

# Nieman Reports

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## **China Sweet and Sour**

**Jerome Alan Cohen**

## **Concentrations of Press Power**

**John B. Oakes**

## **The Problem Isn't Bias**

**George F. Will**

## **An Open Letter to Solzhenitsyn**

**Edward C. Norton**

## **More on South Africa: A Rebuttal**

**Louis Louw**

## *Nieman Fellowships: The 40th Anniversary*

*Archibald MacLeish • Louis M. Lyons • James B. Conant*

**Nieman Fellows, 1978-79**

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## Contents

- 2 Nieman at Forty
- 3 China Sweet and Sour  
by Jerome Alan Cohen
- 18 The Problem Isn't Bias  
by George F. Will
- 22 South Africa and Unjustified, Counter-productive Foreign Meddling  
by Louis Louw
- 26 Concentrations of Press Power  
by John B. Oakes
- 32 An Open Letter to Solzhenitsyn  
by Edward C. Norton
- 36 Nieman Fellowships: The 40th Anniversary
- 50 The Columnist as Victim  
by Bob Greene
- 51 Letters
- 52 "The Kids Are Rotten" Ritual  
by Ken Macrorie
- 54 A Journalism Program to Strengthen Liberal Education  
by Arthur B. Musgrave
- 60 There, There  
by W.M. Pinkerton
- 61 Broadcasting the British Parliament  
by Godfrey Hodgson
- 63 New Class of Nieman Fellows

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## EDITORIAL

# Nieman at Forty

Four decades ago this September nine working journalists from seven states arrived at Harvard University to participate in a new experiment: a nine-month leave of absence from their newspapers during which they would audit courses in any subject they chose except journalism (something Harvard didn't offer anyway).

Forty years later, the Nieman Fellowships are neither an innovation nor unique. Not only have they produced more than 600 alumni/ae, from the United States and abroad; they have also given rise to similar sabbatical programs at several other universities. The concept of mid-career continuing education for journalists has clearly taken root.

Agnes Wahl Nieman, the widow of the founder of *The Milwaukee Journal*, left her fortune to Harvard in 1937 "to promote and elevate the standards of journalism in the United States and educate persons deemed specially qualified for journalism. . . ." One is tempted to pause, at 40, and ask how well her charge has been met. How have Nieman Fellows been changed by the Harvard experience, and how have they — in turn — improved the "standards of journalism?"

Well, the answers are inherently elusive. But by a bit of serendipity an effort to find them is now well under way. For the past twelve months Rutgers University Professor of Journalism Jerome Aumante, a Nieman Fellow in 1967-68, has been using *his* sabbatical to evaluate the program's impact. Under the guidance of Harvard sociologist David Riesman, and with the full cooperation of the University and Nieman staff, Aumante has been taping long hours of interviews, exploring archives, and visiting comparable programs elsewhere. Before his research is finished, all Nieman graduates will be asked to fill out and return brief but probing questionnaires.

Some time next year, then, some answers to those questions just might begin to emerge. There hovers, of

(Continued on Page 25)

# China Sweet and Sour

By Jerome Alan Cohen

*On Wednesday, January 18, 1978, Professor Jerome Alan Cohen, specialist in East Asian law at the Harvard Law School, met with the Nieman Fellows right after his fourth trip to the People's Republic of China — this time with Senator Edward M. Kennedy and a Kennedy family delegation, two Kennedy staff members, and two Boston journalists. What follows is a lightly edited transcript of that session.*

*Cohen:* Let me give you a little bit of background first. As Jim Thomson knows, Senator Kennedy had wanted to go to China since ping-pong diplomacy broke upon the scene, as early, I think, as June of 1971. I think Jim was there even. We met in my back yard to try to figure out how to get the Senator to China. In September '71, the Senator and I left for Ottawa to talk to Ambassador Huang Hua, who was China's new ambassador to Canada and is now Foreign Minister, and we spent several hours together. And I think that if Kennedy had been willing to say that Taiwan was part of China and should be returned to the People's Republic, he might have been able to go right away. But as things turned out Kennedy was not permitted to go to China, nor was any member of his family permitted to go to China, until last month.

Now the reasons for that are rather interesting to speculate about. Kennedy had assumed a leading position on openness to China. I think he and George McGovern were the two most outspoken Democrats who discovered China before Kissinger did — their speeches in '69 at the

National Committee on U.S.-China Relations were broadcast nationwide and were very important in helping create a climate favorable to the People's Republic. It's quite obvious that the liberal Democrats created an issue that Nixon and Kissinger were smart enough to take away from them; and there has been more than a hint that the reason that Kennedy was never able to go to China during two Republican administrations, Nixon and Ford, was that Kissinger made it clear to the Chinese that this would not be welcome — or at least the Chinese assumed as much. I do know the Chinese told me on several occasions that a Kennedy visit would raise the most sensitive questions with Peking. Former Foreign Minister Ch'iao Kuan-hua told a friend of mine, when he was Foreign Minister (he has since been ousted because of his connection with the Gang of Four), that you can't trust the Kennedys, whatever that meant. But once Huang Hua replaced Ch'iao Kuan-hua as Foreign Minister, an invitation was issued — and not just an ordinary invitation, but an invitation for the Senator to bring along 15 other people, which is a pretty nice invitation. And the Chinese did their best to be hospitable.

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**When you meet the leaders of China there's a kind of  
progression...you're sort of being auditioned.  
You go day after day up the ladder.**

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That doesn't mean it was easy. And maybe that's the first thing I should talk about.

Even under favorable auspices visiting China and getting to see what you want is not easy; in fact, it takes unrelenting, ceaseless pressure to get to see half the things you want, in good circumstances, because China is not an open society. And I thought I'd just talk a little bit today about the frustrations and the problems.

Let me first tell you where we went: we went to Shanghai, Hangchow (the beautiful some-time capital of China, on the famous lake), then Peking, then to Hunan Province in the south-central part of China (Chairman Mao's birth area), then to Canton in the south near Hong Kong. Now, first of all, in China you don't go everywhere you want. We wanted to go to not only Tibet, which would have been possible if it hadn't been winter (and the trip was delayed by the energy bill for a month). But we wanted to go to Szechwan Province, southwestern China, the breadbasket of China, home of 100 million people — a very important place where there have been some very interesting political goings-on. And that didn't prove possible.

We heard every phony excuse in the business about why we couldn't go to Szechwan — only two flights a week, it's such a long way, if you go you have to stay ten days, the weather may be bad, it may be hard to get out. One reason after another; but in the end they just didn't want us to go there. There has been a change in political leadership in Szechwan, but we don't know whether or not this was related to it. Conditions are reported to be poor there in terms of clothing, maybe even food. Or it may have been just bureaucratic considerations — our escorts may not have wanted to go where it was cold and uncomfortable in the winter. I mean, part of the problem of visiting a country like China or the Soviet Union is that it's hard to interpret the reasoning behind certain denials. Often it's just bureaucratic reasoning — somebody's refusal to put himself in discomfort, or to risk criticism for taking you to something that might not have made a good impression on you if they had done so.

They were willing to take us to the Shengli oil fields for three days — for one day it would have been worth it, but for three days we decided it just wasn't, when you can only stay 14 days in all. So they weren't wholly inflexible. They took us to Hunan Province, which was a kind of second choice on our part. But there are difficulties, in

other words, about what places you are permitted to visit. Cities open and close mysteriously in China. I know a former student of mine went to Nanchang, in Kiangsi Province in late '71, no problem. But there were problems there in the spring of '72. Our plane [on a previous trip] was forced down there in '72; they wouldn't let us even leave the airport until it was dark, and they literally locked us into our hotel when we got there and made us leave for the airport before it was light, so we saw nothing in Nanchang. Nanchang was then a closed city. So cities open and close inscrutably. And Szechwan did not open to us even though some Americans, not many, had been there previously.

Now, as to the places you go, the question is what do you do when you're there? The Senator had several purposes in going to China. One was high level meetings. He wanted to meet the leaders of China who might be, you know, in charge for the next generation — or at least, the next year. And that was quite successful. He met the most interesting person in China right now, Teng Hsiao-p'ing, a person who has been twice purged and brought back, who seems to be running the day-to-day operations of the Chinese government, and a very colorful figure about whom you hear many stories. And that was the high point of the trip, from a formal point of view. Certainly in terms of meetings, it was the most interesting.

When you meet the leaders of China there's a kind of progression and, you know you're sort of being auditioned. You go day after day up the ladder. You start with the head of your host organization — in this case it was Ambassador Hao Te-ching of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, who had been in Washington and around the country in June and July 1977, heading China's first Foreign Affairs delegation and who made a very bad impression when he was in this country as a hard-line, heavy-handed, and rather unattractive poor-man's Chou En-lai. But he was all sweetness and light in Peking, trying to live down that reputation; butter could have melted in his mouth, and we really had a very nice meeting. And the next day we went on to the Minister of Foreign Trade, Li Ch'iang, who is kind of a laughing Buddha — but a very practical, able man. Then to the former Ambassador to the United Nations and Canada — Huang Hua, whom we'd known before.

Last time I'd seen him he'd been very ideological. He told me — this was in '74, I think — that all American



Chinese specialists were running dogs of Chiang Kai-shek, and he said all American international lawyers were running dogs of Wall Street imperialism; and since I fell into both categories, I knew where I stood. And also, I later heard he was furious about an article that I had published in *Foreign Affairs* in October '76 (that Jim had been kind enough to give me some help with), and he didn't like anything in that article. And I wondered how *this* meeting would go. It actually went very cordially — increasingly cordially, a little distanced in the beginning, but by the end of the dinner that followed the meeting he was calling me Jerome, which made me a little uneasy. It was very, very friendly.

The tone of these meetings was frank and friendly. They refused to be provoked — and they had lots of opportunities to be provoked, but wouldn't take up any of them. They wanted to be friendly, and we discussed our differences as well as our similarities. But then the question was: whom would we meet among the *leadership*? It was evident that Kennedy wanted to meet Teng Hsiao-p'ing — and it wasn't evident we would meet him. We were told he was recovering from a bad cold. It isn't until, literally, the eleventh hour that you know whom it is you are going to meet for sure, and you meet him several hours later.

I remember that in 1972 I went through this hierarchy with the Foreign Minister, etc.; and then they said after

in the room focused on this. I wasn't sure that Caroline and Michael Kennedy could contain themselves at that point. It would have been very, very embarrassing if anybody had broken out laughing, and I think the younger Chinese aides who were around were mortified. But we survived, even when he did it again.

Now, we shouldn't laugh — in the sense that I worked at the United States Supreme Court beginning in 1955, and the Court had just got microphones at that time; and Sherman Minton from Indiana, border-state tobacco-chewer that he was, never adjusted to the fact that before you got rid of your tobacco, you should turn off the mike. And Counsel was often subjected, in the middle of the most serious argument, to a similar kind of display that was most upsetting.

But that meeting was a great meeting, and again the tone of it was very, very friendly.

Kennedy's second purpose was to look at those areas of Chinese activity that seemed of interest to him because of his work in the Senate. Energy, health and justice. Energy and health are fairly commonplace-looking in China; and, indeed, they're pretty good on both matters. Justice is more controversial. I might say that the Chinese did not regard my presence as an unmitigated blessing. On many occasions I wasn't the only one who was made to feel that Kennedy might have gotten more exposure to things he wanted to see if I hadn't been along.

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## They refused to be provoked — and they had lots of opportunities to be provoked, but wouldn't take up any of them.

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lunch, go to your room. And you go to your room, and an hour later you are told, this evening at 5:30 you will meet the Prime Minister, we will come for you, do not leave your room between now and 5:30 — make sure you are available, we don't want a slipup. So, it's a combination of mystery and great high regard; and it adds a lot to the whole majesty of the occasion and the foreigner's feeling of satisfaction at being admitted into the highly-sought inner sanctum.

But Teng Hsiao-p'ing was worth it, and very interesting, and good fun. The only moment of tension resulted from the fact that we hadn't expected the Kennedy family would be in on the meeting. So no effort had been made to prepare them for what might take place. And the real crisis came when Teng, especially recovering from a cold — his spittoon nearby — rather ostentatiously wound up and then spat into the spittoon. And everybody

*Q.* Do you think you might just digress for a second...

*A.* I thought I was digressing all along...

*Q.* ...and speak about their reaction to Kennedy's suggestion that we can normalize relations with Peking while still defending Taiwan?

*A.* Oh, they put it off as our interfering in their internal affairs — by suggesting that it may be possible to establish formal diplomatic relations, normalization, while still having some form of United States unilateral defense commitment to Taiwan. Since they regard Taiwan as Chinese territory, any attempt by another power to protect the people on the island would be regarded by them, understandably, as interference in their internal affairs.

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**"You know, Senator, Chinese-American relations would be much better  
if we didn't have the China specialists interfering."**

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And those of us who've advocated some formula or other for squaring the circle — for meeting the three Chinese conditions: namely, 1) sever diplomatic relations with the government on Taiwan and recognize Peking as the only government of China; 2) termination of the defense treaty between the United States and the Republic of China, and; 3) withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Taiwan — if you think you can reconcile those with continuing defense of Taiwan through some unilateral U.S. guarantee, they say you're interfering in their affairs.

**Q.** Yet this was the same line taken by Senator Kennedy in his August 1977 speech.

**A.** Right; and they'd agree that they regarded the speech as interfering in their affairs and therefore no basis for a settlement. And yet, I still came away feeling that when the chips are down — when the United States decides it is really prepared to split with the old Chiang Kai-shek government, is really prepared to settle for unofficial representation on Taiwan, similar to that of Japan — I still felt we're going to be able to make a deal with them relating to the security of Taiwan. But they are obviously not in the position to say that, even if they might believe it. In any event, where were we when you raised that question?

**Q.** Justice, the three things Kennedy wanted.

**A.** Oh, yes. The last night in China our chief escort said to the Senator, "You know, Senator, Chinese-American relations would be much better if we didn't have the China specialists interfering. Things would be a lot better, you know; those guys, they think they know about China, but they're really messing everything up." And the senior American diplomat who came with us to the Huang Hua meeting (Leonard Woodcock had been at the first meeting and then had to leave for Hong Kong) said he thought Huang Hua was talking as much about my *Foreign Affairs* article as about Kennedy's speech in a number of arguments that he put up about why this was interference. But it's clear that they regard the Americans who work on China, unless they happen to be running dogs of their government, as people who are really interfering. This came up apropos of almost everything.

We tried to do a number of things that most tourists don't do, but some tourists have done — but people with special access. For example, on justice. Last May there

was a black lawyers' delegation that was in China, led by a judge from Detroit who'd been there the year before — and who came back and pronounced that crime was not a problem for the Chinese people. Of course, their radio broadcasts, their newspapers were announcing every day that crime was an enormous problem for them. But, in any event, this conclusion by the guest led to his being asked to organize a lawyers' delegation, and that group went back there last May and had more access to the legal system than any group had had in 21 years in visiting China. And they saw everything from soup to nuts.

They interviewed mediation people who handled most disputes outside of Chinese courts. They saw a few court trials. They went to a labor camp for the first time in over two decades, as well as visiting a prison. They had good interviews. My hope for Senator Kennedy, with that track record behind us, was that we might get equal access. And what we found was that we only got about 40 percent return. And one has to ask, why? When we talked about labor camps, they really hit the ceiling. That was really a no-no. They did take us to the Shanghai prison. Now people have gone to the Shanghai prison before — it is not a standard part of the tourist itinerary, but people have gone there occasionally. And it is a prison they like to show, if they have to show any.

But they wouldn't take us to a court trial. The conversation would go like this: Look, you seem to think there are trials in Peking all the time. We only have two or three a month. Imagine, this is a city of five to six million people — and there are only two or three a month! I said, well, what about next week in Changsha — Changsha is a metropolitan area of a million and a half. They said, no, there will be no trials next week in Changsha.

You have to understand a little bit about the legal system to know what they're talking about at all. When we were in Changsha, they tried to tell us there was no cultural activity either. Just a little town, not much going on. And they used every excuse in the book — nothing was going on, no restaurants, nothing; they just wanted us to stay at our guest house in the evenings, and they would bring a movie for us to see if we wanted. It reminded me of North Korea. And I told them so. Finally, under considerable pressure, lo and behold! there was cultural activity in Changsha, and they produced an absolutely fascinating Hunanese regional opera that was one of the high points, for me, of the trip. And this Hunanese opera, which hadn't been allowed to be shown in years because of

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the Gang of Four's cultural repression, happened to be about traditional Chinese justice. And we purported to see a Chinese trial. At which point Senator Kennedy leaned back to me and said, in a pretty good stage voice, "This is the only trial we're going to get to see in China." Which our hosts appreciated.

The Chinese displayed, by the way, a rather good wit all through. When we get to the universities, I'll give you another example. But the short of it was that they would bring on three judges in Peking for an interview — the same three judges that a succession of American lawyers has met during the last year and a half. Well, it was essentially the same interview. I've got the records of the previous ones. But we were able to press a little harder. And while the reporters that were with us were quite turned off by this (and I think the Senator was also), I got a lot out of the interview. To me it was a rather valuable opportunity. In part valuable to see how every time the judge in charge threatened to give us some statistics, our chief escort would lean over and look him in the eye very, very closely and just keep looking until he said, I didn't bring the materials with me. But, he'd go on to the next point.

And she did the same thing in the prison. The political commissar who at first introduced prison conditions was not very communicative. But the man who really ran things was a gold-mine of information and

to some mediators when we were in Shanghai and you visited the neighborhood housing area? And we said, but you never told us they were mediators. They said, we can't help it if you don't take advantage of the opportunities that you're presented with in China. You've met mediators, and you didn't interview them. And we said, but you didn't tell us that they were mediators. Well, you should have known that they were mediators, you see. That was the most absurd conversation I've had in a long time. As we indicated.

So, you go through the struggles, and fortunately there were three of us (the Senator was only dragged in when it really seemed crucial) — the two staff members and I, and we sort of had a duty-watch we would allocate. You can't keep it up day in and day out, wearing them down, because there are too many of them, and they can wear *you* down. But, the three of us — we did, I thought, reasonably well at sustaining our own morale, if not always succeeding.

The University — that was another beautiful one. You know, universities have been part of the standard tour since I was in China before. I visited Fudan University in Shanghai. Peking University. A couple of others. Howard Hiatt, who is the dean of our Public Health School, who was traveling in China as a high priority guest with his family — because public health is an important area for them to show, and for them to have cooperation in — went

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delighted to find people who really were interested in what he had to sell, until the head of our host organization intervened and made it clear that time was very short — which was a phrase one heard *ad nauseam*. We learned a lot.

The mediation was the best. When I'd been in China in '72, twice I was allowed to interview mediation committees. These are neighborhood committees of ordinary people who settle disputes. We have some experiments going on this, including Dorchester nearby here, and it's rather interesting to see how the Chinese do it. But this time they wouldn't let us. We kept pressing — why can't we interview some mediators? Finally they said, you already have. I said, what do you mean we already have? They said, don't you remember we introduced you

to three universities and met people, medical people, no problems. But, we couldn't get to the universities, it seems.

Shanghai? Well, maybe at Hangchow. Hangchow? Well, no, not convenient. Well, what about just driving through the university? No, can't do that, it's too far — it's too far away, time is too short. But, when you get to Peking... Peking? The students are taking exams. *That* was pure bunk. And they said Professor Chou P'ei-yuan isn't going to be available. But when you get to Changsha, no problem, you can get to go to a university; we'll arrange it — there's a teachers' college there, and you can go to that.

Well, we got to Changsha, and they said — gosh! Changsha's a little place, and there really isn't much

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## I think they were afraid that Kennedy was going to make a speech.

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going on in a university, but there *is* a teachers' high school that Chairman Mao attended and indeed taught at in his youth, and you can certainly attend this high school. And we said, yes, that's nice, we want to go — but a high school is not a university. And I remember on Saturday morning a week ago, as we were going to see some park, and they knew we wanted to see some students, the conversation went like this with our number two escort: "Mr. Ch'ien, tomorrow, Sunday, is our last day in China, we're going to be in Canton; we *really* want to go to a university." The answer: "Now look, you know about Sunday; if it weren't Sunday, there'd be no problem at all going to a university." He said, "Sunday the students are resting. There are no classes to go to. There wouldn't be anybody around. It just wouldn't be interesting." He said, "If it were Saturday morning in Canton, there'd be no problem." I said, "Mr. Ch'ien, it is Saturday morning and we're in Changsha, now let's see a university. Changsha has eight universities." "Who told you that?" he said. "Professor," he said, "Canton has twice as many universities and they're much better than Changsha's." "But Mr. Ch'ien," I replied, "if you can't see any of them, what difference does it make?"

Mr. Ch'ien apparently hoped we would settle for a Chinese compromise. He drove our group past Hunan Teachers College and then Hunan University. Moreover, when we got to the park, there just happened to be five or six college-age "students" there waiting for us, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. One of them looked suspiciously like one of the members of the host organization who had met us at the airport two days earlier. We were all pretty turned off by what seemed to be the only staged happening of the trip, and our hosts knew it.

But then we were told it was lunch time. So we went to lunch, rather disgusted with them; and sure enough, they knew we were discouraged. So they fixed a very nice lunch for us at a restaurant they had two days earlier denied existed. A very nice restaurant. There were lots of people there. Nothing staged about it. There were just a lot of people having a good time, a Saturday lunch, and especially at one of the tables in the big room next to ours. We walked in, and Kennedy wanted to meet people, and we started talking to people, and it turned out that there was a wedding. And there were the relatives of the people, and the Chinese revolutionary new-style wedding — no lavish gifts, no large number of guests, you just take this family out for dinner, and then you give away cigarettes

and candy and what not, a lot of modest little things. And we spent a lot of time talking to these people, while our lunch was being ordered, and then they came over to our room later on and we really had a nice time. We got to meet the bride and groom a little bit, and found out who they were and all that. It was very, very nice. And Kennedy got up to make a toast because we were then leaving in the afternoon to go to Canton, to thank our hosts for all the superb arrangements; and he said "You even have gone to the trouble of arranging a marriage for us here." And he felt free to do that because we knew that the marriage wasn't staged. That was all right. But *they* knew exactly what we were referring to — the "students" in the park. And afterward they complained. The high-ranking interpreter the Foreign Office had given us took me aside and he said, Professor, some of the Senator's toasts go a little too far. The host is a little offended. And it was a nice pun because China has done away with "arranged marriages," you see, and the Senator had said "you even arranged the marriage" (which got them at one level). But they also knew he was referring to the arrangement of the students in the park. Also, just before lunch and after the park, the Senator said, I want to go down and look at the docks. I want to see the docks — the workers who work on the river that goes through Hunan.

It was really incredible: they took us so that you could see the docks. But they took us to a little park that was across the river from the docks, so you saw the docks from a distance, you see, and you really were in a rather harmless little park.

Well, you just live with this day-to-day, and, if you're at all sensitive — unless you want to lie back and say, we'll take whatever they give us and not complain, to be a very polite guest, as it were — you're in for a great deal of frustration.

Now, finally we said to them that night in Canton, we gave them the only thing that worked at all in North Korea. As you know, we had two journalists with us. So we said, the day after tomorrow when we come out, there's going to be over a hundred in a Hong Kong press conference. Then Tokyo, there's going to be one at the Foreign Correspondents' Club; then back in the United States. And everybody's going to ask, well didn't you see a university? Everybody else sees a university. We're going to tell them the truth. And lo and behold! — at the end of Sunday they arranged a university visit, at the Sun Yat-sen University there. And the group came away very favorably impressed by the couple of hours that they spent



there. Just as we had to fight our way in to see that Hunanese opera, we came away with one of the high points of our trip.

Repeatedly what you find is that you have to fight your way into something that makes you have a good impression — which they didn't want you to see, for reasons best known to them.

Now, on the university issue my own speculation is that, although it's true the universities are in the midst of great reshuffling — and it may be they didn't want us around because they thought that we might ask a lot of questions about it — that wasn't the real problem. I think they were afraid that Kennedy was going to stage something. They know about his visit to Moscow University several years ago — when he really tried to get a dialogue going with the students, and it really outraged his hosts. That almost created a riot there. I remember when I repeatedly tried to get Ambassador Huang Hua to come up to Harvard and have sessions like this, he would turn it down by saying that "it's part of our cultural pattern. We would not want you to exchange ideas with our students in China, and so we don't do that here — because we believe in reciprocity, and equality and mutual benefit, and we don't think we should do such things in the United States, much as we would like to." Now, I think they were afraid that Kennedy was going to make a speech and exchange ideas with students or others. They avoided every occasion in China to let him do that.

When I was in China in '72 I spent a long afternoon at the People's Institute — this same host organization. They had a four-hour seminar where I exchanged ideas with about 35 members of their group — a terrific afternoon for me. But they wouldn't give him that; they wouldn't let him meet with 35 members of their group. Now, of course, their organization, like all organizations, is being purged of supporters of the Gang of Four, so it's a particularly sensitive time to visit. They wouldn't let him, I think, address the University group because they were afraid that if they let him meet a large group of students, he would immediately open a discussion. And I must say he did what he could when he went to that teachers' high school. Also, every time we got near a crowd down in the street, Kennedy was out there shaking hands and asking me to ask them how old they are, where do they live, what is their work, picking people out at random. Even in the prison, by the way, that was very successful. As we went through this prison, Kennedy kept saying, I want to interview one of the prisoners. And finally they said, wait; and then they brought out a man, an older-looking man who was obviously an experienced interviewee, and said here's the man we want you to interview. And Kennedy said, no, we don't want him. And we went back into the

room and simply picked out a man at random and said that's the guy we want, a young fellow — and there was some fuss, but then they finally caved in, and we had a nice interview with this man for around 20 minutes. Well, this went on repeatedly.

The high point, I think, of this kind of escapade was at the teachers' high school. And I thought Kennedy might be going too far, because I didn't know how it was going to end. We were in this school in Changsha, and at random he simply picked a class and said I want to go in there, and he walked into the classroom. And at first he said to me, I'd like you to interpret. But I held back since I know in Hunan the accent is very thick; and I just held back, saying to Miss Ho, one of our better interpreters, please, you do the interpreting. And boy, was I glad I did that because it turned out that not only do people in Hunan speak with a terrific accent, which I knew (Chairman Mao had spoken Mandarin with an awful accent), but 30 years after the revolution these people who listen to all their broadcasts in nothing but Mandarin still have trouble understanding standard Mandarin; and repeatedly their teacher had to translate into the Hunan version of Mandarin what the Peking interpreter was saying. And if I had done it, Kennedy would have said, boy, you really don't know Chinese. So I was very glad I hadn't done it.

