

Mass Media in America



Don R. Pember

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Acknowledgments

When one sets out to write a book about mass media in America, it doesn't take long to realize the immensity of the task. Books, good books, have been written about a single medium or about one aspect of one. Consequently, this author needed lots of help along the way. And I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that help.

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drp
Seattle
June, 1973



The World of Masscomm

We all live in many worlds today, but none more colorful, exciting, and controversial than the world of masscomm. Masscomm is a world of magic carpets and fairylands, of faraway places and magical mystical tours. It is the world of happiness and horror stories, both real-life and make-believe ones. It is the world of bulletins and flashes and instant information. It is the world of hits and super hits and golden hits and up-and-coming hits. In the world of masscomm long-haired girls run in slow motion across sand dunes or green park grass. Young men demonstrate their virility with automobiles or cigarettes or hair groomers. Masscomm is casual death in a foreign land while we eat dinner. It is a man walking on the moon while we try to slip the bounds of Sunday afternoon boredom. It is a four-hundred-year-old drama coming to life in the living room. Masscomm is a mirror that sometimes shows us what we have been, what we think we are, or what we might be. Very little of the world of masscomm was a part of our forefathers' lives; most of it wasn't a part of our grandparents' lives; some of it wasn't even a part of our parents' lives. And that makes us different.

We are in its world most of the waking hours of each day. A clock-radio tells us it is time to wake up, and while we struggle to get body and soul together, we are pushed along by the seemingly endless patter of a disc jockey who has been up for hours, or by the pop wisdom of Frank McGee and Barbara Walters. The morning paper is an invited guest at many breakfast tables, or perhaps that extra chair is for the announcer in the small box on the kitchen counter who is filling us in on what happened while we slept. The rest of the world is practically at our fingertips as we slosh some milk on our Crummie Buttons or try to eat around the burnt spots on our toast. If something important or sensational has happened on nearly any part of the globe, we can find out about it while we eat breakfast.

The rest of the day is more masscomm—radio or taped music on the way to work, books and magazines during the day at school or the office, and in the evening (if there is nothing much on television) a movie might sound good, or maybe just the stereo, the new Carole King album, and the latest novel from Robert A. Heinlein or John Updike or Joyce Carol Oates. Added up, the number of hours we spend each day with some form of masscomm would be staggering.



Mass communications recently transported us through centuries of the cultural development of western man. Kenneth Clark acted as host for the thirteen-week BBC "Civilisation" series that was broadcast in America over the public network.

Whether we want it or not, masscomm is a part of all our lives in the 1970s. And no wonder. Sixty-five million copies of daily newspapers are sold in this country every day, plus millions more weekly newspapers and magazines. More than sixty million homes have at least one television set, often two or three. More people have TV in their house than have indoor plumbing or telephones. There are more radios in America than people—almost fifty percent more, or more than 300,000,000. When you're trying to concentrate on something else, it sometimes seems they're all turned on at once. And then there are records and tapes, films, books, and a dozen other media that are put before us each day through mass distribution or circulation. Masscomm is everywhere.

While the great glut of masscomm provides endless (if sometimes unchanging) diversions for us each day, it also creates problems as well. While too little information can create a kind of intellectual starvation among those seeking knowledge, too much can overwhelm receivers, jam up the flow of data, and create frustrations and anxiety. To the average media consumer it might mean a stack of unread magazines piling up on the

end table and an inability to cope with all the news that is published about an important event. But scholars and researchers and others who use mass media for professional purposes also feel the strain. In some areas of medicine, for example, it is impossible for doctors to keep up with all the published information about diseases and their treatments. The same is true in science and social science as well.

The information explosion has also left us with another problem. It is frequently difficult to assemble all the published research data on an important question. For example, man may have already discovered a cure for cancer or heart disease. We might already have the solution to slipping the bounds of time and space that weigh so heavily in any scheme for interplanetary or intergalactic travel. We might now know how to feed inexpensively the millions who go to bed hungry each night. But the answer to these and scores of other problems lie in hundreds of small parts, scattered about the world in bits of information that have yet to be assembled into a whole.

