jencks estimated that if married black women had borne as many children in 1987 as they did in 1960, "the proportion of black babies born out-of-wedlock would have risen only from 23 percent in 1960 to 29 percent by 1987." Nevertheless, Murray's thesis came to have wide acceptance, providing the expert validation for the substance of much of the current welfare legislation and the press analyses which followed.

Where do we go from here in the marketing of experts on welfare policy? Recently, we began hearing calls for triage management of the poor through the removal of dependent and neglected inner-city youngsters from single-parent homes to state institutions, camps, to what Murray calls "lavishly funded orphanages" and conservative commentator James Q. Wilson names "boarding

schools." Joining the call for removal is William Bennett. These proposals are put in the language of societal betterment. For example, conservative criminologist John DiIulio's New York Times Op-Ed piece on the need to put more black children in institutions was entitled, "Save the Children."—"Make the cities safer and get the kids out of them." To those acquainted with the previous writings of these apostle of punishment, the newly discovered rhetoric rings hollow indeed. The goal of these and similar proposals is to put in place the institutional means to efficiently manage the marginalized in our society. DiIulio's more recent marketing of the concept of a coming generation of "superpredator" juveniles who will ostensibly engulf the nation in violence in a few years is beneath contempt. The racism is palpable.

Though based in no significant research, these proposals are consistent with conservative views of the so-called "underclass." As Wilson put it in "The Public Interest" in 1992: "The reason why it is called an underclass and why we worry about it is that its members have a bad character: They mug, do drugs, desert children, and scorn education."

Again, the suggestions for removal of "at risk" youngsters of the poor to institutions is hardly new. It harkens back to the Nixon administration when the idea of genetic screening for incipient criminality was suggested by Dr. Arnold Hutschnecker, a friend and former personal physician to Nixon. Hutschnecker proposed chromosomal screening of every six-year-old male in the country—looking for XYY chromosomes, which might be associated with violent offending in males. As part of the program, Dr. Hutschnecker proposed sending what he called "hard-core six-year-olds" to camps where they could be taught to be "good social animals."

In light of our recent approach to fashioning welfare reform, I fear that this time around, Hutschnecker would be included among those experts to whom we look to inform the substance of national policy. ■

# In Germany, No Battle in the Media

BY MARTIN GEHLEN

The headline has significance: "Welfare—your explicit right" reads the title of the latest government brochure explaining the 1996 German welfare overhaul. The reform legislation was enacted about the same time President Bill Clinton signed the controversial American welfare bill.

Germany and the United States, like almost all industrial nations, are trying to implement money-saving reforms in their social safety nets. But welfare reform in a European nation and welfare reform in the United States are two very different things. In contrast to America, continental Europe acts on the basis of a fairly stable consensus among all societal forces—parliament, government and political parties as well as non-governmental organizations, churches and the media—that welfare benefits are an indisputable personal right for all people in need and not primarily a morally dubious handout for social freeloaders. And compared with the United States, welfare payments in Germany and other European states are relatively generous, calculated to cover the costs of living and minimal participation in the activities of society.

Given this background, the press has no large and spectacular welfare battle to fight. The media coverage in general is hardly ingrained with any doubts about the design and justification of the basic features of a modern welfare state. Instead of philosophical reflections on typical characteristics of deserving and undeserving poor, the media concentrates on features about the lives, daily hurdles and social conditions of individual welfare recipients and their families. In addition, the coverage deals predominantly with legislative technicalities or discusses the pros and cons of certain reform specifics.

In the 1996 German reform debate,

for example, the only controversial aspect was the intention of the government to switch the already existing non-mandatory system of moderate financial sanctions for people refusing to work into a mandatory one. During the last two decades the sanction, a 25 percent cutback of the public payment, was left to the individual welfare case worker and could be handled differently from office to office even in the same city. On the other hand, however, the latest reform also extended other forms of financial help, acknowledging the fact that, for instance, financing a place in a homeless shelter is much more costly than the payment of rent to prevent landlords from putting people on the streets.

Even the issue of welfare misuse hardly makes the headlines. Such misuse of government help exists, but in the computer age these are rare exceptions, considered unfit to dominate the public debate or prove a general mistrust against the needy part of the population. In contrast, the prevailing aspect is that everybody can end up in economic hardship through loss of job or insufficient old-age security, as well as by difficult circumstances such as divorce, single motherhood or chronic sickness.

But the press coverage is not only a mirror of an unspectacular and more or less rational public attitude, it is also a reflection of the general setup of the welfare system. Most European social safety nets, Germany's included, follow the principle of inclusion and integration. This means that recipients of public support are treated equally regardless of their living status or reason of need. Two-parent families, single people, single mothers, handicapped or elderly citizens receive welfare money no matter whether they are poor because of unemployment, divorce, in-

sufficient pensions, mental or physical incapacities, long-term sickness or extreme debt. Among the 2.5 million welfare recipients in Germany, one-third are legal aliens, mostly from southern or eastern Europe. Their largest subgroup consists of nearly 450,000 civil war refugees from former Yugoslavia.

Since 1993, the only group with a different welfare status in Germany consist of seekers of political asylum. They are entitled to welfare payments the moment they arrive in the country. But the level of support for these 60,000 new applicants a year is 30 percent below the regular level for German



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citizens and consists of support for clothing, accommodation and food but not for "social participation." However, those seven or eight percent that are granted asylum are again entitled to regular welfare payments. Given this predominantly integrative setup of the welfare system, it is much harder in Europe to single out certain recipients, to make clear distinctions between deserving and undeserving poor and dispute their rights.

Because the United States has a highly fragmented welfare system which treats people very differently, it is easier for politicians or the media to orchestrate popular misuse by certain groups. In addition, single adults or, to a large extent, two-parent families are principally excluded. The handicapped are served by a separate support system, as are the elderly with insufficient pensions. The United States welfare system itself focuses mainly on single mothers with children younger than 18 years. That makes it much easier for conservative politicians and their media allies to single out welfare mothers for public scorn.

In contrast, the press coverage in Europe does not primarily point fingers at the needy and their alleged undeservingness, but deals mainly with the question of why so many people have no other choice but to live on public support. The responsibility is not seen primarily to lie with the poor themselves but with the setup of the societal and economic framework—the system of employment, income transfer and empowerment of people to care for themselves. Welfare is a symptom, not a cure for social and political mismanagement. Welfare is only the last resort a society can and has to provide, but it is not automatically—as research shows—the final stage of an unlucky or wayward life. The upward mobility of German welfare recipients is surprisingly high, because the level of payment, supported by a societal consensus, is sufficient enough to give people a realistic chance to piece their lives together and move back to self-sufficiency again. And that certainly is, as the government welfare brochure correctly says, everybody's "explicit right." ■

## Welfare in Europe

Welfare legislation in Europe is a complicated patchwork full of national traditions and curiosities. The majority of the Western European nations provide welfare benefits for all people in need, including legal aliens or asylum seekers whose legal process is underway. The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Ireland, Britain and Scandinavia grant certain minimum standard payments according to economic need by national legislation, mostly caused by long-term unemployment, unwed motherhood, divorce, mental or physical incapacity or insufficient old-age security. Mostly, the amount is calculated according to the national poverty line. In addition, people in need should at least be enabled to follow public affairs. For example, in Germany, television sets may not be taken away from welfare recipients, who are also not required to pay the mandatory monthly fees for the public networks. Ireland has a so-called "deserted wife's benefit." Deserted women are entitled to public support if they are older than 40 years and not living with another man.

In other countries, like Denmark, Spain, France or the north of Italy, welfare payments are the responsibility of the regional level of the public administration. The federal level grants a minimum pension for old people or provides financial support for the disabled. The regional or local level, however, takes care of all other forms of welfare support. In Denmark, the whole system is explicitly designed not primarily to hand out welfare checks but to assist people to return to a normal life. Therefore the social administration focuses very much on counseling, on help raising children and on public care for family members in need. In France, the welfare check is seen

as the last resort. If somebody has used up all his private resources, he might be eligible for local welfare payments. Old people are entitled to a minimum income. Since 1988, France has established a national welfare system for citizens who are unable to work. Since 1991, Spain has introduced further welfare guarantees on the federal level for old and disabled people as well as children with deadbeat fathers. Greece, Portugal and the south of Italy have practically no welfare system. These social functions are still performed by the existing networks of extended families.

Given this background, it is complicated and difficult in the process of creating a unified Europe to introduce basic criteria for social support. Therefore, after some failed attempts in the late 1980's, the European Commission developed a policy of "minimal social standards." But besides some details of labor protection legislation or minimum vacation time, nothing has yet been achieved in the field of welfare legislation. The ultimate goal is, however, to form a basis for social welfare for all European citizens on a median level. This means that countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain or Portugal have to substantially increase their social spending and create or complete national systems of minimum support. Other countries with already high levels of public support on the national level can keep their systems in place and are not forced to downscale the social rights of their citizens. Otherwise, a move to cut support would certainly trigger severe anti-European sentiment in populations traditionally used to a system of liberal social protection, placing the whole project of European unification in jeopardy.

—Martin Gehlen ■

# In Japan, Health Care Is the Issue

BY MELVIN GOO

Unlike in America, welfare in the sense of cash grants to the poor is not a raging issue in Japan. But health care is, and Japan is moving toward enactment of a national system of public insurance for long-term care. The United States enacted such a system in 1988 and repealed it the next year as well-off senior citizens protested the higher Medicare premiums they would have to pay.

The U.S. health-insurance portability law passed last August allows individuals who itemize tax deductions to deduct part of their premiums for private insurance for long-term care. Employers also are allowed to deduct such costs to cover workers. But the coverage is not common in company health plans, and only the relatively well-off can afford to buy their own policies and benefit from deductibility. Yet people across the economic spectrum, poor no less than rich, get sick and need long-term care, in the United States no less than in Japan.

That one country appears likely to enact public insurance for such care this year while the other country has no prospect of doing so any year soon tells a great deal about differences in the moods and values of the two societies. Both are moving away from reliance on government, but the United States is doing so more rapidly and sharply than Japan. Both have huge government budget deficits, but the United States has given greater priority to trimming its shortfall than has Japan. Both face a future in which the elderly will constitute an increasingly large portion of the population, but this change will be greater and arrive faster in Japan than in the United States. Both are prosperous nations, but the United States ap-

pears less willing than Japan to spend on health care for its people as a whole. The United States is individual-oriented; Japan is group- and society-oriented. People who need long-term care in the United States will be largely on their own. People who need long-term care in Japan will have better odds of being cared for without ruining themselves or their families financially.

Those differences reflect disparities between the two countries in history as well as contemporary culture and politics. Such vast contrasts cannot be attributed mainly to how the news media in each country operates. Yet it's imaginable that if somehow the American press, with all its ferocity, were suddenly transplanted into Japan, the Japanese could not count on public insurance for long-term care, either.

Japan does not have talk radio, which in America has shown greater capacity to stir up resentments than to generate compassion. Major Japanese newspapers are not instinctively and vehemently opposed in editorial policy to government social programs, as some major American newspapers are. The Japanese news media does not have the kind of adversarial relationship with government that the American media has, a relationship that sometimes contributes to a negative tone in coverage of government initiatives.

Japan, like the United States, is in the midst of reassessing and revamping its social-welfare programs, though the agenda in Japan differs from that in the United States. Public insurance for long-term care is one aspect of numerous prospective far-reaching changes to Japan's health-care system, which has provided universal insurance coverage since 1961 but which is beset by sky-

rocketing costs and straitjacket regulations. Corporate pension plans and the public pension system, the counterpart of the U.S. Social Security system, also have become subjects for reform because Japan's tradition of lifetime employment at the same company has weakened and because underfunding of pension obligations has become more evident.

As for American-style welfare, relatively few people in Japan receive cash payments. In fiscal 1995, the number was about 882,000, just 0.7 percent of the 125.6 million population. Able-bodied persons are not eligible. Nor are individuals who can get help from their families. Individuals must use up all of



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their assets before they can become eligible for welfare payments. The social stigma, the difficulty of being approved, and the strict reputation of some case workers has caused some people who would be eligible to refrain from applying.

A 77-year-old woman and her 41-year-old son, long bedridden, were found dead in April last year in their apartment in Tokyo, about one month after they had died of starvation. "We finished our last meal this morning," the mother wrote in a diary entry dated March 11, 1996. "From tomorrow, we won't have anything to eat." They would have been eligible for welfare but hadn't sought help. "We should endure the difficulty on our own, because we will have more trouble if unkind people are assigned to handle our case," the mother had written in her diary.

The case received extensive press coverage, which helped raise questions about whether the Japanese government and society as a whole are doing enough for those unable to care for themselves. A year-end review in *The Daily Yomiuri*—the English-language newspaper published by *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, whose daily morning circulation of more than 10.1 million makes it the nation's most widely read newspaper—said, "In a country where more than 90 percent of the population count themselves middle class, the poor are not only underprivileged but also a minority scarcely noticed by mainstream society."

Stephen J. Anderson, an American who is an associate professor at the International University of Japan and author of a 1993 book titled "Welfare Policy and Politics in Japan," sees the press in Japan as having helped direct societal attention toward the needs of disadvantaged children, tuberculosis patients, the isolated aging and a number of other groups on the fringes. "The press has a tradition of raising interest and organizing a response among the middle class in the area of welfare policies," he says. He adds that "this organizing of public opinion is indirect" but nonetheless influential.

Anderson cites the case of homeless people in Shinjuku, on the east side of

Tokyo. The number of homeless in Tokyo, compared with major American cities, is relatively low. Even so, the homeless are visible. In Shinjuku, about 350 have lived in the train station's underground concourse, using cardboard from boxes as makeshift mattresses and walls. The government periodically evicts the homeless, at least temporarily, to clean the concourse. "I think some middle class folks have no sympathy for the homeless, but the press is very sympathetic," Anderson says. "The *Asahi* (the nation's second-largest newspaper, with daily morning circulation of more than 8.3 million) had a table with 10 homeless men's profiles and stories. Thus middle class response is directed, if not organized, into a sympathetic channel that seeks moderation from public officials."

In such ways, the press in Japan plays a role not much different from that of the press in America. But a striking difference now in the Japanese press, compared not only with the American press but also with the Japanese press itself until recently, is the extensive coverage on issues of aging. This is what puts pensions and health care, including long-term nursing care, on the front burner. The number of people 65 or older will exceed by the end of this year the number under 15 years old, the government's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research predicts. The institute estimates that the elderly, defined as people 65 or older, will constitute more than 20 percent of the population by 2006, up from 14.6 percent in 1995. It estimates the figure will rise to 27.4 percent in 2025 and 32.3 percent in 2050. This disproportionately large growth of the elderly, which means an increasingly smaller portion of the population will be working and paying taxes on salaries, presents enormous economic consequences.

The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*—or *Nikkei*, whose daily morning circulation of about three million is bigger than that of any other business daily in the world—established a special team of 10 reporters and an editor last year to focus on pension problems. The team produced about 60 articles, which

started in March and continued through June. About half ran on the front page, in the upper left corner. Front-page articles in Japanese newspapers don't jump. The pension articles on the front page ran as five separate series, each with its own subtitle but all under a common logo: "Pension System Miscalculation."

The articles were a mixture of investigative journalism, explanatory journalism, analysis and advocacy. They called for reform. They stood out as special articles but maintained a moderate tone characteristic of calls for change in Japan. The first article in the first series concluded, for example, "To build a national consensus on sharing social-security costs in the rapidly aging society, efforts must be made to change the current pension system into one that can better cope with the new social and economic environment."

Like most news stories in Japanese newspapers—those from foreign correspondents are exceptions—the articles carried no bylines, though the last article in each series included a box containing the names of the team's reporters. The members used no special techniques. "Our reporters interviewed many people," Naotoshi Okada, the Deputy Editor for Economic News in charge of the team, says. The reporters typically started their workday sometime in the morning and toiled past midnight, which is routine for many reporters on major Japanese newspapers.

Some Japanese editors familiar with American journalism say that Japanese newswriting tends to be more objective than American newswriting. That is true in the sense that many Japanese news articles report facts or statements without analysis and without comment by anyone challenging the contents. In special cases, however, as in *Nikkei's* pension articles, Japanese newspapers campaign on the front page for change.

"We think the social-welfare system in Japan is now out of date, because of structural changes in the economy and society," Okada, the deputy editor, says. "The social-welfare system was constructed on the belief that economic expansion would just keep continuing.

That scenario has collapsed." Japan's bubble of inflated assets began deflating in 1990, and the economy has yet to fully recover.

Another Nikkei team of 10 reporters, again with Okada as the deputy editor in charge, was formed in August to examine health care. The articles, which started in November, again are a mixture of investigative journalism, explanatory journalism, analysis and advocacy. They run under the logo "Sick Health-Care System." "The Japanese medical system is out of date," Okada says. "The system was created by the government and is not working well." The series has pointed to inefficiency, rapid growth in costs, doctors keeping patients in the dark about their condition and other problems.

The pension and health-care series last year and this year are the first series on those subjects published on The Nihon Keizai Shimbun's front page. "Many of us now think that social welfare has become one of the top issues for the Japanese economy," Okada says.

The Asahi Shimbun, the most liberal of the national dailies, first assigned reporters from its economics department to cover the Ministry of Health and Welfare about three years ago. Until then, the ministry was covered only by reporters from the newspaper's politics and metro departments. The addition of reporting by the economics department has resulted in stories that previously would not have been written challenging ministry policy, because the economics reporters question costs in ways that the political and metro reporters did not.

Yoshiko Hayashi is an economics reporter assigned to cover social welfare for The Asahi. She characterizes her articles on the ministry's proposal for public insurance for long-term care as negative, in that they have raised questions about the ministry's cost assumptions. She thinks the Diet, Japan's parliament, will amend parts of the ministry's proposal. But she expects a bill creating the insurance system to be passed. Her articles have not questioned the need for the system, and her impression is that coverage by her competitors also has not done so. "I think

that we need such a system," she says. "My own mother had a hard time taking care of my father's parents. Most people have had or know other people who have had such experiences. We have to take care of the elderly."

A TV drama that centers around the lives of a couple and their five daughters, all grown, has captivated Japanese women who see their frustrations portrayed on the screen. In the series, "Relentlessness Is Found Everywhere," the third daughter lives with her husband, grade-school son and mother-in-law. The mother-in-law has Alzheimer's disease, and the daughter-in-law is expected to care for her. The series, aired Thursday evenings on the Tokyo Broadcasting Systems channel, depicts the agonies and conflicts that arise in the family as a result.

"The traditional assumption that somehow wives are supposed to take care of their husband's parents in sickness and in senility still works against modern Japanese women," says Asako Ishibashi, a reporter at The Nikkei Weekly, the English-language newspaper published by Nihon Keizai Shimbun Inc. This role of the wife as care-provider for her husband's parents is assumed especially if the husband is the eldest son. Says Ishibashi, 28 and single: "My mother often warns me: 'Don't marry the eldest son.'"

The changing role of women in Japanese society, traditionally taught to walk three steps behind their husbands, is among the reasons public insurance for long-term care is widely supported. The insurance would cover services, in family homes as well as in public and private nursing homes, that daughters-in-law traditionally provided alone.

No one should expect the insurance system to be perfect. Arguments over cost, quality and quantity are bound to persist long after the system's proposed start in the year 2000. But the coverage still would promise more reassurance to people than if they had nothing. ■

## Frederick Wiseman Camera in the Open



JAE ROOSEVELT

In terms of the ethics of the biz, so to speak, from my point of view it's a situation where ethics and strategy coincide. Because I think it is extremely important to be absolutely honest to people about what you are doing. Because their bullshit meter is just as good as yours. And that also happens to be what works best. It's not the sole reason to do it. As far as I'm concerned there's never any deception involved. The camera and tape recorder are always out in the open. Never pretend to shoot when you're not shooting. So if anybody asks to look through the camera, they look through the camera. I try to do everything I can to demystify the process....The more people know about what's going on the easier it is and the more they're likely to come forward with suggestions. There's nothing ever hidden.—Frederick Wiseman, independent filmmaker, ("Titicut Follies," etc.) when asked at a Nieman Fellows seminar January 17, 1997, if he took pictures without the subjects' knowledge.

# Dershowitz on Reporters and Lawyers

*Defense Attorney Compares Roles and Talks About O. J. Simpson, Richard Jewell and Mike Barnicle*

Here are excerpts from a seminar by M. Alan Dershowitz, Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard University, at the Nieman Foundation November 14, 1996. Dershowitz was a member of the defense team during O. J. Simpson's criminal trial, which acquitted the former football star of murdering his wife and her friend, but not during his civil trial, which found him liable for the wrongful death of the two. His latest book, "The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century," has just been published by Little Brown.

**W**e are the two most hated, misunderstood and important professions in America. We are the only two professions who have specific constitutional amendments devoted to protecting our role. You enforce the First Amendment; we enforce the Sixth Amendment.

Nobody hates us all the time and everybody hates us some of the time. I am adored by people when I represent, for example, somebody like Natan Sharansky. I'm invited to the White House and everybody loves me. I'm standing up against the Evil Empire, and I'm trying to help a man whom all Americans love.

When I represent a woman who has killed her husband after being abused, I'm adored by feminists, but when I represent Penthouse magazine against censorship, I'm hated by some of the same feminists. I'll illustrate this by a story. About a week after the Simpson [criminal] case I was walking down the street in New York, and a woman came over to me. She was obviously Jewish (she let me know that in a second). She said, "I used to love you and adore you. When you wrote 'Chutzpah,' when you represented Sharansky and when you represented Pollard [Jonathan Pollard, Israeli spy] I loved you. You disappointed me when you took on the Simpson case. You really disappointed me." And I said to her, "You're wrong. You're absolutely wrong." She said, "I'm not wrong for being disappointed." I said, "You're not wrong for being disappointed. You are wrong for ever loving me. You misunderstood what I was doing as a lawyer. I was not an ethnic warrinr on behalf of Jews. I was fighting for the rights of somebody who was in trouble."

A block later an African-American



man came over, hugged me and said, "I love what you're doing. I love you." I said, "Don't love me, you'll be disappointed. Because the next time I represent a white man who is accused of killing a black man, you're going to say I'm a traitor. Don't misunderstand me."

The media has the same problem. When you write a piece extremely critical of somebody who is disliked by other people, "Oh, you're terrific. You're great. You're wonderful." Then when you write another piece which doesn't satisfy somebody's agenda, "You're dishonest. You're unethical. You make too much money doing it."

I represent wealthy defendants but I also represent lots of poor defendants. We have one wonderful criterion in my office. We try not to know whether a person is wealthy or poor when we first decide whether to take a case.

Obviously if her name is Leona Helmsley, we know. It is interesting that even Helmsley had a following. Some people loved the fact that I represented her. They would write me letters and send flowers and do all kinds of wonderful things. Nobody ever mentioned the fact that I was getting paid a large fee for representing her. The

money comes up when you don't like the person.

Everybody focuses on the Simpson case. I think I must have averaged 12 cents an hour. I mean it's no secret to any of you that he owes his lawyers lots and lots of money. He owes everybody lots and lots of money, and we all put in lots and lots of hours.

Potential clients have said to me they don't want me to represent them because I've been associated with O. J. Simpson. I think Bob Shapiro has had the same experience. I know that Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld had the same experience.