In any event, Kennedy tried a very interesting experiment, I don't know whether you read about it — I think Bob Phelps of the *Boston Globe* wrote it up — Kennedy tried to get this group to talk. There were 50 or so students in the class, and he polled the group as a device. He put six categories on the blackboard: health, education, military modernization, housing, agriculture, and industry. And he asked the class to vote. He said, you can't have all, you can only have three out of six. Which three do you think are China's most important needs? And it was fascinating. Nobody voted for housing as being the most important need. Nobody voted for health. Only seven voted for military modernization, which really surprised us. And everybody voted for agriculture, industry and education as being the most important things that China needs. That was really rather stunning.

Q. The most important things they need?

A. That China needed, in the future. What are China's needs? And military modernization only got seven votes. Forty-eight voted for agriculture, and 49 voted for industry, and 49 voted for education, you see. Quite fascinating! Then Kennedy polled them: what do you think America's three most important needs are? And they voted housing first, military modernization second — they thought America really needs military modernization,

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## The best way to learn about China...is to interview refugees from China. and to put that together with everything else you can learn.

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you see. Rather fascinating. And later on I asked one of our escorts who worked for a year in that high school, how do you explain it? She said they're not worried about their defense. They are worried about America being strong. They want a strong America. They're told all the time the world needs a strong America. And she said China's a big country, the Soviet Union is far away from Hunan, and we think that if agriculture, industry and education succeed, then we'll naturally have military modernization. And housing and health are already pretty good, at least good enough, so that doesn't make them an urgent priority. But it was quite interesting that he got away with this. And boy, our hosts were really uneasy, they never looked darker. This was the nearest thing to an exchange, and he won that classroom. I mean, they would have given him 50 votes unanimously, because he really...

Q. Did they know who the interviewer was?

A. Yes, they explained to them who he was. I don't think they knew who he was beforehand. We were constantly trying to test that out. Many had heard of President Kennedy, but very few had heard of Senator Kennedy. And it wasn't even clear at some places how many had heard of President Kennedy. But we were looking at the recognition factor to see what was going on.

Q. What was the recognition factor?

Q. Why didn't you suggest that he run for office?

A. In that particular high school class, he was doing pretty well. But you see, it gets down to, you know — we ought to say a word or two, I suppose, about the media in China, because the media are undergoing change in China, no doubt about it. Well, how much — that's a question. Probably not that much. But — big honesty campaigns. You know, they now admit to their people that for years their press lied to them. I get a kick out of this, because I spent a year interviewing refugees in Hong Kong, and I have found that the best way to learn about China — and I certainly maintain it today — is to interview refugees from China and to put that together with everything else you can learn. Refugees principally in Hong Kong, but also elsewhere. And of course, most people say, oh God, interviewing refugees — that's distorted material, etc., as though reading the *People's*

*Daily* tells you the truth. And they now tell you, of course, that the *People's Daily* was lying for years. Still, the *People's Daily* is having trouble, and of course, they don't put in pictures of many American politicians. Kennedy did get a big play, by the way. We knew the trip was successful when the day after our meeting with Teng Hsiao-p'ing there was a picture of them in the paper, and it was on all their television broadcasts, as well as on radio over China.

They wouldn't tell me whether it was in the local newspapers or not. In China they refuse to let foreigners buy local newspapers. We could only buy the *People's Daily* and the *Kuang Ming Daily*, and occasionally one or two others from Peking. But you can't buy the *Peking Daily*, which is the local newspaper for Peking, and you can't buy a local newspaper wherever you go; and they try hard not to even let you read the newspapers there that are posted on the walls at central places in the city.

Q. Do you believe that our liaison office in Peking is more successful in getting access to those local papers?

A. No, not the liaison office, but the Hong Kong Consulate General still gets a good deal, but not an enormous amount, of local newspapers. People come out wrapping their fish in newspapers; they keep the fish and sell the paper to the Consulate General. And you put it all together. Of course, we basically hear all their media broadcasts, their provincial radio broadcasts, so in a way it's a kind of a hopeless effort on their part. Then we probably get all their telephone conversations, too; so the question is how much is their restrictive policy worth. And yet every foreigner is struck by the fact that we are prevented from buying their local newspapers.

Q. Do they explain the constraint?

A. They don't explain the reason behind it. And very few people will tell you right off. By the way, the most important paper in circulation, and in terms of news, is something called *The Reference News*. It is not formally published. It is a summary of wire service reports from all over the world, selected by the hierarchy in Peking for distribution to the nine million most favored people in China, with a "need to know" about world affairs — the officials. They get the *Reference News*, but they're not supposed to distribute this to the masses. And still these



nine million people get it, so maybe you figure that 30 million may see it. That still leaves perhaps 900 million people who don't see it; whereas *The People's Daily* has slightly less circulation, but much of what it has got not only goes out over the radio, but also is reproduced in local newspapers. So the press is very important in China, but under severe restraints.

On the matter of the courts, they probably would not let us see various things because they knew that this is my special field of interest. I was constantly cracking jokes with them by using criminal law courtroom terminology to apply to our daily life and to let them know I understood what was going on; and at one point one of the interpreters said — you know, you speak Chinese quite well, but sometimes we feel you are not using the words in the proper way. For example, one of Ted Kennedy's sisters was late for a meeting one day (she was strolling in the hills), and I said to her in front of the Chinese, she ought to be sent to a May Seventh School, where people get their heads reshaped during the day by labor and then actually work on thought reform at night. And they said — no, the May Seventh School is not for punishment, it's really something to clarify our thinking. And I said, well, I didn't say we should punish Mrs. Smith, I just said she needed to have her thoughts reformed, etc. And we went on like that, joking — but it made them very uneasy. When the

A. We detected somewhat lesser emphasis on the Gang of Four than did visitors who had been there in the previous year. But the Gang of Four is always there as a secondary thing, you can always get them to bring it out. The Gang of Four is a whipping boy for everything; and it's convenient because it permits you to talk about some of the things that go on in a way that's sort of ideologically acceptable for them. They'll tell you that the Gang of Four suppressed everything. People were afraid, the Gang of Four locked people up for years, kept them incomunicado, subjected them to struggle meetings, midnight interrogations, didn't tell their families where they were, never brought them to trial — these were awful things that the Gang of Four was doing. Of course, that's precisely what *they're* now doing to the Gang of Four, you see. But people don't see that; because the Gang are bad people, and this shouldn't have been done to good people. But the Gang of Four did it to good people.

Q. Do they begin to accuse Mao Tse-tung of errors?

A. No. Lower-level officials are very careful to tell you that Mao Tse-tung was never wrong. They continue today to enforce his revolutionary line. It's the same revolutionary line that persisted during the 10 years of the Gang of Four, they say, only the Gang of Four kept twisting it in its application. Supposedly the line has never been incorrect; but the application was perverted by the

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## The Gang of Four is a whipping boy for everything.

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Kennedy kids asked our escorts about the death penalty, they just wouldn't answer, they wouldn't talk about it. It's just too sensitive, they just didn't want to get in any trouble. And yet higher up, of course, people felt freer to discuss it.

Q. What did they say about it?

A. Of course, it still exists. You have to take care of some people whom the masses insist be punished — who are hopeless in terms of reform — but only a small number, and the worst, unrepentant kind. For them the death penalty exists. And of course, one of the ironies is that while the Gang of Four is not being executed and won't be executed, they tell you, a number of their henchmen have been executed.

Q. What do they say about the Gang of Four? What do they say they are doing with them?

Gang. But they're not too sure about how the Gang was able to carry that out for 10 years, fooling the Chairman the way that they did.

You don't get a sense that they're going to do away with the Chairman. You see all kinds of hymns to the Chairman all over, and the Chairman, after all, is the legitimizing link to Chairman Hua, his successor. He picked Hua. Hua has no claim without Chairman Mao. If you dump Chairman Mao, you may have to dump Mr. Hua.

Q. You didn't meet with Chairman Hua; did they give you any reason why not?

A. No reasons why. We indicated it would be nice to see Hua, but there was no basis for thinking we would see Hua, since he sees heads of states, he sees heads of Communist parties, and a kind of curious miscellany of people; but he doesn't see American congressional

leaders. He doesn't seem to be in charge of day to day government much (what head of state is?), but rather involved in the activities I mentioned, also symbolic activities — going out to tour the great disaster of the earthquake period at Tangshan. He seems to be sort of above the battle.

**Q.** What do the Chinese, particularly Teng Hsiao-p'ing, say about the Carter Administration in comparison to the Ford/Nixon Administration?

**A.** Well, Teng has had his say in public. You know, when Vance came back in August he and Carter tried to make it look like the trip had been fairly successful — they couldn't risk another foreign policy disaster, and they tried hard to discourage advance expectations about the China trip, and then billed it as being fairly positive. Carter met Vance at Andrews Air Force Base, and they said the Chinese were flexible and the trip had made progress. The Chinese then lost their tempers; and in public Teng said, not only had they not made progress, not only were the Chinese not flexible, but the trip was a setback, and the Chinese were absolutely inflexible in terms of their three principles — also that there would be no formula possible for compromise, and that Vance had only offered them less than Ford had offered them. Ford would have been content with an unofficial office on Taiwan after normalization, similar to the one Japan has. But what Vance offered in Taiwan was some form of an official diplomatic mission, similar to that which we now have in Peking. That's unacceptable to the Chinese and a setback.

Now we are told that unhappy chapter of last fall is behind us, that we're now back on the track of good relations between the United States and the Chinese government. But nothing is said about what the next stage of the bargaining process is. They say the ball is in our court and they're waiting to hear from us. Meanwhile, Carter has all these other fish to fry, and the American people have shown, over the last few years, increasing resistance to meeting Peking's terms. I mean the period of Marco Polo-itis has ended; in '71 to '74, I think, there was a lot more support for meeting the Chinese terms than there is now. Now people still want normalization, but they don't want to give up anything with respect to Taiwan, and that's a problem.

The policy problem we confront is that we are in a kind of dilemma, a kind of contradiction, as the Chinese would say. On the one hand, as Kennedy likes to urge, we ought to be building up more and more contacts with China — from cooperative cancer research to the reunifi-

cation of families. (I ought to talk about that, it's in the press today, look at the *Boston Globe*, page three. You see photographs of Kennedy with a family whose son we visited — and the son was permitted to leave China in June '78 after almost five years of waiting.) The hope is that through building up these contacts you will be building up the constituency of American support for normalization. The trouble with it is that experience has already demonstrated that if you do have these kinds of favorable contacts — trade and other things, cultural exchanges, etc., with China — then people say, well, what more can we get out of normalization, normalization isn't going to make that much difference. We have the best of all worlds now — we haven't separated from Taiwan, and yet we're getting what we want from the mainland. So it's a kind of dilemma.

You see, you need certain kinds of contacts, and you can't go too far. Trade is a problem: the Chinese are now careful to regard us as only the source of last resort for things they can't get elsewhere, and yet there are enough things like oil technology that maybe will involve increasing trade with them. There's a very practical bunch in China — the Minister of Foreign Trade is really very practical, down to earth. We heard almost no ideology in all the hours we met with their leaders. The nearest thing to ideology came when we met with Huang Hua, and you'll be interested in this because you're from the press. Huang Hua said, look, you tell us the American people are concerned about Taiwan but only one out of 10,000 Americans are concerned about Taiwan — only those who have investments in Taiwan, he said. And the only reason the others have an interest in Taiwan is that your press is in the hands of those monopoly capitalists in Taiwan, and so the press beats the drums about Taiwan; but we know the American people don't care about Taiwan. They care about the 950 million Chinese, not the 16 million on Taiwan. Are you going to let those 16 million stand in the way of historic reunification here? That's the way the argument goes. Just as I don't think he believes that all American scholars of China are running dogs of Chiang Kai-shek, I don't believe he thinks that only one out of 10,000 Americans is concerned about Taiwan, only those people that have investments there. He's lived in New York, he's a very rational person. That was the only ideology we got. (By the way, nobody high up mentioned Chairman Mao to us; there was frequent mention of Chou En-lai, but among the leaders you don't hear much about Mao.)

Our response was that we don't think you understand the situation in the United States, we're surprised to hear you say that; that there's a much broader concern, especially in the light of what happened in Vietnam; and

that maybe we shouldn't have been in Taiwan to begin with, but now that we're there, it'd be a tremendous problem to the United States to hand over 16 million people who haven't manifested a desire for reunification with the mainland (and we would never stand in the way of that if they did).

*Q.* And they never even gave a wink for hands-off, non-use of force in their rethinking about Taiwan?

*A.* Not a wink, they can't brook any interference with their right to take Taiwan. And they couldn't say it now — you don't go into a negotiation giving away your last position. The way we got around to this was by using the Japanese case: in 1972 Peking for years had already had three preconditions for normalizing relations with Japan. Not the same three as with us, though the first was the same: you must break with Taiwan and only recognize Peking. The other two conditions were somewhat different: one was, Japan must say that the 1952 Peace Treaty between Japan and the Republic of China on Taiwan was void, which would have invalidated 20 years of legal relations and made a mess in East Asia; and the third condition was that Japan must say that Taiwan is Chinese territory.

Now Japan only met the first condition. On the second condition Japan didn't say that the 1952 Peace Treaty was void from 1952 to 1972; instead, Japan said that in view of the recent situation with China, normalization, the peace treaty had lost its meaning — would have no future applications. And as to Taiwan being part of China today, Japan didn't say that. All Japan did was to repeat its renunciation of any claim to Taiwan; it said that Taiwan was not Japan's, but also that it wasn't for Japan to say to whom Taiwan belonged. Peking didn't agree with either of those two last positions but she didn't disagree, she simply looked the other way.

Now, it's that kind of tolerance that we're looking for in normalization with the United States. Washington will have to say, we continue to maintain an interest in the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan problem by the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait — Peking isn't going to agree with that, but Peking may look the other way. And we kept stressing that that would be all that would be required, the same kind of reasonableness (you mustn't use the word flexibility, we know they are not flexible; they are people of "principle," and they insist upon those principles and we want to meet those principles).

We also indicated to them that interviews such as they had on October 3rd and 4th in the *Wall Street*

*Journal*, where the *Journal* was very successful in getting the Chinese to say, "no flexibility, nothing," just really made them sound very harsh, something which pleased all who oppose normalization; such opponents went around showing these clips, saying, you see, with those guys, there's no flexibility, so forget it and stop dreaming — get on the Chiang Kai-shek bandwagon when you can. We said that China has to show some understanding of American public opinion, that the Chinese have to respond to our understandable needs. We were very frank on that.

So the whole treatment of the press by the Chinese, I think, is a very important question we tried to sensitize them to. If any reporter succeeds in asking, do you believe that the United States should sell arms to Taiwan after normalization? Of course they've got to say *no* if they have to answer the question. And if they say no, then some say, well, you see we'll never be able to have a successful package-deal on normalization with them. So we were trying to get them to be a little more sophisticated about dealing with the press.

*Q.* What do you think public opinion is among the American people regarding Taiwan?

*A.* If you ask the question, are you for normalized relations with Peking, the answer is yes. But if you ask, are you willing to have normalization by abandoning Taiwan, no, they're not. We want our cake, and we want to eat it too. We want normalization, but not at the cost, as people like to say, of abandoning Taiwan. You have to try to work out some formula that allows normalization to take place without abandoning Taiwan.

*Q.* You hear a lot of stories from time to time about bizarre concepts the Chinese supposedly have about American politics. I'm just curious about how much they really know. I was once told by a Japanese diplomat in Washington that he had talked to various Chinese officials, who he thought fairly responsible, who got Gerald Ford confused with the Ford Motor Company and thought that accession of Gerald Ford meant some sort of power grab by the automobile companies. Whether that's true or not, how well do they understand the nature of —

*A.* It depends who "they" are. At the working level in Washington and Peking there are lots of people who are very sophisticated. They read every magazine and newspaper, and they are very sophisticated. The problem is they are swamped by information. Their problem is the opposite of ours. We have too little information about them, and too many theories. They have too much

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**We have too little information about them, and too many theories.  
They have too much information, but their problem is  
how do they interpret it.**

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information, but their problem is how do they interpret it. And look at the problems we have interpreting what's taking place in the United States. There is in both societies a very great tendency to interpret the other society in your own terms. Since there's been a struggle in China between the Peking and the Shanghai groups, the Shanghai group now called the Gang of Four (you can't call them the Shanghai group and alienate Shanghai; you call it the Gang of Four), there was a tendency on the part of some Chinese apparently to interpret what took place in Watergate as a kind of striking back by the Eastern liberal establishment of both parties against the Western people who had grabbed power with Nixon as the symbol. But apart from that kind of tendency, which I think they're increasingly alert to, one would have —

*Q.* That's not so far-fetched. Wasn't there a book on that — the Cowboys and the Yankees?

*A.* But they are having trouble understanding the ins and outs and the detail, the subtlety, etc. I thought they didn't take advantage of our presence to really talk about the American political process. They're trying to be very understanding now of our problems about Taiwan, but they feel that they can't wait forever. And that we shouldn't ask them to wait forever.

*Q.* What goes on when you have a meeting with Teng Hsiao-p'ing — what do you talk about? Is there anything of substance or is it just how's your trip going? I mean, does he say... Gee, I don't like Carter, I wish... why don't you run, Senator, or something...

*A.* No. But we heard a little of that from Mr. Ikeda, head of the Soka Gakkai religious organization in Japan; he sounded like he wanted to be Senator Kennedy's campaign manager. You know, Kennedy said, in effect, "Gee, I bet you tell that to all the girls."

But no, in China it was pretty serious. There were some amusing interchanges. I remember Kennedy was trying to explain the source of support in the United States for Chiang Kai-shek's government, linking it through our World War II alliance and how Chiang Kai-shek had been built up as a kind of oriental Jesus Christ at that point. They talked about the war, and Teng said something like, "The war, those guys never fought in the war. You know, we did all the fighting, and they were just holding back." He went on about the war, and

Kennedy said, "How long were you a General?" And Teng said, "I was a General beginning 1927 until today." And Kennedy said, "Well, gee that's very impressive, I was only a Private," etc. And Teng said, "Don't feel bad, in our army we don't really have ranks, we're really all Privates." (You can always tell a Chinese general by the number of pockets he has on his outfit, since they've done away with epaulets, insignia, etc.) They had some very amusing exchanges, and I thought the historical attempt by Teng to try to explain to this Senator who had come to the China problem in the mid-60's was rather useful — it explained some of the circumstances of what they'd been through going back to the late '20's. That was a rather affecting exchange. But a lot of it was on substance.

Teng talked like a lecturer, you know. "There are two problems we have to discuss: one is bilateral, one is our common position in the world; and while these affect one another, they're intellectually distinct. And as for the first question, these are the problems, these are our conditions, but this is where your government stands, and this is what Vance said when he came here. What's your view, Senator? We've read your speech, etc." It's quite substantive and very good — they didn't waste any time. Teng showed some real pizzazz at age 74, with a bad cold, with 90 minutes of talk and 10 minutes of picture-taking.

*Q.* Does anything happen to be lost in the interpretation?

*A.* Sure, 45 minutes of substance. And I must say he has a rather thick Szechwan accent that's not entirely intelligible. But I mean it's a good talk, you know. You don't feel that it's just a polite courtesy call.

When we met with Prime Minister Fukuda — there Kennedy asked Fukuda questions three times, but Fukuda proved evasive; he just made whatever statement he wanted to tell the press they had talked about. But I would not say that minds were engaged in that half hour. It was largely Fukuda being photographed with the Kennedys — he's desperate for help at this point, in terms of his popularity; I think he welcomed the Kennedy connection to show how close he is to the Americans, and all that. I get annoyed more and more at these pictures of statesmen while the world is burning around them — each one is smiling and laughing with each other, and all that. You wonder about how it happens, but you see it going on.



*Q.* Jerry, one of the difficulties of this China travel, though, is the pressure of the situation, in a three-week period, which a group of disparate people — these foreigners — a Marco Polo bunch in this strange land, face together. How did human relations work within the group?

*A.* Terrific. As you know, in our book on China my wife and I drew attention to the fact that you usually learn more about your group than you learn about anything in China. And usually you have to get the group to agree upon its interests through negotiation, and sometimes you're so exhausted by negotiating within the group that by the time you come to deal with the Chinese you really haven't got the stamina to carry on very effectively.

I didn't know what it was going to be like with the Kennedys — I've known the Senator for a number of years, on and off, but I never spent, you know, three weeks with him, etc. As for the family, I didn't know what that would be like. I can say this (I wouldn't say it in public, because I don't want to be taken as a Kennedy flack): the fact is they are a splendid group to travel with. I expected the adults to behave themselves, but the kids are marvelous. And for people who've had as much to contend with as the Senator and his wife in terms of everything — being rich, famous, political and all that, their three kids are as good kids as anybody would like to have. It's quite amazing, especially in view of the fact two of them are severely handicapped physically — the older boy with his amputated leg, and the younger boy has a severe asthmatic condition that requires him to carry a machine around, in case he gets an asthma attack; and you know, to be a 10-year-old traveling with a group of adults, that kid was just marvelous. And when he got through making a toast which he wanted to make on our last night in China, there wasn't a dry eye in the house, and it was really terrific. The press reports that Patrick didn't like China — that he was crying because he was glad to leave. That was just pure bunk, I mean he was so affected by the attention our escorts had given to him, he just felt genuinely moved; the press gave the impression that these were a bunch of spoiled brats viewing China, and I must say that's grossly unfair to all of them. They were a grand group to visit China with, and one reason we didn't have that many contradictions within was that they were all clear it was Ted's trip.

Joan wanted to see certain musical things, which was good because it gave us an excuse to see things we otherwise might not have. The sisters were less successful in pursuing their own hobby horses. Eunice Shriver wanted to see institutions for mentally retarded kids, and we got conflicting answers on that — half the Chinese didn't want to admit they had the problem, and the other half would

admit it but didn't want to show her anything. But they were all clear it was Ted's trip and what he said went; that had to be the most important thing, and they would be good soldiers and would get a lot out of it just going along. They're just very nice people, every one of them, I think.

*Q.* Some sociologists think groups never work without a scapegoat, did your group develop one? Or do we have him with us?

*A.* Well, I think, as I say, to the extent that they didn't see certain things, it may have resulted from the fact that I was there. On the other hand, they appreciated the fact that I was there in many other respects. I think we got along pretty well. There's a problem, you know, in giving cues to them. You could act so sophisticated and jaded that you could turn them off very early in the trip.

You ask yourself, what is the true view of China? Is it the naive tourist view? The fellow who goes through and accepts everything, and comes out and says — isn't it wonderful what these people are doing to modernize the country — missing all the crap and all the hypocrisy, and the lying, etc., and all that. That may be the right view — that may be the one who really sees historically what is taking place in China. Or is it the jaded China watcher? The Chinese don't like us to have too much contact as visitors with the foreign people in Peking, either the reporters or the diplomats — because they are all so turned off, they are all so hostile, they live in an atmosphere of such total restriction and hypocrisy. The only enthusiast there is Leonard Woodcock. He tells you what an awful book Simon Leys' book, "Chinese Shadows" is; whereas, the rest of the staff tell you it's a pretty impressive book. I mean, there's just such a discrepancy between the professional China-watchers and Woodcock, who really wants to go ahead with normalization and is a man of real goodwill, that he's only gradually seeing the problems.

But it may be that he's right — that the tourist is right, and that the rest of us who live with the problem are too obfuscated in our views, in terms of looking at the trees instead of the forest. And I think you need a kind of a balance. For me, going back was very useful because having not been there for almost five years, I was getting a little too jaded; on the other hand, the real view of China is the one that's from the outside looking in and sees all the pieces. But the most moving sight I've ever seen in the world, probably came when we were enroute from Changsha to Shaoshan, and along the route they didn't want us to stop for various reasons. All of a sudden we came onto this field where there were 8 to 10 thousand peasants working, and you saw them in line — 20, 30 lines

in a row — people going back and forth, back and forth like this. It was marvelous — it was like a ballet almost. Each carrying dirt on his shoulders, they were leveling the road with picks and shovels, putting the dirt in their baskets and carrying to a place, and just making a nice level field so that in a few years when the tractors come that field is going to be ready, you see, for tractors and to be used as an agricultural area. And it was a most affecting sight. It really looked like the propaganda posters I'd been buying the day before in Peking; and I rejected the ones as too pat, not realistic enough, which showed you smiling peasants working in a red soil with green vegetables all against the background of beautiful green mountains and a blue sky. I rejected that as "we know that doesn't take place" — and yet that was what that scene was like, precisely what it was like.

These people didn't look like slaves, and nobody was out there whipping them. And they were quite well dressed, and they were all joking and there was music playing and they were all working, but the pace wasn't intense; and you know, it was literally a moving sight. I've just never seen better, yet the Chinese didn't want us to stop there. It took everything in our power — Kennedy really had to put the brakes on, on the way back, they didn't want us to stop because it blocked the road. Of course, we were late; but they were afraid that there would be a riot when those people saw us over there, and it would stop labor and all that, and we would have a bad influence on the people. We made it clear that this was the greatest sight, and they don't understand that this was really something that made a tremendous impression on us. When you see that kind of mobilization, when you see what they're doing, it is very impressive. And I could lose sight of that sitting here and reading all the pieces and getting all the dispatches.

So, how to get the balanced view of China, of seeing the costs and the benefits? It isn't easy, and it's an ongoing challenge.

**Q.** What do you think are the concrete, measurable gains toward normalization of this trip?

**A.** This trip, I think, kind of reinforced for the Chinese leaders the political problems we have, and made them recognize that, gee, if we're going to have normalization, as a matter of principle, there may be no room for them to give; but in terms of practice and working it out, we're going to need their cooperation. There has got to be some kind of compromise — not on principle, but in terms of the modes of doing it — what they say and do in creating the proper climate, etc.

**Q.** Do you think you got through at all?

**A.** We got through. We were followed by another congressional delegation, about five senators and 10 con-

gressmen, and their message was going to be similar I think, and our view was, so we'll wait, if necessary. I mean, we're not in a hurry, we can wait. On the other hand, the longer you wait — remember, in the year 2000 you may face a much stronger China. And we don't want to have this Taiwan thing as a time bomb ticking between us.

**Q.** Do you have any sense that there's any self-criticism, or at least a new view in their attitude towards questions, particularly controversial ones, in the campaign against the Gang of Four's mistakes and crimes?