Masscomm appears to present a paradoxical situation. There is so much of it of so many different kinds that it is often difficult to escape. At the same time, even if we try, it is often hard to keep up with. Mass media in the 1970s are also very expressive. That is, they provide viewers, readers, and listeners with an incredibly wide range of ideas and material. From the travels of Dick Nixon in China to the perils of Dick Tracy in the comic strip, from political propaganda on the right to radical rhetoric on the left, from Robert Sherwood to Bobby Sherman—it's all there, someplace. It's true you can't find every book you want in the rack at the drugstore or every record you want from the stand in the supermarket. But generally if you look long enough and hard enough you will be able to locate the kind of media material you want.

And masscomm in the last half of the twentieth century is not something that is available only to the rich or the elite. One of its most striking characteristics is its ability to reach nearly everyone. In America, for example, few persons are not exposed to some form of masscomm. Even the urban poor, according to some researchers, may often have not one but two working television sets in the home. Extreme rural America—Appalachia, for example—is probably the one kind of area where it might be difficult to gain access to some kind of mass media.

Now this does not mean that all classes of men can use the masscomm system to communicate. What it means is there is almost unlimited reception of the system. Access to a wide range of information is a prerequisite for many things, including self-governance. When Thomas Jefferson wrote that education of the people was necessary before democracy could work, he included in his definition of education the kind of information about government and business and economics and politics that the mass media are supposed to provide. Information can indeed be power. In Jefferson's day self-governance was limited to those people who had the ability to get and use information in the mass media—those who could read, a small percentage of the people. Literacy and democratization went hand-in-hand in this country in the nineteenth century.



CBS News

Most Americans got their first close-up view of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev when he was interviewed on the CBS television program "Face the Nation." This is a good example of the potential of the visual medium and the wide range of subjects with which it can deal.

In the autocratic and authoritarian systems of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, information flowed between only a few. When printing was developed in the 1450s it was regulated to the extent that circulation was limited. But as the broadsides and early newspapers expanded circulation, as the news was spread in coffeehouses and taverns by "readers," the first feeble cries of freedom were heard in the land. The mass media have frequently provided man with the requisite tools to free himself from the yoke of tyrannical governments. The men who control the media, however, with their vast power over the flow of information, can represent a tyranny in their own right, a tyranny that can also enslave.

FROM CONVERSATION TO CORPORATION

Despite their immense size and diverse natures, what the mass media try to do is a fairly simple thing: transmit a message from one person to another. This is basically what you and I do when we talk to one another. The same process takes place: the source of the communication sends his message through a channel to a receiver. The source usually "encodes" his message,

that is, puts his thoughts into words, and speaks these words or writes them out. The receiver then “decodes” the message—translates the words into thoughts. This, of course, implies that both source and receiver know the code.

The only differences between what we call interpersonal communications—face-to-face, between two persons or among a small group of persons—and masscomm are these:

1. Through masscomm the message is sent through a channel that reaches a great many people at one time. That is why it is called *mass communication*.
2. Mass communications generally require the use of some kind of device interposed between the source and the receiver, some kind of medium to make massive communication possible. Hence, we talk about mass *media*.

Some people refer to the two kinds of communication as *interpersonal communication* and *interposed communication*. The interposed device is usually some kind of hardware or technological tool. It amplifies the message or allows it to be reproduced a great many times very cheaply. Television production equipment, printing presses, phonographs, radios, cameras—all of these devices are fundamental in mass communications.

Because of the imposition of the device between the source of the message and its receiver, mass communications have some advantages over interpersonal communications. (But they also have some disadvantages.) One clear advantage is the speed with which they can transmit a message to a large audience. Television is instantaneous communication. Half a billion people saw Neil Armstrong take man’s first step on the moon. And they saw it almost the same instant he did it (there was a few seconds’ time delay in transmission from the moon).