You might ask why we did it. We did it probably for the same reasons that most of you do great stories. (We have that in common, too. We try to do good and well at the same time.) Nobody can dispute the fact that lawyers have lots of ego; when we take a case we want to win it and we want the biggest case we can possibly get. People ask me, "Why did I take the Simpson case?" That would be like asking Bernstein and Woodward, "Why did you cover Watergate?"

Willy Sutton robbed banks because that's where the money was. Journalists take the big stories because that's what people are interested in. Lawyers take the big cases for similar reasons. When I agreed to join the Simpson defense team he was facing a possible death sentence.

As a teacher, particularly, how could I not take a case like Simpson's, which becomes the metaphor for our justice system, for better or for worse?

People say to me, "Oh, it must be interesting to come in contact with people like that, celebrities." Some of them are the most boring people on the face of the earth. You just don't want to spend long times with most of these folks.

After we won the von Bulow case, he decided to have a victory party. I never go to victory parties, because there's always some dead person who's either been killed by your client or not. Von Bulow didn't tell me it was a victory party. He just said he was having a small

dinner party for a group of people from New York.

And I show up at the dinner party, and sitting next to me is Norman Mailer. And Claus von Bulow holds forth. Norman Mailer is just enthralled for about 15 minutes. He suddenly gets up. I said, "Why are you leaving?" He said, "That man is innocent. I thought I would be sitting opposite the table from a man who had actually tried to kill his wife. I don't think he did it. There's nothing more boring than a man falsely accused of a crime." And he just walked out.

Do not think that going to a dinner party with Claus von Bulow, Leona Helmsley, O. J. Simpson and Mike Tyson is necessarily going to be a stimulating evening, especially when the only subject they want to talk about is how you can save their rear end.

But I want to get back to the point that we really do have an enormous amount in common. We're both snoops. We both have professional curiosity. We want to get to the bottom of issues. We want to get to the facts. We want to find out what really happened. We want to protect broader interests. We want to do good for ourselves and we want to do well for the interests that we serve. And often the better we do professionally, that is, the more we serve these interests, the more wealthy and famous we become.

Woodward and Bernstein didn't have to work after they broke the Watergate story. They did, and particularly to Woodward's credit continued to have an extremely distinguished career in journalism. Bernstein went a different route. Woodward will go down in history as a man for whom Watergate was one important beginning of a very distinguished career in journalism, who will be remembered for many books and stories, and I surely want to be more like Woodward than Bernstein.

I don't want to be remembered for having done the Simpson case. For me, that was one case, not the most important in my career, not the most interesting, not the most stimulating and certainly not the most rewarding.

People resent success when you're pursuing constitutional rights. I was adored by the press when I started my career, and did many of my cases for free and did mostly capital punishment and civil liberties cases. Once you start representing people with a little bit of dough, you become very vulnerable. And appropriately so. I'm not in any way critical of the press for the kind of criticism that it has directed at me. Particularly factual criticism.

You start reading the same adjective every time your name is described. The Boston Globe always describes me as self-promoting and then they call me on the phone all the time and say, "Would you like to have an interview?" I say, "No. If I have an interview with you, you'll say I'm self-promoting." And they reply, "We really want to talk to you on the phone."

I don't call journalists. I respond to journalists and I'm described as self-promoting. And, you know, you go to your grave with a phrase, "Dershowitz, self-promoting." It's perfectly fair game.

What I want to talk about in light of the fact that we do have in common so much is how differently we treat our professions internally. For better or worse, lawyers obsess about legal ethics. We have bar associations. We have committees. We have rules. We know exactly what you can do and what you can't do. We know that if a client is going to lie on the witness stand you can't put him on the stand. We know that you can't make certain kinds of arguments and you can make others. The rules may be silly and trivial and may not reflect everyone's personal morality, but at least we are very closely governed by rules of ethics and we pay a high price if we violate any of those rules.

Journalists have been allergic to rules of ethics for the most part. I would be the first to defend the journalist against violating any governmentally imposed rule of ethics. It would be utterly inconsistent with the First Amendment. It would be as if we set up rules of ethics for churches or synagogues or mosques. There has to be an ambit of freedom.

The ambit of freedom, particularly

under the First Amendment, has to be as close to absolute as is possible. That doesn't mean that the profession can't have self-governing ethics, that it can't have guidelines and rules that are taken very, very seriously. I know there have been attempts to create rules of ethics to govern the journalistic profession, but they are not enforced internally. They're not taken all that seriously. For example, if a journalist breaks the cardinal rule of journalism and reveals a source when he or she is not supposed to, what happens to that journalist?

It happened to Steve Brill [publisher of *The American Lawyer*] very early in his career. He was exposed for having violated a source, and nothing happened to him. He went on to his career.

**M**ike Barnicle [of *The Boston Globe*] ran a story about me when I attacked one of his favorite characters, William Bulger, the current President of the University of Massachusetts, who was found with \$250,000 in his bank account that he couldn't explain. I became obsessed with exposing his corruption. Bulger asked Barnicle to do an attack piece on me. It was quite a good piece, because Barnicle is quite a good journalist. About 80 percent of it was accurate and funny and pretty critical of me. But there was an issue of one of Bulger's henchmen having made an ethnic comment. Harvey Silverglate, a colleague of mine, was in a case in which he had subpoenaed certain records of Bulger and went to *The Globe* with the results. One of Bulger's friends who is of Irish background went to *The Globe* journalist who is of Irish background and said to him—nobody disputed this—what is a guy named so and so with the Irish name doing believing a guy named Silverglate against a guy named Bulger?

It was an attempt to talk to *The Globe* reporter, one Irishman to the other, saying don't believe a Jew, and that became an issue in the case. So, to really make the attack on me effective Barnicle had to include some racial or ethnic things. So he made up out of whole cloth the following story.

He said: When Dershowitz and I were walking down the street together

in Harvard Square—I've never walked down the street in Harvard Square with Barnicle—we saw an Asian woman walking down the street, and Alan turned to me, and said, Don't you just love Asian women, they're so submissive.

In one sentence he had painted me as a racist, sexist pervert and potential adulterer. That was a wonderful sentence and very effective. Groups of Asian students came to me and said, "We have real difficulty coming to your class, knowing your attitude." I said, "You should have difficulty with any man who expressed anything like that, but, of course, I never expressed anything like that." Finally Barnicle admitted publicly that he had made the whole story up from top to bottom. And there was no sanction. We did our research and found that he had made up the same story, had been sued and had to pay \$35,000 to somebody a few years earlier. He wasn't even imaginative enough to make up a different story.

So there are these quite serious problems that journalists face, and the problem is today that it's an all or nothing matter. I get I would say more calls every year—if I had to put a number on them it would be 500 calls a year—from people who want to sue the media.

They are furious. They are just so mad, and I have talked all but one out of doing it. And, you know, I pride myself really in believing in the First Amendment, that you all have the right to be wrong, and that's the most important right you have in America. The right to be wrong, the right to make an honest mistake.

I was the law clerk on the Supreme Court when *The New York Times* versus Sullivan was written.

**I** strongly believe in not using government agencies to in any way go after the press. We've all seen what happens in other countries where there are press controls. If you don't think freedom of the press is good in America, just go and spend some time in other parts of the world, even free parts of the world, and you'll see. I don't have to persuade you how important it is.

Q.—Do we have the right to be wrong

when we make something up intentionally?

A.—No. I was going to get to that point. You have the right to be honestly wrong, to make an honest mistake—[but] the right to deliberately plant a false story is a very very—

Q.—That's what Barnicle does.

A.—I know. I know. And I don't think he had that right. I thought very seriously [about suing]. There's an alternative and I think the press has to take it very, very seriously. We ought to think very seriously of having a procedure, say within the Nieman Foundation. If anybody thinks they have a legitimate lawsuit against the media for something that is not protected by the Constitution they sign a waiver, giving up their right to sue in court. The media submits to a no more than one day lawyer-free binding arbitration. No financial settlements. No money. Half the day the aggrieved person gets to present his point of view, why he thinks he's been libeled, slandered, defamed. The second half of the day the newspaper gets to present its point of view. There are three judges, distinguished retired journalists, who have great ethical integrity. All they would have the right to do and nothing more is to simply declare who was right and who was wrong—to do what a good ombudsman would do, but very few do when they work for the newspapers and get paid by them. A newspaper would have to sign on and all it would have to agree to was to publish the findings.

I have to tell you that 90 percent of lawsuits would be resolved this way, because people don't want to sue for money. People want to sue because they think they've been aggrieved and they want somebody to tell them that they're right. They're not always right. And they're not always completely right. Sometimes the baby has to be split in half, two-thirds, one-third or whatever. But give them a chance to have a fair adjudication, and they will go away.

It will be profitable for the newspapers. The only people who will be hurt are the lawyers.

I don't think you need lawyers to do this kind of thing. All you need is an

opportunity to really sit down and listen for a little bit of time and decide whether the person has been aggrieved. I've been urging this point of view for a while, and I can't get the newspapers to agree. They think they're in a good position now because they win most of their libel suits, and they should win most of their libel suits. What they don't realize is that a) they're diminishing their credibility, b) it's costing them a lot of money in legal fees that are unnecessary.

I can't distinguish between what Barnicle did and what Janet Cook [of *The Washington Post*, who was forced to give up a Pulitzer Prize for a story about a non-existent child drug addict] did. Janet Cook was closer to the truth. Her figure was a composite. Probably everything she said was true about people in certain areas of the country, and you could find people like that. She didn't do her job. She was a lousy journalist. And now she is selling cosmetics.

Mike Barnicle is not selling cosmetics and many other distinguished journalists who have made up stories are not selling cosmetics. I don't suggest that they should be. Mike Barnicle shouldn't be selling cosmetics. He should have been suspended from the paper for a month. He should have gotten a sanction that makes it clear that what he did *The Globe* deems to be wrong. He sells lots of newspapers.

**H**ow I persuade other people not to sue is very simple. I just tell them what the case is going to look like, what is going to be demanded of them, depositions and interrogatories, and their whole life is going to be exposed to the public view.

It's a little bit like what used to be the case with rape victims in the 1950's and 1960's. Why did rape victims not bring complaints? Not because they weren't telling the truth—they were raped—but because not every single one of them was a virgin, and not every single one of them wanted their mother and father to hear the details of their prior sex life. Or their current boyfriend or their husbands.

Today, as a condition of bringing a

libel or a slander suit, you have to have your entire life spread out on the public record. Few people are prepared to do that. So the newspapers win, but they win for reasons that are often unrelated to whether they are right or wrong, and so I would love to send to your newspapers a message that this is the right thing to do, and it would help the First Amendment. I think it would help the integrity of the journalistic profession.

It's really important to begin to think hard about what's right and what's wrong journalistically. For example, in this room every one of you work for a media that probably has a different rule on whether you will print a negative statement about a public figure which is unattributed to a specific source.

It's a hard question. It's not easy. I mean I can see circumstances where it's important to say that an unattributed source said something critical of the president of the United States—but I can also see arguments that says, no. You can't just do that. Some newspapers split the difference and say a source critical [of] the president or a source close to the Republican Party. Some newspapers will not print certain kinds of information unless the source is prepared to come forward.

We have a rule in the legal profession about that. It's called the hearsay rule. We will not allow anybody to accuse anybody else—there are some exceptions—unless we can get to the credibility of the accuser.

Should journalists have similar rules? These are issues that ought to be debated much more.

Q.—Maybe you can talk about the Richard Jewell case and *The Atlanta Constitution*.

A.—I think it's a broader problem than [libel]. I think journalists, the media, play footsie with law enforcement all the time. You need law enforcement sources and law enforcement needs you. My own sense of the Jewell case is that the government may have planted that story for what they believed was a good law-enforcement reason. They may have wanted Jewell to think he was the major suspect to see how he would respond to that kind of publicity.

Most people who get in trouble get in trouble not for what they did, but for what they did to cover up what they did. That's one of the first rules of law. They didn't have the goods on Jewell. I think the government honestly thought he was guilty. If you look at some of the evidence, it doesn't pass the threshold of probable cause or come anywhere close to it but, you know, there were a few suspicious items. I've read the search warrant in the case, and the judge was terribly at fault.

Once the search warrant was granted, the journalists had not only a right, but an obligation, to go with the story.

The real issue was in the beginning when *The Atlanta Constitution* obviously received a leak from some law enforcement authority that he was a suspect. When you get a call from law enforcement authorities—and they're credible, they've given you good stories before—and you could attribute it, it's hard to fault the journalistic profession for going with this.

**I** think the major fault here is with the leakers. The real question, too, is when journalists are prepared to burn their sources. I bet there's some debate within the offices of *The Atlanta Constitution*, particularly if they get sued—and they will get sued—as to whether they should disclose their source. [Since the seminar Jewell has filed suit.] The jury will probably be instructed that, although they have the right not to reveal their source, [it] can take that into consideration in deciding whether they had a good faith basis for printing the story.

So it's going to be a very, very tough issue. Of course, a good lawyer can find out the source in another way. The way it usually works is—and I've heard this happen many times—you go to the journalist. The journalist won't tell you on the record who the source is, but will sometimes tell you off the record. Then you subpoena three or four people, one of whom is the source, and put them under oath. You ask them a question, and remember the source can't ever say, "I refuse to tell you whether I was the source." It's a privilege that only the journalist has. It's not

like the lawyer-client privilege. The source can't invoke any privilege. He has to answer that question.

By the way, I think journalists have [a] blind spot in much the same way lawyers do. If you have a wonderful story which you think is going to win a great prize, and suddenly a little lousy piece of evidence comes in, and it just would hurt the theory, and would make it much more cumbersome, and would become the second graph and really undercut the first graph, I think you often will blind yourself to the reality of that. You won't do anything conscious. If somebody puts it on your desk and says, "This is it," you will print it, but if it's kind of caught in your peripheral vision, you will kind of discount it and avoid it. We all like things to be clean and neat. I'd much prefer to represent innocent people whom I love. And you'd much prefer to write a story defeating Jesse Helms.

**W**hat do I think about newspapers writing about people's sex lives? I think in America it's very important for journalists to cover the sex lives of presidents and the personal values of presidents. Let me tell you why.

In France, it would be absolutely wrong to do it. Nobody could care less whether Mitterand was having an affair. Why? You rarely saw Mitterand appear in public in any political context with his wife and his children. You never saw him going to church. You never saw his personal life being brought out by Mitterand. And Mitterand, therefore, had the right to say, "I am running as Mitterand, not as Mitterand and wife. Not as Mitterand and church. Not as Mitterand and children."

The politicians set the ground rules. Clinton had his arms around his wife all the time. Clinton was always in church. Clinton was always praying. I'm a Clinton supporter, and I'm telling you that it's fair to write about Clinton's private life—as long as it's true. And if Clinton did what he is said to have done to Paula Jones, that is a fair story. It does involve his ability to govern. If a man when he was the governor of the state of Arkansas—I don't believe he did it—

pulled his pants down in front of somebody, and used a state trooper to bring somebody up, and say, I'm the governor of the state, I want you to do—that's a fair story. When politicians talk about family values, you have a right to hold them to those family values.

**Q.**—What is the key problem with the U.S. justice system?

**A.**—I think there's discrimination based on wealth. One of the university presses [in England] asked me to take my book [on the Simpson criminal case] and adapt it to an international audience. I said, "But the Simpson case, that's the most atypical case. You can't learn much about the American system from the Simpson case."

They said, yes you can. Because the Simpson case showed how the American system is supposed to work in theory, when you have a very wealthy defendant with very experienced lawyers who have a jury that's willing to engage in the presumption of innocence, and is willing not to take the fact that he didn't testify against him, and really willing to apply the standard of reasonable doubt. [It] came out right. And everybody hates it.

One of the resentments is if Simpson got justice [he was acquitted in the criminal case] what about all the people who couldn't afford Simpson-type justice? That's a very big issue. The answer is not to bring everybody down to the level of the poorest, but to bring everybody up to the level that Simpson had.

We resent people who are entitled to have the best legal care. And there's a good reason for it. In medicine we're fighting against the microbes and the clogged hearts; in the legal system we're fighting against each other.

**Q.**—I understand that according to the Second Amendment citizens keeping and bearing arms is unconstitutional, but according to the opinion polls the majority of Americans citizens believe keeping and bearing arms is their right. How to bridge that gap?

**A.**—I don't think there's a gap. I do think the Second Amendment does provide for the right to bear arms. I'm one of the few civil libertarians I know who believes that. I hate guns. If I could press a button and make every gun

disappear, I would do it. I hate guns with a passion. I would never have a gun in my home. I just hate guns.

But I really do believe that for somebody who reads the First Amendment broadly, the Fourth Amendment broadly, the Fifth Amendment broadly, suddenly to read the Second Amendment narrowly is inconsistent and hypocritical. So I think that there is a constitutional right to bear arms. But I think it's a limited right. I think it's the right to have a gun in your home for self-protection. I don't think it necessarily entails the right of an automatic sub-machine gun or the right not to have it registered.

I'm a moderate on gun control. From a political point of view I'm a radical. I'd like to abolish guns, but from a balancing of constitutional perspective, I would favor the Brady Bill. I'm in favor of registration. I'm in favor of broad controls on guns. ■

## Perpetuating A Myth

I think it's a myth that journalists don't have biases. And I think people get angry when they discover that because we've been perpetuating that for a long time—*Bruce Shapiro of The New Republic on National Public Radio's "On the Media," hosted by Alex Jones, November 10, 1996.*

# Larry Flynt, the Exploiter

## Larry Flynt, the Movie

BY JOEL KAPLAN

For several weeks in the middle of my Communications Law class each semester, it seems as if the only media defendant I'm discussing is *Hustler Magazine*. And it's not as though I spend an inordinate amount of time talking about obscenity. In fact, the *Hustler Magazine* cases involve all sorts of First Amendment issues like libel, false light invasion of privacy, liability for physical harm and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

Those *Hustler* cases tend to prove the old maxim that bad cases make good law.

And as hard as it is for most responsible journalists to accept, given the often despicable, sordid and trashy nature of his magazine, Larry Flynt has done more for freedom of the press in this country than the network television stations and almost as much as *The New York Times*.

That is why it was gratifying to see how much attention was focused on "The People vs. Larry Flynt," the major motion picture released late last year about the life of the *Hustler Magazine* publisher. For while the movie accurately portrays the moneygrubbing exploitative nature behind Flynt, his pornographic empire and his dysfunctional, decadent life, it also brings to light the importance of his numerous legal fights to defend the First Amendment.

What other "R" rated movie would have as its climactic moment an oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court, where a political attack on George Washington's fitness to hold office was equated with a slanderous, sexual diatribe on Rev. Jerry Falwell?

At first blush, *Hustler's* attack on Jerry Falwell is way beyond the pale, even to those who might consider the leader of the Moral Majority to be a hypocrite. In a parody of the well-known Campari liqueur print ads, where famous people talk about the first time they sipped the elixir, *Hustler* ran a fake Campari ad about Falwell. Titled, "Jerry Falwell talks

about his first time," the ad copy purports to be an interview with Falwell where the reverend talks about his first time—not drinking Campari, but having sex. And to throw as much salt on the wound as possible, the ad has Falwell admitting that the first time he had sex was with his mother in a Virginia outhouse:

"Well we were drunk off our God-fearing asses on Campari, ginger ale and soda—that's called a Fire and Brimstone—at the time. And Mom looked better than a Baptist whore with a \$100 donation," was one of the more mild passages in the ad.

The ad was outrageous, disgusting, reckless and designed to intentionally hurt its target. But no one who read it could possibly believe it was true. And just to make sure, at the bottom of the ad was an asterisk followed by "ad parody—not to be taken seriously."

But Falwell certainly took it seriously and sued for libel, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Falwell had no chance on the invasion of privacy case—he was a public figure—nor on the libel case—the advertisement wasn't true, but it was not intended to be true. Parody by its very nature is an opinion and hence protected from libel.

That led to using a claim against the media—intentional infliction of emotional distress—that had never before been used in a First Amendment context. The court was forced to address an issue of whether the media could be held liable for speech that is patently offensive and designed to inflict emotional injury.

And Flynt left no doubt that he wanted to destroy Falwell. During the trial, he was asked if one of his objectives was to "destroy Falwell's integrity or harm it if you could?" To which Flynt responded, "to assassinate it."

The jury awarded Falwell \$200,000 for the emotional distress, which was chicken feed to his porn empire (much like the \$5.5 million Food Lion won against ABC

is spare change to Disney). Yet Flynt decided to appeal. The Court of Appeals affirmed the verdict, but the U.S. Supreme Court decided to hear the case.

The movie version does a terrific casting job of the members of the Reagan-era Supreme Court, led by William Rhenquist, Antonin Scalia and Sandra Day O'Connor. Based on the extremism of Larry Flynt and the conservative nature of the court and Jerry Falwell, it is not surprising that the religious conservatives and anti-porn crusaders believed they had a lock on a major Supreme Court victory.

But what Falwell's supporters never realized, and what many anti-media bashers on talk radio still do not realize, is that the conservative Supreme Court that now occupies those nine seats has a strong appreciation for First Amendment liberties.

Thus it was Rhenquist, writing for a unanimous Supreme Court (8-0; Anthony Kennedy did not take part in the case), who declared, "We must decide whether a public figure may recover damages for emotional harm caused by the publication of an ad parody offensive to him and doubtless gross and repugnant in the eyes of most."

"(Falwell) would have us find that a State's interest in protecting public figures from emotional distress is sufficient to deny First Amendment protection to speech that is patently offensive and is intended to inflict emotional injury, even when that speech could not reasonably have been interpreted as stating actual facts about the public figure involved. This we decline to do."

Rhenquist and the other members of the court correctly ascertained that if Falwell had won this case, every political cartoon-

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## LETTERS

ist, editorial writer and "Saturday Night Live" comedian would be facing lawsuits about how their cartoon or skit that, for example, distorted Ross Perot's big ears, could be subject to hurt feelings awards.

A year after the Supreme Court decided the Falwell case, Dan Moldea, the author of a book on the National Football League, sued The New York Times for libel, in part because its review of his book said it contained "too much sloppy journalism." After the case was thrown out, an appeals panel reinstated it, agreeing with Moldea that the highly negative book review hurt him and his reputation.

But in a remarkable turnaround, the appellate panel reconsidered the case and came to the conclusion that their first opinion was misguided. The court said that basically if you write a book, you'd better be prepared for some abuse.

"Any intelligent reviewer knows at some level that a bad review may injure the author," the court said. "Indeed, some bad reviews may be written with an aim to damage a writer's reputation. There is nothing we can do about this, at least without unacceptably interfering with free speech."

The numerous cases against Hustler are a reminder to advocates of freedom of the press that there are all sorts of inventive ways to attack the media. When libel and invasion of privacy do not work, accuse the press of intentional infliction of emotional distress. Fortunately, the Supreme Court in the Hustler case saw through that ruse and told Falwell that unless he can prove libel, he has no case.

Likewise, the Food Lion lawyers who have sued ABC for its Prime Time Live segment quickly discovered that it could not win a libel case. So it too won based on a novel claim of fraud because the undercover producers did not tell the truth on their employment applications. While Food Lion won \$5.5 million in punitive damages at trial, the likelihood is that this Supreme Court, if it chooses to hear the case, will see Food Lion in the same light as Jerry Falwell.