**A.** Yes, look, this is a very down to earth group. And they're trying to be as honest as they can be. And there are real limits; but certainly internally they know that they've made some boo-boos. And on foreign policy Ted Kennedy made the strongest pitch to them I think anybody's ever made in defense of detente. He used Mao's metaphor of walking on two legs. You know, he said, it's great to be prepared, and we are prepared; and he gave them all the facts and figures about how he voted for defense, all the facts and figures about how many missiles and how many bombs and everything we have, etc. But he tried to tell them the American case for lowering the risk of holocaust: it may be fine for China to sit back and to say that war is inevitable, and let the Soviet Union and the United States destroy each other, and also a good part of the world; but we can't accept that. And they can't expect us to accept that. And he made a very forceful case at every level. They didn't try to rebut him, except to say that in the future, you know, Soviet power is expanding, and they've got to be on the alert and all that. I think that may have been a useful part of the trip. Because usually, you see, they only invite the Henry Jacksons of the world — the people who already share with them this view, and they rarely have people who are for detente as well as for some measure of defense. So this was a pretty good exchange.

**Q.** Did they comment on the simmering warfare in Indo-China currently?

**A.** Yes. And we kept pressing them on that. And they said our position is that we encourage both sides to negotiate between themselves and settle it. And it's obvious they're embarrassed by it. Not only do they want stability in southeast Asia, including communist southeast Asia, but if there's going to be instability they want their side to win and their side has just gotten its head handed to it. So they're not in good shape on that.

**Q.** What did they say about what's going on in Cambodia?

**A.** Well, you know, I think they're upset by it. They know it's a failure of their diplomacy — the fact that the war has gone as far as it has.



Q. No, I don't mean the military aspect.

A. Well, they won't criticize what's taking place internally, but I think they're not happy about it. Cambodia's a tough one. They can't abandon it, and yet they feel it's not the easy one for them to defend.

Q. What's the physical environment of the Chinese national government? Does China do its business in a Western style? Bureaucratic office setting? What's the layout when you walk into the headquarters of the national government, what does it look like?

A. It's a big Soviet-influenced, unfortunately, architectural sprawl throughout the National People's Congress building, and you walk in and it's large — a series of large rooms, you don't see the real working areas. The foreigners are received usually in rooms where you sit around in a rather big space. Then you go in and have dinner, or another meal or something. But other than that, they have offices, and most of the work is done in offices. They have meetings, eternal meetings — the lights burn late at night. They like to work late, that's the style. Then sleep during the early morning hours. But they work hard, and a lot of it is simple bureaucratic style.

Q. Same as anything Western, huh?

A. Yeah.

Q. What are their views on Japan?

A. We both want a strong Japan, we both want a strong NATO. This is the first time that China, Japan, and the United States agree — a most hopeful sign for peace in Asia. I mean this is a good time, and they want to move ahead with the Japanese, and they'd like to cooperate with the United States, economically. They're very concerned about what's going on with Japan and the Soviet Union, and I think they're trying united front strategy essentially — mobilizing all elements they can against the Soviets.

Q. How does your reading of Soviet intentions differ from their reading of Soviet intentions?

A. Well, I think they probably think the Soviets are going to be somewhat more ruthless. They're still impressed by the Czech business — the ability of the Soviets to walk into other countries. I think they put a lesser weight upon the Soviets being defensive — for example, about human rights questions: that was a way we could get into the human rights question. "You see how sensitive the Soviets have been about the Helsinki Agreement and the extent to which their human rights failures put them on the defensive in the world," a nice way of alerting the Chinese to the fact that this is a loaded gun, as far as China is concerned, given the world's increasing sensitivity to human rights.

Q. Did they get hot under the collar about human rights?

A. No, Kennedy approached it practically. That is his way — to call for steps for the reunification of families, for example. But there's a ferment going on in China now about human rights — they're going to have a new constitution in about six weeks, and that constitution's going to have some rights that the last one didn't have, because of the Gang of Four incidents, they say.

At that Hunanese opera we saw hundreds of people on the edge of their chairs cheering when the innocent people who'd been wrongly convicted were finally acquitted, and the right person was nabbed, etc. And you asked people afterward, what did that mean? Did it have any contemporary significance? And they'd tell you, of course it did. And, so what was it? "You must not coerce confession. Officials must go down and consult the people. No use of torture. No arbitrary rules. That's what we stand for, and that's what we've got to have from our government."

That's what's going on, you see. It doesn't mean it's going to be the same Western concern for due process as we would have it, but we shouldn't kid ourselves that those people aren't human, that they don't have the same kind of needs we have. And, in many respects, this new regime is trying to recognize those needs.

Look at Newsweek's piece this past week on sex in China — sex education. That was one of the most interesting exchanges the Kennedy kids had with their youngest guide, age 28, trying to exchange revolutionary experiences at the college level of what male-female relations are like. That was quite an eye-opener for them. Look at other recent changes, in terms of what you can now hear and see, for example, the concert we went to where you had international music from all over the world — even "Old Man River" was sung in Chinese — where you had traditional Chinese music, in addition to revolutionary music, you got the feeling you were in an intellectual center where people could hear things. And yet we were told, "Don't think it's going to go too far. We're not going to go as far as many of our Western friends would like." But there is a renewed feeling of giving some way to human satisfactions. Contact with foreigners, which allowed a Chinese and a foreigner to marry for the first time in many years, for instance. Access was easier for us too. I didn't get kicked out of workers' restaurants this time the way I have been in the past. You know, they're trying to figure out how far can they go because they know they've got to go some way since you've got to give people a stake in the regime. And these are human beings. It reinforced my feeling for the Chinese. The Chinese are very human. And they're a lot like us, in some respects.

# The Problem Isn't Bias

By George F. Will

*George F. Will, nationally syndicated columnist and contributing editor of Newsweek, developed this text from the 1978 Press-Enterprise Lecture he delivered extemporaneously last February at the University of California, Riverside. Founded in 1966, the intent of the lecture series is to bring to the University each year someone of achievement and prominence in journalism.*

My theme is that the principal problems with Washington journalism are not, primarily, the result of the biases of journalists. Rather, they are the results of the structure of the government and the complexity of its work, and the economics and technology of the media. But before developing that theme, I must begin with the sort of *caveat* that speakers probably should leave unsaid: My subject may not be all that important. Or, at any rate, it may not be important in the way Americans think it is important.

My subject is the journalism product that comes to the country from Washington. This is a subject that interested Americans long before Spiro Agnew called it (roughly, as was his wont) to their attention, and it did not pass from their minds when he passed from public life. The quality of Washington journalism has become a lively and legitimate interest as Washington has become increasingly important in the nation's life. But usually the concern is expressed in terms of the "power" of the press. Is the "power" excessive? Is that power abused? Power is something frequently, indeed obsessively, talked about, but rarely defined and even more rarely measured.

But "power" can be defined, reasonably, as *the ability to achieve intended effects*. That definition concentrates the mind on the fact that it is one thing to say that the

press has *consequences*, and something significantly quite different to say that the press has power. Obviously the press has consequences. So does the weather; so does a bull in a china shop. But to speak of the power of the press in terms of the ability of the press to achieve intended effects, raises the question of the extent to which journalists normally have intentions, in the sense of specific public policies they want to promote. My impression is that most journalists, *especially* in Washington, are too busy to develop and try to implement political intentions.

To dampen what I consider extravagant talk about this power of the press, I urge three cautionary considerations.

First, advertising, unlike journalism, is frankly and single-mindedly manipulative in its purposes. It, unlike journalism, aims to alter the behavior of particular groups in particular, measurable ways. But nothing is more consistently exaggerated than the power of advertising. Misunderstanding of, and anxiety about, advertising, has been fostered by a substantial body of literature, and especially by the works of John Kenneth Galbraith. His book, *The Affluent Society*, resembles a lot of advertising: it contains not a scrap of evidence to back up its claims — claims about the power of advertising to manipulate the

docile, malleable American masses. Although advertisers undoubtedly welcomed Galbraith's testimonial to their power, they know that most effective advertising has modest objectives. It aims not to create appetites but to influence the choices that are going to be made for the satisfaction of existing appetites. For example, advertising aims not to make people thirsty, nor to make thirsty people buy beer rather than soda. Rather, it aims to get people who are going to buy beer or soda anyway to buy Budweiser rather than Pabst, or Pepsi rather than Coke. Advertising is not as mighty at producing "intended effects" as critics say it is, and advertising, unlike journalism, exists for that purpose.

A second cautionary consideration is this. Anxiety about the power of the press intensified, as did many other anxieties, during the 1960's when the nation was preoccupied with the Vietnam war abroad and campus unrest at home. Many people thought the press was committed against the former and for the latter. But the record shows that American opinion never deviated sharply from government war policy; that the war was ended by North Vietnamese in Soviet tanks, not by American journalists; and as for campus unrest, after several years of what was said to have been (and may have been) sympathetic coverage, campus radicals were on the list of "most disliked" Americans. So the power of the press to manipulate opinion was not demonstrated with regard to two issues that recently aroused anxiety and anger about that power.

Concern about the manipulative power of the press is most intense concerning television. But television is primarily an advertising medium, not a journalism medium. Selling, not informing, is its principal purpose. Yet television exploded on the nation in a very short span, and if it has the manipulative power often attributed to it, that power should be reflected in the nation's "consumption curve," measuring consumer spending on the goods and services advertised on television. That is, there should be a sharp upward swerve in that curve, corresponding to the sudden growth of television which consciously aims at manipulative effects. But there is no such swerve in the curve. American consumption has risen rapidly (with income), but steadily; it has not been given a special boost by television. There is no decisive evidence that advertising, or anything else, can manipulate Americans.

Now, having unburdened myself of that long preamble about "power," I can stride into my point, which is that the principal problems of Washington journalism have nothing to do with "bias."

What often strikes Americans as "bias" is a tone of skepticism that expresses the insecurity — the *justified* insecurity — of journalists. The Washington press corps is,

after all, a relatively small band of generalists trying to cope with a large and growing government of specialists. The Federal government has the world's largest concentration of lawyers and Ph.Ds. And government is becoming complex faster than journalists are becoming complex.

There are about 1,800 daily newspapers in the United States. A substantial majority of them have no Washington bureaus, so they get virtually all of their Washington reporting from the wire services. Among those papers fortunate enough to be represented in Washington, either individually or through their chains, a bureau of, say, five persons is large. Now, no newspaper would try to cover a *community* of 50,000 men, women and children with five reporters. But the Department of Health, Education and Welfare alone has more than 150,000 employees. The press corps has grown fast since the days, 40 years ago, when much of it could cluster around President Roosevelt's desk in the Oval Office. But the government has grown much more rapidly. This is illustrated by the growth of the Washington metropolitan area. I live in Chevy Chase Village, a small incorporated area flush with the north line of the District of Columbia. When my house was built in 1901 it was a country home to which the owner journeyed on weekends. In the 1950's there still was cultivated land in the District of Columbia, and picnickers took the trolley to the woods at the District line not far from my house, and just eight miles from the White House. Today the place where they picnicked is planted thick with department stores, and is closer to the center than it is to the fringe of the metropolitan area. The physical growth of government — fast in good times, even faster in the bad times of war and depression — is part of the journalist's problem.

The growth of the complexity of government is another problem. Consider the difference between 1928 and 1978 with respect to the issues of, say, arms control, and the impact of the federal government on the economy. In 1928 the principal arms control issue was the ratio of heavy ships deployed by the principal powers. Today the journalist who wants to master the intricacies of arms controls issues must be prepared to devote a substantial portion of his time to the task. Regarding the federal impact on the economy, in 1928 the government more closely resembled George Washington's government than Jimmy Carter's. Washington wrote a federal budget in long hand on a single sheet of paper; Carter's budget is about the size of the Los Angeles telephone directory.

Beyond the growth in the size and complexity of government, journalists are troubled by the fact that government has considerable power to determine the agenda of news.

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The government has a huge public relations budget. It is hard to get precise sums for that, but 10 years ago it was said to be about \$400 million, or *twice the combined* budgets of the AP and UPI, the 10 largest newspapers, and the news operations of the three broadcasting networks. Assuming that the \$400 million sum has *at least* doubled, the government today has formidable resources for disseminating its version of reality. But a more sub-

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stantial problem for journalism is that government action tends to define what is *considered* news. A press conference, a hearing, the issuing of a report — these are actions that constitute the most obvious and accessible “news events.” But when historians write the history of the 1950’s they probably will say that the most important “event” of the decade was the migration of many millions of rural, southern blacks to become northern, urban blacks. Nothing has done more to shape the politics of subsequent years. Yet never did this extraordinary migration appear to the busy news editor as a “news event” *requiring* his attention and the allocation of some of his scarce resources *that day*. If, say, the Commerce Department had decided to stretch a red ribbon across the Mason-Dixon line and award a station wagon to the five millionth black person moving north, *that* would have been an “event,” and would have been covered, in part because it would have been telegenic.

Consider another way government has an advantage in shaping the news agenda. Suppose a Secretary of Defense decided, for whatever reason, to discredit the idea of an all-volunteer armed force. He could call upon thousands of hours of Pentagon manpower to help prepare a complicated report pulling together all evidence of difficulties in the all-volunteer force. He could call upon battalions of specialists to produce graphs and charts and other graphics. He could pick the month and week and day and hour of the day to unload a herniating pile of paper on the journalists assigned to the Pentagon. And it would be a rare news organization that would have the resources in Washington to devote to the weeks-long task of ferreting out a more balanced assessment of the all-volunteer force.

It is no wonder that the Washington press corps feels outgunned by a government of intimidating size, daunting complexity, and much energy when advocating its own

version of the “news.” This, more than any “anti-establishment” ideology, accounts for the tone of defensiveness, suspicion and skepticism that occasionally creeps into reporting. Of course it also is true that journalists, even more than most citizens, believe they have been lied to rather a lot in recent years. But the journalist’s problems have much less to do with bad motives in government than with the growth of government, in size and complexity, relative to the press corps. Obviously journalists *have* biases. As E.B. White has said, no man is born perpendicular. But most journalists in Washington are professionals who have little time or inclination to promote their biases.

Now I must turn to the subject of television, and to the special problems posed by the technology and economics of that medium. I do a lot of work on television, so what follows comes under the heading of “biting the hand that feeds you.” I know that disparagement of television is second only to watching television as a national pastime, and I do not want to add unnecessarily to the chorus. But television is so important that it must be looked at unsparingly. Television has changed the world and continues to change it.

From the McCarthy hearings to the Ervin hearings, from Vietnam to Birmingham, Alabama, television has had consequences; it has shaped history. The Vietnam experience, the nation’s first “living room war,” suggests that if there had been television cameras at Gettysburg, this would be two nations today. Television has shaped the kind of people we are. It probably has shortened the attention span of children raised with television, and has given adults a new taste for brevity in journalism. Television certainly has contributed to the coarsening of American sensibilities, especially by its use of violence in entertainment. Television has changed the way Americans campaign for elective office, and especially for the Presidency. National candidates hop from one “media market” to another, from one “photo opportunity” to another, in order to get two minutes on the networks. Television has not had one effect people once thought it would have: it has not — Lord knows! — resulted in the nomination of matinee idols. And it has not given Presidents the power to manipulate public opinion. Indeed, television may have made the nation *harder* to govern, because it — and especially the constant din of broadcast advertising in American life — has made Americans easily bored, and gifted at filtering out what they consider “background noise.” Increasingly, Americans regard political talk as background noise.

Television news is, it seems, a burr under the nation’s saddle. It is watched, voluntarily, by scores of millions, and it is criticized, incessantly, by (it sometimes seems) as



many. And it is surprisingly misunderstood. Not everything about television is obvious, but three of the most important things about television journalism are obvious:

It is an appendage of an enormous entertainment industry.

It is brief.

It is the creature of a strange newsgathering instrument, the camera.

It is brief: subtract commercials and there are 22 minutes of news. A two-minute story is longer than most. It has been noted that a transcript of the evening news, would not fill half the front page of *The New York Times*. Granted, vivid film (of McCarthy bullying a witness, of police dogs attacking peaceful demonstrators) can have an impact that cannot be compared with words. Nevertheless, the need to cover the world in 22 minutes does force television news to be a headline service.

Second, television journalism is part of an entertainment industry. It is supposed to help build an audience for what television is *about* — the prime time entertainment offerings. There is inertia in television viewing as in everything else. A significant percentage of television dials set at Channel X for the early evening news will be set at Channel X when the late evening news begins. Early news shows are supposed to “fix” dials, to predispose people to stick with the particular network.

How does news gather an audience on an entertainment medium? By being entertaining.

I now quote from a column I wrote for *Newsweek* in January of 1977:

“Recently David Brinkley wondered why NBC had routinely run a two minute story of indecisive, unremarkable fighting in Beirut. It was, he believes, a story of interest to only a tiny fraction of NBC’s viewers. Brinkley thinks the problem is that television had adopted newspapers’ standards of news, standards that are inappropriate for television because viewers, unlike readers, cannot ‘skip around.’ But viewers *can* skip around, to competing programs. And they may skip unless a program provides a steady dosage of what a camera provides best, *entertaining action*.

“When wondering why NBC aired the story of meaningless Beirut violence, Brinkley concluded: ‘We couldn’t even use the excuse that the story was easy to get. It wasn’t. It was hard, dangerous work for a correspondent and a camera crew and it was sent to the U.S. by satellite, which is expensive.’ But the difficulty of getting a story, far from being an excuse of not getting it, can be a ‘reason’ for getting it. The Beirut story *was* hard to get. But *only* television could get the sight and sound of battle.

“‘And in the end,’ Brinkley asks, ‘after all the work, danger, time and money, who really wanted to see it? In

my opinion, almost nobody.’ I disagree. Perhaps the Beirut war scenes are *precisely* the sort of things viewers want to see.

“Brinkley, a superb professional, assumes people watch news in order to see newsworthy things. So, regarding the scenes of meaningless Beirut violence, he asks, ‘Why bore the audience anymore than necessary?’ *Bore* the audience? With *war*? Not likely. Brinkley’s audience does not consist of Brinkleys. His news show is a brief information program sandwiched between an afternoon of entertainment and an evening of entertainment. A lot of people turn on news shows in search of . . . entertainment.

“Television’s *raison d’être* is the camera. Television is not always ‘chewing gum for the eyes’, but it always is *for the eyes*. People do not stare at their refrigerators. They stare at their television sets, expecting remarkable sights to appear there. And even unnewsworthy fighting is a riveting *sight*. As a newsgathering instrument a camera is at once powerful and limited. It can never produce a picture of an idea. It always can produce vivid pictures of action. Such pictures *can* be invaluable journalism. They can hardly fail to be entertaining.”

At least *some* news content is implied by the very idea of a newspaper. The same cannot be said of the idea of television. And the technology and economics of television shape what news content the medium provides. For example, television has had a difficult time with economic news. There is no way to take a picture of the law of supply and demand. But, increasingly, television is acquiring the maturity to come to terms with the limitations of its technology. Good economics reporters (such as Irving R. Levine of NBC) are being allowed to report, without straining for vivid pictures. This is, perhaps, a paradigm of the problems with television journalism and all other journalism in Washington. The problems of Washington journalism are, at bottom, problems that can be dealt with, if at all, only by facing facts about the complexity of the government and its works.

But when all has been said (and I certainly have not said *all*) about the problems of Washington journalism, this also must be said: Americans are presented with a remarkably rich array of information. No subject is completely slighted; no point of view is utterly unrepresented. If Americans want information on any subject of public importance, they can get it from some publication or broadcast source. If they do not want it, no journalism, however perfect, can give it to them.

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## South Africa and Unjustified, Counter-productive Foreign Meddling

The editorial in *Nieman Reports* of Summer/Autumn 1977 under the heading "African Nemesis?" by James C. Thomson Jr., Curator of the Nieman Foundation, breathes deep concern, "sadness, anger and hopelessness" about the situation in South Africa and the threat to press freedom after the Government's October action against Nieman alumnus Percy Qoboza, Donald Woods and others.

The editorial contains a number of inaccuracies and paints a grossly unfair picture of repression and of imminent racial disaster in this troubled country. It is not surprising, for since 1948 when the National Party came to power, a racial conflict of immense proportions, with terrible consequences for Africa and the world, was predicted almost *ad nauseam*. The editor's statement that the day of the long predicted blood-bath is advanced, is thus nothing new.

In South Africa the whole population cannot help being bemused by these predictions and the ever increasing concern and criticism while more and more civil rights are slowly but steadily achieved by more and more Blacks in South Africa. Standards of education and the numbers of Blacks attending schools are rising rapidly; the living standards of Blacks outstrip that of almost all

other nations in Africa; and, best of all, Blacks and Whites are indulging on an unprecedented scale in an open debate in the press and around conference tables about their common future. During the past decade the present Government has had more discussion about these matters with Black leaders than all previous governments together.

Of course there were terrifying clashes like the bloody horror of Sharpeville in 1960 and the drawn-out rioting in Soweto and elsewhere in 1976-77. They were not the first, and it would be foolish to think that they will be the last. In a culturally pluralistic society where misunderstanding and conflict always lie shallow under the surface, clashes could be expected at any time. What other country with more than one homogenous nation or tribe has escaped this kind of upheaval?

The National Government has for long been described as a repressive, dictatorial regime bent on keeping the Blacks down. All South Africans over 40 years of age know how this came about. It was mainly the doing of a hostile and virulently anti-Afrikaner press in South Africa itself and correspondents and stringers from Fleet Street who told the English-speaking world that it was a bunch of Nazi racialists who came to power in 1948.

This fact was amongst the findings of a Commission of Inquiry into the press of South Africa over a period of 11 years under the chairmanship of a respected judge of the Supreme Court (today Judge-President of the Cape Province). Nothing was eventually done about it, and part of the press in South Africa and visiting foreign journalists

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*Mr. Louw, Deputy Editor of Die Burger, Cape Town, South Africa, was an Associate Nieman Fellow in 1966-67.*

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have kept up this campaign of vilification of South Africa, the Afrikaners and the Government to this very day. They have always had a good market for their merchandise in a world obsessed by race and human rights.

Nothing positive, no improvement of race relations and the enormously costly educational, housing and other social and economic programs undertaken by the Government for the upliftment of Blacks were reported overseas. About these things the world knows nothing, and it always surprises visitors to South Africa to see what has been done.

It is only fair to admit that the National Government made many mistakes over a period of 30 years. But in a situation like ours, which government would not? The philosophy of "apartheid," of the separation of races, has always been misunderstood and misrepresented by people who believed it to be a policy of deliberate repression of Blacks, whom the racialistic Whites of South Africa saw as inferior beings, even less than human.

That it contains the concept of racial equality and mutual respect for different cultural values and heritages of vastly different peoples and nations, could simply not be accepted by its critics — not even in Europe with its cultural diversity where nation-states abound.

When the South African Government declared that its policy would lead to the creation of fully independent states for different Black nations, it was called a bluff and a political swindle to try and fool the world. When Transkei eventually attained independence after free democratic elections, the world simply would not recognize it as an independent state, although in size, population, development and GNP it outstrips many other independent nations and members of the United Nations. But, of course, it was South Africa giving a Black nation its freedom, not Great Britain shedding its responsibilities in Africa and not Portugal fleeing Angola and Mozambique, leaving them both wide open for Soviet-Cuban military take-overs.

It seems almost useless to try to defend South Africa any longer against the overwhelming prejudice built up in the world during the past 30 years of National Party rule. Who will accept that freedom from oppression (by Whites or Blacks), recognition of the human dignity of persons and nations, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and the best possible education for all South Africa's inhabitants are amongst the highest ideals of the Afrikaner people, the main supporters of this so-called Nazi-regime?

Anyone who doubts it should study the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as a starting point and then move on to the recently published proposals for a new constitutional deal for Whites, Coloureds and Indians in

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South Africa. The different Black nations are encouraged and assisted to develop along the road to self-determination and independence.

As for the urbanized Blacks outside their traditional homelands, there is at present no clearly defined policy, but more and more Nationalists are accepting the fact that they should have civil and political rights where they live, not in a remote part of the country which many of them have never seen. A beginning was made recently by granting the people of Soweto and other Black towns the right to elect their own Community Councils, with all the normal powers of local government.

Most Americans critical of South Africa are totally wrong in that they tend to think there are no differences between the situation in South Africa and that of the American South. The Negroes of America constitute only about ten percent of the population, and real ethnic differences amongst themselves and from the Whites have disappeared. There are no real cultural or language differences, and, one hopes, only marginal differences in the living standards of Whites and Blacks.

In South Africa today there exist at least eight different Black nations, speaking more than ten languages, and differing culturally as strongly as the Englishman from the Spaniard. Mainly for historical reasons there still is an enormous gap between the development stages of Whites and Blacks. (When my ancestors arrived in South Africa in 1657 they were highly trained officials of the Dutch East India Company, but the Brown and Black people they encountered here were nomads living in the Stone Age. Today there are more than four million Black children at school and thousands of Black university graduates — more than in the rest of Africa put together. Most of the Blacks have accepted the Christian faith, but many still believe in witchcraft, ritual murders, etc.)

The Whites have come a long way over 300 years in helping and assisting primitive peoples to develop and accept Western standards of civilization, enabling them to move up on the social and economic ladder in a highly industrialized country. The reservation of jobs for Whites has disappeared almost entirely; the wage gap is being steadily narrowed; thousands of companies have pledged

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## South Africa...needs encouragement, moral and material assistance from its old Western friends.

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themselves publicly to apply no discrimination on the grounds of color, sex or religion; more and more public amenities, theatres and other places of entertainment are opened to all races; mixed sports are no longer frowned upon but are encouraged by the Government, etc. etc.

It is easy to say that we should have moved faster towards the ideal of equality for all, but it should be remembered that it was, historically speaking, only recently that slavery was abolished and the cry for the recognition of human rights was heard. Ten years ago things still looked very bad for the Negroes of the American South.

It may well be asked what all this has to do with the editorial "African Nemesis?"

First of all, there is the editor's view about the "puzzling phenomenon" of a relatively free press in a country where the Nationalists are "systematically reshaping their parliamentary democracy into a one-party police state."

Is it not true that if South Africa had been moving towards a *Black* one-party state, police state or a military dictatorship like most other states in Africa during the past decade or two, there would have been no outcry? Maybe South Africa would then have been more acceptable to the United States and other Western countries presently courting the favor of Nigeria. Or is it only because Nigeria has rich oil fields that President Carter chose Lagos as his pulpit to preach about the violation of human rights in South Africa, while ignoring the fact that Nigeria itself has no free press, no real democracy and that there is virtually no recognition of human rights?

What utter rubbish to say that South Africa is moving towards a one-party state when more and more voters support the governing party in free elections! Is a country only a democracy when the votes are more or less equally divided between two or more parties?