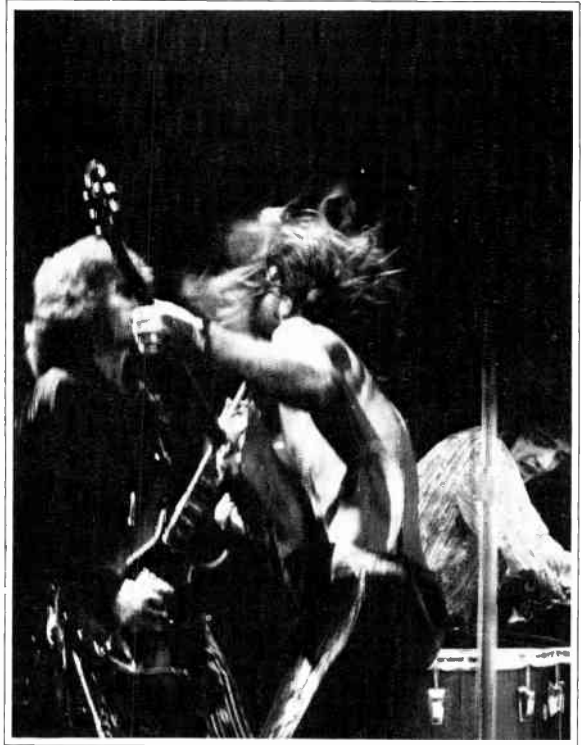
Generally messages that flow through the mass media tend to be more accurate than those transmitted by interpersonal communications. Why? Mass communicators tend to be professionals, trained to observe and relay messages accurately. Certainly they botch the job on occasion. But more often than not, their messages are accurate.

However, mass communications are nearly always one-way. That is, the receiver of the message doesn’t have the opportunity to talk back. Communications researchers call this back-talk, feedback. And because there is very little feedback—especially instantaneous feedback—quite often the message is not properly understood. You can’t ask Walter Cronkite questions when you don’t understand his report on the rising price of food; he just moves right along to the next topic. And you can talk all day to your newspaper and never get a response. Sure, you can write a letter—but it takes time and even then you might not get the answer to your question. Consequently what researchers call *message understandability* tends to be low when mass media are used.

The interposition of a device between the speaker and the receiver has transformed the simple process of two people talking into a gigantic

From an interview with a world leader to the excitement of a rock concert—all are within the easy grasp of the mass media.

This is Grand Funk, a group whose album sales set records in the seventies, but whose recognition is low among mass audiences.



industry. American mass media have become institutions in their own right as big and as powerful as some of our other institutions such as education, business, and government. And during the transition from conversation to industry, the whole process and purpose of communication has gotten somewhat mangled. Ideally, the media exist to transmit information and entertainment to people. But practically, they expend much of their energies just to sustain themselves. Like a giant animal that must eat all the time to survive, the mass media can fairly be accused of sometimes losing sight of their original purpose.

Take television, for example, the newest member of masscomm. Commercial TV can survive only if it receives support from sponsors, so a percentage of broadcast time is set aside for advertisements. But sponsors aren't interested in television as an advertising medium unless people are watching it. So TV designs programs that seek to get the largest number of viewers, to keep the advertisers happy, and to keep their money coming in. We end up with a situation in which television not only broadcasts commercials to sustain itself, but designs much of its programming for this purpose as well.

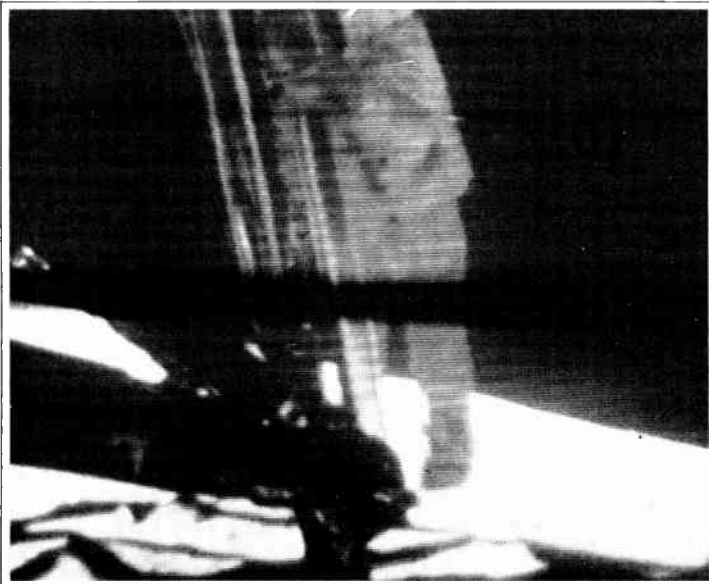
This points up an important lesson to the student studying masscomm: mass media are basically businesses and industries. Because they are, for the most part, businesses, the same often perverse rules that dictate