It is now hoped that Disney will display some of the same legal moxie as Larry Flynt did in taking his case to the Supreme Court.

As Woody Harrelson, who plays Flynt in the movie declares as to why he is appealing his case against Falwell:

"I would love to be remembered for something meaningful." ■

## TO THE EDITOR:

Recently I had the occasion to read Leo Bogart's well-argued essay, "Newspapers' Fate Tied to Revival of Cities," in the winter 1996 issue of *Nieman Reports*. I wanted to draw your attention to either a misunderstanding or misinterpretation as it pertains to editorials in our newspaper, to which reference was made.

Bogart wrote, "The St. Paul Pioneer Press has dropped daily editorials altogether."

Let me tell you what is actually going on here and ask that you consider different words to describe the situation if you make reference to us in the future.

Since January 1, 1996, we have declared ourselves free of the "obligation" to write editorials each and every day. What we have said is that we will write editorials when we want to and when we feel we have something worth saying. During our first year with this new format, we ran editorial pages without editorials an average of 12 days a month. Obviously, that means that on 18 or 19 days a month, we ran editorials.

On the days we didn't carry editorials, we ran other material—often signed pieces by our editorial writers—designed to advance public debate and discussion on issues of the day. Our editorial writers had more time to work on the editorials that actually did appear, on signed columns and on longer projects that often took three-fourths of a page or even a full page.

To be clear then, we have not dropped daily editorials altogether. We have dropped the tradition of running editorials every day.

Bottom line: we have not backed off our commitment to develop and present our opinions. Rather, we believe we have enhanced it. By using our editorial voice less often, we are strengthening that voice when we do choose to use it.

And we're making better use of the time we used to spend producing editorials of questionable value.

RONALD D. CLARK  
Editor, Editorial Pages  
St. Paul Pioneer Press

## BOGART REPLIES:

I understood when I wrote my article that The Pioneer Press was still running editorials, but not every day. I haven't seen today's issue, but my home-town paper, The New York Times, has seven stories on its front page, only one of which might loosely be placed under the heading of breaking news. No editor decides not to put out the paper on a slow news day. Business necessities aside, there's always important and interesting stuff backed up from the days when there's a surfeit of big stories. Readers are accustomed to the tidy package that assures them that the world is still in place. And the reality is that there are always lots of things happening out there that people want to know about and on which they welcome informed commentary.

Editorials are as well-read, on the average, as news stories, and they're especially well-read by the people who take civic responsibilities seriously. Their style, as well as their substance, define a newspaper's character. When they are no longer a predictable daily presence, this signals that they are not essential to the reader's orientation. Surely The Pioneer Press prints a weather report even on days when the meteorologists say there's nothing new. If everything is perfect in St. Paul, isn't there still something elsewhere to get indignant about? What else are newspapers for?

LEO BOGART

## Teddy Roosevelt On the Press

"The men with the muckrakes are often indispensable to the well-being of society; but only if they know when to stop raking the muck."—*Theodore Roosevelt, Speech, Washington, April 14, 1906.*

# Wine by the Numbers

BY WESLEY FIORE

**H**ere's the problem: if we give the Winged Victory sitting on that landing in the Louvre an 87, should we give Michelangelo's David an 89? I mean Winged doesn't even have a head, but then David is pretty short in the clothing department.

Well, there's a problem that isn't solved but is at least avoided by the fact that art criticism greatly predates our current obsession with scores, winners and marketing muscle. So pity then the poor wine writer who is dealing with an area about as subjective in taste as art but is doing it in an era that demands a box score. Or one might say has been trained to demand a box score.

Look at the cultural context. In any European village wine is as much a staple of daily life as bread and coffee. Meals (at least so far) are lengthy and relaxed and the local winemaker has probably been known to the family for generations. Contrast that to our backyard where unless you're from recent immigrant stock or from a worldly elite, wine is just not a part of your life. Things started off pretty well with the early New Englanders experimenting with Lambrusca varietals (concord, for example) and producing their first vintages by the middle of the 16th Century. Things really started to move by the mid-1800's when immigrants from Italy and Eastern Europe planted vineyards of European varietals in California. Prohibition, unfortunately, shut all that down. After the Second World War production inched up again, especially in the jug wine market.

Then, bang, in the last 25 years the wine world exploded. California rocketed to the top of world attention by winning prestigious tastings in France. Napa became a Mecca for winemakers and the production of boutique high-

end wine soared. Sonoma followed soon after. In 1982 a futures market was established whereby one could buy very expensive classed growth Bordeaux for somewhat less money than when the wine was released but the wine wouldn't even be bottled for years to come. The whole nature of the wine trade changed. Where a generation ago it was often small farmers who grew the grapes and made the wine, it very quickly became an occupation for wealthy outsiders, people who had made millions in real estate, law, or as Hollywood entertainers. Even more wineries became attractive additions to large corporations that could bring marketing staffs to bear and were aware of the efficacy of the bottom line.

Enter then the wine writer. He has to make sense of all the hoopla and try to lay down some basic information and advice for everyone from the neophyte who's trying to get beyond white zinfandel, to the sophisticated futures marketer who's going to fork out tens of thousands of dollars based on your assessment of a vintage and a producer who's wines you tasted only out of a barrel on a cold January morning in a smoky French cellar.

So how do they do? Well, hits and misses. The two giants of the trade are *The Wine Spectator* and its stable of writers, originally out of San Francisco but now in New York, and Robert Parker, the author of *The Wine Advocate*, the big guy. Both had a great deal to do with popularizing the 100 point scoring system. European writers had been using a scale of 1-20, but here was a system that every former American school kid could grab onto. And grab on they did. The relative point ratings of one wine to another began to represent huge advantages in the bottom line. To receive a 90+ rating from either publica-

tion is tantamount to a guarantee of market success. A recent example would be the release of the '94 Zind-Humbrechts to the market in Southern California. While Olivier Humbrecht is an extraordinary producer of first-rate Alsatian wines, they are virtually terra incognita on the local scene where chardonnay remains the white wine supreme. Yet with Parker scores in the mid-90's and up, these wines were essentially sold out to restaurants and retailers before they even arrived (even though priced from \$200-1500 cs.). One could imagine what that much clout could do for the latest Napa merlot.



SUSANNA WING

*Wesley Fiore has been in the wine business for over 15 years. He spent most of the 1980's buying wine for various New York Restaurants such as the China Grill in the CBS building and Restaurant 44 at the Royalton Hotel. He was involved, as well, with many restaurant wine consulting projects. He has traveled extensively in the wine-producing regions of Europe and has been involved in the French wine auction market. Since 1993 he has been based in Los Angeles, where he writes wine articles and teaches at private tastings and seminars. He also represents certain Californian and French wines to the Los Angeles market. Fiore's E-mail address is: wfiore5888@aol.com*

To look at the two publications is to see part of the polarity in the wine world today. The Spectator is big and slick with lots of pictures of the wine elite at work and play. Airy articles are interspersed among the thumb-nail tables of reviews with the wine's score prominent. Scores. Here is a publication dedicated to separating the winners from the losers. A recent issue announced three articles on its cover: "Worlds Best Wine Lists," "California's Highest-Rated Merlots" and "Burgundy's Top Scoring Whites" (and, unfortunately, their criteria for things like "best list" are lists that contain the most wines that they've already scored highly). This is also not the place you would look for an article critical of Jess Jackson or the Mondavi family. Nor is it surprising to see how effortlessly it went into the business of promoting cigars.

The Advocate looks very different. A newsletter, tightly and tersely written, it deals just with the wines reviewed and their scores. Parker, a former lawyer, is a prodigious worker who has covered an unbelievable amount of ground. To me, his greatest problem is his huge success. Wine is, after all, subjective. We all operate from our particular points of view. Any one view intelligently presented and well-documented can be helpful in getting a handle on what's out there. But when one palette, one stylistic criteria, becomes the benchmark that can assure financial success, the danger is very great that wine will actually be made to please that point of view.

Other alternatives? The California Grapevine from San Diego uses a committee, usually of 10, which generates a group average score as well as each reviewer's own score.

Frank Prial at The New York Times avoids the score thing altogether and concentrates on defining and illuminating a particular area of wine interest in each article as well as recommending wines. This at least encourages people to experiment and maybe find things they like for themselves.

There are actually many other newsletters. One of interest to many wine buyers here in California is Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, out of New York.

## Foresight

Quotations from a debate in 1934 on a proposal to move photos by wire:

"Newspaper pictures are just a temporary fad."—Melville E. Stone, head of The Associated Press.

"There would not be a sufficient number of important news pictures to keep it going."—Roy Howard, President of United Press.

"You are embarking upon an adventure that will lose a lot of money."—William Randolph Hearst, owner of International News Service.

—From September 1996 edition of *Ninety-Five, Unipress History Project*.

For me the key is the democratization of the process. That is, we benefit from a diversity of opinions, ones that may reflect regional points of view, or areas where the writer may have particular expertise. Many credible points of view act as tonic against the absolute.

Do scores have any value? Well, it's a bit of a morass out there. The complexity of regions, varietal types, producer styles and a different growing season every year make for a lot of information to digest. So, on the most basic level, scores help create some sense of order or priority. Unfortunately, they seem to help the producer most of all. It's like a hot tip on the stock market that all take seriously and try to cash in on. Where on the market the stock price would just rise, with wine it sells out. Of course, the next time round the prices will advance accordingly.

The Internet has the possibility of helping out. It provides a wealth of raw material and regional tie-ins (take a look at [www.smartwine.com](http://www.smartwine.com) or

[www.paris.org](http://www.paris.org)) as well as reviews. I myself wrote articles for a bookstore-magazine out of the Midwest with whom I had no contact except through computer.

My own approach to this problem was to design a series of classes and tastings that would try to focus the participants on their own personal likes and dislikes with wine such that they could begin to make their own decisions. A basic familiarity with the taste of some of the alternatives and a little self-confidence can go a long way, especially if you can avoid the competition, the emphasis on being "correct" and the corresponding fear of being "wrong" that does so much to perpetuate the scoring mentality.

A good general approach to finding wine would be to look locally. In California, for example, take a look at zinfandel. This is one of the varietals that were planted in the last century so there are many 100-year-old vines producing wines of fabulous concentration and intensity, yet without the harsh tanning of, say, cabernet. And because it isn't all the rage like merlot, the prices are modest.

From France, look at the country wines. There is a crescent of towns along the Mediterranean that runs from Roussillon in the west to Bandol in the Côte de Provence in the east. This region produces a vast variety of interesting and unusual wines at often very modest prices.

Why does any of this matter, anyhow? Because wine seems to be one of those things that can really help in a society that's maxing out on pagers and fax machines and cell phones. Wine is about process, it's about time, it's about patience. Time to grow the vineyards, time for the wine to age in bottle, the time it takes to enjoy a good bottle over a leisurely meal, the time that allows for some decent conversation.

Are we up against it? You bet. I can think of trendy restaurants in New York that list the Spectator scores on their wine list so to prevent their clients from committing the gaffe of choosing an 89 when a 90 is available.

But in the 2,000-year frame of reference of wines, maybe there's hope. ■

# Tokyo Broadcasting and Aum Shinrikyo

*Japan's Network Still Operates Under a Cloud for Mishandling Shows About Sect Accused in Subway Gas Attack*

BY HELEN HARDACRE

In the March 20, 1995 poison gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, 12 people died, and more than 5,500 required medical treatment. The religion Aum Shinrikyo was quickly linked to the attack, and a massive police investigation began on March 22. Arrested cult members confessed that they had murdered an attorney critical of the religion, Sakamoto Tsutsumi, and his family, that they had manufactured sarin gas, had used it in an attack in the city of Matsumoto in June 1994 and, finally, that at the order of the founder, Asahara Shoko, they had carried out the gassing of the Tokyo subway.

From March 22 until the August observance of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Pacific War, the police investigation of Aum completely dominated the news in Japan. It overshadowed two major elections, the recovery from the January 1995 Kobe earthquake, the passing of a euthanasia law and a barely averted trade war with the United States. It was a national obsession. When Asahara was arrested on May 16, 1995, television devoted more than 100 hours to the event.

Among the 184,000 religious groups registered in Japan, Aum clearly constitutes an exception to general trends. With only 10,000 Japanese members, it is a small religion, one that had not been extensively studied before the gas attacks. While some other new Japanese religions have millenarian beliefs, most do not believe, like Aum, that the end of human existence is near, nor that the world will be destroyed in an Armageddon. Members of most other sects marry and live ordinary lives, but the ordained in Aum removed them-

selves from ordinary social life, usually giving all their assets to the religion and thereafter living communally with other members and without outside contact. While most Japanese religions bear no resemblance to Aum, the Aum affair has provoked widespread questioning about all religions and doubts about their social responsibility.

The Japanese media have been severely criticized for the character of their coverage of the Aum affair, but none so seriously as the Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS, Tokyo Hosō). TBS eventually was forced to undertake two internal investigations, and it was the object of an investigation by the Public Prosecutor's Office. It was forced to admit that it had acted irresponsibly, and its President, Isozaki Yozo, resigned as an act of contrition. His resignation was broadcast nationwide on April 30, 1996, followed by a three and one-half hour, commercial-free broadcast of apology. Public reaction to the network's conduct, even after the apology broadcast, has been overwhelmingly negative, and the network remains under a cloud. This extraordinary chain of events has become the occasion for much pained reflection on media ethics.

Before 1989, there was virtually no media coverage of Aum, and it might have remained unknown were it not for a confrontation with the tabloid Sunday Mainichi in early October, 1989. (Both The Sunday Mainichi and TBS belong to the Mainichi group of industries, along with the national newspaper Mainichi shinbun.) The Sunday Mainichi printed exposé articles about Aum, seeking to embarrass and discredit the religion, charging that Aum

beguiled young people to desert their families to join the religion and that new members were forced to sign over all their belongings to the religion.

Following this confrontation, TBS planned an October 27 broadcast called "The Underwater Powers Experiment" (Suichu kunbaka jikken). The first segment would document Aum's claim



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that Asahara possessed supernatural powers and could remain underwater for 30 minutes. The second segment was an interview with the attorney Sakamoto Tsutsumi, who represented disgruntled former Aum believers contending that they had been the victims of extortion and that Aum had unlawfully "stolen" their adolescent children. The third segment was composed of interviews with Sunday Mainichi Editor Maki Taro and Nagaoka Hiroyuki, President of the Victims of Aum group, the organization Sakamoto represented. The filming took place on October 26, 1989.

**H**aving gained corporate status as a religious corporation only in August, 1989, Aum was extremely nervous about negative publicity, fearing a rescinding of this official recognition, which also conferred tax-free status on income from donations and religious ritual. Already Sakamoto had been in contact with Aum attorney Aoyama Yoshinobu since June, 1989, negotiating for meetings between Aum members and their estranged relatives. Sakamoto expressed highly critical views of Aum during his TBS interview, saying that Aum was an extortion ring masquerading as religion, that it deserved to be punished and debunking Aum's "Blood Initiation." In this ritual, believers paid one million yen to drink a concoction of Asahara's blood, as an aid in acquiring supernatural powers.

The six-man TBS Social Information Division crew filming the underwater experiment at Aum headquarters near the foot of Mt. Fuji were joined by TBS News Division reporter Nishino Tetsushi, reporter Ishimaru Junko (contracted to work on the Aum story for TBS) and reporters from the Communist Party newspaper Akabata. Although Asahara himself was supposed to perform the experiment, he substituted two disciples, and the underwater stay was reduced from the advertised 30 minutes to 12 minutes. (Neither stayed down even that long; one stayed about 11 minutes.) Ishimaru later testified that she heard Aum leaders arranging with the TBS producer to see the tape before it was aired, making an appointment for the viewing on the same

evening, October 26. Ishimaru questioned the producer about the wisdom of such an agreement, but she was ignored.

Conflicting reports emerged about what happened that night, when three Aum leaders visited TBS for the promised viewing. They were the group's highest leaders and Asahara's closest disciples: the attorney Aoyama, Joyu Fumihiro, head of public relations, and Hayakawa Kiyohide, head of the so-called Construction Agency, in fact working at kidnapping, extortion and other crimes. Hayakawa kept a detailed diary, and this later provided an independent record of what happened. While Aum had easily obtained an agreement to be shown the taped underwater experiment, they further demanded to see the other segments of the planned broadcast, especially the one on Sakamoto. The program in which this broadcast was scheduled, "Let's Meet at Three P.M.," had a program producer, as well as five daily producers, one for each weekday's broadcast. The program producer had not participated in the actual filming of any of the segments, and may not have known what Sakamoto had said on the tape. The program producer and the Friday daily producer decided to allow the Sakamoto tape to be shown to the Aum leaders. When the Aum leaders saw the tape, they demanded that the entire broadcast be canceled, and in the early hours of the morning the producers decided to comply, though not in time to delete the announcement completely from the next day's newspapers' television schedules.

**N**ine days later, on the night of November 4, 1989, Sakamoto Tsutsumi, his wife and infant son were murdered. Colleagues, alarmed when he did not appear at work, eventually entered the Yokohama apartment, where they found blood on the walls and an Aum badge on the floor. The family's bedding was missing, but not their coats, wallets and other things a person would normally take when going out. Aum had removed the bodies and buried them in separate locations, where they remained until

the murderers' confessions in mid-1995. Perhaps because of Sakamoto's left-wing associations, his colleagues could not convince the prefectural police to mount an official investigation until November 15. TBS broadcast news of the investigation from the scene, along with film of people distributing handbills calling on anyone with information to come forward, but it never broadcast the tape of Sakamoto criticizing Aum. TBS kept silent and provided the police no assistance or information about recently having shown Aum leaders Sakamoto's pointed critiques of the religion.

**R**apidly TBS became embroiled in serious ethical breaches, though none of these came to light until 1995. First, the decision by the daily producer of the Aum filming, who agreed to let Aum see the tape before the scheduled broadcast, led Aum to think it could veto a broadcast if the content were not to its liking, thus relinquishing the network's editorial authority. Second, when the program and daily producers further agreed to show Aum the Sakamoto tape, they did not get Sakamoto's consent. Third, when TBS canceled its scheduled broadcast, it relinquished its independent authority entirely, while also depriving Sakamoto of the protection from Aum he would have gained from a public airing of his criticisms. Fourth, by keeping silent all during a six-year police investigation of the Sakamoto disappearance, TBS knowingly withheld information that could have led to the discovery of the murderers and the revelation of criminal activity within Aum before its use of sarin gas at Matsumoto in 1994 and on the Tokyo subway in 1995.

How did a national network come to this sorry state of affairs, and how could ethical standards of broadcasting have been so flagrantly violated? The answer may lie in changes in television news programming and the culture surrounding it. Until 1980 or so, Japanese television did not generally expect that news programs would enjoy a high viewer rating. The news was not expected to be entertaining or to sell, and major

network coverage was largely homogeneous. Newscasters typically assumed a didactic position toward the viewers, positioning themselves as if they were official news sources.

After 1980, however, a new type of program combining news with gossip items from the entertainment world and sports appeared, called "wide shows." These appeared in morning, afternoon and evening slots, sometimes more than an hour long, with daily weekday broadcasts. Networks competed for viewership by diversifying and expanding their programming, and newscasters projected an individual personality, aligning themselves with the viewers instead of official sources, reporting government scandals and corruption with humor and sarcasm reminiscent of an American talk-show host. To support this expanded programming, networks brought in contracted "package" production teams; not all of these part-time or occasional staff members were trained in journalistic ethics.

At TBS, network organization expanded dramatically, and a "Social Information Division" (Shakai joho kyoku) was added in 1985, independent from the pre-existing News Division (Hodo kyoku). Whereas the News Division covered the "hard" areas of economic and political news, the Social Information Division did not observe the same standards for confirming information because it was largely devoted to producing "wide news" programs. Wide news shows generally emphasized rumor and scandal, and thus they were probably not regarded by the public as such reliable news sources as "straight" news broadcasts in the early evening slots. The staffs were largely contracted on an occasional basis, and the network did not take responsibility for training them in journalistic ethics.

The problems in TBS coverage of Aum might never have come to light had Hayakawa Kiyohide not been arrested on April 20, 1995 and his diary discovered. Hayakawa had recorded numerous criminal activities in great detail, and thus the diary has become one of the most important documents for the prosecution of Aum members.

## Subliminal Clips Criticized, Too

Quite apart from TBS's problems with Aum described in this essay, it was also roundly criticized for using "subliminal conditioning" to boost ratings in its coverage of the police investigation of Aum. TBS programmers inserted short clips of Aum leaders in unrelated programming in lengths too short to be perceived by the naked eye. This technique, discredited in the United States decades ago, is supposed to create viewer desire to see more of the material presented "subliminally." Thus, a viewer of an entertainment program entirely unrelated to Aum would be shown frames of Asahara's face; in this case programmers hoped to induce the viewer to watch Aum coverage on the TBS network. A more manipulative use of the technique was to splice subliminal frames of a face of Judas into coverage of one Aum leader reacting to the stabbing of another, thus implying that the first was culpable in the murder. When TBS's subliminal techniques were revealed, the network issued a public apology; it was subsequently required to write and submit a report on the incident to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

Since its author evidently believed that no one else would ever see the diary, he recorded events candidly and truthfully. Thus, the diary can be taken as a true record of the crimes in which Hayakawa participated, the prosecution reasoned, and also of such events as persuading TBS to cancel its broadcast. As it turned out, Hayakawa recorded Sakamoto's words on the tape verbatim, and thus it is beyond doubt that TBS staff did allow him, Joyu, and Aoyama to view it. However, the Tokyo Public Prosecutor's office did not re-

lease the full contents of the diary until well into Hayakawa's trial because of the diary's importance to the case against him. This meant that when the Prosecutor's Office first called upon TBS to explain its actions in the fall of 1995, TBS had access only to a synopsis of the diary's contents.

Questions were raised in the Diet about TBS's conduct when the network's rival NTV (Nihon Television) reported on October 19, 1995 that TBS had shown Aum leaders the tape of Sakamoto. The producers of "Let's Meet at Three P.M." were questioned about the matter by TBS executives, but they responded with lame denials, asserting that they could not remember any such event. In 1989 they had not told their superiors about Aum's pressure on them to cancel the broadcast, and it was possible to cancel a broadcast without producing any formal record of the decision. The chain of command was evidently so loose that few people even knew of Aum's late-night visit to TBS studios. Confronted with NTV's allegations, however, TBS executives were faced with the choice between believing a synopsis of an indicted criminal's diary or trusting the denials of their own staff. They chose the latter course and denied NTV's report on air. They were later to regret this decision.

From October, 1995 through mid-March, 1996, TBS conducted a half-hearted, in-house investigation to clarify whether network staff actually showed Aum the Sakamoto tape. Because the investigation did not utilize outside personnel empowered to solicit legally binding testimony, it was stymied by the continued stonewalling and "non-denial-denials" of the producers who had actually permitted the tape showing and then canceled the broadcast. TBS executives in charge were not released from on-going duties, and they did not even interview the contracted director who filmed the Sakamoto interview. TBS's Managing Director Okawa Mitsuyuki's lame conclusion in his testimony before the Diet on March 19, 1996 was, "It cannot be established that the tape was shown" to Aum.