The editorial further states that South Africa's English language press has served as a *de facto* opposition party, and then admits that this press has been virtually devoid of any political power, resulting in only a tiny handful of people being elected to the opposition parties in parliament. Surely this shows their inability to convince the electorate of the wrongs of the Government and to advocate an acceptable alternative policy. It shows that

the English language newspapers are not reflecting the views of the majority of the White voters, let alone those of the Blacks.

The statement that the "huge non-white majority remains totally disfranchised" is absurd, to say the least. It was the National Government that introduced one man, one vote for all the inhabitants of South Africa — whether they be White, Coloured, Black or Asian — to elect representatives for their own constitutional councils. Numerous democratic elections have taken place, which are in sharp contrast with elections in most other African states, where they have had one man, one vote once only!

The editorial is a good example of the flagrant application of double standards against South Africa, compared with the rest of the world. The editor devotes an entire editorial to the banning of Donald Woods, the temporary imprisonment of Percy Qoboza and the closing of the *The World* and *Weekend-World*. Yet he was silent about the unfortunate experience of Mr. Tung Tao Chang, editor of Singapore's leading Chinese language newspaper, who was detained without charge of trial for longer than a year. This is not surprising, as the majority of the media of the Western world never even published that fact.

Incidentally, even if one abhors preventive detention and the closing of newspapers as much as I and most South Africans do, it did not go unnoticed that the wave of arson, rioting and killings in Soweto and elsewhere had ended almost abruptly after the Government's October crack-down. Peace and order were restored soon after and thousands of rioting pupils started returning to their schools. I am not saying that Percy Qoboza or Donald Woods were in any way responsible for the riotous behavior of people, because many other people, some regarded as moderates, were also "banned" or incarcerated. Many have now been released.

Another example of the application of double standards was the incarceration with trial of Kenya's best known novelist, Mr. N. Thiongo, which also received virtually no publicity.

The media of the world, including Nieman Reports, gave much more prominence to the closure of *The World*, the detention of Mr. Qoboza and the banning of Mr. Woods than to events concerning the freedom of the press elsewhere in the world. In India during the 20 month period ending the defeat of the Gandhi Government as many as 253 journalists were sent to prison by the Government of Mrs. Gandhi. Most of the media of the Western world — including Nieman Reports, who through the Asia Foundation has close ties with Indian journalists — either completely ignored these developments or gave them only scant attention.

While *The World* and its Weekend edition closed in South Africa, newspapers were also closed in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, India and Pakistan, and complete press censorship was imposed in Thailand, Burma, the Philippines, Laos and Vietnam. There was no international furor about these breaches of press freedom.

In the issue of Nieman Reports under discussion, there appeared an illuminating expose of the threats to press freedom in India, but the editor found it unnecessary to comment at all.

The blatant discrimination over many years against South Africa causes all fair-minded South Africans to react with bitterness and to question all efforts by well disposed foreigners to suggest or prescribe solutions for their country's complex problems. This is why phrases in the Nieman Reports editorial such as "brutal injustice," "ingeniously cruel," "one-party police state," etc. fill many South Africans with an equal amount of "sadness, anger, and a deep sense of hopelessness."

I must also protest strongly against the statement that "banning" is an "ingeniously cruel Afrikaner invention." This is nothing other than house-arrest, applied in many other countries long before the Afrikaner came to power, and was in fact based on existing British Law.

Finally, I would like to point out that many thousands of White South Africans, including a large percentage of Afrikaners, are most concerned to achieve through change peaceful solutions for South Africa's complex problems. Vituperations such as the editorial under discussion do not assist them at all, but rather induce them to adopt a more uncompromising attitude. Some even over-react and are sliding back to nearly forgotten racial prejudice and hatred, thinking that the whole world, especially the Carter Administration, is prepared to sacrifice the Whites of Southern Africa (including those in Rhodesia) for the friendship, oil, and other riches of Black Africa, while doing nothing to prevent Russian and Cuban take-overs on the same continent.

South Africa today needs encouragement, moral and material assistance, from its old Western friends to move as fast as it possibly can towards a more just and equitable society. We have had to bear more than our fair share of criticism and moralizing by individuals and nations without a clean conscience about their treatment of and their attitude towards the Blacks of this world.

Threats of economic sanctions, the United Nations ban on the supplying of military hardware to South Africa and other kinds of direct pressure won't help us to solve our human problems peacefully. It will only make it more difficult, as it will harden the hearts of both Blacks and Whites.

## Nieman at Forty

(Continued from Page 2)

course, one prudent *caveat* from veteran prober Riesman: the ultimate answer may well be, "It's really hard to tell."

In any event, 40 is hardly a venerable age for most institutions, and too young to warrant much of a fuss. Harvard itself, after all, is 342 and still quite spry, which makes any Nieman self-congratulation seem out of place. Moreover, although 40 used to be the upper age limit for applicants for Nieman Fellowships, this restriction was wisely abolished five years ago. Journalists obviously can make creative use of sabbaticals at virtually any age.

Instead of celebrating a birthday or pretending the full realization of Agnes Nieman's first cosmic aim, we might rather take pride in the achievements of the hundreds of journalists whose lives she touched — those Nieman Fellows who used the Harvard year as a rare interval for reflection and growth, and who, one hopes, have never quite shaken the habit. And we can also note with quiet satisfaction what many of them have done for Harvard during their Nieman year. In the words of the first Nieman Curator, Archibald MacLeish, they have regularly helped to "aerate the soil" of a University whose major perennial dangers are rigidity, grandiosity, and parochialism.

J.C.T. Jr.

*In one of the press interviews, [Robert Frost commented], "I said when I was 60 that the first book I remember the looks of was a book of verse by Robert Herrick. It was sent for my mother to review in my father's newspaper when I was seven or eight years old."*

*... [Frost] had read, by the time he was grown up, all the Latin poets, all the greats, the Greeks. He had the Odyssey. He had Greek drama, Latin drama. He had a book on trigonometry... He never traveled without one of his editions of Latin poetry, and his textbook of trigonometry — for when he couldn't sleep at night. He would get up and do a trig problem!*

From Reflections on Robert Frost,  
Kathleen Johnston Morrison in a seminar  
with the Nieman Fellows

# Concentrations of Press Power

By John B. Oakes

*The following is a lightly edited text of the Frank E. Gannett Memorial Lecture delivered in May, under the auspices of the Washington (D.C.) Journalism Center, by John B. Oakes, former Editorial Page Editor, The New York Times.*

Most people who are connected in one way or another with the press, or with government, or even both, will surely agree with the late Justice Black of the Supreme Court of the United States who, nearly forty years ago, viewed "the guarantee of the First Amendment as the foundation upon which our government structure rests and without which it could not continue to endure."

Some will agree that freedom of the press as guaranteed by that same First Amendment, has in recent years been under an insidious attack frequently in the courts, sometimes in the legislatures — an attack which finds its wellspring in an underlying public attitude toward the press, of mistrust, resentment and fear.

But I doubt that very many will agree that a good deal of the fault for this situation in which press freedom is under attack — and a great deal of the cure for it — lies in the hands of the press itself.

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The issue of freedom of the press is of course as old as this country, dating all the way back to 1690 when the very first American newsletter, not far behind its English counterparts, was born in Boston. It was known as "Publick Occurrences," lasted only one issue, and was immediately suppressed by the royal governor of Massachusetts because that one issue included a couple of early if primitive examples of investigative journalism: an account of the corruption of Indians by the colonists and the seduction of his daughter-in-law by the King of France

— two forms of human endeavor, corruption and seduction, that are not totally foreign to our investigative press of today. But "Publick Occurrences," as the outraged governor noted, had been published "without the least . . . countenance of authority," and so it ended almost before it began. The next newspaper to appear a few years later had better luck, lasting until the Revolution, because it carried under its logo the telling phrase "Published by Authority," which doubtless improved its fortunes and certainly stultified its contents.

When independence was established and the Constitution eventually adopted, press freedom — the right to publish anything one pleased "without countenance of authority" was taken for granted, and exercised to the fullest — though not yet written into law. When it was, a few years later with the adoption of the First Amendment, it was couched in broad but negative terms, that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom . . . of the press . . ." It carried with it no guarantee that publishers and editors would act responsibly or with restraint, no guarantee even that the press should be a free marketplace for ideas and opinions or a forum for debate.

However, the rationale for a guaranty of press freedom would seem to rest on the assumption that the discussion of public affairs and the expression of opinion would be the primary function of the press — at least that was the function that required the special protection. The Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized its belief that the First Amendment's major purpose was "to protect the



free discussion of governmental affairs." And it may have been this postulate that Alexander Hamilton had in mind when, in the last but one of the Federalist papers, at the height of the debate in New York over adoption of a Constitution that then contained *no* Bill of Rights, he wrote of the Press: "...its security, whatever fine declarations may be inserted in any constitution respecting it, *must altogether depend on public opinion and on the general spirit of the people* and of the government."

The embattled press ought to have this very much in mind today, as it depends itself on First Amendment grounds against perceived attempts of courts or legislatures to erode its freedom. We need to remember that it is the "general spirit of the people" on which, as Hamilton pointed out, the basic guarantees must ultimately depend.

And this is the issue I want to discuss: the relationship of the press to the "general spirit of the people" — what it portends and what can be done about it.

The American press has changed completely in character, in structure and even, to a considerable extent, in purpose not only over the past two hundred years, when the First Amendment was written into the Constitution, but over the past twenty years; and it is changing at an accelerated pace every day.

It isn't the press alone that is changing. It is the audience, too. With a change in character and in audience has come a change in public attitudes toward the press, a weakening in that public understanding and support of the First Amendment in "the general spirit of the people," that is the rock on which its protective power ultimately rests. Unless we establish a new relationship between press and public, we are eventually going to see the basic Constitutional guaranty outmoded in the public mind, and therefore, because the courts do indeed eventually follow the election returns, weakened by courts or legislature if not ultimately destroyed.

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Hardly a hundred years ago, we were in the golden age of personal journalism. It took little capital to start a newspaper, little readership to keep it alive. What it did take was a strong, articulate editor who had a distinct point of view and was willing and able to express himself with force and cogency. This was the era of the partisan personalities of American journalism, whose names — Greeley, Bennett, Dana, Pulitzer — were synonymous with their newspapers.

As industrialization developed, education broadened, and means of communication improved, the limited

audience to whom the editors of the 19th century were addressing their message, changed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Publishers and editors discovered that the new mass audience was interested in a wider spectrum of news and information than had been the norm for the relatively rarefied elite of earlier decades, a point Adolph Ochs demonstrated in two ways when, to save his tottering newspaper at the turn of the century, he broadened and deepened its content and at the same time lowered its price.

The old-style, highly competitive personal journalism began to give way to the journal of information; and throughout this century, through two world wars and on to the present day, American newspapers, reflecting and at the same time stimulating existing trends in American industrial society, have increasingly moved toward a kind of standardization and away from the peculiar and often erratic individualism that had once been their characteristic.

They have also become Big Business, a development that has already had and will doubtless continue to have a subtly adverse effect on both public and judicial perception of the First Amendment's protection of press freedom. What has happened is that there has been a massive concentration of control of larger and larger numbers of newspapers in fewer and fewer top managerial hands; huge corporate conglomerates are replacing private or individual ownership; and along with this trend there has been a corresponding reduction of competition to the point where less than 50 of the 1,500 cities of this country with daily papers have two or more under competing ownership.

It's easy to say that these developments have been inevitable, paralleling similar developments in many other areas of commerce and industry; but it is just because the free working of the press, both print and electronic, is of such peculiar importance in our democratic society that the consequences of this kind of evolution take on a special significance, threatening to undermine Constitutional protections that we now take for granted.

Press freedom is not something to be taken for granted simply because that one phrase was written as an afterthought into the Constitution. In much of the world — and not only in Communist countries — it is not even accepted in principle; and in most of the rest of the world, where it is in fact accepted in principle, it is rejected in practice. In many areas the press is considered to be properly a creature of the state rather than its critic; and many millions of people who theoretically believe in freedom as we understand it have been forced to learn to live without it. It is easily undermined; and I think that we of the American press would be living in a fool's paradise

if we believed that we could continue to enjoy public support for our Constitutional protection under the First Amendment, if we forgot our implied responsibilities under it, by allowing our credibility to be eroded or destroyed.

The First Amendment as it applies to the press is clearly designed to protect a public rather than a vested interest; our Constitutionally protected purpose is essentially one of public service rather than private profit.

Only recently the Chief Justice of the United States wrote a concurring opinion in which he went out of his way to state, in effect, that he could see little if any distinction between the First Amendment rights of a newspaper corporation and those of any other kind of corporation. It is clear that Mr. Justice Burger believes that the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press does not necessarily involve protection of the press as a unique kind of institution requiring the special institutional protection that Mr. Justice Stewart, for example, attributes to it. The point is important not only because Mr. Burger is Chief Justice, but because he has put his finger on a Constitutionally tender spot in the anatomy of huge press corporations.

While he spoke against "limiting the First Amendment rights of corporations as such," Mr. Burger seemed at the same time to be suggesting a reinterpretation of First Amendment protections in light of — and here I quote — "The evolution of traditional newspapers into modern corporate conglomerates in which the daily dissemination of news by print is no longer the major part of the whole enterprise. . . ."

The converse of Mr. Justice Burger's opinion implicit in this recent Massachusetts case fits, I believe, a growing public perception of press conglomerates replete with built-in conflicts of interest. I think this perception may lead to a questioning of the need for special protection of the press as such, under a First Amendment that was in fact designed to ensure the free flow of information and opinion, and not the accretion of corporate power.

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As the capital investment required to produce and publish newspapers has increased, three distinct but related economic developments have taken place, affecting the industry and its relationship to the public; the formation of "media conglomerates" linking under one ownership a wide variety of large enterprises; the establishment of enormous newspaper and broadcasting chains; and the development of both conglomerates and chains into publicly-held stock corporations. When to the already great power of a quasi-monopoly in a given city is

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**The potential threat of centralized,  
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is always there.**

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added the greater strength of chain ownership, some troublesome questions of public policy are inevitably raised.

While many chains operate in such a way as to leave editorial independence in the hands of individual components, and use their vast resources to upgrade their papers — as has happened in a large number of cases already — this is not true of all chains and there is no guarantee that it will always be true of any. The potential threat of centralized, remote control, of concentrated economic and editorial power, is always there.

The late Justice Black, considered to be the most "absolutist" of all justices of the Supreme Court on freedom of the press issues, warned as long ago as 1945 that the First Amendment "rests on the assumption that the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the Public." I think it's not too great a jump to read, for "diverse and antagonistic sources," the substitution of "diverse and competing ownership."

Yet today the ten largest newspaper chains control one-third of the country's total readership — 20 out of 61 million. And the big chains are getting bigger.

As the mad race within the communications industry toward bigger combinations and conglomeration goes on, we are going to see intensified moves to extend anti-trust and other kinds of restrictive legislation, which will of course be fought on "free press" grounds, much as the efforts to break up industrial trusts and combines early in this century were also fought — and with the probability of just as little success.

As recently as 15 or 20 years ago, no newspaper shares were traded on the stock market. Today there are at least a dozen, including some of the largest newspaper corporations, controlling in all about 20 percent of national circulation. There are perfectly sound economic reasons for this trend, but there are also inherent dangers.

Most people who buy publicly-offered shares in this industry do so as a straightforward business investment, no different from investing in a shoe company or a soap company. Is it unreasonable to suppose that stockholders or even directors who have no interest in or connection with the press other than as a financial investment will



exercise more pressure to improve bottom line than top quality, whenever the two conflict?

What essentially worries critics of the growing concentration of power in the news industry in the hands of relatively few communications companies — publicly and privately held — is that the more concentrated power becomes, the more likely it is to move the focus of print journalism away from its original goals and purposes into becoming a mere money-machine, as has happened in the television industry. It is this potential threat that inevitably colors the public perception of the press as an independent institution.

That perception is further altered — and not for the good — when the press lobbies for special privileges and exemptions from, for example, the anti-trust laws — as it did in connection with the Failing Newspaper Act a few years ago, and from the child labor laws a good many years before that. To use the battle cry of “Freedom of the Press” as a shield on every possible occasion for special economic benefits is to debase the currency of freedom whose integrity we desperately need to preserve.

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Meanwhile, the newspaper audience has been changing, and we have to face the fact that, relatively speaking, it has also been declining, especially among younger readers. The reason? It's too simplistic to blame it all on television — although that medium has undoubtedly given them a taste for the “quick fix” in news rather than for in-depth reporting. More deep-seated causes may be found in the new mobility of the American family and its resultant loss of deep-seated roots; the growth of leisure time and of affluence, affording in both respects a wider choice of interests to compete with the daily newspaper; but above all, the loss of credibility in all institutions, including the press.

These are among the factors that have affected in varying degrees the responsiveness of the American reader to the daily newspaper and have already led to profound changes in the attitudes and contents of newspapers themselves. These changes have been taking place in a society that seems increasingly to be turning in to itself, more interested in problem-evasion than in problem solving, more concerned with style than with substance, more self-indulgent than self-critical.

Newspapers are now desperately trying to recapture the attention of their readers, as broadcasting has always done to its viewers and listeners by supplying, in Henry Geller's felicitous phrase, “Chewing gum for the eyes.” The press is now moving in that direction, emphasizing “chewing gum for the brain.” Service-oriented journalism

is the word today, to grab the reader who, it is confidently believed, is more interested in “what will it do for me?” than in “what do I need to know?”

In the effort to win back readership in the suburbs, among youth, from the television audience, American newspapers have been shifting their emphasis away from

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### **The press is now...emphasizing “chewing gum for the brain.”**

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what the editor thought the reader ought to have, to what they now believe the readers want. The press has been increasingly catering to shallowest taste, increasingly forgetful of its constitutional obligation to inform the democracy. However, so long as the shift of focus is made not at the expense of traditional news values, so long as it does not inhibit the expression of the most unorthodox opinion, it may not do too much harm and may temporarily help weak newspapers to survive.

But to the degree that it tends to downgrade those traditional mainstays of news and opinion which the First Amendment was obviously designed to protect, just to that extent, American journalism is weakening its moral if not its legal claim on the public to that special status it has rightly held in our society.

As a matter of fact, a survey taken early this year showed that readers are more interested in every category of so-called “hard” news that American editors give them credit for; and so it seems to me that both the practical and philosophical ends of journalism would be better served by concentrating our efforts on improving our coverage and our analysis of the great trends of our society — social, economic and political — than by trying to combat television on its own grounds in the race for mass audiences. Unfortunately, there is a Gresham's Law for the press as well as for economics: bad programming, bad news policy, tends to drive out good — not always successfully, thank God, but often enough to raise concern over the advent of least-common-denominator journalism.

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The press unfortunately stands exceptionally low in the eyes of the public today. In a listing of 20 professions and occupations, a Harris poll taken only a few months ago showed that the press — or, more exactly, the people “running” the press, meaning presumably the top editors, managers, publishers — stood 16th in public esteem, followed only by law firms, Congress, organized labor and advertising agencies in that order. Such

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**I think there are ominous symptoms...  
that we of the press are indeed in danger  
of losing...public confidence.**

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measurements as this suggest that the widespread reports are true that "they hate you out there," as Louis Banks [Ed. note: *Nieman Research Fellow '70*] so delicately put it in a recent article in the *Atlantic*. Banks was talking about the mistrust, the fear, even the hatred of business executives toward the press; others have observed that similar feelings are prevalent in far broader segments of American society, more so than in many years, a feeling that simply cannot be dismissed by the post-Vietnam and post-Watergate clichés about the messenger bearing bad news. The feeling goes, I believe, far deeper than that, a "public antipathy toward the press" as the respected ombudsman of the *Post*, Charles Seib, put it not long ago.

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Last January, the *Times* of London was briefly shut down because one of the printers' unions within the plant refused to permit publication of one issue containing an article highly critical of the union. In a magnificent editorial discussing the problem, the *Times* of London had this to say:

"Those who wish to maintain the freedom of a nation must stand behind the editorial freedom of the press, even though they know that it will sometimes be abused and often be wrong in its judgments. Those in the press who want to maintain its freedom must also try to raise the standard of its news reporting, its sense of responsibility, its willingness to report all sides and its essential fairness. Only a fair press will retain the public confidence that is needed by a free press."

Once the American public loses faith in the press as an institution of prime importance to the democratic process, the most fundamental protection of the press — far greater than that embodied in the First Amendment — will have been lost. I think there are ominous symptoms today that we of the press are indeed in danger of losing that public confidence.

The growing number of attacks on press freedom in the courts is, I believe, a reflection of that development in the public mind. The tidal wave of gag rules, of subpoenas, of efforts to force revelation of confidential

sources, and now the new vogue of closing off pre-trial hearings, are all part of this trend, which is clearly subversive of First Amendment guarantees and must be resisted as much in the public interest as in the Press's interest.

But I think the institutionalized press would place itself in a better position to fight the real encroachments on its freedom if it acknowledged, more readily than it is now prone to do, that when competing constitutional rights collide — as often happens especially between First and Sixth Amendments — it is not necessarily true that the press in every case must prevail. I don't think we are very convincing when we take — as we tend to do — an even more absolutist position than Justice Black would have done, by regarding the First Amendment as automatically overriding every other provision of the Constitution, not to mention common sense.

The press certainly has an obligation to fight every attempt by executive, legislature or judiciary to prevent it from scrutinizing these three branches of government — and all three branches attempt it from time to time; but we cannot expect to retain public confidence, the ultimate bastion of our liberty, if we are perceived to be arrogant and insincere in the lip-service we sometimes give to the conflicting constitutional rights of others, or none too concerned about maintaining the most rigid standards to protect and preserve our own integrity and independence.

As confidence in all institutions has been weakened, as our society has at the same time grown more complex, more broadly sophisticated and less trustful; and as newspaper management has tended to move steadily away from the personally-directed journalism of an individual editor and toward the impersonality of the corporate structure, the newspaper's direct relationship to the public has inevitably become more distant; and the public understanding of the connection between press liberty and public liberty has become most dangerously blurred.

A great deal has been heard in recent years about the right of newspapers' access to the records, documents and files of government. But although we newspeople are generally highly articulate on the public's right of access to government, as we should be, we are not usually quite so strong on the public's right of access to ourselves.

Governmentally enforced access to the press is not the answer. Far from it. To force a newspaper to publish an item is no less an infringement on its freedom than to forbid it from publishing one, as the Supreme Court has pointed out. In a number of West European countries, there is a mandatory right of reply, under which newspapers are required to publish corrections — in some cases, I am told, even if the "correction" is itself incorrect. This is hardly what we need here. Nevertheless,

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the public demand for greater accessibility to the press is not to be laughed off — and I believe that in one form or another, the threat of governmentally enforced access will remain, just as long as there is a public perception that newspapers tend to operate less in the public interest than in their own interest. We need to cut away from our characteristic arrogance, and to open ourselves much more than has been the custom in the past to accessibility by the public as well as accountability to it.

It was in fact with this basic thought of opening up the newspaper to a fuller and freer exchange of ideas that I introduced the concept of an Op Ed page to the *Times* a few years ago, establishing it in the Editorial Department as a kind of public Forum, affording greater scope for access to the columns of our newspaper, and in greater depth, than was possible in our "Letters to the Editor" or anywhere else. This was certainly not the first Op Ed page — the old *New York World* had a very famous one a half-century ago — but it was, I think, the first to be established with the specific motivation of opening up the paper to the public on so wide and broad a base.

We have to take much firmer steps than we have taken to make ourselves voluntarily more accountable to the public. The other day an Idaho newspaper, the *Lewiston Tribune*, created a sensation by giving an entire page to a self-examination, publicly looking into possible conflict-of-interest situations among members of its own staff from publisher to part-time reporter. An editor of the *Tribune* observed, "The impressive thing is not that the *Tribune* wrote a story about itself but that the piece so startled our fellow journalists." He was more modest than accurate because it is no small feat to list for the benefit of a newspaper's readers the connections, both civic and financial, of its publisher, directors, editors and reporters, exposing precisely where potential conflicts of interests might be concealed in its news or editorial coverage. Why shouldn't other newspapers follow this excellent precedent also, giving far greater coverage to matters affecting the newspaper industry itself, including especially anything that looks as though a conflict-of-interest question could be raised about ownership, management, directors — and news, editorial and business staffs.

Only about 20 newspapers have established ombudsmen, a valuable device for linking the individual newspaper with the individual reader whose daily complaints of inaccuracy, bias, unfairness, vindictiveness, or simple error might otherwise go unheeded and unanswered — and in many newspapers throughout this country, often or usually do.

The establishment of a News Council a few years ago seems to have been another sensible way to open better channels of communication between press and public —

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## The public demand for greater accessibility to the press is not to be laughed off.

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without in any way infringing or remotely threatening to impinge on freedom of the press. Modeled after the successful British Press Council, the American News Council has no compulsory powers at all — nor should it have. It acts simply as a means of receiving complaints from individuals or groups who feel they have been unjustly treated in the press and have failed to obtain any redress or satisfaction from the offending newspaper. All the News Council does is to act as an objective, disinterested judge, make its findings and hope that the subject newspaper will accept them and publish them. It has already proved to be a useful buffer between press and public as well as a means of offering an outlet for public frustration with the press.

When the News Council was first established about five years ago, it was greeted with extreme hostility by much of the working press. It's a hopeful sign of maturity on the part of the press itself that the News Council is now beginning to gain wider and broader acceptance, funded now — in part — by some of the most highly regarded names in American journalism.

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In a sense, the American newspaper is an unregulated public utility, and that's the way we want it to be maintained — unregulated, unlicensed and free. But this is an era when every value is being reexamined and every right is under question, even the Constitutional protection of freedom of the press. In defending itself from that attack, the press has to be accountable to something more than our own business offices and our stockholders; we have to be accountable in the narrowest sense, and first of all, to our own consciences, of course; but in the broadest sense to the public interest as we see it.

I am not saying that the First Amendment establishes virtue as a criterion for management, editors and reporters. It clearly doesn't — fortunately for us. What I am saying is that given the special and privileged position of newspapers under the Constitution, it is vital that public confidence in the credibility of the press be maintained and strengthened. Its erosion is a threat to that freedom, because as Hamilton so clearly warned us, it is on the "general spirit of the people" that freedom of the press in the longest run depends.

# An Open Letter to Solzhenitsyn

By Edward C. Norton

June 27, 1978

*To the Editors:*

The enclosed...is my reaction, similar to other journalists', to the speech by Mr. Solzhenitsyn earlier this month.

Much of what I have written is editorial position, which is why I have framed the article as an open letter to this respected and valued man.