successful business practices (usually defined as showing a profit on the bottom line) in the automobile industry, in the frozen food business, lo, even in the corner grocery store, also dictate much of the operation of the mass media in America.

Our communications system has evolved from one that existed to transmit messages, information, and ideas to one that expends much of its energy to sustain itself. This is a congenital problem shared by most large institutions from college registrars' offices to canned soup manufacturers' factories. But it is an especially acute problem in the mass media where the fundamental reason for existence—facilitation of the flow of information and entertainment among people—has become blurred in an institutional-economic haze.

In *Voices from the Sky*, Arthur C. Clarke relates a fascinating legend that offers an analogy to this problem. Many centuries ago in Persia a prince lost his beloved queen while she was still in the flower of her youth. With her death he vowed to devote the rest of his life to building a monument that would be worthy of her beauty and grace. As years passed, the best craftsmen in the land began to raise a giant palace of marble and alabaster around the queen's sarcophagus. Year by year it grew until its spires and minarets became the wonders of the world. But as the decades passed, the perfection the Persian prince sought eluded him. There remained a fundamental flaw in the monument. One day as the now-aging prince stood in the gallery above the great hall of the mausoleum he realized what it was that spoiled the perfect harmony and design of his monument. He called the

Complex of United Press International



Man sets foot on the moon and 500 million people are there—via TV. The dark streak running horizontally across this picture of Neil Armstrong descending the ladder on the LEM was caused by an interruption of television ground data at the tracking station in California where the pictures were being received from the moon.

architect and pointed at the now-dwarfed sarcophagus that held the queen he had so long ago lost. "Take that thing away," he said.

We sometimes forget why our institutions were first created.

MASS MEDIA AND MAN

While it is often easy to forget after sitting through three hours of prime-time television punctuated by scores of often vacuous commercials, media have helped us to overcome two of our greatest adversaries—time and space. A written communication system made it possible for civilization to develop on this planet; it provided the means for one generation to learn from the mistakes of another. It made possible the transmission of knowledge from one century to the next. Certainly pre-literate man passed down stories and tales that were instructive to each new age. But a communications system tied solely to verbal skills or an oral tradition is a limited one. So written communications and later mass communications have given us the ability to overcome time and have provided the permanence of record needed to make meaningful development possible.

Films, videotapes, recordings, photographs—all these are part of man's record of the past. In fact, most of what we know of the past has come to us through the mass media. Composer-writer Mason Williams said (in *The Mason Williams F.C.C. Rapport*) that World War II is actually a film to him. "I've never seen it from any other perspective," he wrote. Many of our conceptions (and misconceptions) about our past are drawn from mass-comm.

The permanence of record of written communications has allowed us in some small way to overcome many of the barriers of time. At the same time, the swiftness of electronic communications has overcome some of the handicaps of space. Today, for the purpose of communication, the distance between Los Angeles and New York is really no greater than the space between two adjoining houses. Messages that not long ago took months to traverse the Atlantic Ocean now take seconds by communications satellite. In the time it used to take your grandmother to tell her neighbor the town gossip over the back fence, we can now spread nationwide the details of a Hollywood star's latest divorce.