However, almost immediately after this denial, TBS executives finally ac-

quired a complete copy of the Hayakawa diary's description of Aum leaders' 1989 viewing of the Sakamoto tape. The executives realized instantly that the diary's account must be true and that their own producers had lied. President Isozaki resigned, and TBS began a thoroughgoing re-investigation of the entire affair, resulting in a report to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (the body which issues broadcast licenses). The mendacious producers were fired. A three and one-half hour, commercial-free broadcast of apology was aired on April 30, 1996, in which TBS painstakingly reviewed each step in the incident and pleaded with viewers to renew their trust in the network.

The apology broadcast was at considerable pains to explain away another potentially embarrassing revelation from Hayakawa's diary. Nishino Tetsushi, the TBS reporter from the News Division who had accompanied the film crew to the underwater powers experiment filming, had negotiated with Hayakawa for an exclusive TBS interview with Asahara. Nishino and Hayakawa frequently spoke by telephone, and the interview later took place in Bonn, Germany. When the issue of the Sakamoto tape was made public, the interpretation emerged that TBS had struck a quid pro quo bargain, agreeing to cancel the broadcast of Sakamoto's criticisms in return for this exclusive interview. Hayakawa's diary makes it clear that he regarded the matter in this light, though Nishino denies that he did or ever could have influenced producers in the Social Information Division to cancel a broadcast. While Nishino's own tapes of his conversations with Hayakawa substantiate his position, Hayakawa had no appreciation of the organizational barriers to manipulating Nishino to silence the Sakamoto tape. It is no compliment to TBS to point out that in this instance the right hand had so little cognizance of the doings of the left that Aum was quite capable of having its way with the network without mobilizing Nishino.

The apology broadcast of April 30, 1996, Isozaki's resignation, and the firings were not, however, sufficient to set

the matter to rest. On May 17, the Ministry issued TBS a serious warning, and TBS responded by canceling its late-night broadcasts for five days. This was the first time in history that a Japanese network had voluntarily refrained from broadcasting. On May 20, TBS abolished the Social Information Division and soon initiated a major personnel shakeup. TBS also formed a committee of outside experts to advise the network, but preliminary reports on its deliberations have emphasized members' dismay at how little the network seems to have learned from this incident and their pessimism about the prospects for meaningful reform.

At no point in its investigations, in reports to the Ministry, in Diet testimony, or in the apology broadcast did TBS ever really seem to grasp the magnitude of what it had done. It seemed incapable to the end of articulating clearly the ethical principles it had violated. TBS never acknowledged that in showing Aum the Sakamoto tape and then canceling the public broadcast, it created the conditions in which Aum could murder the Sakamotos without discovery. TBS never admitted that in failing to assume responsibility for the actions of its staff it obstructed the search for the Sakamotos' murderers by withholding evidence. It never admitted that if it had come forward in 1989, Aum might have been prevented from using poison gas at Matsumoto and on the Tokyo subway. Just as the Aum affair has cast doubt upon the social responsibility of all religious associations, the TBS affair has unfortunately raised questions about the ethics of all Japanese broadcast journalism. ■

*The author wishes to thank Mr. Kenji Hanyu of TBS for useful information and for use of a video of TBS's April 30, 1996 apology broadcast, titled "Shogen," (Testimony). This essay is based on articles on the TBS incident appearing in the International Edition of the Asahi Shinbun and on the following sources: Baba Koichi, Shichoritsu kyoso Iwanami bukkureto 407 (Tokyo, 1996) and Kuroda Kiyoshi, TBS jiken to janarizumu Iwanami bukkureto 406 (Tokyo, 1996).*

## Martin Peretz Choosing an Editor



When I bought The New Republic Walter Lippmann asked me to come and see him... He had a message for me. I was then rather left. The New Republic, he said, was always to be responsible. And what he meant by responsible in 1974 was very different from what it was in 1914. In 1974 we were not to rock the boat. The New Republic's logo is a ship in stormy waters. In any case, it's a piece of advice that I have tried not to take. First of all, it makes it a more interesting place to work in if we don't. Given that you try to be scrupulous, you don't also have to go and try to make sound judgments to the people who judge whether you are responsible or not. It is true that I have never hired an editor because of ideological similarities or ideological affinities, even. What I look for in an editor is someone who has an independent spirit, who is very careful about the intellectual reputation of the magazine, who writes good prose and evokes good prose from others. And not being responsible has made us very controversial, which, it is true, it was not, let's say, in the decade before I bought it.—Martin Peretz, Editor-in-Chief and Chairman, The New Republic, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, January 31, 1997.

# What About the Other Africa?

BY FOLU OGUNDIMU

In reading Liz Sly's first-hand account of the "Anguish of Covering Africa" (Nieman Reports, Spring 1996), I am struck by the irony of a reporter whose experience in Africa exposes many of the contradictions of covering Africa in the Western news media.

In fairness it is only right to note that Sly concedes that Africa is not unique either in terms of the scale of human suffering being reported on or the extent of physical discomfort associated with reporting breaking news stories. But insightful are three observations in her piece:

1. There is validity up to a point in criticisms of Western media for paying attention only to Africa's crises and not to positive developments.

2. She simply did not have time for stories about Ghana's economic recovery program or democracy in Zambia, or developments in the other 40 odd African countries.

3. "There is indeed a different Africa, one of largely peaceful enterprise and vigor, with relatively decent hotels where you can enjoy comfort that most Africans will never experience."

Other Africa correspondents have made similar observations in justifying the overall coverage the continent receives in the West. The expectations of editors back home and the small number of correspondents who are permanently assigned to cover the continent are some of the reasons often given for this reporting orientation. The literature on Western reportage of the continent has pretty much established that both benign neglect and negative reporting typifies coverage of Africa in the Western press. For example, in a forthcoming study in the *Journal of North-*

*east African Studies*, we found that prior to the international relief assistance to Somalia, "Operation Restore Hope" in 1992, only ABC News of the three major American television news networks had one Africa-based correspondent on the eve of the United States-led operation. Yet by the time United States marines arrived in Somalia, ABC, NBC and CBS fielded more than 100 television news crews and correspondents, all of them led by high-powered news anchors.

Sly's observation as "The Chicago Tribune's only correspondent in Africa during three of the most newsworthy years Africa has seen in a long time" typifies this episodic coverage of Africa. Despite such candid observations, however, one wonders whether reporters who are permanently assigned to covering Africa sufficiently mirror the realities of the continent, given their tendency for reporting disaster-type, poverty-stricken, disease-ridden stories. This is an important point, given that many experts contend that the overall image of Africa presented in the United States press has serious consequences for Africa's development aspirations.

I am persuaded that well-meaning reporters could do a lot more in their reporting of Africa than simply following formula reporting and playing to expectations of editors back home. It is not enough for Sly to admit that she "simply did not have time for stories about... developments in the other 40-odd African countries not afflicted by headline-grabbing disaster." My comments are not intended to show that Sly's observations about covering Africa are inaccurate or unworthy of recollection. Or that she had not meant

well in highlighting the scale of misery and the gross disparity between what obtains in Africa and standards in the West.

Our paths crossed in the summer of 1995 while I was visiting Uganda with my research associate. We were sitting in the beautiful garden of the Fairway Hotel, Kampala, about to have a late lunch, when Addil Karmali, the genial Canadian-born Asian General Manager of the Fairway, asked if we had met two visiting Chicago Tribune journalists.



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When we said we had not, he brought Sly and her colleague, a photographer, to our table. Introductions were made, and we ordered some sandwiches, cold Ugandan beer and lemonade, and we settled down to conversation.

"So, what brings you to Africa?" I probed gently. "Oh, we were covering Rwanda," Sly said, the obvious pain of recalling the experience beginning to flush her cheeks. The two proceeded to describe, in detail, the horror of the Rwanda they had seen in the past month. The deaths. The corpses. The dying. And the living dead. After a while, my associate couldn't take it anymore.

"So, what brings you to Uganda?" she asked.

One of The Tribune pair said they had heard that Uganda was on the verge of collapse and they decided to check it out.

What's this about a Ugandan collapse? I asked.

"Something to do with movement politics," came the reply. Pressed to explain what she knew of the story, neither Sly nor her colleague could do so. I was not surprised. Reference to "movement politics" represented an internal political debate taking place within Uganda at the time. The debate concerned a proposed constitutional amendment to ban competitive political party politics, with the government of President Museveni supporting the amendment. The government's preference was for a competitive, no-party affiliation political system. The proposal was a controversial one at best, given its implication for the consolidation of emerging pluralistic democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. But to the unschooled observer, or to the parachuting journalist, attempting to report this internal bickering among Ugandan politicians was akin to a Martian landing in the United States in the summer of a presidential election year and reporting back to Mars on the great democratic experiment on Planet Earth.

And "where do you go from Uganda?" I asked Sly and her colleague. They said they were eyeing Nigeria, but the Nigerians wouldn't give them visas. Their backup plan was to visit Mali. Asked why they were going into Nigeria, Sly

said they wanted to do several stories on corruption in Nigeria. At this, I decided I'd heard enough. Not because I was a Nigerian myself, although that might have had something to do with it. But I was struck by the irony of these two journalists scrounging around Africa looking for stories about wars, famines, corruption and the possible collapse of a state while ignoring equally compelling stories of enterprise, resilience and the abundant energy of the African people. These equally compelling stories were laid bare before us, even as we sat in the exquisite comfort of the shaded gardens of the Fairway, sipping cold drinks and eating steak sandwiches. Although Sly alludes to the availability of such comfort in her Nieman piece, such images are clearly absent from Western reporting of Africa.

From our point of view, we thought it was odd that all the instances of reportage The Tribune team had mentioned concerned one kind of crisis coverage or the other. Given our own expectations prior to arrival in Africa, and having traveled through Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, we were particularly surprised that media reporting of these countries did not prepare us for the energy, resilience, vibrancy, industry and optimism we had so far observed.

Uganda presents a particularly interesting case. At the time we ran into Sly and her Tribune colleague, we had been in Uganda for a little more than a week, doing some work in connection with the emergence of private enterprise broadcasting in that country. Our most recent pre-arrival knowledge of Uganda was confined to contacts with nationals based in both Uganda and the United States and to press reports. We were unprepared for programs of massive political, economic, and social transformation taking place in the country, despite knowledge of guerrilla insurgency in parts of the country.

A country of 16 million people, Uganda had been reported extensively in the United States press during the 1970's because of the activities of its one-time brutal and eccentric dictator, Idi Amin. But since Amin fell from

power, only the most avid readers of foreign news could claim an inkling to what was happening in the country. Between 1994 and 1995, there were 74 stories published in all United States newspapers about Uganda. About one-third of those stories dealt with the refugee crisis in Rwanda, the Ugandan port of Entebbe being a major transit point for delivering aid and assistance to the refugees. There were some 13 stories dealing with economic and political issues in Uganda, about half of which reported on the economic resurgence of the country. This resurgence was often qualified with observations regarding the "authoritarian" style of President Museveni. The bulk of the remaining stories dealt with AIDS and war with rebels on the Sudanese and Kenyan borders. There were also a few lifestyle stories.

The Chicago Tribune published six stories on Uganda during this period. Three were about gorilla conservation and environmental issues, one was about a Rotary exchange program, one related to the Rwandan refugee crisis and the one Sly story was about a foreign aid housing development scheme. Of all United States newspapers that covered Uganda between 1994 and 1995, The Tribune was exemplary for its diversity of topics and number of stories relating to Uganda. But did the paper adequately reflect the Uganda we saw in 1995? I think not.

In the last five years alone, Uganda has recorded one of the fastest growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa, a growth rate of 5.6 percent according to the World Bank. Throughout the 1980's, its growth rate in agricultural production surpassed its population growth, meaning that Uganda was one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa producing enough food to feed its population. These facts could serve as the basis of enterprising journalism. Another is the example of the return of Asian properties once confiscated by Amin. Although the property restitution program began with the overthrow of Amin, it was not until the overthrow of Milton Obote in 1986 that the program gained momentum, according to many knowledgeable Ugandans. The

## Liz Sly's Reponse to Criticism of Her Africa Coverage

*From Beijing, where she is now stationed for The Chicago Tribune, Liz Sly responds:*

Mr. Ogundimu has leapt to some wildly inaccurate conclusions about me and the time I spent in Africa. He is clearly unaware that I spent over four years living there, something the article I wrote for Nieman Reports made crystal clear, and he clearly has not bothered to read more than one of the hundreds of stories I wrote during those years.

If he had paid attention during the conversation with me that he claims to recall, had been more industrious in his computer searches of newspaper archives and had properly read the piece I wrote for your journal, he would have been aware that:

- When he met me in June 1995, I had already spent over three years in Africa. I was neither "parachuting in" to cover Rwanda, nor was I uniquely "unschooled" in issues relating to Africa. During my assignment, I visited 24 African countries, not one or two as he states.

- At the time, I was in the middle of a year-long project in which I traveled across Africa for an 11-part series in The Chicago Tribune on the range of issues confronting the continent. I undertook

this endeavor precisely because I felt the focus on Africa's disasters had not presented a fair picture, as my piece for Nieman Reports explained.

- The series included reporting from all the countries Ogundimu accuses me of failing to visit and on all the issues he accuses me of overlooking, including a long piece about Ghana's economic reforms and another profiling the impressive industriousness of a typically poor woman in Mali.

- I was not in Uganda "scrounging around" for a story about Uganda's "collapse." I went there as part of my carefully scripted schedule to research a piece for the series on democracy in Africa. For the same story, I also visited Tanzania and Zambia, another country he says I ignored. The piece contained the reporting I did the week he met me in Uganda, including an interview with Uganda's President Museveni on his concept of "no-party" politics—something he assumes I am too ignorant to understand.

- The fact that Ogundimu's computer search turned up only one story out of three written from that trip to Uganda, and none of my other work, renders unreliable all the statistics he offers to prove that U.S. press coverage of Africa is inadequate.

Regarding Ogundimu's recollection

of our conversation: he must have forgotten that the genocide in Rwanda took place in 1994, not 1995. My photographer and I therefore did not "describe, in detail, the horror of the Rwanda [we] had seen in the past month. The deaths. The corpses," etc. There were no corpses or death to be seen in Rwanda in June 1995.

In the pages of Nieman Reports he has missed an opportunity to advance debate on this important subject by resorting to attacks on my intelligence and professional integrity, without checking his facts first.

I suggest that Ogundimu make an effort to find out what I actually did write about while I was in Africa. Only then will he be in a position to attack me for what I ignored or failed to understand. I would be glad to send him a copy of my series.

Finally, I would like to point out that I was named "International Reporter of the Year" for the series by the National Association of Black Journalists, an organization that shares Ogundimu's concerns about the quality of reporting on Africa. It was the second consecutive year that I had won the award for my reporting out of Africa. My photographer, Nancy Stone, and I, were also awarded the Clarion "Special Projects" award by Women in Communications for the series. ■

Fairway Hotel was a case in point. According to Karmali, until the ownership of the property was regained, the hotel had fallen into disrepair and was a shell of its former grandeur. The remodeling and refurbishing taking place were part of continuing efforts by the original Asian owners of the property to restore it as one of the finest accommodations in Uganda.

Another example: on one stretch of road between Kampala and Jinja, we observed, in the distant shimmering African sun one afternoon, a mass of velvety black dots bobbing like flies over a distance of about three miles. "What are they?" we asked our guide. They were field workers plucking tea

from the Mahdvani plantation. The plantation stretched for seven miles. The Mahdvani sugar plant was located in a small village along this road. It was the main industrial establishment for the area. We thought these were examples of stories with a human face Western reporters visiting Uganda could also report, aside from the stories of political conflict, war, AIDS and the refugee crisis. But these kinds of stories were rare in United States reporting of Uganda. Of the 74 stories written about Uganda in United States newspapers between 1994 and 1995, only two—one in The Houston Chronicle by Amy Waldman, the other in The San Fran-

cisco Chronicle by Alan Zarembo—dealt with the return of Asians to Uganda in the post-Amin nightmare.

There were countless other "little people," "big picture" stories that we saw in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia that we thought were worth telling. These stories have been largely ignored, unfortunately.

The day after our conversation, Sly and the photographer went out and looked for one of those "little people" enterprising stories. I remember how the photographer approached us at supper and said how thrilled she was about finding a good story of a Ugandan women's cooperative. The story

involved an innovative home-building program, using a \$1 million grant provided by the Danish government. This story, along with accompanying photograph, ran September 24, 1995, under Sly's by-line in *The Chicago Tribune* as "Creative use of aid helped women in Ugandan village transform a slum into a thriving community." The same story also ran as a syndicated *Chicago Tribune* feature in *The Indianapolis Star*.

Reporting Africa critically and from balanced perspectives usually requires far more sophisticated insight and training than has often been the case with most Africa correspondents. Despite stories of the impoverishment of Africa and the portrayal of many of these countries as aid-dependent societies, one has to question the premise of press reporting when available data show that many of these have for the last several decades been producing more and getting poorer. For example, by 1994 Uganda had more than tripled the value of its Gross Domestic Product—from \$1.1 billion in 1965 to \$4 billion—yet it was a much poorer country in 1994 statistically than it was in 1990. The same was true of Mali, whose GDP increased in value from \$260 million in 1965 to \$2.5 billion in 1990, dropping to \$1.9 billion in 1994. In both countries, rates of agricultural growth have either stayed comparable with population growth rates or fluctuated on either side of deficit or surplus, as is the case with Mali. Accompanying massive growths of the economy in their post-independent eras, growths that were non-existent in the colonial era, are also massive indebtedness to global economies, most of them Western creditors, on account of poorer terms of trade and economic mismanagement. The complexity of this economic transformation is what is largely missing from press reportage of Africa, with much preference given to stories depicting the economic ineptitude, foreign aid, corruption and the crises of state.

Also excluded from much of the storytelling are the sacrifices Africans make in servicing their economic burden, much of which has been imposed on them by the inequities of the interna-

tional economic order. For example, few know that until 1990 Uganda was paying 55 cents on every dollar earned to service its debt to foreign creditors. For the last five years, that figure has been down to 46 cents. Mali, with one-half the GDP of Uganda, has been paying 28 cents on every dollar earned in interest payments to foreign creditors. Given that most Africans have no access to credit, the effect of high debt service payments on "cash and carry" economies has been devastating.

Africans ought to share much of the blame for the poor image they receive in the West. Until they learn more skillful ways at information management, it is unlikely that their media image in the West will be any different from what is presently the case. No amount of talk and complaining would change the picture. The answer to change lies in proactive policies by public and private enterprises to make greater efforts to foster a better external image.

It is doubtful if Africans recognize when things go wrong. During our 1995 visit the only way CNN could broadcast into Uganda was by way of the Ugandan-owned private enterprise station STV, for which CNN received sizable compensation. Many CNN broadcasts were irrelevant to Ugandans or Africans. When Africans did learn about themselves via CNN, the image wasn't often pretty.

As we visited Uganda in 1995, the Organization of African Unity Summit was opening in Addis Ababa. On the agenda were economic revitalization and democratization. Yet the opening of the summit was unreported by CNN until the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. On the same day CNN carried a widely reported, frequently repeated story by Gary Stryker, on the threat of the guinea-worm disease in Ghana. Aside from the Mubarak story, the OAU itself was completely ignored. It is doubtful whether CNN would have similarly treated any summit of Western leaders.

It is equally doubtful if Ugandan media professionals we interviewed felt as strongly as we did about this CNN coverage, or whether they saw the irony

in the observation that a Western news agency was utilizing Ugandan resources to present a predominantly negative image of Africa to Ugandans, as reflected by this particular case. We think such is the complexity of reporting Africa in general. ■

## Lee C. Bollinger New Frontier, First Amendment



At its best journalism is a calling for people, just like it is for academics. People often sacrifice much larger incomes to pursue this vocation. Journalism is also imbued with this sense of autonomy and independence, along with a spirit of public responsibility. That is the sense of journalism I picked up while working on my father's paper [in Baker, Ore.]. In my academic research it has led me to explore how we nurture and protect that freedom of the press and where we draw its limits.

For the past several years I've been working on a book on issues involving what I call public cultural institutions—including universities, public museums, public broadcasting, national endowments for the arts and humanities and public art programs. These are all institutions created for the purposes of preserving and inspiring what we think of as high cultural achievements. I'm interested in understanding the basic social purposes and functions of these institutions, the degree to which they are thought to be separate from politics and commerce and the extent to which they should receive protection under the First Amendment against government regulation. I view this as part of the new frontier of the First Amendment.—Lee C. Bollinger, *President, University of Michigan, Michigan Today*, winter 1996.

# Assignment: Bosnia

BY LINDSAY MILLER

I went to Bosnia on a U.S. military transport plane in April 1996, at the moment hotshot war correspondents were going the other way. Bosnia was over, in their view. The Dayton Peace Agreement, then five months old, appeared to be holding, with help from 50,000 well-armed NATO troops. The fighting was over, even if the hostility that tore former Yugoslavia apart was not. On to Chechnya and Afghanistan.

In the transport plane, which felt and sounded like the inside of a jackhammer, I sat strapped to a long metal bench, between a baby-faced American soldier, fast asleep, and a Danish woman who counseled Muslim victims of wartime rape. I was on my way to a freelance assignment to work out of the American Embassy in Sarajevo as a journalist "professional in residence."

My assignment, which came from the United States Information Agency, was to work with young Bosnian journalists at television stations around the country, to coach them in the standards and craft of journalism in a democracy. The emphasis was on preparing to cover the country's first post-war elections. Since Bosnia does not have a tradition of either free elections or free press, I figured I might have something to teach. I had much more to learn.

Most of us carry a picture of Bosnia in our minds, images of suffering, cruelty and hatred. My first sight of Sarajevo was as horrifying as I imagined: the shattered tower of the *Oslobodjenje* newspaper; followed by row upon row of housing projects, bolted for the 1984 Olympics, burned out and scarred by grenade shells; then came the National Library, once a treasure house of Bosnian history, now a fragile hulk containing nothing but ashes.

Soon, however, I was seeing Muslims in miniskirts, street cafes packed with people laughing and talking and

slowly drinking thimble-size cups of coffee, the Macarena blasting everywhere. (Until I got home, I thought the Macarena was just a big Bosnian hit.) The effect, especially at the beginning, was cognitive dissonance.

This was an in-between time, no longer war, not yet peace. Many of the Bosnian journalists I worked with told me in some ways it was easier during the war. Then there was just one story to cover, the enemies more easily known. The real challenge is telling Bosnia's story now. I had to agree.

After this trip, I returned to Bosnia twice more, spending a total of almost six months. I continued to work with local independent television stations. I also helped in the efforts to get an independent television network on the air.

This network, called Open Broadcast Network by its international backers and TVIN by its local affiliates, began broadcasting a week before the September 1996 elections. Despite massive political, financial, geographical and technical obstacles, it continues to broadcast across the country's internal boundaries. This network, if it grows, as planned, to include Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat affiliates, could be one of the most positive outcomes of the Dayton Peace Accords.