However I respect him, I think he was wrong in many of his remarks...I have steered away from his treatment of morality and humanism; these topics can be argued forever.

I have put this together using a translation of the speech which was printed in a local paper's editorial page.

*E.C.N.  
Nieman Fellow '73  
Ridgewood, N.J.*

*Mr. Solzhenitsyn:*

When it leaked in the press beforehand that you were to be the principal speaker at the 1978 Harvard commencement, many of your fans had pangs of regret that they would be unable to attend.

The press, and the public television network, however, gave your talk wide coverage. Whatever you said was virtually guaranteed coverage. Your remarks, however, were not the usually bland and quickly forgotten fare voiced in college quadrangles around the United States each June.

Your speech was a sermon. It verged on an indictment of the West, its peoples, and specifically its press.

It requires a respectful reply.

Your charges were:

1. A world divided against itself cannot stand.
2. Only violence can transform the division between the West and the Soviet Union.
3. The West has suffered a decline in courage.
4. Rampant materialism in the West makes its citizens unhappy.
5. An objective legal standard is not enough on which to build a society.
6. Western press makes "heroes" of terrorists, reveals national secrets and intrudes shamelessly on the privacy of well-known people under the slogan, "Everyone is entitled to know everything." You called this a false slogan. "A person who leads a meaningful life does not need this excessive flow of information."



You added, "Such as it is, however, the press has become the greatest power within the Western countries, more powerful than the legislature, the executive, the judiciary. (But) to whom is it responsible? In the Communist East a journalist is frankly a state official. But who has granted Western journalists their power, for how long and with what prerogatives?"

7. The peoples of the East have become more spiritually deeper and more interesting characters, because of their suffering, than those generated by standardized Western well-being.

8. "The center of your Democracy and your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of a sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface films must be very thin, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy."

As the rain fell on the puzzled and surprised Harvard audience, you also scored United States-Vietnam involvement, alleging that the recent anti-war movement is somehow responsible for the betrayal and genocide of the Vietnamese.

Your speech was an indictment in general and in specific terms. Its aftermath left a stunned silence around the nation, it seemed to this observer. The silence was broken as columnists, who had figuratively covered their typewriters for the summer, began to crank out commentary. Much of this copy was unfavorable to you — respectful, but unfavorable.

Your credentials, Mr. Solzhenitsyn, are impeccable: world-famed writer, moralist in favor of the individual against the corporate state, and historian of that bleak era when a so-called people's government had to zone off millions of its own citizens for the security of the state. These credentials contributed to the attention you had in Harvard Yard.

Many listened, respectfully. Many thought you were, in the vernacular, off base. Let's consider your charges:

- A divided world cannot stand. It has, for hundreds of years. More recently, a divided world has stood since 1945, and only fanatics would push for an immediate change in this condition.

- The resort to violence between super-powers has been check-mated by atomic mega-destruction. With any luck nations will make it into the 21st century without exploding another nuclear bomb in warfare.

- American courage historically has been suspect. The Yankee of myth is supposed to be shrewd, materialistic and cowardly. History, however, proves the opposite. Your own Vermont fought valiantly in the

American Revolution, and in the American Civil War, against equally brave Georgians in a tragic war.

The United States in World War II took on two major opponents and beat both. The Soviet Union, you'll recall from your own military days, did not battle both the Germans and the Japanese. Stalin declared war on Japan only at the end, when U.S. victory was assured.

That's all right. Americans have been historically perceived as good-natured and unwarlike. As a people we are slow to anger. Yet this continent and its millions can be galvanized instantly. Consider Pearl Harbor. That devastating attack in 1941 accounts for the American desire to maintain an awesome arsenal. Vietnam was a "wrong" war for the United States because the nation, rightly, did not feel it had been attacked.

- Your claim that Western materialism makes for unhappiness is commonplace rhetoric, and has been heard for generations. It is neither easily proved nor disproved. The Declaration of Independence speaks only of the pursuit of happiness. It nowhere promises all will attain happiness. Americans are more realistic than you give them credit for. They realize their well-being is tied to personal freedom, health, a roof over their heads and security for their children.

Sure, there are extravagant frills — mansions in Beverly Hills only rock stars and Arab oil sheiks can afford. There are also villas in Vermont that wealthy expatriate Russian writers can afford.

Why is it that the globe's largest Soviet consortium — purportedly devoted to improving the lot of the people — can't provide its citizens with decent shoes? Why do Soviet citizens try to buy the jeans off the legs of visiting Westerners? What kind of materialism is that?

Furthermore, why are members of a society which has actively and repeatedly crushed all forms of organized religion necessarily more spiritual than the West? Look at your Vermont communities: usually the tallest thing in town is the church spire — and it's been there for hundreds of years. The plurality of worship in this nation is one of the least recognized gems of the American Revolution. For centuries — and to this day — men the world over have killed because of religion. The suggestion that Methodists and Catholics would take aim at each other in Montpelier or Montgomery because of sectarianism is both out of the question and laughable.

- An objective legal standard alone may not be enough on which to build a society, but it's certainly a start. Why do you assume that the American Revolution has ended? It hasn't.

Your attack on the American press was a surprise. In this precinct you can expect retaliation, and as an old artilleryman, heavy counterfire.

# A World Split Apart

*After receiving an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Harvard University at Commencement Exercises on the morning of June 8th, Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn addressed the Associated Harvard Alumni at their traditional afternoon meeting. His appearance marked the end of two years of self-imposed seclusion, and an estimated 20,000 people, undaunted by light rain, filled Tercentenary Theatre to hear him speak.*

*The following excerpts from his speech are ©1978 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. His entire address will be published as a book by Harper and Row.*

[1.] The split in today's world is perceptible even to a hasty glance. Any of our contemporaries readily identifies two world powers, each of them already capable of entirely destroying the other. However, understanding of the split often is limited to this political conception, to the illusion that danger may be abolished through successful diplomatic negotiations or by achieving a balance of armed forces. The truth is that the split is a much profounder and a more alienating one, that the rifts are more than one can see at first glance. This deep manifold split bears the danger of manifold disaster for all of us, in accordance with the ancient truth a Kingdom — in this case, our Earth — divided against itself cannot stand.

[2.] Anguish about our divided world gave birth to the theory of convergence between leading Western countries and the Soviet Union. It is a soothing theory which overlooks the fact that these worlds are not at all developing into similarity; neither one can be transformed into the other without the use of violence.

[3.] A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, each government, each political party and of course in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite, causing an impression of loss of courage by the entire society.

[4.] Now, at last, during past decades technical and social progress has permitted the realization of such aspirations: the welfare state. Every citizen has been granted the desired freedom and material goods in such quantity and of such quality as to guarantee in theory the achievement of happiness, in the morally inferior sense which has come into being during those same decades. In the process, however, one psychological detail has been overlooked: the constant

desire to have still more things and a still better life and the struggle to obtain them imprints many Western faces with worry and even depression, though it is customary to conceal such feelings. Active and tense competition permeates all human thoughts without opening a way to free spiritual development.

[5.] I have spent all my life under a communist regime and I will tell you that a society without any objective legal scale is a terrible one indeed. But a society with no other scale but the legal one is not quite worthy of man either. A society which is based on the letter of the law and never reaches any higher is taking very scarce advantage of the high level of human possibilities. The letter of the law is too cold and formal to have a beneficial influence on society. Whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relations, there is an atmosphere of moral mediocrity, paralyzing man's noblest impulses.

[6.] The press can both simulate public opinion and miseducate it. Thus we may see terrorists heroized, or secret matters, pertaining to one's nation's defense, publicly revealed, or we may witness shameless intrusion on the privacy of well-known people under the slogan: "Everyone is entitled to know everything." But this is a false slogan, characteristic of a false era: people also have the right not to know, and it is a much more valuable one. The right not to have their divine souls stuffed with gossip, nonsense, vain talk. A person who works and leads a meaningful life does not need this excessive burdening flow of information.

[7.] A fact which cannot be disputed is the weakening of human beings in the West while in the East they are becoming firmer and stronger. Six decades for our people and three decades for the people of Eastern Europe; during that time we have been through a spiritual training far in advance of Western experience. Life's complexity and mortal weight have produced stronger, deeper, and more interesting characters than those generated by standardized Western well-being.

[8.] There are meaningful warnings which history gives a threatened or perishing society. Such are, for instance, the decadence of art, or a lack of great statesmen. There are open and evident warnings, too. The center of your democracy and of your culture is left without electric power for a few hours only, and all of a sudden crowds of American citizens start looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy.

Make heroes out of terrorists? Who? When? Where? Do you know of popular clubs formed to hail the faceless robots of the PLO, IRA, and Red Brigades and others who kill for "liberation?"

Does detailed reporting of the activities of these groups and individuals make heroes of them? Perhaps, based on the form of journalism you are used to — no insult intended.

The Communist press makes it very clear that its policy is to print only good news. One example — and it still irks me — is that the People's Republic of China suffered perhaps the worst earthquake in history two years ago, with perhaps a half million killed. Yet details to this day are scant. It was not good news. It cannot be defended on political grounds. There cannot be a correct Party position on quakes. Or can there?

As for revealing national secrets — what does that mean? The Pentagon Papers? Most national secrets are not secret to the world's intelligence community — be it the CIA or the KGB. They are just secret from the majority of humanity.

The sovereign in the United States is not a Central Committee, the Congress, the President, or the Supreme Court. The sovereign is the people. If they are badly informed by their elected officials, they will make mistakes. The United States has made its share — from the Vietnam war, back to the Mexican War, and the Spanish-American war.

The issue of privacy and the press is a valid one. No doubt you have been surprised, and irritated, to discover reporters from Time or the *National Enquirer* pounding on your door, wanting your exclusive comments on detente, or the inherent benefits to wearing chin whiskers. You'll just have to bear it.

What you call an excessive flow of information in Western media is not that excessive to most Americans. They can, believe it or not, ignore it. They can also ignore pornography, philosophy, foreign relations, political science, history, and your books.

You are right to say you don't need this flow of information for a meaningful life. But carried one false step further, you could also say you don't need a well-stocked library for a rounded college education.

Your assertion that the press in the West has become the greatest power will come as news to the American government and the multi-national corporations. Most citizens cannot escape either. The press doesn't collect taxes. The press purports to inform. Its strength comes from its readers.

The press runs for office every day. Plunk down your dime and you vote. Turn a knob and you vote. Turn it off

— another vote. It's there, and this is important, Mr. Solzhenitsyn, when you want it, and need it.

Someday the town officials are going to raise your taxes. That's when you'll grab for your local weekly newspaper. Or maybe the nation is headed toward the impeachment of a President. The citizenry will plug into the electronic nervous system of full television coverage of House deliberations.

Haven't you noticed in your four years here how fast the "toys" are put away when serious subjects demand attention. Is it the same in Minsk?

The Minsk journalists (and many on other continents) are appointed by the state. No thanks. Here journalists are self-appointed, and supported by the marketplace. Rogues and geniuses thrive in our ranks. And no society has a copyright on the latter. They are not protected by a faceless bureaucracy. They play hard ball in an often thankless game.

Your assertion that Eastern peoples are spiritually purer because of their suffering is simply chauvinistic piffle. Life is unfair, and suffering, be it from toothache, cancer, or genocide, is equally unfair. Given a choice, however, rational humans would rather not suffer.

The remark that American surface films must be very thin because there was looting in New York City in July 1977 indicates that you read about it in the press, or saw it on television. Yes, there was looting. Hundreds of poor stole food and other items. Millions didn't. Looting is a common crime. Russian soldiers looted in Germany after World War II. In every group there are a number of thieves, even potential murderers. Would you have us believe they are not present in other lands?

In closing, Mr. Solzhenitsyn, let me ask you this: why, with its obnoxious newspapers, irritating television commercials, traffic-clogged highways, polluted rivers, oppressed minorities, cowardly leaders, do you wish to remain in Vermont?

We suspect that you stay there because you like the climate — both the cold winters, and the freedom from a Central Committee, a KGB and all its apparatus. Another question: if you were allowed to notify 1,000 in your homeland that they could join you freely in Vermont, how many applications do you think you would get?

Many conservative Americans used to drive around with this bumper-sticker on their cars: "America — Love it or Leave it." We hope, instead, that you have many healthy years here, years to study America, and perhaps, come to love it.

Respectfully,

Edward C. Norton

# **Nieman Fellowships**

# **The 40th Anniversary**

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**James B. Conant**  
**Genesis of the Program**

**An Evaluation of the First Class**  
**by the First Class**

**Louis M. Lyons**  
**A New Venture: Nieman Reports**

**Donald Hall**  
**A Visit with the First Curator**

**Archibald MacLeish**  
**Reflections on Walter Lippmann**



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# I. Genesis of the Program

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A look at the beginnings of the Nieman Fellowships is provided by James B. Conant in his memoirs, as it was under his presidency of Harvard that the program began.

The text below is excerpted from the book **MY SEVERAL LIVES: Memoirs of a Social Inventor** by James B. Conant. (©1970 by James B. Conant. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.)

American colleges and universities have grown and flourished because of the generosity of many men and women. . . . Agnes Wahl Nieman might be considered [my] ideal benefactor. . . . The widow of the founder of the *Milwaukee Journal* led me, by the terms of her will, to recommend the creation of the Nieman Fellowships in Journalism — an invention of which I am very proud.

The will provided that the bequest, made in memory of Lucius W. Nieman, should be used “to promote and elevate the standards of journalism in the United States.” When I first heard the news, I must admit I was disappointed. We had just concluded the far from successful Tercentenary Fund drive. The two projects close to my heart — the National Scholarships and the endowment of the University Professorships — had not received the measure of support I had hoped would be forthcoming. The depression was still very much of a reality; every private college and university was hard pressed for funds. The last thing I should have thought of asking Santa Claus to bring was an endowment to “promote and elevate the standards of journalism.” Here was a very large sum of money (the exact amount was still uncertain), which was tied up in perpetuity by what looked like an impossible directive.

How did one go about promoting and elevating the standards of journalism? By establishing another school of journalism? I hoped not. We had been having trouble enough in the last few years with a new School of Public Administration. It had proved to be no easy matter to fit a new academic entity into the Harvard framework. However, the possibility of establishing a school or

department for training future journalists could not be discarded out of hand, and various ways of spending our sudden riches must be explored. Since no reference in the will pointed to any faculty or existing division of the university, no formal consultation with faculty members seemed to be required. Therefore, on my advice, the Corporation (the President and Fellows) authorized me to seek suggestions on an informal basis from people within and without the university. Arbitrary as it may seem, I never heard the Corporation’s decision challenged.

Let it be noted that it was the President and Fellows — not the President — who made the crucial decision that the use of the Nieman bequest should be determined without formal action by any body of professors. The President was to explore with publishers, editors and professors the obvious idea of a school of journalism and any other schemes that might be forthcoming. He was to report back to the Corporation and make his recommendations. There was no guarantee, of course, that what he recommended would be accepted. The final action would be taken by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Thus the President was left free to come up with an idea, but the responsibility for its adoption would be that of seven men.

From the start no one seemed to favor establishing a school of journalism. There were already several such schools attached to both private and public universities. Some practicing journalists spoke well of them; some did not. Whatever might be a just appraisal, there seemed no compelling reason for still another.

As to other suggestions for spending the income of the Nieman fund, only two were put forward with any force. The department of English suggested the establishment of courses in writing which might be of special value for journalists; the director of the university library suggested a collection of microfilm of newspapers from around the nation. Of the two ideas, that of the librarian had the advantage of novelty and flexibility. A collection of microfilms could be as large or small as desired; it could be curtailed if better uses of the money were suddenly to appear. But I was not entirely ready to commit all the income from the new endowment to the augmentation of one of the resources provided by the university library. It would be hard to make a case that the existence of microfilms of many newspapers would “elevate and promote the standards of journalism.” Some more imaginative scheme was surely needed.

Why not a fellowship scheme? I asked myself. Why not offer newspaper reporters the opportunity to take the best part of a year off and participate in the intellectual life of the university? I doubted if taking courses would be of much benefit. Certainly, I was not going to suggest the

introduction of lectures about journalism nor suggest a program the completion of which would be marked by a degree. Indeed, one of the cardinal points in the plan developing in my mind was a firm prohibition against enrollment for a degree. I was already sufficiently familiar with what was going on in many institutions to be extremely wary of adding journalism to those studies in which after passing examinations one could obtain a special master's degree. Fortunately, journalism, unlike schoolteaching and school administration, was not yet caught up in the tangles of academic red tape. No newspaper owner or managing editor was going to ask a prospective employee about his degrees. Therefore the fellows I envisioned would obtain no tangible rewards for their year in residence. The intangible benefit obtained by listening to lectures and discussions would have to suffice.

I broached the idea to some members of the Corporation, a few deans and faculty members. Some liked it, but no one reacted with enthusiasm. In the ensuing informal discussions, the details of a plan emerged. The recipient of a fellowship should have had at least three years of experience in journalism; the stipend should be the same as the man was earning on his newspaper; there must be a person in charge on a full-time basis supported by an advisory committee of professors. Such a man would be a "guide, counselor and friend" to the holders of the fellowships. He would endeavor to keep them in contact with newspaper work by inviting to Cambridge, from time to time, publishers, editors, and columnists for an afternoon or evening session. The fellows would be free to listen to lectures or not as each saw fit. There would be no requirements for the completion of a paper and no examinations.

It was obvious that the fellowship scheme would work only if those who controlled the major newspapers wanted it to work. To give a man who had already proved himself to be of great value to a paper a year's leave of absence would be a sacrifice on the part of an editor. Did experienced newspapermen think enough papers would cooperate to give the scheme a fair trial? I put this question to several leading journalists in several cities. The answers were ambiguous. I recall a meeting at the President's house of three or four men who represented the Boston papers. After I had expounded my idea and been subjected to cross-questioning, the verdict was about as follows: "We have no better suggestion; you might as well try what you have in mind, though it will probably fail."

I reported the results of my exploration to the Corporation and made a cautious recommendation. Nieman Fellowships in journalism should be established, but only a portion of the income of the Nieman bequest should be earmarked to support them. The rest should be

used for starting a collection of microfilms of daily newspapers as the director of the library had suggested. My recommendation was accepted.

In my annual report for 1936-37, I explained the creation of the new Nieman Fellowships: "New gifts for special purposes bring with them new responsibilities. Sometimes these responsibilities are such that the university accepts them with a heavy heart and some reluctance; in rare cases it refuses them altogether. But the recent Nieman bequest, though it places an additional problem at our door, can only be regarded as a great challenge to this particular community." (If I had been improperly frank, I would have written that, while I at first regarded the Nieman bequest with a "heavy heart and some reluctance," I had decided to regard it as a challenge.) I stated that "the plan is frankly experimental. The exact path of development cannot now be traced. Since no building is involved and no additions to our staff are required, the scheme is flexible and, if found impractical, can be modified or, indeed, abandoned in favor of some other project which may seem more promising."

A year later in reporting to the Overseers, I was far less cautious. There were two reasons for my change of mood. In the first place, contrary to the first gloomy prognosis, approximately four hundred applications had been received; second, I had been lucky enough to persuade Archibald MacLeish to accept the responsibility of heading the project. (Since he was to be responsible for the microfilm collection as well as guiding the nine fellows, we agreed he should carry the title of Curator.) He had brought the kind of enthusiasm that was needed to the novel undertaking. He saw the possibilities for the university and for the Fellows in having weekly seminars on the role of journalism in American life. He rallied to his assistance professors in the Law School as well as in the faculty of arts and sciences. These academic men appreciated the opportunity of discovering the point of view of journalists; the journalists in turn welcomed the chance to debate current issues with well-known professors.

The tradition of an exciting exchange of views thus established in the first year by MacLeish was carried on by his successor, Louis Lyons. Without the insight of these two men the scheme might well have failed. Indeed, it is hard to think of the Nieman Fellows without Louis Lyons, for he continued as Curator through the difficult war years and well beyond my administration, retiring only after twenty-five years of service.

My indebtedness to Mrs. Nieman I have made clear. It is the indebtedness of an inventor to a person who challenges his ingenuity...

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## II. The First Class

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Since that first year, the Curator has asked members of the outgoing class each spring to write an informal evaluation of their Nieman year. The following excerpts are taken from the reports submitted by the first class of Nieman Fellows, 1938-39. In each case we list the Fellow's affiliation at the time of his appointment.

JOHN CLARK

Editorial writer, *The Washington Post*

...The social whirl this year has sometimes seemed to me approaching debutante proportions... As for the dinners themselves, I suggest that a somewhat less sooty and better ventilated dining room might be available — perhaps in Cambridge.

There remains the essay of the year... I have profited vastly, notwithstanding my sorry failure to take full advantage of the opportunity. I am healthier (regular hours) and wiser...but, more significantly, in a new breadth of vision (ivory towers, like lighthouses, blink largely in only one direction). And I think I'll soon be wealthier; at least I've a ring-book full of facts and figures which, being probably the only one of its kind in existence, should open the doors to some better position than I formerly held...

The Fellowship came at a point in my career when I was neither apprentice nor master; and a journeyman, especially in a big city, languishes for encouragement. This the Nieman appointment has given me.

IRVING DILLIARD

Editorial writer, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

One of the chief benefits has come from the association of the Fellows, one with another...

I will not attempt to state what knowing you [Archibald MacLeish] has meant to me. I am sure I have indicated it to you already. Thanks, Archie, and through you to Harvard, for everything!

WESLEY FULLER

Reporter, *The Boston Herald*

...I think it's a tribute to Harvard that we have been able to find so little room for improvement.

I was convinced that a Fellowship, whereby an experienced and intelligent newspaperman could cut red tape to search out the answers to his problems, engage in stimulating conflict with leaders of thought, organize his methods of thinking and orient himself along broader horizons, would not only benefit him, personally, but would equip him to make his contribution to the progress of mankind. I also believed that while no sudden elevation of the standards of journalism would be effected when the Fellows returned to their typewriters, an increasing number of clear-thinking, trained men in key positions would, with passing time, exert a definitely healthy influence.

I do feel the year has given me the foundations for accurate, dignified, authoritative science writing. Extended basic knowledge, understanding of the methods, philosophy and history of science, the technique and sources for adding to this knowledge, a general broadening and deepening of perspective — I feel the year has given me these.

...Virtually everyone to whom I presented my problems went out of his way to help me, and I feel that their kindness and interest are in largest measure responsible for the year's success. The real oil in the machinery of the Fellowships has, of course, been Mr. MacLeish...His complete understanding, his helpful advice, his militant insistence of the highest standards, his keen mind and refreshing enthusiasm have served as an unparalleled stimulant.

FRANK S. HOPKINS

Reporter, *The Baltimore Sun*

...Our group has been overwhelmed with kindness all year...

The age at which Nieman Fellows are selected and the fact that they have several years of experience and responsibility before coming to Harvard insures that they shall always be a group of considerable social and intellectual maturity.

I consider the year to have been rich in new ideas,

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new experiences and new friends, and that I shall always remember it as one of the happiest and most profitable periods of my life.

EDWIN A. LAHEY

Labor Reporter, *Chicago Daily News*

Such facts of life as that a university is made up of mortal men, of the noble, the ambitious, the precieuse, and even the thick-headed; such facts as that social scientists of eminent stature may be special pleaders for (or even contra) the structural design of the world I know; these had never occurred to me before I arrived in Harvard Yard.

I sincerely feel that I have been snatched from the brink of illiteracy. The year has been a vacation in the truly regenerative sense of that word. I return to Chicago not so much with a fund of knowledge as with a healthy attitude. There is within me, I think, a sound admixture of the old timer's sense of futility and the cub reporter's breathless aspirations to lead the world into a better day.

HILARY HERBERT LYONS Jr.

Chief editorial writer, *Mobile (Ala.) Press-Register*

The standards I must apply to the academicians are those I also apply to poets, stenographers and steam-fitters. So far as I have been able to make out, there are only two classes of human beings — the living and the walking dead. With my usual arrogance, I should like to say that the number of the living at Harvard is considerably larger than I expected to find. Most of these . . . are to be discovered in the Senior Common Room at Leverett House.

. . . The series of weekly dinners organized and presided over by Mr. Archibald MacLeish must certainly be described as the most valuable stimulus I have had outside the study and the class room. To the plan for the dinners I was at first a voluble and truculent dissenter. I have realized for a long time, however, that these weekly meetings were not only an important part of my Harvard education but an exceedingly pleasant way of acquiring it.

It may amuse you to know how sad it has made me to write this letter. It has been a foretaste of leaving Harvard, and rather a wrench at the heart. I've been incredibly happy here, and immensely grateful for my Fellowship. I can't think what I've done to repay the University, but at least I feel that I've made as good use of

my opportunity as my capacities allow. . . I shall always remember this year with gratitude. It has been one of the most satisfying experiences of my life.

LOUIS M. LYONS

Reporter, *The Boston Globe*

As to any debt owed anybody, all of us owe the opportunity of the Fellowship to Harvard, to Conant's creative imagination, and to the strange chance that led Mrs. Nieman to make her bequest to the right place at the right time for what proved a happy result.

EDWIN J. PAXTON, Jr.

Associate Editor, *Paducah (Ky.) Sun-Democrat*

I hope there will be no major change in the conduct of the Nieman Fellowship plan in the future. For I believe the plan was handled in its first year to a point of brilliance, and would like for those who follow the first-year men to have the same opportunities. In selecting future Fellows, I hope no inflexible system will be adopted. For newsmen, more than members of any other profession, are inclined to be individualists. Any attempt to select them too much of a pattern would, I think, materially restrict the effectiveness of the Nieman Foundation in its stated purpose.

From my personal standpoint, the Nieman Fellowship set-up is close to perfect. The weekly dinners were the most stimulating experience I have ever had. The de-emphasizing of the practical side of journalism is a very valuable point, from the angle of newsmen who have had all too much of the practical side. And the association with and encouragement of Archibald MacLeish — a veteran reporter himself — were among the highlights of my year.

J. OSBORN ZUBER

Editorial writer, *Birmingham (Ala.) News*

It has been a great year in my life in every respect. . .

In point of study and reading, it has been highly profitable. I have learned a great deal. In point of contacts I have made and associations I have had, the year has been most stimulating. In point of pleasurable, the year has left nothing to be desired. . . I shall always be grateful to Harvard for this year.



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## III. A New Venture: Nieman Reports

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In 1946 the idea of President Conant to hold a Nieman Reunion launched a tradition that has continued ever since. Moreover, out of this first gathering, Nieman Reports was born. As the one permanent Fellow at that time, Louis M. Lyons became inescapably its editor, and the Nieman office became its place of publication. Volume I, Number 1, of the quarterly was published in February, 1947.