The first development in media that increased the speed of the communication process was the printing press, which initially allowed hundreds of copies of a message to be disseminated rapidly. Then came electronic communications—radio, and later television. The newspaper, which had first been the first with the news, suddenly found itself in second place. Today, new forms of communication promise to make possible the transmission of thousands of messages on a single laser beam at the speed of light. Man has come to take for granted this marvel of speed. We are angry when the score of the ball game played last night in a city many hundreds of miles away isn't in our morning newspaper, or if films of disaster-wrought villages in the Middle East aren't included in the evening news broadcast. Yet many people argue that the swiftness of our communications system is not always the blessing it appears to be. They suggest that it is difficult to

react and make decisions on the basis of the tremendous amount of information that is daily spewed forth in such rapid fashion.

Pretend it is 1792 and the United States frigate *Repulse* is fired on (or supposedly fired on) while patrolling the Tonkin Gulf. Instead of shooting off a cable to the president that same night or hour, the commander of the *Repulse* has to draft a report, which may take several days. He then has to sail back to America himself or dispatch the message in another ship. In either case it is several months before the report arrives in Philadelphia (the nation's capital in these days). President George Washington then has to call his advisors together—which can take a week or so even if they are at their homes. Decisions made in the heat and confusion of the moment are not necessarily the best ones. Time has a way of adding perspective to difficult problems. . . .

MEDIA IN AMERICA

While the mass media of this world—and of other worlds as well, one supposes—share the characteristics previously discussed, there are two or three special characteristics of the mass media system in the United States that should be noted. Media systems tend to reflect many of the characteristics of the society in which they develop. As we will see later in the book, the Soviet media system reflects most of the basic tenets of communist theory. In our own nation the system reflects the preference for laissez-faire economics and shares an unusual relationship with our government as well. Also, American notions about the capitalistic system have dictated the role played by technology in many instances in the growth of our media system. These characteristics don't make the mass media in the United States better or worse than those in other countries, just a little different.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of American mass media is their dominant commercial nature. Advertisers support most of the major elements of the system. Books, films, and to a small degree, phonograph records, are the only aspects of the system that do not rely heavily on advertiser support for survival. Advertising support was first introduced into the print media on a large scale in the latter half of the last century. Until that time most of America's leading newspapers were funded primarily by political parties, other special interest groups, and subscribers. The passing of this phase of journalism history and the movement toward reliance on commercial support instead—labeled in most texts as the new independence of the American press—has been regarded by most historians and journalists as a positive change. A similar metamorphosis took place in electronic broadcasting in the late 1920s when advertisers first discovered radio and then took control of the medium. But today there is a new skepticism that the media might have invited the fox in to guard the chickens when it invited commercial interests to protect their independence.

Let's use a publisher for our example of all media men for the moment. He can seek support for his publication from only about four different sources. First, he can rely solely on subscribers or the buyers of his

magazine or newspaper. But this has been notably unsuccessful in this country. Several newspapers have attempted to publish without ads. They have all died. The most successful (really the only successful) adless publication that is supported solely by subscribers is *Mad* magazine. Other adless magazines are published, but they are partially supported by parent organizations such as the Consumers Union, which publishes *Consumer Reports*. Publishing costs are too high today. The subscription price of a newspaper barely pays the cost of getting the publication from the printing plant to the reader's home. While a publication funded solely by its readers would be independent (having an allegiance only to its subscribers), most Americans seem unwilling to pay the cost of such a luxury.

A second means of funding is through vested interest or special-interest groups. Most organizations have newsletters or journals or magazines. Some, like the Black Panthers and the Black Muslims, also support newspapers. Such papers carry the messages that each organization wishes to spread. For example, one would not see an editorial supporting socialized medicine in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Nor would one expect to find laudatory articles on Governor George Wallace in the *Black Panther*. A great deal of American mass media, especially smaller operations, are funded this way. Even some radio stations receive much of their financial support from church groups that own them.

Government support is a third scheme for financing a publication. In the Soviet Union, for example, *Pravda* is published by the communist party and *Isvestia* is the government newspaper. In other systems the government connection with the press is less blatant. Newspapers receive large subsidies to take a posture favorable to the nation's rulers. Of course, in nearly all countries except the United States the electronic media—radio and television—are funded through government subsidy and are controlled by the government as well.