My one disappointment is that I worked only at predominantly Muslim or consciously multi-ethnic television stations. No Bosnian Serb or Croat stations accepted the USIA's invitation to have an American professional-in-residence. The five independent stations where I worked—Studio 99, TV Hayat, TV Zetel, TV Tuzla and TV Mostar—are relatively young. They were born during the 1991-1995 Balkan war or in the months just before or after it. They began as makeshift, unlicensed stations.

They still have the feel of a college

radio station: a lot of young people hanging around, while a few work furiously. These stations look, even sound, the way American newspaper city rooms used to. I became a pack-a-day passive smoker. There were rotary phones, the occasional liquor bottle in or on a desk and the peck-peck of two fingers pounding on a portable typewriter.

The average age of a Bosnian television journalist is about 23. Many older, experienced journalists left the profession or left Bosnia during the war, or they were killed. Most of the young men at these stations are demobilized soldiers. They fought for the Bosnian army, though not all of them are Muslims. Some are Bosnian Serbs and Croats who fought to defend Sarajevo and



*Lindsay Miller, Nieman Fellow 1988, got to live out one fantasy of many a Nieman: she never left Cambridge after her Nieman year. Formerly a writer/producer for CBS News in New York, she's now a freelance. Miller has worked on projects for Bill Moyers, Fox Television and the Ford Foundation and said she's always looking for meaningful work. She lives with her husband, Peter Ambler, who also visited Bosnia.*

preserve a multi-ethnic state. Some have scars that are easy to see. A tape editor at TV Hayat in Sarajevo works with only his left hand, since the right was made useless in the war.

Most of the people I worked with are Muslims, but they do not fit many of the stereotypes that many Americans have of Muslims. These are Muslims in mini-skirts, Muslims with punk haircuts. A few are devout, but most told me they never even thought of themselves as Muslims until wartime propaganda defined them that way.

From an American point of view, journalists at all these stations were strangely reticent on some stories. There was a murder one night on the street in Zenica, but no one at TV Zetel mentioned it at the story meeting the next morning. They only started talking about it when the meeting was over.

"Let's get a reporter and camera over there," I reacted.

"Oh, no," someone said. "We have to wait for the police to give us a report." That attitude, at least in part, reflects the lingering legacy of communism. So does the practice of covering a press conference word for word—no matter how long, no matter how confused and no matter how boring. Ask questions, I told them. It's your job.

On other stories, however, TV Zetel was enterprising and bold. One outstanding young journalist, Amarildo Gutic, has developed a series called

Usta Puna Baruta ("Mouth Full of Gunpowder"). The premise is that during the war people saw things they are still afraid to talk about—as though they had a mouth full of gunpowder, which could destroy them. His idea is that it is better to tell these stories than to hold them in.

The first program in this series looked at the fate of the local history museum which apparently was looted during the war, not by hostile forces, but by local officials of the ruling Muslim party. Amarildo Gutic is a natural reporter, full of passion for truth-telling, with a storyteller's sensibility and an eye for detail. What he needed, and what I could help him with, was structure. Less is more.

When I walked into any of these television stations, despite the differences in age, culture and environment, I felt right at home. As any Nieman Fellow knows, a certain personality is attracted to journalism. Even using an interpreter, we were speaking the same language.

If, however, I ever felt too much at home, something would let me know I was still a long way from Kansas. One day in Sarajevo, at TV Hayat, I was working with Azra Alimajstorovic, a talented journalist, who became Deputy News Director of the new network. I noticed she was stapling her copy to an unusual kind of thick white paper. It turned out to be Braille.

The station was located in what had been an association for the blind. The walls were lined, floor to ceiling, with tall gray volumes of the works of Marx and Lenin, in Braille. The journalists were using pages of these books as backing for their copy. There's got to be a symbol in there someplace about the blind and a new voice. But, as I discovered in Bosnia, nothing is ever so simple.

The works of Marx and Lenin were translated into the language once known as Serbo-Croatian. On my first day in former Yugoslavia, I mentioned to an American Embassy official that I had learned to say a few words in Serbo-Croatian. "Ko, sta, gdje, kada, zasto, kado." That's "who, what, where, when, why and how." He said, "I advise you



LINDSAY MILLER

*Damir Begovic, a video-tape editor at TV Hayat, an independent Sarajevo station, works left-handed because his right hand is useless from a wound he received as a soldier for the Bosnian army. Typical of many young Bosnian TV journalists, he is enthusiastic.*

never to use that word again." He meant the word Serbo-Croatian.

Language itself is a casualty of this war in which Serbs and Croats fought each other and each in turn fought Muslims. Now Serbs call their language Serbian, Croats Croatian and Bosnians Bosnian. Some stations where I worked have a special editor called a lektor, a kind of language police to make sure the correct language is used. Whatever they call what they speak, people across former Yugoslavia can still understand what the other is saying.

Television carried so much ethnic poison during the war years. Can it be an antidote, too? I know a lot of 23-year-old Bosnian TV journalists. They tell me they are sick of war. They want to get on with life. They are the ones who give me hope. ■



LINDSAY MILLER

*Azra Alimajstorovic is Deputy News Director of TVIN (TV Independent) and a first-rate journalist.*

# Media Rights in the New Hong Kong

Here are excerpts from a speech by Tsang Tak-sing, Chief Editor of *Ta Kung Pao*, a Chinese-language daily published in Hong Kong and a Nieman Fellow 1995, on February 25 to the Hong Kong American Chamber of Commerce, the largest body of its kind on the island.

I am aware that Hong Kong is suddenly getting a lot of attention from the United States government and the American media. American officials and Congressmen seem to be making an attempt to "elevate" Hong Kong to the same status as Taiwan, Tibet and human rights as one of the central issues that will seriously affect Sino-U.S. relations.

Hong Kong had not been given such a degree of attention by Washington in the past. I wonder why for 150 years the American government never raised any meaningful objection to British colonial rule over Hong Kong; why there had never been any objection to the draconian laws in Hong Kong that existed up to the mid-1980's, including laws that were a constant threat to freedom of the press here.

Only now, when we see the impending end of colonial rule over Hong Kong, does the American government start to pay attention. One would suspect that the American government, together with a large part of the Ameri-

can media, regard the end of colonial rule over Hong Kong as a change for the worst, and would prefer Hong Kong to remain under colonial rule rather than to attain a high degree of autonomy under Chinese sovereignty. Are these people really the descendants of American founding fathers who fought against British colonialism?

I have no objection to any belated attention, so long as Hong Kong will not be stifled by people who are overzealous but lack sufficient knowledge. You, of course, will have a better assessment of how much Americans know about Hong Kong. I remember an occasion in 1985 when I was in St. Paul, Minnesota. I was not as young as I'm now (to paraphrase Bob Dylan) and for some obscure reason I went into a disco and there met a local woman. We struck up a conversation and when she knew that I came from Hong Kong, she asked, "why do you keep exporting so many automobiles to us?"

Then last year I got a letter from a "National Technical Information Service" under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The letter asked for permission to translate articles in our paper to be put into their database, to be sold as a service to subscribers. Later I received another letter from them saying that we would eventually receive a check for the number of hits accessed by Internet users. The address they put down on the envelope was our office at 342 Hennessy Road, and after the road name was the city name "Hong Kong," and then the word "Taiwan."

Without sufficient knowledge of the facts, Americans will have misunderstandings about the future of Hong Kong. They will be easily misled by

people with strong biases, some of them in the American media. One can almost draw parallels with 1949, when the Chinese people generally referred to the success of the revolution as "liberation," some Americans bemoaned the "loss" of China to Communism. The demonizing of China in the American media went on for more than 20 years, until President Nixon's visit to Beijing. But then it seems that old habits really die hard.

As a journalist I covered the process of the Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong in the early 1980's, and the long transition period since. Initially the British, supported by some other people, declared that the return of Hong Kong to China would spell economic disaster for the territory. You know very well the real economic picture in Hong Kong today, and the doomsday prophets are proven wrong. But now they have another theme and say that even if the economy is all right, civil liberties here, including press freedom, will suffer after the British have departed.

Article 23 of the Basic Law for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is regarded by these people as a threat to freedom of the press and other civil liberties. As a member of the National People's Congress of China, I voted for the adoption of the Basic Law in 1990. It is my view that the "Basic Law" enshrines the "one country, two systems" concept of Deng Xiaoping and is the best guarantee for civil liberties for the people of Hong Kong. For example, Article 27 of the Basic Law says, "Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, of the

press and of publication." In fact this is the first time ever that freedom of the press has been written into the law books of Hong Kong. In the past we only had draconian laws curbing the freedom of the press here.

Article 23 itself also fully reflects the spirit of one country, two systems. Let us look at what it actually says. It reads, "The Hong Kong SAR shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies."

I do not think there is anything unusual about the requirement to enact laws against treason, etc. Rather, that is quite universal and required by other countries in the world. Don't you also have laws against treason in the United States? And after 150 years of foreign domination over Hong Kong, I look forward to the full realization of the slogan "Hong Kong to be administered by the people of Hong Kong," and so I am in full support for legislation to prohibit foreign political organizations from interfering in the affairs of the future SAR.

I can understand the worries about Article 27. Yes, freedom of the press can be curtailed by state and government actions. For example, prior to the recent announcement by the Clinton administration on partially lifting the ban, U.S. news organizations were not allowed to set up bureaus in Cuba. Wasn't this state interference a hindrance to freedom of the press and a curb on the people's right to know?

I am also aware that there are people who take absolute views: those who hold that in order to guarantee freedom of the press, you cannot have a law against treason; if there is Article 27 in the Basic Law, you should not have Article 23 there, too; if you were ever wrongly arrested by the police, you should be against all police power, or otherwise it would be "a great irony."

I do not think that the real world exists in such absolute terms.

You know that up until now in the U.K. there has never been a written Bill of Rights, which was an American invention.

The main point about Article 23, to which attention should be drawn, is the phrase "shall enact laws on its own" that is, the Hong Kong SAR—we ourselves, shall enact the relevant laws; Beijing will not legislate for us; laws on the mainland will not be transplanted to Hong Kong. Obviously this is an article in favor of localization. Its effect is to devolve power to the Hong Kong SAR, to implement "one country, two systems." This is thus definitely an article to the benefit of Hong Kong. This is an article distinct to Hong Kong, no other part of China at present has the right to legislate on its own on matters dealing with state security.

So according to Article 23, either the Provisional Legislature, or the First Legislative Council to be elected next year, will have to enact laws dealing with treason, theft of state secrets, etc. These are local legislatures, made up of local people. The draft bills will have to be first proposed by the Legal department of the government, served by present civil servants and soon to be headed by Elsie Leung as the Attorney General. She is a level-headed lawyer who has grown up here and has a long experience practicing in Hong Kong. The draft bills will have to be approved first by Mr. C. H. Tung, the Chief Executive, advised by his Executive Council, also made up totally of prominent persons in Hong Kong.

These people in the government and legislature of the SAR are members of the community of Hong Kong. They are aware of local attitudes, values and concerns, and I believe they are not going to enact repressive laws colonial-style. Mr. Tung and Ms. Leung, together with members of the Provisional Legislature, have all indicated that they will fully consult the people of Hong Kong before enacting these laws. They have to answer to the people of Hong Kong.

After the relevant laws are enacted, if there are suspected offenses it is the

local Legal Department and not Beijing that will press charges, and I don't think that Elsie Leung will press charges against a newspaper just for being critical of the Chinese government. Even if charges were brought against the press, they will be heard in the local law courts. We will have the final Court of Appeal here in the Hong Kong SAR. So what the press can say or not say, is not decided by Mr. Lu Ping or anyone else in Beijing, but by the law courts here, law courts that operate under the present common law system. Article 23 can thus be looked upon as a greater protection for press freedom and other civil liberties here.

Because of Article 23, we shall have two systems of law even on matters concerning national security, and cases will be tried here in the local law courts instead of in Beijing or somewhere else in China. Let me give an example. There is actually a person I know, who in the early 1980's was accused of espionage. The man, a Mr. Lo Fu, was alleged to have copied secret documents obtained in the Xinhua News Agency, which is the official representative of the Chinese State Council here, and sold it to an American agency. He was summoned to Beijing, stood trial there and was sentenced. He served his term in Beijing, despite the fact that the crime was committed here.

After July 1, with Article 23 of the Basic Law, legal proceedings regarding this type of offense will be localized. In fact the JLG, the Joint Liaison Group made up of Chinese and British representatives, has already agreed upon a localized version of the Official Secrets Act. If that draft is finally passed and accepted by the SAR legislature, it will become part of the laws enacted under Article 23. Offenses under this law will be tried here. This is definitely an improved arrangement.

With a different set of laws in the Hong Kong SAR distinct from that in mainland China, there will continue to be two different modes of operation for the press. There will be things that you cannot write in the mainland, but can be published here. There will be things

that they write on the mainland, but no one here will be interested in publishing. This is precisely the concept of one country, two systems: two sets of values, two mechanisms for the operation of the press.

What exactly is the main difference between the operation of the press in the two systems? The difference is that in mainland China there is a guiding ideology, call it Communism or Marxism or Mao Zedong Thought, or whatever you like, but there is a standard by which all news is measured to see whether it is fit to print, and those stories that are regarded as false or not up to the standard, are discarded.

Despite temptations of "Chinese exceptionalism" I think this is not unique to China, but is true of any nation which has a strong set of beliefs, be they political, religious, or cultural, which strongly affects the "gate-keeping" process in journalism. But here in Hong Kong, call it the capitalist society or open society or free society or whatever you want, people here are used to the idea that nobody has a monopoly on the truth. Different ideas compete in the marketplace, the most popular may not necessarily be the closest to the truth. So here you have the right to be wrong.

There are costs to be paid for Hong Kong to develop as an international center of finance, of commerce, of transport, as well as a center of information. We need the free flow of information for Hong Kong to consolidate its position as a regional and international center of financial and economic activities, so as to be useful to the modernization of China. ■

## Eisenhower On the Press

*"The members of this group [the press] are far from being as important as they themselves consider."*

1954.—President Dwight D.

Eisenhower, quoted in

"Eisenhower," Stephen Ambrose, 1984.

## The Foreign Correspondent in Manila Access Easy but Truth Is Another Matter

BY RODNEY TASKER

**I**n some ways, the Philippines has overdosed on press freedom the last 10 years. There are so many Manila newspapers that most people could not possibly read them all every day and in some cases would not want to. If the country had an American legal system, libel suits would fly fast and furious because armies of Filipino journalists compete to be more sensational in their reporting, particularly on personalities rather than on issues. The country's family-oriented culture concentrates far more on people and their relations, in an almost village atmosphere, than it does on wider affairs.

Foreign correspondents often are drawn into this maelstrom. When talking with Filipinos, correspondents who think they know the country refer to political leaders, business tycoons and other newsmakers by their nicknames. President Fidel Ramos is "Eddie," Vice-President Joseph Estrada is "Erap" and Manila Archbishop Cardinal Jaime Sin is plain "Sin." In any other country, that would suggest disrespect and tend to undermine the authority of the individuals, but not in the Philippines, where just about anything goes.

This also means access to top people at a level unparalleled in Asia, apart from South Asia. That's if the subject has seen you before, or knows of you. Personal contact is at a premium in the Philippines and is always on a first-name basis. All three presidents in my experience—Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino and Ramos—have called me "Rodney." It has been the same with other foreign and local journalists. Unlike in most other Asian countries, the interviewee does not normally ask what you want to talk about in advance, let alone require a letter first as, say, top officials do in Thailand.

Access is just as good under current President Ramos as under Mrs. Aquino. In fact, while Mrs. Aquino did not al-

ways feel at ease with reporters, Ramos, a former army general, seems to welcome the attention and gives a weekly news conference at Malacanang Palace.

Journalists can wander through ministries and defense establishments with relative impunity, especially foreign journalists since security guards are deferential toward them. A press card works wonders, particularly with the police. A former finance minister, Cesar Virata, always kept a bottle of Chivas Regal in his office and poured out the drinks if I were seeing him at the end of the day. A general offered me brandy when I was interviewing him at 11 a.m. Many top officials like to party and will invite journalists.

This all sounds wonderful for the foreign correspondent, inured to relying on diplomats, local journalists and the occasional official during an assignment. But it can have pitfalls; you have to know and trust the person you are talking to. All Filipinos like to talk a lot, whether they know what they are talking about or not. After Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin committed suicide in late 1986, an American correspondent hinted that it was, in fact, murder. That was only rumor. After talking to Muslim sources, another wrote that the government was committing genocide against Muslim separatists. It was untrue, and the reporter was expelled.

Misinformation can spread both ways. When I was based in the Philippines in the 1970's, I was told by a source close to

*Rodney Tasker, a Briton based in Bangkok, is Southeast Asia correspondent for The Far Eastern Economic Review, for which he has worked since 1974. He was based in Manila from 1976 to 1978 and has been on frequent assignments there since then.*



Imelda Marcos that she referred to me as a "card-carrying CIA agent." She also said I was trying to have an affair with her eldest daughter, Imee. Neither claim was true. Imelda is one Filipino who has always called me Tasker rather than Rodney.

Press freedom came to an abrupt halt when Marcos declared martial law in September 1972. From then until his ouster in 1986 there were only three Manila newspapers, all connected with the ruling camp and all afraid to criticize Marcos or his military and business cronies.

In 1978 Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile sued my magazine and me over a piece I had written about an attempt by a Marcos henchman to take over a church-run bank. When I was in Europe, he upped the litigation to criminal libel. My editor insisted that I return to Hong Kong, where my magazine is based, rather than to Manila.

After two years during which I was barred from the Philippines, I contacted Enrile from Hong Kong and was invited to return for an out-of-court settlement. I was met at the airport by a posse of military officers. Enrile personally assured me he was dropping the charges. The following day, I had a pre-arranged interview with Marcos, at the end of which he asked: "By the way, have you settled with Johnny [Enrile's nickname]?"

After Marcos was forced into exile by a military uprising in 1986, there was a democratic overreaction under Mrs. Aquino ("Cory"). New newspapers flooded the market, and journalists enthusiastically exercised their newfound freedom, sometimes in indiscreet ways.

Mrs. Aquino turned down a request from the journalists' association that reporters be allowed to sit in on Cabinet meetings. Malacanang Palace issued a statement that journalists should dress properly in the palace and pay attention to personal hygiene. That was a veiled reference to one or two foreign correspondents who habitually turned up for palace press conferences in sleeveless T-shirts, jeans and thongs, having not showered for a couple of days. Things have become more or-

## Microsoft Learns People Lack Time to Search Web

One of the things we are finding out after about a year and a half of doing news on line at Microsoft is that people have too high an expectation for a lot of the gee-whiz tools that we thought the Internet was going to be used for. They see video, they expect it to move like MTV and anything less just looks like a broken TV, not a cool newspaper. So during the past year and a half I've been working at Microsoft trying to figure out what it is people do want and what we found out is that they have so many demands for their time that they want news fast and they want it to find them more than they want to go find it....Getting off line is what people want more



John Callan

than anything and they want to not spend so much time looking at their computers, drumming their fingers, waiting for a modem to pop in....What we find from our own experience is that no matter how clean you make the Website people do not have time to look at it. With something like 600 or 700 thousand Websites that are updated daily and a lot more that are just out there, there's too much demand on people's time. So what we have been doing at Microsoft since about January [1996] is trying to recast the problem and say if people won't come to find us, we're going to go and find them....So what we're doing now is to say that there is not one platform that we're going to focus on; we're going to focus on a ton of platforms.... We're going to try to figure out how to do news to a whole bunch of different news platforms....Across this broad spectrum we get our million subscribers. Then we'll be able to create a printing press for our journalists to write stories for.

—John Callan, national producer for *Sidewalk*, Microsoft's local on-line arts and entertainment guide, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, January 15, 1997.

derly since, but the informal atmosphere remains.

Filipino dignitaries sometimes prefer to see foreign rather than local reporters because they feel there is a better chance of being quoted more accurately and with less of the well-known Filipino emotionalism. Rather ironically, given our previous legal tangle, Enrile, now a Senator, last February agreed to see me a day after I applied for the interview. It was to talk about the 10th anniversary of the uprising against Marcos, which he had led with Ramos. In a loud voice in front of senators and local journalists in the Senate dining room, Enrile said he had told many local reporters he would not talk on that subject. Then he proceeded to talk to me, on the record.

Enrile has gone almost overboard to be friendly since we settled the legal case; perhaps he felt bad about my

having been banned from the Philippines. During a meeting with him a year ago, I happened to mention that I play golf. A day later, one of his aides called to invite me to play golf with Enrile the next day.

Objectivity is often endangered by the instant friendships a correspondent encounters in the Philippines and the sometimes emotional responses he gets from his questions. Foreign reporters, particularly those based in Manila, can be tempted to be less impartial than they should be simply because they have good access to some politicians and less to others. But overall it is a healthy democratic atmosphere, for which the Philippines should be praised.

And you must remember the nicknames. ■

# Technology

## *The Digital Journalist*

BY TOM REGAN

**R**ecently I received a letter from a professor of journalism asking me to outline the differences—and similarities—between reporting for conventional media and reporting for the Internet.

Finally, I thought no one would ever ask.

As on-line readers demand greater depth to the stories, there is an increasing need for what you might call the neo-renaissance digital journalist. The digital journalist not only needs to know how to write a great story, she must also know how to handle a tape recorder, a digital camera and a videocam (perhaps all at the same time), and then go back to the office, edit the print, audio and video elements of the story, and combine them together in a compelling way.

She must be able to surf the Web to find sites that complement her own piece. Next, she puts her own E-mail address at the bottom of the story, so that she can engage her readers in an ongoing dialogue. Her readers are asking her to do all this in a new way, with a new voice, one that is more open and connected to them.

Currently too many media organizations—particularly newspapers—believe they can get away with simply taking content from their daily operations and sticking that up on the Web. Sort of an “If we build it, they will come” philosophy. In some cases it works, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal being the best examples. And, contrary to what some on-line gurus think, there will always be a place for shovelware on a good Website.

Perhaps the leading practitioner of new digital journalism is The Chicago Tribune. The Tribune has six reporters working for its Website. Their coverage of the Democratic and Republican conventions last year went far beyond efforts of most on-line media. Their reporters not only wrote stories, they also used digital photos and video to great effect. Considering the tepid and over-managed TV coverage of these events, citizens could get a much better idea of what was actually happening at the conventions by visiting The Tribune’s Web site. And since The Tribune also created chat areas, people could get together and talk about what was happening.

The biggest difference, and the greatest stumbling block, for a journalist moving from the world of conventional journalism into digital journalism is the element of interactivity. If conventional journalism is a one-way one-to-many model, digital journalism is a two-way one-to-one model. And that scares the hell out of more than a few journalists. The model has always been “we write, you read, and that’s the end of it.”

As Jon Carroll of The San Francisco Chronicle said in a recent article about reporting on the Web, “In general, news gathering organizations have become hopelessly spoiled by their own comfortable insulation from their readers.... They are like doctors in the 1950’s, they form a kind of priesthood, talk in jargon and suggest what they do is so incredibly technical and complex that the average person just couldn’t understand it.”

Immediate feedback from readers, however, is a key feature of on-line journalism, and the journalist who wants to work on line needs to be prepared to engage her readers in an ongoing dialogue, and editors have to be prepared to give their reporters time to have these conversations.