The following account of the beginnings of Nieman Reports is excerpted from the introduction to the book *Reporting the News*, edited by Louis M. Lyons. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. ©1965 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.)

One thing a newspaperman should learn early is that memory is a very unreliable reference for any matter of fact. I thought I had learned this. But a letter from Dean Norval Neil Luxon of the University of North Carolina Journalism School jolted me. For years I had been replying to questions about the origin of Nieman Reports by saying that it was started in response to one of the recommendations of the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press. That commission in its report in 1947 urged, among other things, a continuing appraisal of the performance of the press. My memory was that the Nieman Fellows picked up this suggestion and undertook to try to meet it in a modest way by launching a quarterly in journalism. And I would certainly have gone on thinking so if Dean Luxon had not written me to suggest that, after seventeen years, the best, or most durable, articles of Nieman Reports be collected in a book.

This, he said frankly, he was proposing for the convenience of instructors in journalism who found the quarterly a continuing source of material for use in their classes. I had of course known that journalism school staffs were among the most appreciative subscribers to Nieman Reports and that many of them, notably Neil Luxon himself, had become valued contributors.

His suggestion led me first to the files. For the earliest issues had long been out of print. I wasn't even sure that in all cases file copies remained. There was just one of the first issue, February 1947. To my amazement, there was nothing at all in it about the Hutchins Commission report. It was the second issue that was devoted to this epochal document.

The first issue of Nieman Reports announced its intention. The announcement simply stated that:

*The ninety-six newspapermen who have held Nieman Fellowships in the past eight years organized the Society of Nieman Fellows in 1946 and their Council voted to start a publication in journalism.*

*It is intended to publish a quarterly about newspapering by newspapermen, to include reports and articles and stories about the newspaper business, newspaper people and newspaper stories.*

*The Nieman Council hopes to make it of enough interest to the newspaper profession so that newspapermen generally will want to subscribe to it and write contributions for it. It has no pattern, formula or policy, except to seek to serve the purpose of the Nieman Foundation "to promote standards of journalism in America. . ."*

The magazine got out of bounds with its first issue. Some Fellows had suggested that a mimeographed job would do; others proposed sending out printers' galleys. The serious postwar paper shortage was part of the problem. But the Crimson Printing Company, which prints the Harvard newspaper and other publications, agreed to print in magazine format if we would accept a heavy white butcher paper they had in stock. This was better than we'd expected.

The first issue attracted some newspaper attention, which, curiously, we hadn't expected. The *New York Herald Tribune* reported it in detail, describing its articles, with the result that about 300 applications for subscriptions came in immediately. This was more than three times the number of the Nieman Fellows up to that time. The Fellows and former Fellows have ever since been a minority among subscribers and they soon became a minority among contributors. For no similar periodical existed. *Editor & Publisher*, the trade paper, and the *Journalism Quarterly*, a publication of academic research in journalism, just about made up the field.

Nieman Reports offered a forum for articles, reviews, critiques, proposals on any aspect of journalism. It was the one place a speech or lecture could be published, and, if important enough, published in full. To provide full texts, if significant, was accepted as one of its functions. Soon most of the articles came from outside the Nieman circle, though the current group of Fellows at Harvard always supplied most of the book reviews and could be counted on for one or two articles in each issue, often the liveliest and most provocative. Contribution was always voluntary and in the nature of things uneven. But there were always some who could turn out acceptable reviews and sometimes a distinguished one. Sometimes a member of the group would take over in effect the role of book-review editor. If one turned in an interesting article, this often stimulated others to try their hands.

The first issue narrowly missed disaster over the proofreading. In our innocence, we thought the printer read proofs. He assumed that it was our responsibility. The result was lugubrious. Of the two pages of letters to the editor in the following issue, most had references to the incredible number of typos in the previous number. Our first letters department was headed "Complaints and Otherwise." One of these letters will do as a sample of the rest. Brooks Atkinson wrote, "I'd like to subscribe, providing the proofreading improves."

That first issue led off with one of the most provocative articles the magazine ever printed. As I now read it again years later, what interests me is that we had no qualms at all about leading our first issue with it. It was lively, interesting, and valid. Its title was "What's the Matter with the Newspaper Reader?" Its author was William J. Miller, and its point was that the reader must be an indiscriminating fellow to put up with the fare most newspapers served him. Bill Miller was a vital, tough-minded reporter on the *Cleveland Press* when he came to Harvard. Everything about his article was utterly out of tune with almost everything that followed, both in that same issue and in those to come. It seems paradoxical, to go back and read it, that this was our introductory tone.

Whether Miller sought a shock treatment, or wrote with tongue in cheek, or felt in the cynical mood he then ascribed to newspapermen generally, would, at this distance, be only a guess.

His opening is sufficiently descriptive:

*Whenever two or more newspapermen get together the talk sooner or later turns to the sad state of the nation's press, and what should be done about it. That was true of every one of the nine groups of Nieman Fellows so far. A majority in nearly every group felt that the press generally was doing an inadequate, and too often a biased and venal, job. Like the weather, everybody talked about it endlessly but found no solution for it.*

*Many reasons have been advanced for the publishers' cussed persistence in continuing to publish newspapers that are far from being as honest, as fearless or as outspoken as most of their writers would wish them to be. One possible reason is perhaps too simple to have merited much discussion, and that is that the general public may not want a better press. I have come to the conclusion that the people get about as good a press as they deserve.*

The rest is more of the same, with suggestive detail. What saves it from mere carping is its humor.

*If you will make a careful study of newspaper readers on street cars, subways, buses or elsewhere, you will quickly note the moods which conflict with the tepid desire to be informed. . . . At the time when most people read newspapers, either going to work or going home, they tend to be absorbed in day dreams. . . . One man is torn between a desire to read and a desire to look at girls' legs. Usually he settles on a particular girl and thereafter maneuvers his paper in such a way that he can pretend to read it and at the same time watch her. . . .*

In that first issue, the other principal articles were, "Crusading in a Small Town," by another Nieman Fellow, Ernest Linford, then editor of the *Laramie Republican-Boomerang*, now chief editorial writer of the *Salt Lake Tribune*; and "I Always Wanted My Own Newspaper," by William Townes, a Nieman Fellow from the same news room in Cleveland as Bill Miller. The piece by Townes tells of his excitement and satisfaction in developing the Spartanburg, South Carolina, *Herald* by providing leadership in its community problems. "News enterprise, quality and editorial integrity were the first requirements in my formula." They spelled business success besides building a strong community newspaper.

In one important aspect, that first issue set a role for Nieman Reports which was to continue. It published four

and a half pages of text of a Senate committee study of the forces tending to monopoly in the newspaper industry. Called the Murray Report because its chairman was Senator James E. Murray, it was titled "Survival of a Free Competitive Press." It was in two parts: "The Small Newspaper" and "The Newsprint Industry." The subheads on our summary of the Murray Report tell its story: I. Giants Control Newsprint; II. Crisis for Small Papers; III. Press Monopoly Cannot Stay Free.

As it turned out, that was as effective a background setting for the Hutchins Report, which would occupy our second issue, as could have been contrived had we been conscious of the sequence to come. It also set the pattern for our comprehensive report on the British Royal Commission study of the monopoly trend in British journalism which came out the same year.

Nieman Reports gave full treatment to these three examinations of the forces affecting the press in America and Britain. The Murray, Hutchins, and British reports, with summaries, reviews, and comment, occupied fifty-five pages, some 16,000 words, of the first three issues of our new magazine. Nowhere else was such comprehensive treatment given to these illuminating studies of the forces at work in the newspaper business. If nothing else, this, we felt then, and still feel, justified our venture. It filled a gap.

The April 1947 issue [Vol. I, No. 2] led off with a long review of the report and followed with a comprehensive summary and abstract of the report itself. The next issue was full of reactions from the newspaper press, almost all negative, some scoffing at this Ivy Tower notion of a bunch of professors who set themselves up to criticize the press. Actually they didn't set themselves up. Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, set them up with \$200,000 to make a study of the state of freedom of the press. It was the commission that expanded its report, as the title indicated, to "A Free and Responsible Press." "Responsible" was the key word, and freedom and responsibility were linked: only a responsible press could remain free. Responsibility of the press is a concept introduced by the Hutchins Commission, or at least given currency by its report. The publishers who scoffed at it as an academic notion in 1947 have long since adopted it into their vocabulary. I am sure many of them think they invented it. It became at once the basic theme of Nieman Reports and has threaded through the reviews, critiques, and articles occupying seventy-two issues. My memory was off only by two months. Nieman Reports took its tone, found its philosophy, and built its course on the responsibility of the press.

From the start we accepted it as a frequent obligation to publish texts of studies and reports which because of

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their length and special nature would not find publication elsewhere. Thus we ran the full report of the inquiry by a committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors into Senator McCarthy's investigation of James Wechsler, editor of the *New York Post*. The incisive part of that was a separate report of four members who were the only ones ready to speak out forthrightly against this instance of McCarthyism threatening freedom of editorial expression.

Texts for court decisions about the press were always grist for our mill, and these included vigorous assertions of the right of the press to access to court records, and equally vigorous denunciation of irresponsible pretrial publicity which led to reversals of sentences.

The issue of free press versus fair trial runs through our pages as it does through the endless controversy between lawyers and newspapermen. It was the theme of numerous sessions of the Nieman Fellows with the Harvard Law School. We have run articles by judges indignantly excoriating the press and retorts by such militant editors as J. Russell Wiggins, challenging the judges' premises. This issue is not going to be resolved to satisfy everyone. The press, unlike law and medicine, has never achieved an effective discipline to hold all its members to a minimum standard.

This leads into another endless and unanswerable question that has occupied considerable space in Nieman Reports: is journalism a profession? I have always cut through this to say that the responsible journalist acts as though it was, that his attitude must be that the reader is his client and his only client. This, too, I think, is increasingly accepted, certainly by newspapermen of the quality of Nieman Fellows. But the newspaperman is not a member of a profession in the same sense as a doctor or lawyer. He is not a licensed practitioner. Nobody examines his qualifications to admit him to practice. He does not serve an *identifiable* client. He is employed by a businessman, a publisher. In the cynical view, journalism, if a profession, is a captive profession. The ultimate responsibility is the publisher's, whose most immediate concern is to sell enough papers to get enough advertising to make the operation pay. Standards in journalism are consequently very individual. Each man has his own. Those of the boss cannot always be guaranteed, let alone

those of the yellow rag across the street with which both the journalist and his boss must compete.

Interpretive reporting brought a whole chapter of self-conscious debate over whether objectivity was sacrificed, whether reporting was taking over editorializing. When abused it did. But the basic journalistic discipline of objectivity can govern reporting in depth as well as on the surface. The effect was that the public was more informed. More competent reporters were required to deal with the background of the story. If this led to inclusion at times of a reporter's judgment as to the facts, I for one welcomed this aid. If the reader disagreed with the judgment, he could discount it and still welcome the fuller report.

Newspapering was, throughout this period, opening up, loosening up, the reporter given his head more. In and out of Nieman Reports, I had been pushing for this, cheering for it.

One can detect a gradual change in the tone of Nieman Reports down the years. The earlier issues show a sharper critical note. One time and another it has been suggested to me that the earlier Fellows were more radical. That, I think, is too easy an answer. Some of the same writers reappear through the years and their tone has moderated too. I note it in my own contributions. Of course the whole tone of American society has grown more conservative. The bulk of these articles ran from just after the end of the New Deal through the Kennedy administration. But the change in the press itself, I think, has been pronounced. Erwin Canham was writing of a "crisis in confidence" in the newspapers in the early period of Nieman Reports, and nobody would call the editor of the *Christian Science Monitor* either radical or carping. A frequent note in the early issues is about the extreme conservatism of publishers. It was true. There was also then perhaps a sharper cleavage between the attitudes of news room and business office. The Newspaper Guild was still new and publisher resentment of it strong. Reporters very generally felt an inhibiting hand at the news controls. Reporters thought of copy editors as hired to sit on the lid. News executives reflected the rigidities of publishers. "Little brothers of the rich," Edwin Lahey called them.

Of course, too, the education and competence of editors and reporters have risen. Specialization has increased. The first group of Nieman Fellows was divided between general reporters and editorial writers. Now as many are specializing — in science, labor, the Soviets, economics, Latin America, municipal finance, international relations, urban problems. This reflects the change in staff makeup and in the organization of the newspaper to cover the more complex areas of news in a world whose interests have been expanding in all

dimensions. The later issues deal with covering the schools, church news, strike news, the problems of science writing, or presidential press conferences, of foreign reporting.

The war and the bomb and the cold war brought new problems of security, secrecy, censorship, and complaints of "news management." These intensified as correspondents struggled with officialdom to tell the story of Korea, Cuba, Vietnam.

When Robert Miller of the United Press did us an article on the Korean War correspondents' problems with MacArthur's censorship, the Reader's Digest bought it, after our publication, paying both the author and us, and our share paid the printer's bill for a whole issue. In Vietnam the correspondents' difficulties became even more complicated. One of our most timely and illuminating articles was "The Correspondents' War in Vietnam," by Stanley Karnow, who was in the Far East for Time-Life and then for the Saturday Evening Post. Karnow is one of a notable group of foreign correspondents among the Fellows. Other include George Weller and Keyes Beech of the *Chicago Daily News*; Watson Sims of AP; Selig Harrison, first for the AP, then for the *Washington Post*; Dana Adams Schmidt, Henry Tanner, Richard Mooney, Henry Raymond, and Tillman Durdin of the *New York Times*; Alexander Kendrick of CBS; Dean Brelis of NBC; Piers Anderton of ABC; John Hughes of the *Christian Science Monitor*; Christopher Rand and Robert Shaplen, with the New Yorker; Robert Manning and Jerrold Schecter with Time; Robert P. (Pepper) Martin of U.S. News & World Report; Henry Shapiro and Robert Miller of United Press International; Robert Korengold and Walter Rundle, two UPI correspondents who joined Newsweek. Typically thorough in his preparations, Karnow wrote us that he was planning an article on the opium trade in China — would we please hire someone to get him a list of all the books on opium in the Harvard Library? Christopher Rand's system has been to walk over as much of a country as he could and talk to as many people as he could encounter.

The international dimensions of Nieman Reports expanded with the contributions of our Associate Fellows from other countries. Their articles about the newspapers of Japan, Taiwan, New Zealand, and South Africa, were detailed and informing. They also proved live bait to bring us many other articles from outside our own ranks, about the press of Chile, Sweden, Italy, Canada, France, and Germany.

The first article by an Associate resulted from the Fellows' asking our first Japanese member to take over a seminar to discuss the Japanese press. He had full notes and we got him to develop them into a piece for the



Reports. Sometimes we got a reverse twist on this, a discussion of the American press by one of our Indian members.

Our first couple of issues included even short stories and other literary forms which we soon decided were out of our line. Had we kept on with this, the quarterly might have attained a more literary flavor. For, besides Bud (A.B.) Guthrie, a number of Fellows, Robert Shaplen, George Weller, Hoke Norris, Henry Hornsby, Clark Porteous, Tom Wicker, William McIlwain, Hodding Carter, Frank K. Kelly, Tom Sancton, Herbert Lyons, and Ian Cross, among others, proved to be novelists as well as journalists, and Charles A. Wagner a poet. But it was unquestionably sound to stick to our last, and for a long time the quarterly filled a vacuum in its field. Without staff or resources, we could not take on more than we did.

No one is more conscious of the limitations of the quarterly than its first editor. The Fellows' dues and our subscriptions barely paid the printer's bills, though we did not hesitate to subsidize one issue out of four when necessary, on the ground that publishing was part of the job. We never could present detailed commentary on press performance with the immediacy of "CBS Views the News" in the brief intervals when, first Don Hollenbeck on radio, and later Charles Collingwood and Ned Calmer on TV, were assigned this useful chore. Nor had we the professional staff with which the Columbia Journalism Review, endowed and handsomely published, began in 1962 its graphic surveys of newspaper performance on the most important issues. We were unable to pay contributors, and consequently unable to assign articles, save for a brief period after I received the Lauterbach Award in 1958. The Lauterbach committee turned over the residue of their funds with the award, for support of Nieman Reports. It was amazing how fast the \$4,000 melted away in publishing even a modest quarterly. We maintained the award, at a reduced rate and finally only a scroll, to complete the decade from its establishment. The purpose of the award was to honor the memory of Richard Lauterbach, a Nieman Fellow and brilliant journalist, by the recognition of distinguished service in the field of civil liberties. Herblock was our first year's selection, then Ralph McGill and Thomas Storke. In the case of Mr. Storke, we had the added satisfaction of seeing the Pulitzer prize for public service follow our lead.

It was not wholly a liability that we had to depend upon the product of reflection and detachment. Such an article as James McCartney's on the "Vested Interests of the Reporter" (March 1964) would hardly have been produced under other conditions than the fallow year of his Nieman Fellowship. The yield of such experience is almost unique and, I hope, justifies a modest venture in

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publishing. From former Fellows, active in their own work, anything they sent us was a byproduct; but it too was apt to be thinking out loud about a situation on which they had been able to get some perspective. It was the occasional insight of such a piece that provided the chief satisfaction of editing.

I am sure we published too many pieces about What is the matter with editorials? or weeklies? or the wire services? — though the best of these were effectively provocative. As I think back over it, I realize that we labored also under a certain inhibition, not to be dogmatic, not to claim to have all the answers. Although our effort had been stimulated by the Hutchins Commission, we shied away from their proposal for a Commission on the Press. This proposal was kept alive and actively promoted down the years by William Benton and Harry Ashmore, both closely associated with Robert Hutchins. The practicality of this was under recurring discussion. I was never convinced. But beyond that, we resisted involvement in the implication of a board of review that would pass continuing judgment. We wanted a forum of open criticism and appraisal, but drew back from the establishment of a commission to render judgments. We were accused, of course, of doing just that; but so long as we had not presumed to do it, we could stand the accusation.

But we kept the Reports open for descriptions of such commissions in Britain and Australia, which to be sure were quite different, and, it seemed to me, of little effect. We published with interest a proposal of Arthur Sulzberger's for a "newspaper court" to deal with abuses of pretrial publicity and the like. Barry Bingham was to suggest a local committee in Louisville for appraisal of the press. As owners of both papers there, he would unquestionably have desired such organized informed criticism from outside. In Littleton, Colorado, Houstoun Waring had organized a group of citizens to present periodic criticism and suggestions on the performance of his *Littleton Independent*. This was the effort of a publisher to be sure he was meeting his community's needs. But these were very limited applications of the Hutchins idea, as of course was Nieman Reports itself.

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## IV. Archibald MacLeish: The First Curator

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In the spring of 1938 President Conant appointed Archibald MacLeish first Curator of the Nieman program. Six months later, he was called to Washington by Franklin D. Roosevelt to become Librarian of Congress, and he was replaced as Nieman Curator by Louis M. Lyons, a member of the first Nieman class.

Forty years later, on the night of May 23rd, 1978, Archibald MacLeish returned to Harvard for the valedictory dinner of the

graduating Nieman Fellows. That evening he reflected on the Nieman program, his own life, and read from his poetry. Although his remarks that night were addressed solely to the outgoing class and were not recorded, the Editors feel that a glimpse of the life of the MacLeishes in their mid 80's should be shared with our readers.

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### Visiting the MacLeishes

By Donald Hall

It is a fine day early in March. We drive west to Vermont, south along the Connecticut River on Route 91, past Bellows Falls and Brattleboro, into Massachusetts. One exit after Greenfield we turn off for Conway, a small farming town that has been home base for Archibald and Ada MacLeish since 1927. At the end of town, following directions, we find a road with the sign: NOT PASSABLE IN WINTER AND SPRING. The road climbs steeply between snowbanks, and when it reaches Uphill Farm it stops abruptly. The town plow has gone no farther. We park behind the house, stretch ourselves into the bright air, and the back door of the farmhouse opens: Archibald MacLeish bounds out — a tweed jacket over a sweater, brown beret tilted on his head, his step springy, 85 years old.

When MacLeish came to Harvard as Boylston Professor in 1949 — at 57 — I enrolled in his first writing class. A year after graduation I stopped at Uphill Farm for lunch. From time to time, over 29 years, we had seen each other elsewhere, and we corresponded from time to time. I had not seen him for a dozen years. And he astonishes me. His body moves like that of a 40 year old — and it does not relapse into age after creating an impression. His eyes are bright and quick. His skin shows something of years in the sun; under his chin eight decades have dropped a small sac of flesh; his hearing is faintly impaired; but his body is lithe and his eyes are strong. His voice astonishes me most: it has not aged; it seems not to have aged since

its 20's. Now I remember that his voice was always youthful; it remains light, quick, flexible and with none of the crags and fissures and gutters of age.

Archie escorts us to a small, sunny library at the front of the house, where Ada MacLeish awaits us. She too seems not to have changed in the last 12 years. When we sit, I ask about this house. Uphill Farm was built in 1711 — the original saltbox — founded on stone ledge, its timber cut from its own hills. Somebody built onto it in 1826. A century afterwards, when the MacLeishes moved here, they added the large music room for Ada's singing.

Archie's connection with Conway begins even earlier. In 1892, the year he was born, his maternal grandfather, Elias Brewster Hilliard, became minister to Conway Congregationalists. Looking for a place to come to from France, in 1927, they heard about Uphill Farm, and bought it with its 250 acres for \$5,000. When they met the neighbors, Iz Boyden told Archie, "Your grandfather married me."

For 51 years, Uphill Farm has been the granite foundation of a busy life, and a loved place. "I've been wanting to write a poem about this house," says Archie. He shakes his head, aware of a houselife separate from his own. "I'm afraid to. Something would kick me downstairs."

We look out a window at the broad hill descending a wide white acreage toward town. At the back of the room

near the fireplace, in a bookless patch of wall, there is a photograph of Earth from space — that familiar image of the late 20th century, the green and isolated sphere that we are riders on. While Archie fetches some wine, we chat with Ada. Archie has brought up the subject of memory. Now Ada speaks lightly of the loss of short-term memory in one's 80's — this elegant warm woman — and of the strategic placement of notes reminding what's to be done.

MacLeish returns with a tray of Dubonnet and vermouth. I ask the MacLeishes about their winter. Until last year, they had wintered for almost 30 years in Antigua. Last year, when their borrowed Antigua house was unavailable, they tried Bermuda instead. It was all right, but a bit lonely; they missed Antigua acquaintances. (They made friends in Antigua despite their refusal to attend cocktail parties. "Twenty-six years in Antigua," says Archie, "and not one cocktail party.") They had made arrangements by telephone with the Club in Bermuda and were advised that one always dressed for dinner. Adaptable, they packed evening wear, only to sit night after night in the Club's dining room alone, two old and handsome people splendidly dressed in solitary luxury. "We became close friends with the headwaiter."

It is time for lunch. We walk from the library's flowers, past flowers in the hallway, to the dining room at the back of the house, with flowers on the dark table. It is after the noon hour, and the sun begins to reach the western slope that slants upward from Uphill Farm. A woman moves quietly from the kitchen and serves us with chicken and broccoli in a yellow sauce, carrots cooked with chunks of pineapple. Archie uncorks a Vougeot '72.

Sitting over a good lunch, talking about Antigua and Uphill Farm, I think how fortunate they are. After 62 years of marriage, each is healthy and alert — and each has a companion who is healthy and alert. Still, they are in their ninth decade; if one forgets, there are things to remind one. In order to live in this house, the MacLeishes need help. A year ago, the couple working for them decided to retire. It is extremely difficult, in this day and age, to find a couple — man to garden, care for lawns, do upkeep; woman to cook and clean house. By great luck they found two superb people, but there had been a time of anxiety. Archie said he would die if he had to live somewhere else. Ada said she would die if she had to take care of this house by herself.

The problem solved, life becomes livable again. Now they look forward to summer, to getting out of doors. The two of them garden, both flowers and vegetables, with help from their help because Ada's trick knees preclude kneeling. The carrots we eat today were frozen from their garden last summer. And when the snow pulls back, it will unloosen the swimming hole behind the house, where in

their middle 80's Archibald and Ada MacLeish still take a dip before breakfast every morning, Ada tells us, "as nature made us."

After lunch Archie takes us to the music room for talk. We pass through a hallway of framed degrees and citations, signed and unsigned pictures that delineate MacLeish's several lives: Yeats, Frost, Joyce; Roosevelt, Dean Acheson. The music room is high and cavernous, full of books and flowers and pictures. Gerald Murphy's painting "The Pear and the Wasp" used to hang in this room until the MacLeishes donated it to the Museum of Modern Art, as Murphy lay dying.

I ask MacLeish, is Uphill Farm the place for work?

Yes, he tells me, this has always been the place for work. "'J.B.," much of the 'Collected Poems.' 'Conquistador' began in France, but everything *real* was lacking in it. The real part came here, after a visit to Mexico." Did he work in Antigua? "Antigua was all right for reworking things. Antigua was perfection, but two or three months is all you can stand of perfection." Here he works in a one-room stone house, 250 yards away from the farmhouse, far from telephones. He likes to be at work by 8 o'clock in the morning, to work on poems *before* he works on anything else.

I ask him what he knows now about writing poems that he didn't know at the beginning. He laughs and says that he may know "a little more at the end than at the beginning." He pauses. "I think I know one simple thing that I hadn't. This may strike you as odd because I used to talk about this as if I knew. When you're beginning, you *think* you're after scope or direction. You're *really* after a believable speaking voice, a voice that will collect feelings, the way lint collects on certain fabrics. Re-reading Alexis St. Leger's (St. John Perse's) 'Anabase,' I see what amazing powers lie in the discovery of the voice. It is a *dominant figure*. That voice is not the voice of anyone who ever lived, but of humanity, in relation to basic experience — salt, fire, the sea."

"And there's another thing." He tells how he took Robert Fitzgerald's translation of the "Odyssey" to Bermuda, in order to read it aloud to Ada with the sound of surf in the background. Reading it, he found a line that he had never seen before, a line translated differently by other translators. In the 11th book, Odysseus tells his story to Alkinoos, who answers him saying that Odysseus has told his story, "As a poet would, a man who knows the world."

MacLeish pauses to let the line sink in. He shakes his head. "These are the words that I needed for years. Who *does* know the world? Not the businessman. Not the scientist. Yes — Shakespeare, Homer, Dante. This is what makes greatness in a poet: *to know the world*. And yet,

this is not what people have been saying about the poet. The orthodox view is that the poet knows how to write, but has nothing to do with reality."

I ask him the question writers always hear: What is he working on now? He waits only a moment.