Americans see few examples of government-supported media, yet many magazines, films, and television and radio shows are directly published or produced by our government. They are circulated throughout the world under the auspices of the United States Information Agency. Most of these productions, be they print or broadcast, are slick, well-prepared, and highly pro-American. Many such magazines are sold on foreign newsstands and others are given away. Films and television programming are usually supplied free. Short USIA films play in the leading movie houses in important capitals of the world. And free programs from the United States provide a significant portion of the total viewing day for many smaller foreign television stations.

The last means of funding a publication is the one that the majority of the mass media use in the United States—support from advertising. The advertiser purchases space or time from the medium to promote his goods or services. Ideally, his own advertisement would be his only influence on the content of the medium. Practically, we know this is not true. Most newspaper editors deny that any advertiser can influence how they present a news story. And this is basically true, although most journalists can recall at least one or two examples of an advertiser's success in getting a

newspaper to leave out or tone down a story. For example, many supermarkets were fairly successful in stopping the publication of news about various grape and lettuce boycotts. And television executives will correctly assert that the industry has wrested the control of the content of the medium away from advertisers by refusing to let them sponsor particular programs or produce programs for the network. It wasn't long ago that the company representative or the man from the advertising agency supervised every step of production on shows that his firm sponsored. This ended in the late 1960s.

Now an advertiser can buy time on a program but he rarely sponsors the entire program; his commercial support implies no direct control over program content. He may merely buy time on Tuesday between 8 and 10 P.M. and his spot may end up almost anywhere. Newspapers and magazines place advertisements in about the same way. The advertiser buys a full page in a certain issue and usually has little to say about the page he will get unless he is willing to pay the premium price for premium (back page, front page) locations.

But one would have to be extremely naive to think that advertisers have no control over the various media that carry their messages. In television the advertiser is interested in reaching as many viewers as possible and in not alienating any of those he does reach. The television industry therefore gears its programming to meet these requirements. Indirectly, then, the advertiser has some control over the kind of material presented on the tube. The control is less obvious in the print media, but no newspaper that continually published material to alienate its supporting business sector could survive. Hence a subtle but effective control over content is exercised.

"He who pays the piper calls the tune" is a very old saying, but one that contains more than a grain of salt when applied to American mass media. And when we explore the contemporary mass media in detail in later chapters, it should become obvious that we, as listeners and viewers, have really very little to say about what kind of music the piper will play. American newspapers get more than seventy percent of their revenue from advertisers, and television gets nearly all its money from them. Readers, viewers, and listeners put very little into the media coffers and hence have little control.

GOVERNMENT AND THE PRESS

The unusual relationship between government and the mass media in the United States makes the American media system different from those in other parts of the world. By most accounts, the media in this country have more freedom from government control than those in any other. However, they must meet all legal responsibilities that are required of other businesses. They must pay taxes and minimum wages. Their offices and buildings must meet building standards, and in most cities business activity licenses are required. In addition, the media live under restrictions peculiar to their kinds of products. Libel and privacy laws inhibit what may be printed

or televised; obscenity statutes limit what may be mailed or sold; the Federal Trade Commission regulates what advertisers may claim or promise.

The broadcaster lives under an even more severe restriction. He is using a valuable public resource—the airwaves—to conduct his daily business. In most nations the government owns and operates the broadcasting systems; in the United States, however, they are privately operated. Each broadcaster is given a three-year license by the government to use the public airwaves. If he doesn't provide the kind of service the government expects and demands, he can lose his license. This can be a potent restriction, although it hasn't been used as such very often.

But while the media are regulated by the government, they act as a kind of regulator of government as well. For example, it is traditional in America that the press be a watchdog of government at all levels. Although it cannot impose sanctions such as fines or jail sentences against a government that steps out of line, its power to publicize errors, inaction, or illegal or unethical conduct gives the watchdog a sharp bite sometimes. The publicity of the recent Watergate investigation is a good example.