J. D. Lasica explains this new model of digital journalism in his excellent piece, “Net Gain,” in the November 1996 issue of the *American Journalism Review*. Lasica says we need to move away from the role of journalist as gatekeeper and more toward the idea of journalist as filter or guide—a sort of “virtual bartender,” as Esther Dyson is quoted as saying in the article.

In digital journalism, the reporter/editor doesn’t tell the reader what’s important—the reader decides that for herself. Instead, we serve as guides, helping the reader find the information that will be the most useful for them. The reporting/editing function doesn’t disappear, but it does change.

Kevin Kelly, Executive Editor of *Wired Magazine*, says that the voice of on-line journalism is “more passionate, impressionistic, telegraphic, immediate, relativistic, global and post-modern...” All this does not mean that we abandon our traditional journalistic principles of fairness and truth-telling. Instead, it asks us to recognize that while readers still want and value our viewpoint, our viewpoint is only one of many and may not be the defining one.

No doubt many reporters and editors will see the new digital journalism as a threat. This view, however, overlooks the possibilities that exist in this new model. We are being offered a chance to reconnect with our readers. We are being offered a chance to be important to them in a way that has not existed since the end of World War II. We can either accept that challenge and learn the news skills needed to be digital journalists, or we can ignore them and continue to watch our audiences fritter away. ■

*Tom Regan is the Managing Editor of The Christian Science Monitor’s On-line Edition. His homepage is at <http://www.1.usa.com/regan/Home/tom.html>*

# BOOKS

## In the Old Days, Rocky Got Away With It

**The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller  
Worlds to Conquer, 1908-1958**

By Cary Reich

Doubleday, 875 Pages, \$35.

BY R. W. APPLE JR.

At Nelson A. Rockefeller's 70th birthday party at his Pocantico Hills estate, two of his longtime aides sat at a table on the edge of the room and watched him dancing with what he would have called, with heedless political incorrectness, "a pretty girl." One aide said to the other: "He's amazing. I've counted, and he has 12 or 13 of his girlfriends or former girlfriends here. Danced with every one, too."

Cary Reich doesn't tell that tale in the magisterial first volume of his biography of the former governor of New York—I had it from one of the aides—but he may as well have. His pages are filled with details of several liaisons and hints about dozens more, involving well-known figures like Joan Braden and Nancy Hanks and others who were more obscure. If Rockefeller led a compulsively busy public life, as art collector, developer of the underdeveloped world, museum trustee, supervisor of family projects such as Rockefeller Center, Presidential adviser, politician and God knows what else, he had an even busier private life. Sometimes he barely bothered to conceal his affairs, openly courting other men's wives or his female staff members.

He got away with it all. Oh, there was a brief kerfuffle in the press when he divorced his wife, Tod, who hated politics, and married Happy, who loved it. But precious few of the other amours made the papers and certainly not in my own austere rag or the late lamented New York Herald Tribune, run succes-

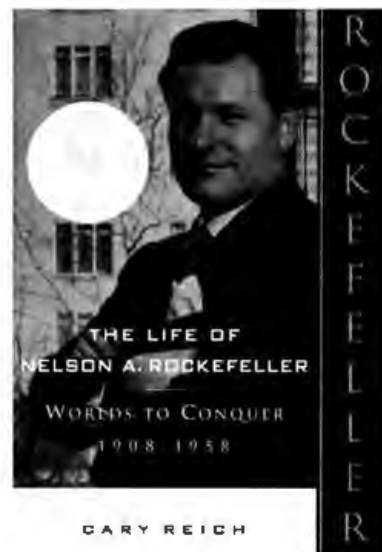
sively by his friends the Reids and then by his closer friend John Hay Whitney.

It is impossible for a reporter like myself, who covered part of his era in Albany and two of his futile presidential campaigns, not to wonder what would have happened if Rockefeller had lived in these times. The sexual peccadilloes, real and imagined, of Gary Hart and Bill Clinton, among others, were as nothing compared with those of Nelson Rockefeller. Maybe he would have been caught out; maybe the fear of exposure would have constrained him. But in the 1960's, it didn't matter all that much to reporters, at least to those who considered themselves "serious." I wonder whether the Republic suffered.

The same thing applied, of course, to the brothers Kennedy. As a cub, I was sent to the Carlyle Hotel late at night, when the real reporters had finished their shifts, to stake out the President, just in case. Of what? I didn't know, but I found out. When I reported to the city desk the next day, rather breathlessly, I'm afraid, that I had watched a well-known actress take the back elevator to his suite, I was told to forget my "scoop." The Times was interested in visitors with affairs of state on their minds, not the other kind.

How we treat politicians' private lives is only one way in which this book, the product of seven years' work, including scores of lengthy interviews, reflects changes over the last four decades in big-time politics and how it is covered.

The power of political bosses is a



rapidly fading memory today (to cite another politico-journalistic revolution) but in the 1958 gubernatorial campaign in New York, they proved decisive, operating largely out of sight of reporters. Long before the public suspected it, L. Judson Morhouse, George Hinman and Malcolm Wilson, Rockefeller's agents, were lining up support for him among powerful local Republican leaders like J. Russel Sprague of Long Island and Frank Kenna of Queens. Without them, he could not have won his party's nomination. And on the other side, the machinations of Carmine DeSapio, the Tammany boss, doomed the chances of Governor W. Averell Harriman for reelection when they were finally exposed at the Democratic state convention. Now nominations are sought almost

entirely in public, under the gaze of reporters and television cameras, not in smoke-filled rooms.

Yet the 1958 general election battle was in many ways a proto-modern campaign. It featured immensely rich men fighting for a political prize and spending their own money on the struggle. It was one of the first with the full panoply of handlers; Rockefeller was surrounded by fund-raisers, private pollsters, press agents, strategists and writers. He himself was an early example of the charismatic candidate who had "that most ineffable and elusive of qualities for a candidate, sex appeal," as Reich says; he quotes R. Burdell Bixby, a practiced political hand from the Dewey era, as saying that "no man I ever knew could charm more people per square inch than Nelson Rockefeller." FDR, maybe, but FDR did not have television, and the maturing new medium carried across New York pictures of Rockefeller driving a sulky at an upstate county fair, eating blintzes on the Lower East Side, speaking Spanish

in the barrios, converting him instantly from a suspect member of the privileged classes into the magnetic "Rocky," a man who convinced even himself, as he said, that he was "an authentic representative of the people."

In his heady mixture of wealth, charm and good looks, Nelson Rockefeller prefigured John and Robert Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. He brought a rich background to politics. He had engineered the location of UN headquarters on the East River, overseen the construction of Rockefeller Center, worked on domestic and foreign policy in Republican and Democratic administrations in Washington and labored to bring Venezuela into the modern world. He had vaulting ambition. He could call on the brains of Henry A. Kissinger and the riches of the Chase bank and his own family. He had five residences, none humble, and if he wanted to hold a hush-hush meeting he had the Radio City suite once used by the showman "Roxy" Rothafel, an art deco masterpiece designed by the great Donald Deskey.

Reich tells a wonderful tale to illustrate Rockefeller's reach. His three-story flat at 510 Fifth Avenue had a glorious view to the south, and light from that direction flooded the main rooms because the building on the adjacent corner, the elite Knickerbocker Club, was only a few stories tall. But the club got into financial trouble and considered selling the site to developers for a high-rise as a way of generating income. Bad news for Rockefeller, so he bought the building, permitting the club (of which he was a member, of course) to stay put.

"Nothing stands in Rockefeller's way," said Senator Jacob Javits, his New York political ally and friend. "Nothing. He always gets what he wants." So it seemed, but of course it wasn't quite true. He wanted to be Secretary of State, but John Foster Dulles blocked his way, so he had to put across his ideas (like the "Open Skies" plan) through others; he ran the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, as it was then, but as undersecretary, and he had to defer in public to the secretary, his nominal boss, Oveta Culp Hobby. His brother,

Laurance, once recalled a Harry Emerson Fosdick sermon called "Life Is Making the Most of Second Best," and commented, "I believe life taught Nelson that sermon."

Reich's first volume leaves Rockefeller at a moment of triumph, his sweeping victory in 1958. More victories lay ahead and 15 years as governor that left behind a vast network of new highways, a 71-campus state university system, the billion-dollar South Mall government complex—and huge debts. All that is to be covered in volumes to come, together with Rockefeller's great disappointments, his crushingly unsuccessful Presidential bids, whose amateurish ineptitude stood in such striking contrast to almost all the other things he did. The disparity was never explained (or very well understood) by contemporary chroniclers, myself emphatically included. On his showing here, we can hope for better from Reich. ■

*R. W. Apple is Chief Washington Correspondent and Washington Bureau Chief of The New York Times.*

## For the Student

### Controversies in Media Ethics

A. David Gordon, John M. Kittross, Carol Reuss

Overview by John C. Merrill

Longman. 317 Pages. \$25.20 pb.

Students should get much out of this discussion of 13 major controversies regarding media practices, such as handling public relations releases to violating the privacy of public figures. Unfortunately, each topic is discussed in an either-or-format, like a debate. Thus, the two alternatives offered on privacy are that the mass media must respect information in private or government data bases or there is no need to be concerned about using such material. As reporters and editors well know, the complexity of stories in real life make such sharp divisions meaningless. ■



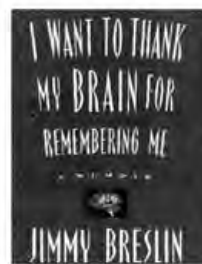
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## Was Booze Better?

I Want to Thank My Brain for Remembering Me: A Memoir  
Jimmy Breslin

Little, Brown & Co. 219 Pages.  
\$22.95.

The two fingers Jimmy Breslin uses for typing move as effortlessly as ever, from one anecdote to another, as he tells the



story of the removal of an aneurysm from his brain. Diversions from the main story postpone the surgery to the last chapter, but Breslin is irreplaceable. Even after the operation, when he skipped words and his speech was slurred, he commented, "I did better than this when I used to drink." ■

## The 'Wimp' Who Became Our Favorite Uncle

**A Reporter's Life**  
**Walter Cronkite**  
 Alfred A. Knopf. 384 Pages.  
 \$26.95.

BY RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

When Walter Cronkite was 10 years old, his father, a dentist, moved the family from Kansas City to Houston, where he was to teach in a dental school and join the practice of an older, well-established dentist, whom Walter, with characteristic reluctance to hurt anyone, identifies pseudonymously as Dr. Smith.

They celebrated the new partnership with dinner at Smith's spacious suburban residence, where the two families sat serenely on the front porch after dinner as they awaited the arrival of the delivery boy bringing desert, ice cream, from town. The boy, who was black, pulled in on his motorcycle and headed up the porch steps. Dr. Smith leapt from his wicker chair and landing a blow on the boy's nose that sent him sprawling, said, "That'll teach you, nigger, to put your foot on a white man's front porch."

Dr. Cronkite turned to his wife and son: "Helen, Walter, we're leaving;" and, refusing the mystified Smith's offer of a ride and not pausing to hail a taxi, walked his family back to town. A crucial factor in anyone's moral development is how his parents react when he first hears or says the word "nigger." That scene was the beginning of Walter Cronkite's moral education and is the best moment of his memoir—plus a clue to the steady, simple rectitude that has set the tone of his career.

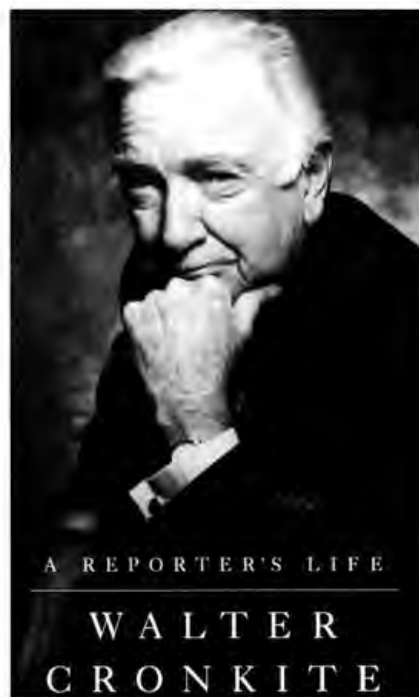
Until the father's alcoholism turned him into an abusive scold and brought on the parents' divorce the year Walter began college, they drilled honesty into their son so persistently that, he says, "I became a wimp when confronted by authority." He carried a guilt complex about things he had never done and is so crimped by his own kindness that he cannot crush an ant or put an innocent

worm on a hook. Small wonder, then, that presidents and the Washington powerful have usually felt comfortable with him and that, while other reporter-commentators like Edward R. Murrow and Eric Sevareid became the nation's conscience, Walter Cronkite became the country's favorite uncle.

Cronkite appears three times in what is probably the best documentary film about journalism ever made, Jerry Bruck's "I. F. Stone's Weekly." In one scene a pilot in Vietnam who is about to fly Walter over the battlefield for a look-see says he never wears a parachute, so Walter declines his as well. In another clip, Walter tells his viewers that Premier Ky is a "hero to his people," followed by a Stone voice-over pointing out that Ky is an admirer of Adolf Hitler. The film's point is to contrast Izzy Stone's forthright, radical condemnation of the war with the fuzzy, go-along policy of the establishment press. I mention this now, because after years of reading journalism memoirs and a year interviewing CBS alumni in my own research, an unkind word about Walter Cronkite—except that he "hogs the mike"—is as rare as an unkind word from Walter himself.

Which doesn't mean that he has written a great book. A number one bestseller, yes. A delightful read, yes. Recommended reading for Journalism 101, perhaps. But neither a gold mine for future broadcast historians nor an original analysis of contemporary media. With this Cronkite would be the first to agree. He has accomplished what he intended: he has told part of his story for those who remember him fondly in a familiar voice that always amuses and sometimes inspires.

Twice while I was reading, the bound, gray, 80-year-old Cronkite head appeared on my TV screen promoting the book I held in my hands. Once was a CBS News report on a bash CBS had thrown to celebrate the author; the other, a CNBC interview with Tim Russert. TV reporters should first be trained in print journalism, Walter said, because writing long stories gives them



better skills of organization, a clearer grasp of the whole issue—an understanding never achieved in eight-second sound bite news.

But whatever organizational skills Cronkite picked up at his beloved Houston Press and the United Press have been pushed over the edge in his attempt to organize the story of his career. He begins chronologically and holds it through World War II, his Moscow stint and his switch to CBS and Washington's WTOP. Then he groups stories in chapters topically: like presidents I have known; the Vietnam War, including his famous editorial on getting out; moon shots and voyages to the bottom of the sea; civil rights in the American south and South Africa; "big stories" like the Kennedy assassination, Watergate and Nixon's trip to China; and the status of television news.

Into this framework he plugs some good anecdotes.

Cronkite reminded Douglas MacArthur, at a large reception, of the family legend that the general, when a no-longer-young captain, had once proposed to Walter's mother but been chased off by the grandfather. "Helen Fritsche. Ah, yes. Yes," MacArthur re-

called with a glint in his eye, then turned away. We are left to imagine Walter Cronkite as Douglas MacArthur's son.

At a cocktail party he introduced himself to Charles Lindbergh, who promptly forgets his name. At a bar Cronkite asked Wernher von Braun what he thought of Hitler, and the rocket scientist raved, "Ach, I hated Hitler." Cronkite concludes he's a phony.

Occasionally Uncle Walter talks tough. At lunch, after only one martini, he tells off Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, who suggests the press should be more "patriotic." "It's not the journalist's job to be patriotic," he replies. When the Kennedys try to manipulate him by controlling an interview, he bristles, but makes only little compromises. He condemns the Pentagon for clamping controls on the press in Grenada, Panama and the Gulf War.

Cronkite tells much of his story as if he doesn't take himself seriously at all, especially recounting his misadventures as a cub reporter at The Press—like the time he misreported one digit in a multimillion dollar figure in a bank clearings story, only to discover that the daily numbers racket was based on those figures and he had screwed them up! "I know what it is like to be a marked man," he says. "Every car that paused alongside my jalopy at a stoplight was filled with hoods casing me for a hit."

In Kansas City he loses his KCMO job because he broadcasts the fire department's version of a fire rather than the version coming over the phone from the program manager's wife.

During World War II, wearing a "C," for correspondent, on his arm, he's mistaken for a chaplain. When he lands with glider troops in Normandy he mistakenly grabs an officer's helmet, and troops mistake him for their lieutenant. During the Battle of the Bulge, hustling to interview GIs during the fighting, Cronkite asks a soldier shooting at Germans his name, home town, and unit; and the boy replies, "Hell, Mr. Cronkite, I'm your driver."

It comes as no surprise that the young Walter once considered joining the Episcopalian ministry. Even a casual reader will spot a good dozen homi-

lies—usually conventional wisdom, like "As long as nations cannot live cooperatively, there must be conflict"—scattered through the text.

He strongly insists that educators should get young people to read more newspapers and opinion magazines so they won't rely on TV for their information. But readers of this book get no sense of Cronkite the reader. The smell of printer's ink and the glamour of the Linotype machine seduced him out of college almost immediately; if "Walden" or "Moby Dick" or the "Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens" had any impact on his values, he has not let us know.

I also wish he would have more respect for the full meaning of the word "friend." How can a journalist of Walter Cronkite's apparent rectitude call Frank Costello or Frank Sinatra a "friend"?

For the paperback edition, his editor could serve him—and us—better. It was the Walker Report, not the Milton Eisenhower Commission, that called the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention street war a "police riot." A little more chronology: he describes the operations of a typical CBS Evening News broadcast after he recounts his exile from CBS. To provide no index or notes is to deny to book publishing the standards once expected at CBS News.

Alas, in spite of the author's reputation for optimism, "A Reporter's Life," like all books about CBS these days, ends in sadness and bitterness. Once Cronkite left, the ambitious Van Gordon Sauter, the failing William Paley and the avaricious Larry Tisch gutted the great institution the better Paley and Frank Stanton and Murrow—and Walter Cronkite—had built. Sauter and his "minions" treated Cronkite like a "leper." "I felt I had been driven from the temple where for 19 years, along with other believers, I had worshipped the great god News on a daily basis."

But that's the way it is. ■

*Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., author of "The American Journey of Eric Sevareid" (Steefforth Press), is Assistant Dean of Fordham College in New York.*

## Steven Pinker The Rewriting Imperative

The aspect of language use that is most worth changing is the clarity and style of written prose. Expository writing requires language to express far more complex trains of thought than it was biologically designed to do.

Inconsistencies caused by limitations of short-term memory and planning, unnoticed in conversation, are not as tolerable when preserved on a page that is to be perused more leisurely. Also, unlike a conversational partner, a reader will rarely share enough background assumptions to interpolate all the missing premises that make language comprehensible. Overcoming one's natural egocentrism and trying to anticipate the knowledge state of a generic reader at every stage of the exposition is one of the most important tasks in writing well. All this makes writing a difficult craft that must be mastered through practice, instruction, feedback, and—probably most important—intensive exposure to good examples. There are excellent manuals of composition that discuss these and other skills with great wisdom, like Strunk and White's "The Elements of Style" and Williams's "Style: Toward Clarity and Grace."

What is more relevant to my point is how removed their practical advice is from the trivia of split infinitives and slang. For example, a banal but universally acknowledged key to good writing is to revise extensively. Good writers go through anywhere from two to 20 drafts before releasing a paper. Anyone who does not appreciate this necessity is going to be a bad writer. Imagine a Jeremiah exclaiming, "Our language today is threatened by an insidious enemy: the youth are not revising their drafts enough times." Kind of takes the fun out, doesn't it? It's not something that can be blamed on television, rock music, shopping mall culture, overpaid athletes, or any of the other signs of decay of civilization.

But if it's clear writing that we want, this is the kind of homely remedy that is called for.—  
*Steven Pinker, Professor and Director of the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in his book, "The Language Instinct."*

## Red Scares and the Damage They Inflicted

Not Without Honor

The History of American Anticommunism

Richard Gid Powers

The Free Press. 554 Pages. \$30.

By RICHARD DUDMAN

**W**hat do J. Edgar Hoover, Richard Whitney, John F. Kennedy and the Pentagon Papers have in common?

Answer: each was a major setback for the anticommunism movement.

Hoover, in 1917, was a 22-year-old clerk in the Justice Department's Alien Enemy Bureau. His job was to investigate the political beliefs and associations of some four million enemy aliens to see whether they had been infected by the radical opposition to United States entry into the first World War and the later radical enthusiasm for the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. If thus tainted, they would be rounded up in massive raids, for prosecution and imprisonment or deportation.

To handle the huge task, Hoover enlisted the aid of a network of counter-subversive organizations. One of these, the American Protective League's 1,200 branches, with 250,000 members, investigated rumors of disloyalty, rounded up draft evaders, disrupted Socialist functions and even served as strike-breakers.

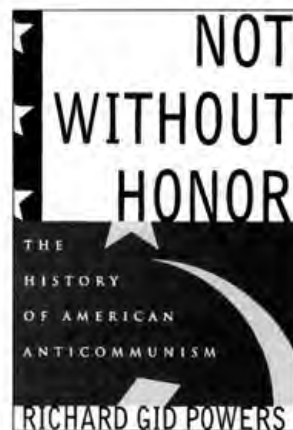
Powers sums up Hoover's impact in a passage that sets the tone for his entire book: "Largely because of Hoover's actions during these years, there would persist forever after a stereotype of anticommunism as a right-wing conspiracy against the civil liberties of the left, an image that was not far from the mark in describing some of the noisiest and most reckless anticommunists over the years, but it was also one that could be manipulated to frustrate responsible anticommunists in their efforts to expose the grim reality behind the glorious ideals professed by Communists both in America and abroad."

The story of Richard Whitney begins with a raid by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on a Communist Party national meeting at Bridgman, Michigan, in the summer of 1922. Jacob Spolansky, the agent in charge of the raid, had been monitoring the Communists, once by hiding under a pile of leaves to spy on an outdoor planning session. But before Spolansky and his team could move in on the Bridgman meeting, the Communists spotted them, hid their papers and fled.

An undercover agent led the agents to the place where the party records had been buried in potato barrels. Michigan authorities used them to try the party leaders on sedition charges. Then Hoover gave the documents to Whitney, a newspaperman, who used them in his book, "Reds in America." His "Spider Web Chart" tied almost every reform or radical group in America into a mammoth conspiracy to subvert American institutions and bring the country under the control of international Communism.

Powers says Whitney's book contained grains of truth, "but in a larger sense, none of it was true. Whitney saw a pink tree here, a pink shrub there, and imagined he was seeing a radical forest draped in the deepest hues of red." Powers traces the conspiracy obsessions of Whitney and others to one Nesta Webster, a charismatic Englishwoman who worked out a master conspiracy theory after a visit to Russia, tying Masons, Jews and Jesuits together with Communism. She also traced her hatred of revolution to her belief that in a previous life she had been guillotined in the French Reign of Terror of 1793.

President Kennedy's role as an obstacle to anticommunism lay in his de-



votion to pragmatism as against ideology. Instead of viewing the Cold War as a final battle between democratic good and communist evil, writes Powers, Kennedy at times "seemed to welcome the Soviet-American rivalry as good for the national health, the moral equivalent of a spirited 50-mile hike or game of touch football."