"You're aware," he says, "that people who've lived on into old age have stopped writing. You don't face up to it; you don't know what to *face*. You don't want to risk despair. Then you must face it: It is not happening."

He has been unable to write poetry for the last year. It has been a bad year, the worst year, because of the long and terrible death of their son. Kenneth MacLeish — Ada and Archie's 60-year-old firstborn, editor and writer for the National Geographic — died last August after five years' struggle with cancer. "At the time that happened, I was putting prose pieces together. That occupied me." He did not recognize, at first, that the poems had stopped. "Then I had to face it. What do you do? Do you consciously accept silence? Wait? Begin all over again, as if in a new experience of life? How would you *use* that new experience in life? Nothing needs understanding... more than that dwindling."

He does not seem to have dwindled away. I suggest that sometimes extreme pain makes poetry impossible, but that it may return.

Yet he is right that few poets have written well in old age. Walter Savage Landor died just three months short of 90 and wrote exquisite, lapidary poems almost until the end. Tennyson lived to be 83; there is a fine love poem to his wife ("To you who are seventy-seven") composed in his 82d year. Robert Frost lived to be 88 and published a successful book the year before he died — but the quality of the late work shows decline. By and large, it is observable that poets in their 70's or 80's either cease to write or write badly. The great exception is Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928, who never published his poems until he was almost 60, and who wrote many of his best poems — some of the greatest lyrics in the language — in his 70's and 80's. And Archibald MacLeish published a "Collected Poems" in 1976, with a section of "New Poems" apparently written since 1968, with this verse about "The Old Gray Couple:"

*Everything they know they know together —  
everything, that is, but one:  
their lives they've learned like  
secrets from each other;  
their deaths they think of in the nights alone.*

Archie hears me talking. He allows that I could be right — about the pain preventing poems, instead of age — but I can tell that he does not believe me. "I haven't

been *able*," he says, "to get back to verse. Yet I have the compulsion." "There are poems that come from terminal experience."

Both of us think of Yeats. Though Yeats died at 74, he had been ill, and he wrote magnificently "from terminal experience." Archie remembers a story and tells us now about hearing Yeats lecture at Yale in 1915 — Yeats was 50 then, Archie 23 — and of relaxing with him later at the Elizabethan Club and how Yeats recited Tennyson's song from "The Princess" ("The splendour falls on castle walls") with a tender mockery of the Laureate's mellifluousness. We laugh, hearing in his youthful voice an American imitate an Irishman mock an Englishman: "Blow, bugle, blow..." But when we stop laughing MacLeish's voice comes weaving back to thoughts of life and death and poetry.

"From the beginning of time the old have been laughed at for their forgetfulness." Short-term memory is the key; perhaps the conditions of aging *preclude* poetry, because of short-term memory's relationship to the poetic process. "When you get older, it's hard to come back to the work; when you are young you walk in the woods and you are surrounded by the poem you are trying to write; it flies around your head. When you are older you forget you are working on it."

After a pause, he thinks of Rilke and Rilke's obsession with astronomical predictions of the sun's death — the end of everything. "Rilke felt that the human role was to create a world that would survive time and disaster. *Survive*. A series of vast shadows. Perhaps there *is* an excuse for human labor." He pauses; I wonder if he can hear the wordplay he makes, on the death of the sun. Then he continues, vigorous: "There *is* sense in being alive, justification in being alive. There has been created in the human mind — in however short a time, only ten thousands of years — a world that could live without the world. Mozart has vanished; his music endures. There is a world that has been made by poets, musicians; that world *exists*. Are we to suppose this world will not survive us?"

Afternoon darkens, and it is nearly time to leave. We stand, shake hands, make plans to see each other again. MacLeish has one more thing to say: "There is also the consolation of *having been*. It is a consolation limited to old age. The haunting sense of extinguishment is there. Something in you *does* marshal, against it, an unarguable sense of *having been*."

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Donald Hall's most recent book is "Remembering Poets."

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## V. First Curator MacLeish Reflects on Walter Lippmann and the Nieman Fellowships

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**Last January the Nieman Foundation for Journalism moved into new and larger headquarters, an 1836 Cambridge landmark now called Walter Lippmann House. Located at One Francis Avenue, the structure stands as a stately and classic memorial to the journalist who helped found the Nieman program 40 years ago. (See Nieman Reports, Winter/Spring and Summer 1978, for full accounts of the move and the Walter Lippmann Memorial Fund Drive.)**

**Here Archibald MacLeish reminisces about the role of Walter Lippmann (Harvard 1910) and the history of the Nieman program.**

Sometimes, looking backward from an unexpected turning in the road, you almost see a pattern in what lies behind you. I know I did when I heard that Harvard University had bought the fine old Francis house in Cambridge for its Nieman Fellows and planned to call it Lippmann House and raise a Walter Lippmann Memorial Fund to endow it.

I had been the first Curator (as President Conant decided to call it) of the Nieman Foundation forty years before and I knew very well what the Foundation owed to Walter Lippmann. He had been the University's principal adviser on what to do and what *not* to do with the Nieman bequest and if the foundation which resulted has now become (as it surely has) the foremost academic adjunct to journalism in the world, the credit is very largely his — his and Jim Conant's.

All this came together in my mind as I thought of the happy propriety of a Walter Lippmann Memorial housing the Nieman Foundation on Francis Avenue within a green apple tree of the house of William James. In 1938 we lived in no such glory. We had the occasional use of the lounge in Straus Hall in the Yard and we ate a weekly dinner in the back room of Joseph's restaurant in what was then called the Arts Club in the Back Bay. But even so, we were a phenomenon and it was to Walter Lippmann that we owed our particular distinction: that we were a journalists' school but not a school of journalism. Which means that we were concerned, not with the teaching of the profession of journalism but with the kind of education without which journalism cannot be practised in the contemporary world.

We did not, in those early days, belong to Harvard as the College, say, belongs to it. But Harvard — the whole of Harvard — belonged to us. We could use its libraries and laboratories, sit in its classrooms, make friends and counsellors of its professors and generally educate and reeducate ourselves at its expense, and all because President Conant persuaded by Walter Lippmann, had so conceived of the relationship between a great university and the difficult but essential task of disseminating "news" in an increasingly complicated society.

I do not, of course, *know* that that radical and creative decision was Walter Lippmann's contribution to the establishment of the Nieman Foundation. All I know is that the decision had been made before President Conant offered me the curatorship (at a salary, incidentally, which was roughly a third of what I was then earning by journalism of my own — and which I accepted immediately). But of one thing there can be no question. Whatever Walter Lippmann's advice, it was his example which supported the Foundation at its beginning. He was not only a great, modern journalist. He was also one of the first instances of what a great, modern journalist has to be and know if his profession is to serve the new, vast, complicated, doubtful modern world.

*Archibald MacLeish*

# The Columnist as Victim

By Bob Greene

In Wednesday's editions of *The Tribune*, I wrote a column about two phone calls I received — one from a girl who said she was a 13-year-old prostitute, the other several weeks later from a person who said she was the girl's mother, and that the girl and a friend had been killed in California.

On Thursday I learned that I was the victim of a hoax, apparently perpetrated by an emotionally disturbed teen-aged girl. The two phone calls to me apparently were placed by this girl. I have spoken with her parents, who feel that their daughter was responsible for the false story.

I apologize to readers of the column. I wrote it thinking that I was protecting the identity of a family in personal torment. Instead, I quoted someone as saying two murders had taken place, when it now turns out there is no evidence of such murders.

Here is the background:

Some six weeks ago, when I was writing a column for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, I received a phone call from an apparently distraught girl who said that she was a 13-year-old prostitute. She asked for my help in getting out of what she said was a widespread prostitution ring.

I offered to meet her. She said she would call me back, and hung up.

This phone call was outlined in

detail in the first section of Wednesday's column.

On April 5, after I had joined the staff of *The Tribune*, I received a message from the city desk asking me to call a certain woman at a suburban phone number. I did.

As I reported in the ensuing column, the person answering the phone identified herself as the woman who had called.

"I believe you know my daughter," the person said.

"What's your daughter's name?" I said.

She said a name I didn't recognize. She then said that perhaps I knew the daughter by another name.

The second name was the one the girl had used six weeks earlier.

Through a mixup at the switchboard, we were then cut off. I redialed the number; the person answered and we resumed our conversation.

The person said her daughter had been found dead in California. The person said that soon after the death, a letter had been received from the daughter, in which the daughter expressed a desire to come home — and in which the daughter asked the mother to contact me, and thank me for trying to help, but to assure me that the daughter was all right.

I asked to meet with the person. She said her husband had forbidden her to call me about the letter, and that she could not meet me. I asked her to read me the letter.

She did. It took almost half an hour. I took notes. The person cried as she read it. At one point she said:

"You know, it seems strange to read

someone's handwriting you know you'll never see again."

When she had finished reading the letter, I asked her to read me certain portions again, so that my notes could be made more complete. She seemed to break down at this point, and after reading me some of the sections, she said "I've done it once. I'm too upset."

She asked me to call her only in the daytime, because she did not want her husband to know she had called me.

Immediately after talking to the woman, I had the phone company cross-check the phone number. It was registered to a family with the same last name as the woman who had placed the call to me that day.

I wanted to confirm certain details of the story, but I had promised the woman I would not call her husband. She said her husband had taken care of having the bodies returned to the Chicago area, and that her husband knew in what town in California the girls' bodies had been found.

I knew that I had received the two calls; the second call, from the "mother," had been rich in detail, and had seemed to fit in with the original call from the girl.

I was convinced the calls were legitimate.

I was wrong.

To protect the family, we ran the column using no last names (my efforts to contact the "mother" during the ensuing afternoons were futile, and, keeping my word not to involve the father, I did not call at night.)

On Thursday I called the number again.

A woman with the correct last name answered, but said that she had never talked with me.

I told the woman and her husband what had happened.

They became distraught. They said they were convinced that the entire series of events was caused by their 14-year-old daughter — who has the

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*Bob Greene is a columnist with the Chicago Tribune. The above account appeared in the April 14, 1978 editions of that newspaper.*

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same name as the girl who originally called me.

They described the girl as "brilliant," but said that she had severe emotional problems, including a personality that apparently takes on different forms. The girl, they said, apparently had played the "mother" during the second set of calls.

Several aspects of this story are still unclear, but the important thing is that I printed the story based on my belief that it was true. Further checking, with the father, would have proved me wrong, but I had given the "mother" my word and honored it. Checks with law enforcement authorities Thursday indicated that no unsolved murders of teen-aged girls are currently on the books in California.

The parents of the girl say she is undergoing psychiatric care. The mother, father, and daughter met with editors of *The Tribune* and myself Thursday night. The parents said the daughter had been suffering emotional anguish during the last several months. They said that she — like the girl described by the "mother" on the phone — had been molested several years ago by boys at her school, and that the event had had a severe effect on her emotionally.

The girl at various times both admitted and denied making the phone calls, but her parents — basing their convictions on similar past occurrences — said they were totally convinced she did it.

The germane thing is that, believing a story was true, I wrote one that was, in essence, false.

I have been writing a newspaper column for seven years. This is the first time anything like this has happened to me, but that is not a good enough excuse. To those of you who read the original column:

I am sorry.

(Reprinted courtesy of the Chicago Tribune)

## Letters

### PIDGINS & OTHER KUDO BIRDS

*To the Editors:*

Oh my. I trust something got lost in the translation from the transcripts of Professor Finley's remarks (Summer 1978). In discussing English as a "hybrid language," the article (p. 7, second column) has him saying, "As I see it, English is sort of a pigeon German." That's somewhat distantly related to our other famous bird, pidgin English?

The amusing slip recalls a typist transcribing the taped remarks of a congressman, who mentioned the "Deseret News." From the recording, the typist came up with the "Desert Rat News."

On another topic of your Summer issue — a letter regarding use of photos. You could use photos, but I'm still a great believer in the power of the word. I settle down to read the Nieman Reports. I don't have to be beguiled by that vivid medium and the power of the image.

One last point...and that's about using "Kudos." It should be used sparingly. Roy H. Copperud, my favorite expert on usage and style, notes that kudos is singular ("Kudos is not a plural any more than pathos"), but the AP-UPI style books lists kudos as needing a plural verb — about the only "guidebook" sanctioning that use! Well, as Copperud, who runs "Editorial Workshop" in Editor &

Publisher, says, "Let us now kudo famous men."

Bernard S. Katz  
Washington, D.C.

### HE LIKED IT

*To the Editors:*

Just a note to thank you for sending me copies of the Nieman Reports for the Winter/Spring and Summer of 1978 which I read with great interest. I was particularly glad to see Louis Lyon's report on President Conant as I had worked closely with both of them. I was also very pleased to read Eric Sevareid's conversation with Walter Lippmann. I heard Lippmann speak at the Massachusetts Historical Society some years ago and spent some time with him in his Georgetown residence talking about his archives.

Keyes D. Metcalf  
Belmont, Massachusetts

Nieman Reports welcomes articles, letters and commentaries on or about journalism. The deadline for submissions for the winter issue is October 10.

# "The Kids Are Rotten" Ritual

By Ken Macrorie

Every ten years or so a few supposedly mature adults in the United States decide to lay their frustration with the state of the union onto the younger generation. It's a ritual witch-hunt, like the stoning of citizens in the New England town in Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery." Since the people heaving the rocks are persons of power in their communities, the press dutifully reports what they say, thus spreading the sadism.

One of the campaigns in this war against the young is waged periodically, against students as writers. "Objective tests," say school administrators, testing experts, and a few frustrated teachers, show that the educational system is "spawning a generation of semiliterates." I take part of that phrasing from an article in Newsweek, December 8, 1975, entitled "Why Johnny Can't Write."

This is a tired charge in an old war. In 1963 The Saturday Review printed an article also called "Why Johnny Can't Write," and so did Look magazine in 1961. Back in May, 1893, in The Atlantic Monthly, J.J. Greenough wrote:

*A great outcry has been made lately, on every side, about the inability of the*

*students admitted to Harvard College to write English clearly and correctly . . . Now . . . most of the schools require frequent written exercises of some kind, either original compositions or translations. These are corrected and commented on by the teacher, and rewritten by the pupil. With all this practice in writing and time devoted to English, why do we not obtain better results?*

These accusations in magazines have seemed good copy to newspaper editors, who have featured them again and again without remembering the last instance, and the one before that. They have failed to see they are dealing with an age-old American ritual, not a temporary breakdown in educational efficiency.

How could the press be so myopic? Newspeople have a vested interest in writing. They sense, quite rightly, that they are the guardians of the printed word. Daily they prepare the text which is read by more readers than any other, and they want to uphold high standards. But standards will never be upheld or raised by people ignorant of the enterprise they value so highly. If newspeople investigated the teaching of writing thoroughly, they would be jolted.

First, the collapse of writing skill among American youth is a fiction. There was no skill before a cataclysm, and therefore no cataclysm. Students have always written abominably, and everyone has always wanted to obtain better results in composition classes. Over the decades, hundreds of strategies have been devised to break students out of illiterate and thoughtless writing, but none has succeeded

on a large scale. Behind these innovations, the mainstream of teaching English composition has flowed. Drill them in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Assign topics for themes, mark the errors, and give a grade.

The second fiction about teaching composition is that the schools must go back to basics to improve writing. The majority of schools and colleges have never left what they consider the basics, and their students have always written miserably.

But didn't today's practicing newswriters learn to produce decent prose, properly spelled and punctuated — in school? No. They learned those skills and mechanics in spite of school. Most persons I know who have mastered American-English punctuation are English teachers or editors, and they learned it a week before they began the jobs which demanded they know it or suffer acute embarrassment. They needed to know it.

Newswriters do not perform like students in composition courses. They work with editors who help them make their stories sound in substance and form. By the time their stories reach print, their copy has been checked for cogency, accuracy, spelling, and punctuation by the pooled knowledge of a number of trained people. And all of them are working on the same side, attempting to make the story as literate, useful, and significant as possible. Not for itself, but for thousands of readers out there who get part of their picture of the world — some of their bearings as human beings — from newspapers.

In most composition courses there are no readers in the plural, no perplexing range of intelligence and experience to write for, only the teacher. Writing a theme does not count, except in the most artificial terms of a grade for the course.

In conventional classrooms, matters of form are so over-emphasized and prescribed that most papers written in

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*Ken Macrorie, Professor of English at Western Michigan University, is the author of textbooks and books on teaching, most recently "Uptaught" (1970), and "A Vulnerable Teacher" (1974), published by the Hayden Book Company.*

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them turn out empty. Often the teacher chooses the topic the student writes on — usually one of his or her own favorites — and so there is no news in the paper for the teacher, its only reader. If the students do poorly they will not lose their jobs; they will not feel cheated out of the ego satisfaction of seeing their words in print, for they know none of this class work will ever see print or a genuine audience. It is a diabolically motiveless situation, in which each year or so, “grammar” or “composition” teachers (what perfect terms there!) drill students again in spelling, grammar, and punctuation which does not take.

I know composition teachers. I became one in 1947. I have edited their national journal, *College Composition and Communication*. I have talked to groups of them in more than half the states in the union.

In 1964 because of a culmination of failures, I quit being a composition teacher and began enabling students to write more powerfully. But the tradition still resides in my bones. The other day I read this passage in a student's research paper: “There are three ways to put together a component system. The all-in-one receiver is the most popular.” In the margin I instinctively wrote, “Who told you this?” On second thought, I changed the comment to “Say who told you this.” The change may seem slight, but I know the mind and nerves of the freshman writing a paper for the English teacher. All through school, writing has been a matter of right or wrong — in the teacher's mind. The judgment of the quality of the work has been primarily based on right or wrong answers in workbook drills, quizzes, tests, and the number of errors caught by the teacher in the student's papers. Teachers are correctors and judges, not editors and helpers. To the student “Who told you this?” sounds like a comment made just prior to a smash in the face — with a “D” or an “F.”

The whole correcting syndrome is wrong. “Writing,” as a free-lance writer friend of mine used to say, “is creating a relationship between people.” The act involves unconscious as well as conscious energizings. Newspaper reporters may appear to work through a tight, impersonal regimen: (1) an editor gives them an assignment, (2) they go out and get “the facts,” (3) they come back to the office and write up “the story” according to time-honored forms of organization and mechanics, (4) other editors check their work for mistakes. In actuality

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**“Writing is creating  
a relationship  
between people.”**

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the process is much more than that and tremendously different from the process of most English composition classrooms. Editor and writer work together. One is not hedging and posturing in order to provide a defense for a grade he will eventually assign. The other is not toadying and guessing what will please the editor in order to keep the job, perhaps get promoted; but in most instances the pleasing will occur only if both do their jobs well — which is to relate a piece of the world to their readers who pay for the service.

For ten years or so now, in every region of this country, some writing teachers in high schools and colleges have been getting from many students writing powerful enough to move other students and people outside the classroom. They have done this by beginning the course with “free writing,” in which students strive for truth but write fast without worrying about mechanics, grammar, or spelling. In the traditional classes these matters are sharp swords that spill blood-red ink in the margin of their

themes. In the new program, the best passages from students' writings are read aloud in class and commented on by everyone assembled there — a live bunch of varying human beings.

In this new program teachers move students to open assignments in which they write of incidents in their lives. In their papers a reader can see where the passions and ideas are coming from. These writers know what they're talking about.

Then, more reading aloud, with praise and suggestions for improvement from everyone in the room — students and teacher. Much of what is written is memorable, entertaining, and instructive. The verdict comes, not in a grade from one judge, but in the laughter, the ah's and uh-huh's, the tightening of muscles and riveted attention, and sometimes the tears, of an audience of listeners. I wish news-people would begin to report on classrooms where authentic writing takes place, where students and teacher listen to writing read aloud and react to it as human beings concerned with truth as well as form.

Readers of this publication may wonder why I ask the press for help in reforming the teaching of writing in colleges and high schools. If the reform movement is soundly based, will it not be achieved from within the profession without the help of outsiders? No. Teachers pay more attention to criticism of their work in the mass media than in their own journals. And so they should, for the press is only seldom insular and secretive: it meets and challenges the world.

*(Editor's note: Professor Macrorie will supply interested readers with a list of teachers who elicit “live” writing from their students. Requests for such information may be addressed to him in care of Nieman Reports, One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.)*

# A Journalism Program to Strengthen Liberal Education

By Arthur B. Musgrave

How colleges can best meet the needs of society for improving its journalism or public information system and how colleges can best meet the needs of students who believe they may be interested in journalism careers have long been controversial issues in American higher education. These two general questions are reflected in a more specific one: What about a liberal arts versus a journalism major for students who think they might like to be journalists? Conflicting answers have been advanced for decades — 1908, when the University of Missouri established the first School of Journalism, being a useful historical marker.

A unique program aimed at solving this controversy and at strengthening liberal education in several and new and specific ways was initiated in 1946 at the University of Massachusetts. It had two independent parts. The essential part, and the first to be developed, was an extracurricular counseling-tutoring-internship-placement program for students in any major. It was designated as the University's Journalism program because, like a journalism major as commonly defined, it purported to prepare students specifically for journalism careers. The other part, which was developed in the 1960's, after an earlier beginning, was curricular. It provided several social science courses concerned with research and critical scholarship about mass communication.

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*Dr. Arthur Musgrave, Nieman Fellow '43, has been Professor of Journalistic Studies at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst since 1946.*

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This article will describe the purposes of the program and the policies required to serve them. It seeks to show that the combination of any liberal arts major with the type of extracurricular journalism program described here, or an adaptation of that program in small liberal arts colleges, can best serve 1) the needs of society for improving the system by which it gets timely information about public affairs; 2) the needs, both vocational and educational, of students interested in journalism; 3) the needs of colleges for improving the quality of the services provided by the student newspaper both to its staff and to the college community; 4) the needs of colleges for increasing student and public understanding of the practical values of liberal education and the moral purposes of higher education.

An interdepartmental committee that determined policies for the journalism part of this program described it in the University's *General Information Bulletin* as a "co-curricular program of work on newspapers under tutorial guidance from persons who have had experience in hiring and training reporters and who can, hence, provide counseling and placement services to students (and editors) based on how students have performed in a realistic test of journalism aptitude."

The most complete of the *Bulletin* summaries appeared in the 1970-71 edition. Following the sentence just quoted were the three paragraphs below describing the program's innovative journalism part:

*This co-curricular (non-credit) tutorial program is open to all students, regardless of their majors, who think*

*they are interested in journalism careers. It is designed to be a superior substitute for vocationally specialized courses, often called professional courses, such as News Writing and Copy Editing. Since it was established in 1946, all students who wanted a journalism job have been placed and have proved successful on the job in the opinion of the editors to whom they had been recommended. The reason for its success is that it permits students to make informed career choices. It also provides students with published articles in newspapers that, along with the newspaper experience, are useful as job-getting credentials.*

*Newspapers in Northampton, Greenfield, Holyoke, and Springfield cooperate in this co-curricular or journalism program. The college daily also cooperates, and any student who writes for it may obtain tutoring in journalistic writing techniques. Undergraduates interested in journalism careers should spend a few hours weekly writing for the college daily, starting in their sophomore year, and should seek work on a commercial newspaper during the summer of their junior year. Student placement aid is provided as part of the tutorial and counseling program.*

*As a rule, the director of the journalism program arranges for students to participate in the tutorial program with commercial newspapers after they have participated in the tutorial program with the college daily.*

As the *Bulletin* summary indicates, this new type of undergraduate journalism program is unique in its

combination of policies. Three should be noted:

1) It provides tutoring on a non-credit basis to students who are teaching themselves journalistic writing and editing techniques — differing in this respect both from all journalism curricular programs and from all liberal arts college programs that do not provide any organized program for students who think they may want to be journalists.

2) It provides limited but sufficient newspaper experience to test journalistic interest and aptitude without the incentive of academic credit — differing from internship-for-credit programs which steal much time, such as a whole semester or more, from academic study, which cost the same as the academic study that is lost, and which attract students who are not motivated enough to become journalists that they will participate in a non-credit program.

3) It provides tutoring related to responsibility for placement from a person or persons who are qualified for such types of teaching services by successful experience in hiring and training reporters — differing in these two related respects from all journalism education programs. Hiring experience is not a teaching qualification in these. And the faculty, while providing courses that purport to prepare students for journalism jobs, does not take placement responsibility.

A basic aim of this type of journalism program is to meet “straightening out” needs of undergraduates without recruiting students for journalism jobs. This aim is one reason for having the program be an extracurricular activity. It is also among the reasons it strengthens liberal education.

By definition, liberal arts majors, unlike journalism majors, do not purport to prepare students for any specific occupation and do not recruit

students for particular businesses. Journalism majors not only prevent students from taking a liberal arts major instead, but also create departmental faculties that have a self-interest in recruiting for the major — the number of new faculty positions, along with promotions and salary increases for departmental members, being dependent on student enrollment. One of the moral issues presented to the academic profession by this sort of major, hence, is that it helps flood the journalism job market, with harmful consequences to journalism and to colleges which offer such majors. These consequences will be discussed later.

Here it might be stressed that a major which has the effect of recruiting students for newspapers or broadcasting or public relations companies — businesses that have a surplus of job seekers, and, because they can raise wages, need never have a shortage — is quite inappropriate in higher education. Many persons, including hundreds lacking college degrees, are qualified for entry-level journalism jobs. These do not require a body of substantive knowledge or highly specialized skills. The knowledge and skills required for higher level jobs, such as editorial writing or specialized reporting on large newspapers, can be acquired on the job by liberally educated persons.

The view that the academic profession should not be recruiting students for specific businesses is fundamental to the adoption of this type of extracurricular program. Journalism needs to be a healthy business independent of government for a free society to exist. But journalism businesses can meet their recruitment needs in ways more useful to them and to our society than by having college faculties recruit a vast surplus of graduates to compete for journalism jobs.

Another by-product of a journalism major that is avoided with an extracur-

ricular substitute is that students and parents get the impression that this major, rather than a liberal arts major, is necessary to become a successful journalist. This misleads high school and college students; hence, it also presents a moral issue to the academic profession.

Two other reasons for journalism to exist as an extracurricular program are closely related. First, the program should be open to majors in any field. Second, journalism as an occupation is a professional or vocational way to use a liberal education.

Other reasons for this extracurricular type of journalism program are related to two of its specific aims that served the general purpose of strengthening liberal education. One was to motivate students to get the best possible liberal arts education with confidence that it is a practical education both for students who become journalists and for students who think they may want to become journalists — the latter being a much larger group.

Another specific aim was to motivate students to make the best possible use of their extracurricular as well as their curricular opportunities while in college (and in journalism or other jobs after college). Although liberal education does not purport to train students for any specific occupation, it has vocational value because it provides training in 1) the liberal arts of reading, writing, calculating, speaking, and listening, and 2) self-education by giving students frameworks of knowledge into which they can fit new facts and ideas.

After they have taken courses in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, students should choose a major that interests them the most and in which they will study hardest. They should be advised that as far as entry-level journalism jobs are concerned, it makes no difference what liberal arts major they select.



In addition, students should be informed that a college degree, although highly desirable, is not essential for success in journalism — that performance skill as a writer is more crucial. Information was provided about the wide variety of majors taken by distinguished journalists, and about the many journalists who were not college graduates, but who had the ability to educate themselves.

These academic advisership policies supplement the policy of journalism as an extracurricular tutorial-placement program. They are intended to help students get a broad education, with enough in-depth training in one academic discipline to permit evaluative research. They are intended also to teach students what journalists who have had hiring experience know: success in journalism, as in many other occupations, depends less on the beginner's technical information than on his or her capacity to grow on the job. Any college course which stretches the mind and increases one's mastery of liberal arts skills is likely to be useful in journalism. Anyone with journalistic aptitude can easily learn the techniques needed by beginning journalists on the job. This aptitude includes a sense of form about writing and an ability to learn quickly a particular form, such as the summary lead used in most news reports.

This is not to say that study of journalistic writing forms should be excluded from college classrooms. Quite the contrary. Such study should be included, particularly in writing courses. An exercise in slanting news through the order in which facts are presented or emphasized can help produce critical consumers of journalism. Study of types of beginnings used in magazine articles and news reports is useful in developing writing and reading skills. These forms can be taught by competent writing teachers. They have a proper place in composition courses. But whether a whole course should be

devoted only on how to gather and write news is highly debatable.

How many writing courses a student should have is also debatable. Students in the tutorial program were advised to take no more than one a semester in their junior-senior years. A limit of two was recommended to those with much writing talent. Because the writing *process* is the same regardless of the *product*, no particular writing courses were recommended. Students were told that a creative writing course is likely to be a useful supplement to the sort of writing they were doing for the student newspaper.

An important practical reason for having journalism as an extracurricular activity is that the program is designed for students who are sufficiently motivated to become journalists that they are willing to devote spare time to writing for newspapers and to related reading, such as one of the how-to-do-it textbooks in news writing. These well-written texts present no intellectual difficulty. They permit students to teach themselves news writing techniques. The motivation of students who will be attracted to a journalism program is crucial in designing a vocationally successful one.

This extracurricular program is designed for the idealistic young writer who has confidence that he or she can write successfully for newspapers — students, who, if they make an informed decision to become journalists, are almost certain to succeed on the job. Students of this sort are often found on the campus newspaper or in campus journalism jobs. They are a constant source of newspaper job applicants, although they frequently leave the small-city dailies, on which they usually start, in order to take higher paying jobs in or outside of journalism. They have journalistic talent; that is, talent at gathering, understanding, and presenting information in writing that will interest the audience. They also have academic

talent. Many will major in journalism if the faculty offers this major.

The placement of such students, particularly if they have a scrapbook of writing they published in college, is relatively easy. In hiring college graduates, editors look for writing ability and journalistic motivation. Good indications are newspaper internship experience on a non-credit basis, experience on college newspapers or in college news offices, work as campus correspondents or on newspapers during the summer.

This tutorial program was started on the basis that its director would be responsible for placing 80 percent of participants who wanted journalism jobs and that 90 percent of these would survive the on-the-job trial period. A policy of director responsibility for placement reinforces the policies of maintaining a journalism program as an extracurricular activity and no recruitment of students for the journalism job market. No serious placement problems were encountered.

An extracurricular program that provides students with a realistic aptitude test and a realistic understanding of journalism job opportunities, wages, and working conditions is not likely to have many students in need of placement services. Several students a year went into journalism, but in no year did more than 10 seniors want to take news writing jobs — and the placement responsibility was limited to news work. Students of marginal talent are likely to eliminate themselves from the program. Talented students will also decide against journalism careers, usually because of salary considerations. Many will choose teaching, or law school, or a variety of jobs in government or business that seek college graduates with communication skill. Hence, a proper supplementary policy is to provide these students with information about the variety of career possibilities open to them.

Another practical reason for having



journalism as an extracurricular activity is that students can easily participate in and eliminate themselves from it. Experience at Massachusetts indicates that in a large college which is part of a state university, most of the students who register for the tutorial program only because of an interest in journalism jobs, and not to improve their writing, eliminate themselves at the first few counseling sessions. (These sessions are devoted to news writing exercises, discussing the journalism job market, and writing for publication in the student newspaper.) Upperclassmen in most journalism majors, on the other hand, often cannot change their major without having to spend additional time in college.

An important reason for journalism as a non-credit program is that the cost, compared to a journalism major, results in a large saving of college funds for undergraduate education. Even a weak journalism major is likely to take well over \$100,000 annually from the college budget. Although recruiting an editor with successful experience in hiring and training reporters and with knowledge of management problems costs more than recruiting a former reporter, one editor in a tutoring program can be a superior substitute for five or more journalistic writing teachers in meeting guidance and placement needs of students who think they want to be journalists.

An excellent extracurricular program can be provided in a small liberal arts college by having the editor of a newspaper published nearby serve as a tutor on a part-time basis. Liberal arts colleges that are part of large privately-endowed or state universities require only one full-time Director of Journalism with, perhaps, some part-time assistants, depending on the time spent with writers for the student newspaper who wish tutoring or advisership or critical-reading services, but who do not plan journalism careers.

This type of student at the University always far outnumbered the participants who remained in the tutorial program because they wanted to have a journalism career. This is likely to be the case in colleges that have large weeklies, semi-weeklies, tri-weeklies, or dailies. An experienced editor who does not have any faculty-control or censorship function — i.e., an editor who is in or near the newspaper office primarily to tutor students who think they may want to be journalists — is likely to have the major demand on his time come from other newspaper staff members interested simply in learning to write better or in improving the newspaper or in discussing problems ranging from training new recruits to ethical issues in handling controversies. Students want to do well at writing for publication.

How much tutorial and advisership time should be available to a student-

He proved to be highly talented at the difficult task of on-the-job teaching. After a few years, the student editors asked him to take the title of "adviser" to make clear he was available to all staff members. The newspaper then took over the payment of his salary. The magic of clarity about the different (although overlapping) roles of tutor and adviser is preserved by having a tutor-and-adviser paid by two sources. An advantage in having an adviser (or consultant) paid by the newspaper is that it makes clear his role as the employee of the students. An advantage in having a tutor paid by the college is that it makes clear his educational service to the instructional program of a liberal arts college.

A student newspaper offers not only many educational opportunities for supplementing a curriculum, but it can be an excellent vocational experience

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controlled newspaper depends partly upon faculty and administrative perceptions of the newspaper's importance to the college community and of the educational opportunities presented by it. At the University, the general policy was that the tutor in journalism should give a large part of his time to this publication, now the largest campus daily in New England. One reason was that a major purpose of this sort of journalism program is to improve the quality of the services provided by the newspaper both to its staff and to the University community. As the newspaper became larger in the early 1960's, the University employed an editor of a nearby daily to assist in the tutorial work.

for students interested in journalism jobs after graduation. It gives a vocational aptitude test. Indeed, it is not essential that student newspaper writers intern on a professional newspaper for an editor with hiring experience to determine their aptitude for news work. How well they write, how quickly they learn, and what sort of persons they are, will become apparent to an editor who provides tutorial services. He comes to know the students. He is not likely to make the mistake he can make in his own office and hire a person with writing talent who lacks personal qualities, such as ability to work responsibly with people, needed for success in journalism.

An important advantage of this sort

of journalism program is that a college or university can better handle problems presented by the college student press that are a proper concern of a college faculty and administration. There are many. One example is the seriously excessive time spent by student editors on their extracurricular

An adequate analysis of college newspaper problems that are of proper professional concern to American college faculty members and administrators, and of solutions to those problems, would require an essay longer than this one. Here the point is simply that such problems exist. So do

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**In a majority of American colleges,  
student editors spend from 30 to 40 hours weekly  
on their extracurricular work.**

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work. For decades it has been obvious to college administrators and faculty members in most of our colleges that, as presently organized, the newspaper's quality, whatever it may be, is achieved at the expense of the total education of the student editors. In a majority of American colleges, student editors year after year spend from 30 to 40 hours weekly on their extracurricular work.

Extracurricular activities have educational aspects. Plainly, they should be conducted so as to further the educational aims of the colleges, as were the literary and debating societies in the classical college. When an organized activity for students is conducted decade after decade at the expense of the total education of its student leaders, the problem is properly identified as an exploitation problem. The spending of excessive time has become a norm — what is and what should be — among college editors. It is expected that the top editors and candidates for editorships will exploit themselves and sacrifice studies for the sake of the newspaper. Partly this is because students cannot solve the organizational problems of the student press. They are in office for so short a term, and they are so busy with problems, that there is no chance to solve the problem of how to make the best use of both their curricular and extracurricular opportunities.

solutions. Pending the development of institutional solutions, such as an effective norm-creation effort that would motivate student editors to solve their newspaper's organizational problems, tutors can counter the pressures on students with public performance responsibilities to sacrifice their studies. Tutors can also assist student-faculty committees in developing appropriate educational policies concerning student journalism.

As indicated earlier, journalism majors also present a moral issue, particularly to administrators who develop such majors because they appeal to many students as practical, as one possible answer to the what-are-you-going-to-do-after-college question, as interesting, and perhaps intellectually facile. Although for decades these majors have been helping to flood the journalism job market, this is not the aim of journalism teachers. It is a byproduct of the aim they share with teachers in other fields: to build the major and increase its faculty — thus earning promotions, tenure, and salary increases for themselves and their colleagues.

Apart from the vocational frustration experienced by the students who major in journalism believing they are preparing themselves for journalism jobs, the applicant surplus defeats efforts to improve the quality of

journalism. Improvement does not depend on whether new employees know journalistic writing techniques or the history of journalism or other useful things taught to journalism majors. It depends on the quality of young writers in news work. This quality, in turn, depends in the long run on journalism wages, particularly on small-city dailies and broadcasting stations, along with some weeklies and magazines. These provide almost all the starting jobs. The salaries in entry-level journalism jobs are low compared to wages in other occupations which need people with writing and related communication skills.

A college policy of providing a surplus of journalism job applicants may meet needs of some small-city publishers and editors, but it is wrong from the academic profession's viewpoint. If a college wishes to offer a journalism major, it should at least follow a policy of limiting it to the number of majors the journalism faculty believes have a reasonable chance of obtaining jobs. Some journalism majors are certain to obtain journalism jobs, of course, because the major attracts some superior students and because there is a high turnover in entry-level jobs. Hence, the percentage of majors who obtain journalism jobs is the important figure and should be reported annually by the journalism faculty.

Central criticisms of a journalism major have been that it teaches things that can be learned as well, or better, on the job by persons with journalistic aptitude, that it is a needless waste of limited educational funds, and that it deprives students of a liberal arts major which gives students some in-depth training in an academic discipline (training that would make them better prepared for living as well as for earning a living in journalism or any other occupation that needs the skills of liberally educated persons). A tutorial substitute for a journalism

major meets these criticisms.

Another advantage of a tutorial substitute is that liberal arts majors have more prestige among many editors who handle hiring. One reason is that editors have hired journalism majors who did not do well in the trial period. When this happens, the editors blame the major. Sometimes they also form a poor opinion of the college that offered the major. But when the editors hire a major in Political Science, History, or English, Biology, or other liberal arts disciplines, and have the same unfortunate experience, they do not blame the major or the college. Liberal arts majors, unlike journalism majors or journalism tutorial programs, do not claim to be preparing students specifically for journalism.

A proper concern of higher education is the improvement of the quality of journalism in our society. One way to prompt improvement is to end college recruitment of students for journalism jobs. Recruitment can easily be handled by the employers of journalists. Many are doing an excellent job by providing summer internships, by visiting colleges to recruit seniors, by raising entry-level wages, by cooperating with universities in developing seminars for working journalists, and by contributing to university fellowship programs for experienced journalists.

A particularly appropriate service higher education offers is research and teaching by scholars interested in problems of journalism in an age of mass communication. Such study has been undertaken by scholars in a variety of disciplines. What is needed in some universities is a department or institute that has a central rather than an incidental concern with this area of scholarship. Fortunately, a byproduct of large journalism majors in recent decades has been a marked increase in the number of teacher-scholars with this central concern. Some concentrate

on quantitative research about communication problems. Others study the role of the mass media in society, international communications, or some other sub topic in communication studies. They provide social science courses.

In recent decades, such a development occurred in many speech departments that had introduced courses concerned with radio, films, and television. A merger of scholar-teachers in journalism schools with these other scholar-teachers in communication studies departments would seem logical. Critical scholarship into the way in which the communication process has been institutionalized in our society is possible. Such scholarship is not likely to be developed properly in departments or schools that regard themselves as providing professional training for jobs in the mass media. Each of these functions is in conflict with the other. Each has different sources of support.

In universities that have writing courses in different departments, this merger might also promote a single writing program taught by teachers in journalism and in other departments, such as English. The program could provide general courses in expository writing. Such courses are needed by many freshmen and other students in most colleges. Journalism teachers are, or could easily become, excellent teachers of general expository writing courses for students in all fields. If they helped in providing such courses, better use would be made of educational funds in colleges that offer journalism majors.

The development of communication studies departments is consistent with the development of an extracurricular vocational program that provides aptitude testing for jobs on newspapers or other communication media. Both types of programs share the purpose of improving liberal education and the services provided society by its print,

film, and broadcasting industries.

In addition to developing a curriculum concerned with critical scholarship about journalism, and to following policies that prevent recruitment of students for communication businesses, universities have a third appropriate way in which to help improve the quality of our public communication system. This is to work with the media in developing more academic fellowship programs for journalists and broadcasters. A particularly useful approach of wide applicability would be the creation of state or regional fellowship programs in all parts of the country.

As a supplement to the tutorial journalism program and the social science curriculum in journalistic studies, the University of Massachusetts established a unique fellowship program for New England journalists in 1964. It was created with the assistance and cooperation of the New England Society of Newspaper Editors. From 1964 to 1972, when an experiment was begun in offering non-credit seminars and workshops, about 10 journalists a year were enrolled. Their tuition and expenses were paid by their newspapers. The University provided teachers for three graduate courses. To date, it is the only regional fellowship program developed by a university and financed by the press itself — as university fellowship programs must be if they are to reach a large number of working journalists in all sections of the United States.

Today about 200 American colleges offer a journalism major; i.e., an area of concentration in which the student typically takes a fourth of the courses needed for graduation. Last year, students taking a journalism major instead of a liberal arts major numbered more than 65,000. Millions of dollars are allocated annually to this curriculum in which courses teaching journalistic techniques — the so-called professional or vocational or how-to or

technical courses — are required. A relevant question is: What sort of concept of the journalist is being given to students by this major?

Surely, a curriculum tells students what the administration and faculty think is important. Required technical courses would not seem to reflect a conception of journalists as persons of public conscience and moral consequence who by virtue of a liberal education and on-the-job growth can interpret their communities in an informed and humane perspective.

Whatever the case, a liberal arts major combined with an extracurricular tutorial program for undergraduates who think — some mistakenly — that they are interested in journalism careers, can meet their educational and vocational needs. Simultaneously it can meet needs of society for improving the quality of its public information system, particularly if it furthers 1) scholarship about journalism and 2) the availability of academic fellowships for journalists in most regions of the country. Even without these related developments, an extracurricular journalism program can serve many needs of our colleges, particularly the need for strengthening liberal education in a variety of specific ways.

# There, There

By W.M. Pinkerton

There is a growing consensus favoring the phrase instead of the statement. There are many indications of it in the prose of journalism and government. It is believed that large affairs thus unfold. What is disclosed is not who-did-what-to-whom but "what" or sometimes "it."

So there are sentence fragments embellished with expletives in journalism, government, business and scholarship. There are disembodied sentences. There are no do-ers. There are "developments," "trends," "views," "situations," "attitudes." There are not people and institutions saying, making plans, doing things, taking actions.

There exist examples in every day's reading: "There are fewer and fewer lives that remain unaffected by the women's movement" (*New York Times*). "There is a kind of person who..." (*New Republic*). And from a Nobel laureate (not in Literature), "There is no doubt that women are disproportionately under represented among scientists, scholars and leaders."

There is one guidebook that deals with this usage — old Fowler. Back in the 1920's, he noted "the well-known special use of 'there' before *be*, *exist*, and such verbs." His revisers in 1965

didn't have to change a word. What is involved, Fowler explains, is inversion — putting the verb in front of the subject. Good. There will be a vigorous active word — a verb — up front, as in this recent example: "There should be restrictions on Sunday driving." Much better than, "Restrictions on Sunday driving should be." Or this: "There can be few more seemingly unequal political contests in the world than those over military spending, its claims against social needs." Surely better than, "Few more seemingly unequal political contests...can be." Or, "There has been widespread discontent with government corruption, property speculation and rampant materialism." Better, again, than, "Widespread discontent...has been." There is a certain dignity and distance about the form, isn't there? As in this AP lead: "There is growing concern among environmental health specialists about the future of cadmium..."

So there are we!

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William M. Pinkerton, Nieman Fellow '41, is retired and lives on Cape Cod.

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*...In our culture, the printed word began gathering force at about the time of the American Revolution. Among those who framed the Constitution, literacy was so much assumed — illiteracy was so much ignored — that what we think of as a concession to mass communications, the First Amendment, was in fact a concession to a small group of printers on behalf of a very few readers.*

Richard C. Wald  
Press-Enterprise Lecture, 1977  
Riverside, California

(Editor's Note: An article on this type of regional fellowship program is scheduled for the next issue.)



# Broadcasting the British Parliament

By Godfrey Hodgson

LONDON - Winston Churchill once pointed out that the cure for democracy's problems is more democracy. Now his successors in the British Parliament seem to be taking his advice by contemplating the idea of giving the public a view, in addition to the sound, of their legislative activities.

Less than five months after live radio broadcasts from the House of Commons and the House of Lords began, serious consideration is being given to bringing television cameras into the two chambers.

A proposal to that effect was narrowly defeated in 1975. But House of Commons leader Michael Foot, whose position is comparable to that of Speaker in the U.S. House of Representatives, said recently that the bill ought to be reintroduced — and that he would vote for it.

Not long ago, a Conservative legislator by the name of John Farr tried to use a procedural loophole to sneak through a vote on the question. He failed, but he did succeed in prompting an impromptu debate that gave members of Parliament the opportunity to register their senti-

ments about their radio experience thus far.

Opinion, as expressed in the debate, was divided. A Labor member voiced the view that it was good for the people to hear Parliament, "warts and all," while a Conservative said that the more decorous House of Lords benefited by comparison with the House of Commons, since "their measured tones... make listening to them quite a delight."

The public seems to be somewhat less tolerant. The headmistress of a London school complained that her pupils were being exposed to bad examples in hearing one legislator call his opponent a "fat arse" and hearing another refer to a woman colleague as a "bitch."

Deploring Parliament's "loutish behavior," a letter-writer to the *London Times* warned against children imitating "such manners," while media critic Milton Shulman said that legislative discussion resembles "the cacophonous anarchy that greets the ear on entering a zoo at rutting time."

Consistent with Churchill's counsel, John Farr and others argue that television will solve the problem because, by listening to mere radio broadcasts of Parliament, citizens are shocked by the "background noise."

By "background noise" Farr meant the continual laughter, jeers, catcalls, yelps, cheers and roars that are part of debates in Parliament.

It may be, as Prime Minister James Callaghan alleges, that the broadcast

proceedings spur too many politicians to "seek to prove party points" at Question Time, at which the chief of government is subjected to interrogation.

But I, for one, find it entertaining and democratic — as well as heartening — to discover that whatever power or pomp Parliament may have lost, it still retains human vitality and a healthy contempt for cant.

It is also reassuring to report that, despite its criticism, the British public has displayed a growing interest in the broadcasts. Afternoon audiences rose from 400,000 to 750,000 during the first month, and about 1.5 million people tune in to a daily one-hour summary entitled "Yesterday in Parliament." This is not spectacular for a country of 56 million, but they are respectable ratings.

One explanation for the public's initial surprise at the unruly conduct of Parliament is that it never really knew much about the way the legislature acted inside its august chambers. A prime reason for this is that, before radio broadcasts began, correspondents tended to produce dignified accounts of the proceedings in order to spare legislators, many of whom were friends, the opprobrium of looking foolish.

That fear of appearing frivolous not only held back radio coverage of Parliament for 50 years, but it similarly impeded the press until 1771, when life for legislative reporters was eased. Until then, journalists were

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*Godfrey Hodgson, the host of a weekly London television show, writes on political and social issues in Britain.*

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# THE WALTER LIPPMANN MEMORIAL FUND

In September of 1977, President Derek C. Bok of Harvard University announced a grant of \$100,000 to the Nieman Foundation for Journalism in memory of Walter Lippmann. The grant inaugurated a special fund drive with a goal of an additional \$400,000 for monies to be used for the renovation and full endowment of the Nieman headquarters, Walter Lippmann House. Response has been encouraging; the drive, still in progress, is more than halfway toward its goal.

Readers who wish to participate in this memorial to Walter Lippmann are invited to fill out the form below.

The Walter Lippmann Memorial Fund  
Nieman Foundation for Journalism  
Harvard University  
One Francis Avenue  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

I enclose a gift of \$.....

I prefer to make a pledge of \$.....  
(Pledges may be extended over a three-to-five-year period.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to:  
Nieman Foundation — Walter Lippmann Memorial Fund  
Your contribution is tax deductible. Thank you.*

severely punished for offending Parliamentary privilege, and publications would denote speakers by their initials or refer to the House of Commons as the "great Lilliput" to avoid trouble.

It was in 1926 that the British Broadcasting Corporation first requested permission to air a Parliamentary budget message live. But not until three years more for the BBC and a commercial competitor, Independent Radio News, to get authorization for regular coverage.

Coverage is not easy, since the legislators never refer to each other by name and it requires a nimble anchorman to identify the Right Honorable Member for Leeds North East.

Television is meanwhile creeping into the act by using the live voices of legislators over their still photographs. This is a frustrating substitute for viewers and the pressure is mounting to have television cameras admitted into Parliament.

Technically at least, there should be little objection to televised proceedings, since the development of sophisticated electronic equipment makes it possible to film legislative activities without compelling members of Parliament to function under the glare of arc lights.

The decision will probably have to await the next general election, which may come in the fall. The Labor Party, if it wins, will no doubt favor television. Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher opposed it in 1975, but she is likely to change her mind after the qualified acceptance of the radio broadcasts.

Eventually, therefore, Parliament may cease to be what Thomas Carlyle called a "red tape talking machine" and elevate the standards of its performance. Democracy could be enhanced in the process.

*(From the International Writers Service.)*

# —Nieman Fellows, 1978-79—

Eleven American journalists have been appointed to the 41st class of Lucius W. Nieman Fellows to study at Harvard University in 1978-79. The Nieman Fellowships were established through a bequest of Agnes Wahl Nieman in memory of her husband who founded *The Milwaukee Journal*. The Fellows come to Harvard for a year of study in any part of the University.

The new Fellows are:

SIDNEY M. CASSESE, 39, assistant editor (copy desk), *Newsday*. Mr. Casse, who attended Virginia Commonwealth University, will study government and public policy, particularly in the area of municipal government, economics, educational policy and political theory.

NANCY L. DAY, 30, regional editor, *San Francisco Examiner*. Ms. Day holds degrees from the University of Illinois and Stanford University. At Harvard, she plans to study the interaction and ethics of business and politics in local, state and national government, along with organizational behavior and its relation to newspapers.

MARGARET A. ENGEL, 26, government reporter, *Des Moines Register*. Ms. Engel holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri, and at Harvard will concentrate on industrial health problems, in the form of engineering controls and disease detection.

WILLIAM J. GILDEA, 39, reporter, *The Washington Post*. Mr. Gildea holds degrees from Georgetown University and Columbia University. At Harvard he plans to study American

culture, specifically as it relates to human behavior and social trends, plus literature and an examination of American literary and social critics.

KATHERINE A. HARTING, 30, associate producer, ABC-TV News, Washington, D.C. Ms. Harting is a graduate of the University of Michigan. She will focus her studies on 20th century American political history, economics, the mechanics of the judicial system and the law governing the press, and film-making.

JOHN C. HUFF, Jr., 29, city editor, *The Greenville News*, Greenville, South Carolina. Mr. Huff has his bachelor's degree from Duke University, and at Harvard will specialize in business management and industrial relations.

H. VICTOR LEWIS, 32, acting national editor, *The Boston Globe*. Mr. Lewis is a graduate of the University of Texas, and at Harvard will concentrate on constitutional law and legal issues, and classical studies.

ROBERT M. PORTERFIELD, 32, reporter, *Anchorage Daily News*, Anchorage, Alaska. Mr. Porterfield attended the University of Oregon and Lane Community College, and at Harvard will focus on labor union economics, governmental investment policy, corporate finance and public utility regulation.

PEGGY A. SIMPSON, 39, congressional correspondent for the Associated Press (Washington, D.C.). Ms. Simpson holds a bachelor's degree from North Texas State University, Denton, Texas. At Harvard she will study economics in relation to social

policies and areas of law which relate to the historic patterns of discrimination and their remedies.

FRANK A. VAN RIPER, 31, Washington bureau correspondent for the *New York Daily News*. Mr. Van Riper, who received his bachelor's degree from the City College of New York, will concentrate on comparative government and world political science and history.

LAWRENCE A. WALSH, 33, managing editor, *The Texas Observer*, Austin, Texas. Mr. Walsh is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, and at Harvard will study economic issues, specifically economic analysis, resource depletion, central planning, and tax and land use policies.

The Fellows were nominated by a committee whose members included: Daniel Aaron, Victor S. Thomas Professor of English, Harvard University; Norman A. Cherniss, Executive Editor and editor of the editorial page, the *Press-Enterprise* (Riverside, California); Ellen Goodman, syndicated columnist of *The Boston Globe*; Phyllis Keller, Associate Dean for Academic Planning in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University; John McCormally, President, Publisher and Editor of the *Hawk Eye*, Burlington, Iowa; Anthony G. Oettinger, Gordon McKay Professor of Applied Mathematics, Harvard University; Roger Wilkins, columnist for urban affairs of *The New York Times*; and James C. Thomson Jr., Curator of the Nieman Fellowships.

Announcement of the appointment of Associate Nieman Fellows from abroad will be made in the next issue.