The Pentagon Papers turned out badly for the cause of anticommunism, when the criminal case against Daniel Ellsberg, the leaker of the papers, was dismissed. The prosecution collapsed when it was revealed that the White House "plumbers" had broken into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office to look for incriminating evidence. "It was hard to avoid the conclusion that anticommunism itself was the ultimate culprit exposed and indicted by the Pentagon Papers, since anticommunism was presumably the motive driving the war-making elite to conspire against the public," Powers writes.

Such an interpretation of people and events through a half-century of American history may remind the reader of an old joke about a historian who relates

every happening to "the Armenian question." Even Adolf Hitler comes through as a threat to anticommunism: "The need to resist Hitler made it almost impossible for anticommunism to survive the thirties at all."

But this is a serious book, recounting incidents involving a long-lasting real threat to American security and institutions. Powers rightly labels many anticommunist leaders as deranged and counterproductive for their own cause. Robert Welch's "looniness" included calling President Dwight D. Eisenhower a "dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy." Senator Joseph R. McCarthy's witch-hunting and wild charges against respected figures led to his downfall (but McCarthyism lingered "for the long-term as a stereotype to discredit even responsible anti-communism." Powers sees crazies like Whitney and Webster and Congressman Hamilton Fish and many in the early years of the American Legion as having made it "hard for anyone to believe that the danger of communism was anything except a figment of the paranoid imagination, and that anti-communism was anything more than a delusion about an illusion.")

(Some innocent parties do not escape Powers's scatter-shot accusations of nuttiness. Quoting David Halberstam's book "The Best and the Brightest" as his source, he observes in a note about the U.S. China hands who were purged and eventually rehabilitated: "They actually had been as infatuated with Mao as the China Lobby had been enthralled by Generalissimo and Madame Chiang's anticommunism." On the contrary, Halberstam reported that one of the China hands, John Paton Davies, warned Agnes

Smedley, a correspondent for The Manchester Guardian, that the Chinese revolution was very exciting and romantic now, but if it succeeded the Communists would become powerful and corrupt and she would feel disillusioned and betrayed, used and cast aside.)

Powers has his anticommunist heroes, as well. In the 1930's, Sidney Hook, Eugene Lyons and Isaac Don Levine "set before Americans the facts of what Stalin had done to a Bolshevik Revolution that had once raised the hopes of the left around the world" and "rallied the democratic left against what American fellow travelers were doing to put American culture at the service of a regime that had eliminated cultural freedom and personal liberty."

In the 1970's, says Powers, when anticommunism had been almost destroyed by the Pentagon Papers, the Vietnam War and the Nixon/Kissinger détente with the Soviet Union, "one man summoned the will, the strength, and the imagination to commence the giant task of rebuilding the anticommunist coalition": Norman Podhoretz, Editor of the American Jewish Committee's magazine *Commentary*. He gave anticommunist intellectuals a new forum. Powers lists three dozen, including Midge Decter, Michael Novak, Bayard Rustin, Dorothy Rabinowitz, Elliott Abrams, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Alexander M. Bickel, Irving Kristol, Hilton Kramer, Seymour Martin Lipset, James Q. Wilson, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Walter Laqueur, Theodore Draper and Edward Luttwak.

Powers evidently forgave Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., for supporting Kennedy's pragmatism. He praises Schlesinger repeatedly for his steadfast support of the liberal, anticommunist Americans for Democratic Action and his defense of the Congress for Cultural Freedom for secretly accepting funding from the Central Intelligence Agency.

It does not seem to bother Powers that some of the leading anticommunists he praises were themselves former Communists. He evidently does not share the view of some that ideological obsession on the right and left bear some resemblance to each other and

that either one can be hazardous to healthy politics and governance.

In the interests of full disclosure, I should note that I took a different tack from Powers's when I wrote about many of the same people in a 50-cent paperback, "Men of the Far Right," published in 1962. The book described the right-wing as a continuous spectrum, ranging from crackpots like Robert Welch to intellectual libertarians like William Buckley of *The National Review*. I predicted that this diverse spread could pull itself together and possibly even nominate Barry Goldwater for President two years later—but only if the rational leaders of the intellectual right could accommodate themselves to the yahooism and prejudice that was central to the movement. I saw the nuts and racists not as an obstacle but as a necessary component of any right-wing success.

Powers stops just short of crediting President Ronald Reagan, his greatest hero of all, with the worldwide collapse of Communism, instead quoting Alexander Solzhenitsyn to that effect. He closes on a mournful note about the present low prestige of American anti-communists: "Honored abroad, however, in their own country they are still without honor."

His book-length effort at resurrection of that image minimizes the role anticommunism has played for half a century as justification for disastrous adventures abroad and political repression and demagoguery at home.

Now that anticommunism has lost its reason for existence and faded into history, we in the press will do well to ponder our own part in the evils committed in its name. New ideological zealots will come along. They will make good copy, but we should keep our distance and always cut the cards. ■

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## Taft on the Press

The people elected me—not the press.—*President William Howard Taft, in a remark to Archie Butt, a friend, in 1909.*



## Politics Of Culture Shaping the World

**The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order**

Samuel P. Huntington

Simon & Schuster. 367 Pages. \$26.

BY RATIH HARDJONO

Samuel P. Huntington's latest book should be read by all foreign correspondents, not only because of its brilliant way of presenting a new paradigm, but also because he takes us to every conflict in the post-Cold War world.

His basic theme is that "culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the pattern of cohesion, disintegration and conflict in the post-Cold War world." He specifies seven main civilizations today—Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Western, Latin American, and "possibly" African. Incidentally, he manages reasonably successfully to overcome the distinction between culture and civilization, which bedeviled discussion about his thesis when it appeared originally in article form.

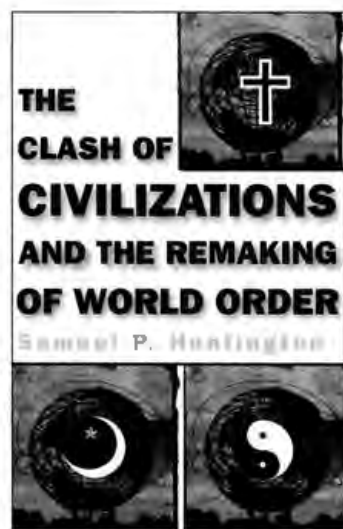
According to Huntington, every civilization has its own structure and order. A "core state" is "the principal source or sources of the civilization's culture." There is a "member state," a country "fully identified culturally with one civilization." However, not all countries can belong neatly to one civilization. Huntington sees some as "lone," where a country lacks any cultural commonality with another, like Japan. Some he sees as "cleft," where a country has large groups belonging to different civilizations, such as Malaysia. He also writes of "torn" countries, where "a country has a single predominant culture which places it in one civilization but its leaders want to shift it to another country," like Australia and Turkey.

Huntington's main preoccupation is with the decline of Western civilization, not just economically but also demographically. The West faces threats from an "Islamic Resurgence" with a fast grow-

ing population and "Asian Affirmation" based on economic growth. If the West and especially its core member, the United States, is to survive, it must renew itself by abandoning multiculturalism and affirming its traditional Western identity. In particular, Huntington is concerned with the growing number of Hispanics in the United States who retain their own cultural identity. Unlike other books on this subject, he does not address the issue of the identity of African Americans and their long struggle to have their distinctive identity recognized.

I found Huntington's book particularly strong in its insight into the resurgence of Islam. His argument is very well documented, noting that the Islamists draw their support from three large groups, students and intellectuals, traditional middle class groups like merchants and traders, and recent rural migrants in large cities. All of these have in different ways left a traditional way of life and have begun to modernize. In this process there is a vacuum, as old identities are abandoned and not replaced. Islam fills this gap. Huntington also notes that population growth among Muslim nations is considerably higher (more than two percent) than Western nations. This growth impacts on Muslim societies, where there is a growing number of young people and a high level of unemployment.

However, this insight becomes a phobia at the end of the book, when Huntington contends that "wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peacefully with their neighbors." He lists the wars Muslims have been involved in this decade. To imply that Muslims are more violent than any other civilization



is too glib. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, yet for the last 30 years has been at peace with all its neighbors. I am a direct descendant of the founder of one of the largest Islamic schools, Pondok Gontor, in East Java. I was never taught any violence. In fact, we were always taught restraint and self-discipline. All civilizations past and present have a history associated with violence; the Muslims don't have a monopoly.

Huntington's honesty about the behavior of "Western Arrogance" during this century is a sign of a true scholar. He doesn't try to defend the West. In fact, he asserts at the beginning of the book: "The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do." This fact, more than anything else, has to be the root of resentment among many non-Western countries toward the West.

This anti-Western feeling derives partly from colonialism, but in the post-Cold War era there has been an increase. One reason not mentioned in the book may be that many poor non-Western countries had embraced Westernization and modernization in the hope of stimulating economic growth. The results have been patchy. Last year when I was in Morocco a political activist commented: "The hope of better economic conditions has not materialized. We've tried the free market and it's not working. So people are starting to go back to what they know, Islam."

Huntington sees, as another threat to the declining West, Asia's economic growth, which has boosted Asian confidence as a civilization (Asian Affirmation). Economic growth has enabled Asian countries to build up their military capabilities. Again this section is well documented and tightly arranged. However, Huntington then leaps to the conclusion that together the Asian and Muslim civilization will be a threat to the United States, and war in the future is not an impossibility.

His argument is mainly based on arms deals between China, Pakistan and Iran. This very specific analysis does not really match the reality of Muslim and Chinese relations. Relations between the two are pragmatic, rather than anti-Western or anti-American. In day-to-day dealings there are also many tensions between Chinese and Muslims, for example, in Malaysia and Indonesia. China itself keeps a constant watch on its Islamic population in the Western part of China, bordering Kazakhstan. The possibility of China-Islamic states uniting against the United States seems far-fetched to anyone who lives in the Asia-Pacific region. Here Huntington is pushing his theory to the extreme.

When Huntington talks about the structure of civilization and categorizes the different sorts of states, his examples don't necessarily fit into his theory. For example, Indonesia is categorized as a cleft country with regard to East Timor. Huntington states that a cleft country happens when large groups belonging to different civilization are living in one country. Indonesia's population is 200

million, 85 percent Muslim. East Timorese number around 600,000. Huntington seems to think that Indonesia is run by a Muslim government oppressing Catholic East Timor. This is wrong. The military runs Indonesia. The conflict over East Timor is not a religious war, it is decolonization gone wrong. East Timorese wanting independence face the Indonesian army.

Also, I find his comments on Australia, where I am stationed, puzzling. He sees Australia as "torn," foolishly trying to integrate with the Asia-Pacific region when it should be establishing firmly its Western traditions. I see Australia as a Western country which in recent years has made the utterly pragmatic and sensible decision to reconcile its own national interest with the national interests of its neighbors. Professor Huntington implies that a recent security agreement between Indonesia and Australia is directed at China. But it could equally be seen as a far-sighted accommodation between two neighbors belonging to different civilizations.

Huntington's theory lacks one very important component, economics. Nowhere in his analysis of conflict does he factor in poverty. Most Muslim states are poor. Most Western states are rich. Post World War II, rich nations don't go to war with other rich nations despite complex differences, cultural or otherwise. When the United States and Japan had problems in the trade area, there were many strong exchanges but no talk of military conflict. War between poor countries often happens, and these are desperate wars because in many cases they involve scarce resources. The civil war in Burundi is about a small minority having all the control over the Hutu majority, but it is also about control of Burundi's scarce resources. During the Cold War many poor countries received economic aid in return for their loyalty to one of the superpowers. Today they are left to fend for themselves. As a result conflict is breaking out everywhere.

Huntington concedes that the Bosnian Muslims at the beginning of the war in the former Yugoslavia were not strong Islamists. Now they are. Bosnian Muslims had an arms embargo put on them and waited for the United

States to help. Meanwhile, Muslim countries led by Iran and Saudi Arabia started to pour money into Bosnia. By the time the United States decided to do something, it was too late. The turning point for Bosnians was not so much rediscovering Islam but aid arriving when it was desperately needed.

When Huntington published his now famous article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 titled "Clash of Civilizations," he commented that most of the respondents did not take into account the question mark at the end of his title. It was a good point to make at the time, and I have taken it into account when reading this book. I don't see, however, that it makes much difference. The title of this book is "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," suggesting a more constructive approach, but still the bulk of the book focuses on why and how the clash of civilizations will occur, not on the remaking of world order. That issue is discussed in only one chapter out of 12, the last chapter. Huntington prescribes three basic ground rules: states abstain from intervention in conflicts, states negotiate with each other to contain or to halt wars and people in all civilizations search for some commonality in values and outlook. I say amen to that.

However, many readers outside the United States will be disturbed by Huntington's ambiguity about a future American role, which has been present, sometimes under the surface, throughout the book. He states: "Avoidance of major intercivilizational wars requires core states to refrain from intervening in conflicts in other civilizations. This is a truth which some states, particularly the United States, will undoubtedly find difficult to accept." After elaborating in great detail how Islamic Resurgence and Asian Affirmation are threatening Western civilization, Huntington's message to Americans on how to react is less than assuring. There is, one has to say, a disposition in Professor Huntington to think that, in the nature of things, conflict is inevitable. ■

*Based in Sydney, Australia, Ratih Hardjono is international correspondent for KOMPAS, Indonesia's most influential daily newspaper. She is a 1994 Nieman Fellow.*

## The Marriage of Newspapers and Art

### The Newspaper in Art

Garry Apgar, Shaun O'L. Higgins,  
Colleen Striegel

New Media Ventures, Inc. 220  
Pages, 208 Illustrations. \$75.

BY LOIS FIORE

Late in the 1980's, James Lessersohn of The New York Times and Shaun O'L. Higgins, a former editor of The Spokane Spokesman-Review, were visiting The Phillips Collection in Washington, when Higgins noticed a painting by Vuillard of a woman reading a newspaper. Later in the tour he noticed two other works involving newspapers, Gris's "Still-Life with Newspaper" and Van Gogh's "Entrance to The Public Gardens in Arles." Intrigued, Higgins decided that whenever he visited a museum, he would look for other paintings featuring newspapers. He thought one might be appropriate to use in a newspaper promotional campaign.

After four years of visiting museums, Higgins had notes on about 80 works of art and decided to expand his search. He brought in two colleagues, Colleen Striegel and Garry Apgar, with backgrounds in journalism and art history. Together, they "visited more than 200 libraries, museums and galleries in North America, Australia, Europe and South America, sorting through an estimated 80,000 works from the 16th Century to the present."

The result of Higgins's casual observation, curiosity and diligence is a beautiful book, "The Newspaper in Art."

When we think about newspapers, we think about words. If we think about art at all, it is usually by reading about the latest blockbuster at the local art museum, or the newest controversy involving the banning of art or photography perceived by some as offensive, or seeing a striking page-one photo. But in Apgar's opening essay, "Print News Imagery in the Visual Arts," he merges the history of newspapers into the history of art. From the first time a



Paul Cézanne, "The Artist's Father," Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, © Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington. 1866, oil on canvas.

few sheets of text were seen in a painting in Bruegel's 1565 "Peasant Wedding," to the revolutionary use of newsprint in Cubism, to the use of images in protesting the Vietnam War, we see how art and newspapers and society are intertwined.

Higgins's and Striegel's essay, "From Casual Object to Universal Icon," is filled with examples of the similarities and ties between art and newspapers. They are both storytellers; they serve as "keepers and interpreters of religious and cultural lore, providing both the informational core around which primitive societies formed and the social glue that held them together." They both encourage "thinking, helping readers and viewers form opinions and act upon them." Both describe the culture of the times: a painting by Eastman Johnson from 1869 showing a father reading a newspaper and thereby establishing his authority as head of his family; and Mary Cassatt's 1878 paintings of women reading the front page of a newspaper, not the women's page,



Joseph Solman, "Mother With Children," collection of Roni Solman. 1960, watercolor on newsprint. Photograph courtesy of the artist. Solman did this piece on the Daily Racing Form while on a commuter train.

reflecting a change in the way women were perceived—"...the viewer senses that their minds are actively at work in the world."

But as informative as the essays are, the joy of this book is the art. As one who has seen the most awful reproductions of paintings in art books, with color and texture that has nothing to do with the original work, it was wonderful to see the quality of the 208 photographs reproduced here. Even without knowing or having seen the original art, the viewer is clearly able to see the artists' marks—the astonishing variety of brush strokes, the gleam in the globs of paint, the intimate and delicate line of some work, the bold and blunt blocks of color in others.

So read the words to understand the great and ongoing connection between newspapers and art, but leave plenty of time to look at the pictures. ■

Lois Fiore is Assistant Editor of *Nieman Reports*.

# A Reader's View

## Writing About Art

BY MURRAY SEEGER

**O**f all the fields of journalistic interest, perhaps none is so poorly covered as the world of art—all forms of artistic expression, painting, music, performance, writing, photography. Perhaps those who do art can't write and those who can write can't do art.

More likely it is a matter of lack of interest by editors and publishers outside the major creative centers of Boston, New York, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. There is also the matter of approach. Should we permit criticism of the local symphony for fear of driving away needed clients? Or at the risk of offending a board of directors that includes the publisher's wife?

There is a shortage of journalists sufficiently conversant with the arts to make the subject interesting. There are, however, programs to help journalists increase their knowledge. The Nieman Foundation, for one, has had few applications from journalists interested in the arts although Harvard offers a rich aesthetic inventory for exploration.

Many media outlets depend on professors and working artists for columns and articles. These outside contributors are often at the mercy of editors who have little or no understanding of what the experts are writing about. Book reviewing is a big freelance outlet despite frequent embarrassing conflicts of interest.

One element missing in art journalism is the multi-talented observer who can discuss the entire creative scene, bringing the new into focus, weighing it against the old and helping the lay audience enjoy what is available. Neither are there many observers able to delve deeper into the arts to make major movements comprehensible to wider audiences.

Certainly, there doesn't seem to be anyone around in general circulation to match the output of Gilbert Seldes, who died in 1970 after a long career as columnist and author on "The Lively Arts." Hardly any form of artistic entertainment escaped his attention.

Professor Michael Kammen, a cultural historian at Cornell University, concluded: "To the extent that enthusiasm is more attractive than cynicism, Seldes emerges as one of the most engaging cultural critics of his time. To the extent that an excess of enthusiasm leaves one open to be second-guessed, Seldes also remains one of the most vulnerable critics of his time—yet one of the most versatile and instructive as well."

This is from Kammen's recently published, "The Lively Arts, Gilbert Seldes and the Transformation of Cultural Criticism in the United States" (Oxford). Reading his career backward, Seldes was the first dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, first

director of television for the CBS Network, daily and monthly columnist and critic for major newspapers and magazines.

Seldes was a cheerleader who enthused over comic strips and jazz as well as the work of leading novelists of his age. He is most important because he recorded serious commentary on the amazing development of mass communications from the day he left Harvard in 1914 until his death.

While the Seldes book explores the exciting era of the popular arts, Professor Wendy Steiner, Chair of the University of Pennsylvania English Department, examines several controversies that recently riled the highest levels of culture. She talks about the fights over pornography, politically correct speech and the behavior of intellectuals whose artistic contributions were tainted by their evil political proclivities.

"The Scandal of Pleasure" (University of Chicago) takes us to the opposite aesthetic pole occupied by Seldes. While journalists can identify with Seldes's world of radio, television, theater and books, they have more difficulty exploring the deeper issues behind an exhibition of photography by Robert Mapplethorpe, the subtle contents of Salman Rushdie's fiction and the debate over Paul de Man's school of deconstructive criticism and his youthful Nazi journalism.

Do we dismiss the philosopher Martin Heidegger because he was a Nazi Party member or the scholarship of Anthony Blunt because he was a spy for the Soviet Union? These are not easy questions and journalists have to avoid glib answers.

The two books show the broad boundaries of cultural criticism. While Seldes's work could still find an audience through the electronic or print media, Steiner's work is quickly consigned to academic shelves. This is wrong, however, because she has important things to say to the same soft-boiled eggheads who would read and appreciate Seldes.

Steiner discusses "the battleground of contemporary culture" and is not satisfied that Mapplethorpe's photos are still available or that an assassin had not yet found Rushdie to carry out the Islamic death sentence. There are deeper implications. "Does the recent assault on artistic and intellectual freedoms presage a greater rout to come?" she asks.

"Art occupies a different moral space from that presented in identity politics, because art is virtual," Steiner argues. "We will not be led into fascism or rape or child abuse or racial oppression through aesthetic experience."

An important ingredient that brings Steiner and Seldes together across the wide spectrum of all art, and aligns them with the world of journalism is their common fealty to the free expression elements provided by the blessed First Amendment. ■

*Murray Seeger is a 1962 Nieman Fellow.*

# NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

## *The Reporter Turns Editor*

BY LORIE HEARN

Some years ago, when I considered myself a reporter for life, I chuckled at one of the final chapters in Edna Buchanan's "The Corpse Had a Familiar Face." She said handing a hard-wrought story over to an editor was "like sending your daughter off for an evening with Ted Bundy." Her advice to journalism apprentices was threefold: "Never trust an editor. Never trust an editor. Never trust an editor."

I think back on that bit of wisdom often now as I sit at my computer in the newsroom moving paragraphs around and suggesting new leads for stories that are not mine. Am I one of those editors Buchanan rues, or am I more like those she acknowledges actually make copy better?

My decision to move from reporting to editing and the management ranks did not come easily. Each step was painstaking and tenuous. The idea came to me like a whisper four years ago, a whisper I couldn't shake off. I had been a reporter at five different newspapers over more than 20 years, covering everything from sewer boards, to city hall, to plane crashes, to state judicial politics. I was settled comfortably into the downtown office at The San Diego Union-Tribune with a desk that had a view of the bay. I was the Legal Affairs Reporter, writing mostly important local, state and national stories. The job was one I'd dreamed of for a long time.

So why mess with a good thing?

The answer is: I didn't intend to. My initial thought was to expand my breadth of experience. I'd try editing,

just to see what it was like. A bonus might be that I could contribute to this business I love in a bigger way than I could with my bylines.

I started with brief stints on the desk, filling in for vacationing editors. It was the best of both worlds, writing, but then editing for weeks at a time. I was allowed a valuable window into how the newspapers' leaders made daily decisions. I had permission to question their thinking and to bring problems from the rank and file to their attention.

Knowing I couldn't go on forever with a professional split personality, I left the paper for a Nieman Fellowship, hoping the distance from daily journalism and the inspiration of new colleagues would help. Professors at Harvard and the people at the Nieman Foundation encouraged me to examine my motives and desires. In the end, timing helped push me over the edge. As the Nieman year ended, The Union-Tribune reorganized its management structure, leaving an editor's opening for the courts reporters. I felt it was meant to be.

Over the last two years of being a desk jockey and something of an air traffic controller, the challenges have been as great as those of any story I've covered. I've been bone-tired and bleary-eyed more often than I can remember. But editing has given me a different kind of satisfaction on a much broader level because I've been able to have a strong voice in shaping our coverage of legal and other issues. I can tell you, I smile a lot in this job.

It helps to have a great team of reporters. Together, we dogged a judicial corruption scandal that ended in two former judges and a gift-giving lawyer getting federal jail terms. We localized the partial federal government shutdown caused by the budget impasse. We've struggled to put violent acts committed by juveniles in context. Daily, we're confronted with federal law enforcement issues generated by the city's proximity to the Mexican border.

I try to be the kind of editor I thrived working for. As a reporter, I felt best about my work when I had an editor who pushed me higher when I wasn't sure how to get there on my own. I didn't mind doing some professional bloodletting for a boss I knew cared as much about the product and the readers as I did. I was jazzed working for editors who remembered what it was like in the trenches and who cut me some slack when I needed it.

It's all about mutual respect.

As the Legal Affairs Editor at The Union-Tribune, the equivalent of many newspapers' assistant metro editors, I believe that philosophy applies to those above me as well. I want to be proud of where I work. I'm lucky because I am.

Some of my most difficult times have been in learning and practicing the art of diplomacy. Editors are in the middle. They have to listen to readers, to reporters and to the voices of the corporation that owns the newspaper. The crew of editors on the metro desk works

well as a team, back reading for each other, jumping into the fray when one of us need help. We often joke that we feel like the plate-spinner on the old Ed Sullivan show: keep those plates in the air. And while you're at full tilt, keep an eye on the other plate spinners' plates.

Many reporters have the luxury of focusing on a single subject or story for one whole day. As an editor, I juggle many stories at once, crafted by reporters with varying personalities and skills. I attend news meetings, have telephone consultations with our lawyers over access issues and engage in conversations with our Readers' Representative and writing coach. I work with the photo and graphics staffs, scroll the wires, read legal journals, plan projects and talk through ethical dilemmas. And then there are personal issues: scheduling days off for reporters, helping them get their work done while they take time to care for a sick child, finding someone to fill in at the last minute for an absent reporter. The pace can be dizzying and exhilarating.

The toughest thing is the management part. The paperwork, the performance evaluations, the forms that must be filled out. It's hard. It's time-consuming. Most of the time, it's not fun.

The best part, though, is the people. Coaching and mentoring are big reasons I know I made the right decision in crossing over to the other side. There is nothing more gratifying than "unpackaging" a story idea with a reporter over a day or over weeks and then having the copy sing off the page when it's finished. Even the best reporters and editors need to stretch. The key is working with people who help us do it. We do a lot of figurative and literal high-fives around the newsroom.

Maybe I sound a bit naive. I've only been editing full-time for about two years. It's hard to maintain enthusiasm, let alone feel it's contagious. Sometimes I miss my front seat on the world. But just when you start spending too much time questioning yourself, something happens. In my case, that something came on a sheet of paper at the beginning of February. It was a letter my reporters had written nominating me for the company's monthly award

for journalistic excellence. It doesn't get much better than that. ■

*Lorie Hearn is a 1995 Nieman Fellow.*

—1943—

**Frank Kelly** was one of five people honored with The Santa Barbara News-Press 1996 Lifetime Achievement Award at a banquet last November. At 82, Kelly has had an adventurous life, which began in his imagination, as a youth, writing science fiction. He switched to journalism after college, where he was a reporter for The Kansas City Star and The Associated Press. He was a speechwriter for Harry S. Truman's 1948 presidential campaign, worked as assistant to the Senate majority leader in the Capitol until 1952 and eventually joined the Ford Foundation as Vice President of the Fund for the Republic. In 1982, Kelly and three others founded the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, where he is currently Senior Vice President. He has written 10 books and has just been inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame.

—1961—

**Robert (R.C.) Smith's** book, "A Case About Amy," was published last fall by Temple University Press. The book is an account of how and why a deaf girl lost her public school sign language interpreter to a Supreme Court decision in 1982. Smith's first book, "They Closed Their Schools," has just been republished by citizens of Prince Edward County, Virginia, where the schools were closed, 1959-64, in an effort to avoid desegregation. All proceeds from re-publication are going to creation of a civil rights museum in the county. Smith resides now in Jamestown, N.C.

—1962—

**John Hughes**, former Editor of The Christian Science Monitor, has been appointed Editor of The Deseret News, the afternoon daily in Salt Lake City. Hughes is also serving this year as a juror for the 1997 Pulitzer Prizes.

—1966—

**Charles A. Ferguson**, retired Editor of The Times-Picayune, has been awarded an honorary doctor of literature degree (D.Litt.) by Dillard University, New Orleans, where he has served as a Trustee and Board President for the last 25 years.

—1967—

**Dana Bullen**, after 15 years, has retired as Executive Director of the World Press Freedom Committee. "But," he says, "while my salary has retired, I'm not sure that I have. I continue to work with WPFC several days a week as senior adviser on a consultancy basis. I previously worked 21 years at The Washington Star, serving as Foreign Editor, U.S. Supreme Court reporter, U.S. Senate reporter and syndicated columnist. When the paper closed in 1981, I joined WPFC, for which I had been a volunteer."

—1971—

**Ronald Walker** writes: "It was good to see so many people at the last Nieman reunion in Cambridge, some of whom wondered what I was doing living in the Virgin Islands and the little, laid-back island of St. John. For one thing, not going to seed, since I write a weekly editorial page column for The San Juan Star, the English-language daily, which sent me off to the Nieman year to begin with. For another thing, my wife and I have built a house in St. John as part of her family's vacation rental homes business, and an invitation is hereby extended to wandering Niemans. For yet another thing, 'Who's Who in America' has seen fit to include me in its 1997 volume. More evidence, I submit, of not entirely going to seed in the tropics."

—1974—

**Patricia O'Brien** has a novel coming out. A journalist for many years, O'Brien has also written "The Ladies Lunch" and "The Candidate's Wife."

Here she talks about the switch from writing nonfiction to fiction:

"Making the transition from journalism to writing fiction was a little like walking into the middle of Connecticut Avenue at rush hour and stripping off all my clothes (if I didn't totally embarrass myself, I'd probably get hit by a bus). But it was fun to make up people and craft plots so I tossed my clumsier efforts into trash bags (three full ones by the end of the first novel) and kept writing. I was very frustrated until a fellow reporter told me that I had to "give myself permission to make things up." Bingo. It's still intimidating to stare at a blank computer screen and know that whatever I produce must come from my imagination and not from interview notes and fact-filled files. But when things are going well, it's enormously satisfying.

"My novel, 'Good Intentions,' (July, Simon & Schuster) is about a woman radio talk-show host in Chicago trying to rebuild her life after a traumatic divorce. In an effort to recapture past happiness, she buys the house she grew up in. But that forces her into a confrontation with a painful past, exacerbated when her mother and daughter come home for an awkward Christmas reunion. Therein hangs my tale. It's been the most satisfying fiction effort to date, in part because I moved away from using Washington politics as a backdrop. (It's harder to make up good political stories these days; you're competing with the realities of the Dick Morris era.)

"Now I'm planning a trip back into the world of nonfiction. My old pal **Ellen Goodman** and I (we met 24 years ago during our Nieman year) are writing a book together on friendship. We'll be doing it for Simon & Schuster, and we'll have more to report on that later."

—1979—

**Tomas Dillen** brings us up-to-date on what he has been doing since his Nieman year:

"I worked as Head of Information, Continuity and Planning at Swedish TV2, an office job allowing me to take part in the raising of our son, Oskar.

## Committee Named To Choose Nieman Fellows

A committee of two journalists and two members of the Harvard University community will select approximately 12 American journalists for the University's 1997-98 Nieman Fellowships.

The committee, chaired by Curator **Bill Kovach**, are:

**Elizabeth Bartholet**—Professor of Law, Harvard Law School.

**Ann Marie Lipinski**—Managing Editor, The Chicago Tribune; Nieman Fellow 1990.

**Sydney H. Schanberg**—Pulitzer Prize winning journalist; former columnist,

Then I returned to making international documentaries for a few years. During a job in Brazil, I took ill quite seriously and was forced to end traveling for a while. (The documentary we made in Brazil, "Law of the Jungle," can be obtained from The American Museum of Television and Broadcasting in New York.)

"I created and headed the first dedicated group of investigative journalists at Swedish TV for a couple of years. Then I left Swedish TV to become an independent, and I now head my own film production company. Quite a new experience in my life.

"I'm well, my wife, Ulla, is well, son Oscar is well. Life is quite bearable. And regularly we are reminded of the good Nieman year through the many times excellent Nieman Reports."

—1981—

**David Lamb's** wife, Sandy Northrop, had plenty of help from the class of '81 in launching her new book, "Drawn and Quartered: The History of American Political Cartoons." **Rose Economou** invited Sandy to address her journalism students at Columbia College in Chicago as part of the Fischetti Awards, one of the highest honors in political cartooning; **Doug Marlette** is featured prominently in the book and was the inspiration of Sandy's original interest in the subject with his book, "In Your Face." And **Jim Stewart**

The New York Times and New York Newsday.

**Timothy C. Weiskel**—Director, Harvard Seminar on Environmental Values; Visiting Lecturer on Religion and Society, Center for the Study of Values in Public Life, Harvard Divinity School.

More than 1,000 journalists, representing various media throughout the United States and in more than 60 other countries, have studied at Harvard as Nieman Fellows since the program was started in 1938. ■

interviewed Sandy for a segment on political cartoons for CBS's "Sunday Morning." "Drawn and Quartered" was published by Elliott & Clark.

—1983—

**Karl Idsvoog** writes:

"After a summer of unemployment, I've picked up a job with a long commute. I'm an investigative producer for 'Inside Edition.' I'm based in New York; my wife, Kath, and the kids are still in Cincinnati. My son Adam continually asks when I'm going to get another job. I tell him: 'Adam, I work in TV; it won't be long.' One good thing about 'Inside,' it allows you to report stories others won't touch. My first investigation dealt with problems on GM antilock brakes. I got the tip from an investigative reporter in a major market who wasn't allowed to do the story. His news manager told him, 'we don't do (negative) car stories.' So if you've got good stories getting killed, please send them my way to [IdsvoogNY@aol.com](mailto:IdsvoogNY@aol.com) "Thanks."

—1988—

**Michele McDonald**, freelance photographer, won the first public awareness award given by The Hospice Federation of Mass. for "Choosing a Good Death." The two-year story was initiated and written by Boston Globe health columnist Judy Foreman, who was hon-

ored for her "compelling journalistic achievement." McDonald's photographs were recognized for their spiritual quality.

**Eduardo Ulibarri**, Editor-in-Chief of *La Nacion* in Costa Rica, was one of four journalists to receive the 1996 Maria Moors Cabot Prizes from Columbia University for distinguished reporting on Latin American affairs. The award, presented last fall, included \$1,000 and a gold medal.

—1991—

**Rui Araujo** is back in Lisbon after "three long years in Brussels," where he was a reporter for RTP:

"The Portuguese television is going so badly I got a promotion: I am now the Editor of 'Enviado Especial'—the most serious news show on RTP 1.

"In the meantime, I decided to write another book. This time it is fiction. I am finishing chapter II of a cop story, based on facts. The Portuguese Police Department allowed me to spend four months with the homicide group in order to know how the guys think, act and live. It is very interesting. Last but not least: I teach journalism at Cenjor, the most prestigious journalism center downtown."

—1992—

**Jan Strnad**, in the Czech Republic, became a general director of MADISON Public Relations in October 1996. The organization was founded to support the well-known advertising agency Young & Rubicam. Strnad said, "It seems to be very interesting work, much closer to journalists, my former colleagues." Strnad had been a political specialist in the American Embassy.

—1994—

**Frank Gibney** is now Tokyo Bureau Chief for *Time* magazine. He had been based in Hanoi.

**Jaroslav Veis** left his newspaper, *Lidove noviny*, about nine months after his return to Prague after his Nieman

year. He then worked, he writes, "as Program Director of the Centre for Independent Journalism in Prague...and part of my job was to edit a quarterly journal KMIT (an abbreviation for Communication, Media, Information, Technology, which explains what it is about) for which Nieman Reports was a great inspiration. And I co-edit it still, even if I left the Centre to become an active journalist again—a columnist for the news magazine *Tyden*, *The Prague Business Journal*, and other Prague-based publications. At present I still write for all of them but on a freelance basis, having a lot of work on the editorial board of *The New Presence Monthly* (an ambitious project published in both Czech and now English).

"And I have spent some long weeks this year translating the book which has (at least something) to do with journalism and ethics—"Primary Colors"...I am curious if it will stir some discussion on the issue here. And there are some interesting activities in Internet journalism starting in the Czech Republic—not only full-text versions of traditional media but new projects of virtual newspapers in which I am involved."

—1995—

**George Abraham's** wife, Pamela, writes to say that George is enjoying his job with a new paper, *Dar Al Sharq* in Doha, Qatar. "My only problem is that it keeps him at the office 12-14 hours of the day....One good thing of having been a Nieman affiliate is that I have started writing, too. I have a column which comes out once a week. It's a female view on events in India. Thanks, **Bill [Kovach]**. Guess I could never have had the courage to write without the writing classes of Rose Moss and the impetus from a wonderful year."

**Barbara Folscher** is resigning from the South African Broadcasting Company in June to freelance as an independent producer. "With the broadcasting market opening up as it is here, it seems to be the best thing to do. I will still be doing documentary programs and have many options on whom to work for. I want to tell you, too, that the

impact of my Nieman year is still central in my approach to whatever I do. I have often tried to understand exactly what it is that settled so thoroughly in my thoughts and in my being. Closest I can get to it is to call it a search for value—whether I am doing a program, educating my children or discussing the painful transition of my country. It sets a standard that influences the way you regard your own world and ultimately your own life."

**Karl Schoenberger's** wife, Susan Moffat, had a baby girl, Hannah Marumoto, on February 15. The family, which includes daughter Sonya, is based in Hong Kong, where Karl is Asia Bureau Chief for *Fortune* magazine.

**Lou Ureneck** is now Assistant to the Editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. For the next 18 months to two years, *Inquirer* Editor Maxwell King says, Ureneck will be in a "developmental rotation through a series of professional roles at *The Inquirer* and its publishing company, *Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc.*, before assuming a permanent position at PNI or elsewhere within *Knight-Ridder, Inc.*" Ureneck is starting with an editing assignment on the City Desk.

For four years Ureneck had been Vice President and Editor of *The Portland [Maine] Newspapers*, where he also was in charge of developing the company's on-line news services. He also was one of the first editors to initiate and consistently use a civic journalism approach to the newspaper's coverage of a variety of issues. Ureneck started at the *Portland Newspapers* in 1974 as a reporter and columnist and held a succession of positions over the years, including Managing Editor in 1984 and Executive Editor in 1989. In 1995, Ureneck was named *Journalist of the Year* by the *Maine Press Association*.

Ureneck and his wife, Patricia, have two children.

—1996—

**Kevin Davie**, Publisher of *WOZA* (Zulu: "come"), an on-line-only newspaper, tells about a first in his country: an "on-line stockbrokerage." He con-



tinues, "This is a joint venture between WOZA and the leading discount stockbroker. Our readers will be able to read the news, including company and market reports, call up share price graphs and company histories as well as place their buy/sell orders all from the same Website. I believe we are the first on-line paper anywhere to offer such a service. I told a contact at one of the large banks here about it. His response: good heavens, you're competing with us.

"Now, this is non-conventional source of revenue for a newspaper. But I believe that just as conventional sources of revenue (particularly from classified ads) will be lost as the new technology takes hold, new forms of revenue will have to be found if new media publishing is to be self-sustaining. Publications will, of course, as now, have to be structured so that the commercial interests do not conflict with the editorial interests."

WOZA's Web address is: <http://www.woza.co.za>

**Patricia Guthrie** of The Albuquerque Tribune writes, "I'm still riding the high-country of New Mexico in my pickup combining health reporting, occasional editing *and* will be Editor of our Backcountry Page, exciting fish, hunting and recreational stuff...I also volunteer for absurd duty such as working Thanksgiving and Christmas mornings at 4 a.m. as the National Wire Editor. I also started writing an occasional series profiling really old people, inspired by Prof. Robert Coles's book, "The Old Ones of New Mexico."

**Jenny Lo** left the BBC on Dec. 16 after spending five weeks in the United States working on a documentary on Clinton's second term. On Jan. 6 Lo started work as Communications Director for the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum (Tel 171-467-3600 or 3655). She says, "This is a charity which deals with corporate citizenship, sustainable development, transition economies, emerging markets, training of leaders and managers in South Africa, China, Russia, the world and gets governments, businesses, non-governmental

organizations and international organizations like the World Bank together..." Lo says her new job, which involves a lot of traveling, "is very hectic (in a different way than journalism) but very interesting."

**Joseph Williams** is now Assistant Metro Editor of The Boston Globe, supervising police and court coverage for Boston and the greater metro area. He was Assistant City Editor for The Miami Herald until his move to Boston at the end of January. Williams feels this is an exciting opportunity and says he has to keep restraining himself from thinking that he's living his Nieman year over again. His wife, Amy Alexander, a journalist and freelance writer, is editing an anthology on Louis Farrakhan and black leadership, featuring essays written by black writers. ■

## Obituaries

—1943—

**Millard C. Browne** died on July 17, 1996 in Menlo Park, California, of kidney failure as a complication of Parkinson's disease. He was 81. Browne spent more than a third of a century at The Buffalo Evening News and retired as Editorial Page Editor. He began at The News in 1944 as an editorial writer, at the age of 29, and wrote more than 10,000 editorials. Browne traveled widely. Known for his defense of freedom of the press, Browne lectured often on the First Amendment. He is survived by his wife of almost 57 years, Jane, and, among others, two daughters and two sons.

**Fred W. Neal** died November 21, 1996 as a result of being struck by an automobile. He was 81. Neal was on the faculty of The Claremont Graduate School in its Center for Politics and Economics for more than 39 years, where he founded the International Relations Program. He was a nationally known expert on Russia, the republics of the former Soviet Union, and the republics of the former Yugoslavia. He also founded the American Committee

on East West Accord. At the time of his death he had instituted the Fred Warner Neal Lecture Series at the Center for Politics and Economics. The lectures were designed to bring distinguished international leaders to speak. For those interested in supporting the center and the lecture series, donations may be sent to: The Fred Warner Neal Memorial Fund, The Claremont Graduate School, Office of Development, 150 E. Tenth Street, Claremont, Calif., 91711. Neal is survived by his son, Frank Stephenson Neal II, and daughter, Susan Victoria Neal, both of California.

—1945—

**Houstoun Waring** died on February 18 at the age of 95 in Littleton, Colorado. For 40 years he was Editor of The Littleton Independent and for 30 years after that wrote "Hous's Column." He started at the Independent right out of college; it was the only journalism job he ever had. Waring's full life included many honors and awards. He is survived by, among others, two sons and a daughter.

—1950—

**John L. Hulteng** died in March of 1996 of cancer. Four days before his death, Hulteng learned that he was one of four journalists chosen to receive the highest honor from Columbia University's journalism Alumni Association, the Alumni Award. Hulteng's widow, Elizabeth, accepted the award on his behalf. Hulteng is former Dean of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Professor of Communications at Stanford University. His books include "The Messenger's Motives: Ethical Problems of the News Media," and "Playing it Straight: A Practical Discussion of the Ethical Principles of the American Society of Newspaper Editors." Hulteng, who grew up in North Dakota, began his career in 1947 as editorial writer for The Providence Journal and Evening Bulletin. ■

## E. O. Wilson's Last Class

*E. O. Wilson, a member of the Nieman Foundation Advisory Board and for 40 years one of the most popular members of the Harvard Faculty with Nieman Fellows, taught his last basic biology class, Science B-15, last fall. A devoted fan of the Nieman program, Professor Wilson had grown particularly fond of Nieman Curator Howard Simons. Shortly before Howie's death, Professor Wilson named a new ant species he discovered in Costa Rica in honor of Howie. In scientific nomenclature it is *Pheidole simonst*.—Bill Kovach*

The mostly clear skies of daybreak have given way to lowering clouds hinting at snow as a group of students are making an unusually anxious dash for the science building on the north side of Harvard Yard on December 11, 1996.

At noon they crowd into Science Center Classroom C where they become part of a mass of some 200 students, faculty and a half dozen Nieman Fellows who have sprouted insect antennae headbands fashioned out of black pipe cleaners. They are awaiting E.O. Wilson's final lecture in Science B-15, a core curriculum course he began teaching in 1979.

At 12:10 the teaching assistants begin a chant of eeee-oooh-eeee-onoh, to the rhythm of the chant of the flying apes in the "Wizard of Oz," as a fiercely blushing Wilson walks down the steps to the front of the class. The blackboard toward which he descends is draped with a banner reading: "Best Wishes on Your Retirement E.O." The lecture table has a large chocolate cake, a potted orchid, clustered balloons and a scattering of insect models.

Standing applause washes over him as he waits for quiet. The applause goes on for a full minute.

"I am totally discombobulated," Wilson declares. "This is beyond anything I ever dreamed of...In fact, tomorrow I will announce I am rejoining the faculty and will retire the following year..."

As he walks to his left he breaks off his opening remarks. "My gracious," he blurts out, pointing to a white-haired man sitting two rows back in the audience, "my mentor. What an honor this is. Ernst Meyer..." he pauses and then continues with the story of Ernst Meyer.

"His book, which was handed to me when I was 18 years old, was my epiphany," he says. "It is what launched me on my career. He is my hero."

A student comes forward with a large folder which she presents from the students in his last class. It contains, she says, a collection of insect pictures they challenge him to identify and the top 10 choices for the title of his B-15 class.

Wilson makes short work of the identification, which includes "a fly of indeterminate species which is, I believe, in fact, the fly of the movie 'The Fly'."

He then begins to read the suggested course titles, beginning with the least popular. He stops at "Sociobiology or bust" to note, "Twenty years ago when I had pickets around my class that would not have been funny." He was referring to a fierce "nature vs. nurture" furor that ripped the scientific community apart. He was denounced as a genetic determinist bordering on a racist. Other class titles proposed included: "Ants, ants, ants;" "Bugs 'R' Us;" "Fun with Ed;" and the winning entry, "The Wilderness Beyond the Hedgerow."

The winner, he reminds others in the room, is an allusion to a recurring anxiety nightmare he told his class of earlier in the year. In that dream he is on an island, which he takes

to be New Caledonia in New Guinea. He realizes he has been there for some time but has done absolutely nothing. He has talked to no one. He has made no trips into the rain forest. He is standing in the midst of a suburban sprawl and has not even seen a rain forest. He realizes he has only a few hours before he has



E.O. Wilson wearing antennae. BONNIE LAHAYE

to fly away. He jumps into a car and begins to drive anxiously across huge expanses of built-over land. He can not even see a forest. Finally, in the distance, he sees what appears to be the edge of a forest. Breathlessly he drives toward the forest only to discover it is only a hedgerow. He always awakes with a terrible sense of depression that he will never make it to the rain forest.

"The time has come for me to close out my active teaching career. But while I will retire next June [1997], I will keep my office, continue my research, consulting and writing. And I expect to be teaching a small class or two as the rules of my status of emeritus will allow."

E.O. Wilson concludes his final lecture after 40 years as a member of the Harvard faculty with this admonition to his students: "If we don't take immediate and active steps to preserve what primal forests as are left we will all spend our days driving toward the hedgerows." ■



NIEMAN REPORTS

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