Shielded by a First Amendment guarantee of freedom of expression and by the independent federal courts, the press has vigorously undertaken its watchdog role. There have been lapses in its diligence for reasons we will explore in other parts of this book, and there is some question whether government censorship of the press is as serious as the economic control advertisers institute against some media. But nevertheless, if the press in America were to point to the proudest chapter in its history, it would have to be to its continual battles to keep readers informed of what is going on in government.

It is natural, then, that a state of conflict exists almost perpetually between the press and the government. Sometimes this hostility heats up more than usual, such as the press tribulations with the Nixon administration. In these times it is prudent for the public to be sensitive to threats of freedom of expression, for although the press may be the institution under fire, liberty of speech and press is a right we all share—and can all lose. Each time the newspapers lose a First Amendment battle with the government, we all lose a small part of one of our basic freedoms.

MASSCOMM AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology, the magic key that has unlocked so many doors in the twentieth century, is what has made the "mass" part of mass media possible. It has provided the means of sending an original message to hundreds, thousands, and even millions of persons. But technology has also played another important role in the development of the mass media.

Without the technology that generated mass production techniques and in turn shortened the work day and work week, the leisure time needed to consume films, radio, television, and books would not have been available. And it is this same technology that has provided the implements of mass media—television sets, books, radio, and so forth—at a price within the means of the average American.

Technology is integral to all media systems, but its relationship with the American media system is unusual. This difference stems from masscomm's reliance on private ownership rather than on government support. Historically in this country technology has been used to the advantage of the owners and operators of the media, rather than to that of the consumers. For example, the technology existed to put television into the home by the mid-1930s. The British were watching television on a regular basis in the 1930s. Yet it wasn't until after World War II that TV sets appeared in large numbers of American homes. Why? One reason was that the men who controlled television also controlled radio, and in the late twenties and early thirties radio was going great. Why take a chance on an untested medium—television—when radio was a sure thing? The same was true for talking movies. Studio investment in equipment for silent films was such that most major film companies were not interested in going off in a new direction. It wasn't until Warner Brothers, a small moviemaker with little to lose, made *The Jazz Singer* that other companies were forced to adopt the new techniques.

Technology has played another role as well: it has helped create the huge mass media that we have today. Great difficulties face the small entrepreneur as he attempts to compete with (or cope with) today's vast media giants. In 1820 all that was needed to operate a newspaper was a printing press and some paper. But as new technology developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century—bigger and faster presses, linotypes, stereotyping processes, and so forth, all which cost tremendous amounts—the small printer was unable to make the investment needed to compete in business.

The same was true in film. When Mack Sennett went to Hollywood in the mid-nineteen-teens, it was possible to make a film for a few hundred dollars. But by the mid-twenties, new technologies had pushed the cost of making a film over the \$100,000 mark. And with the advent of sound and the need to construct sound stages and invest in new sound equipment and sound cameras, the film studios found they had to go outside to banks and insurance companies to find financing to make movies.

Technology can provide the magic carpet for man to visit new worlds through the media. Mediated experience can enhance all persons and stimulate new understanding. Computers, lasers, holography, and electrostatic printing can give man new freedoms never before dreamed of. At the same time, technology can be a tyranny if used improperly, or if through economics it closes more and more doors to those who have messages to send but who are unable to pay the toll.

MOVING ALONG

In this chapter we have tried to outline some of the basic characteristics of masscomm before moving along to a discussion of what the mass media do and more detailed information about specific media. When we put these characteristics together we can see that masscomm is big, powerful, wealthy, and highly complex. We thrive on it every day—and it thrives on



An early developer of American television, Philo T. Farnsworth demonstrated the medium could be practical long before the industry was ready to push its development.

The Bettmann Archive, Inc.

us. Like any institution, it will be no better or worse than the men who run it. But on the other hand, an institution frequently determines the behavior of those who control it. All this will become much clearer in the chapters to come. And so, as they say on television, moving right along. . . .

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In preparing this chapter, this is some of the material that has been extremely helpful.

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The Role of Masscomm in Modern America

John Marshall's classic ethnographic film *The Hunters* (1957) is the story of four South African bushmen and their quest for food in an environment that keeps their community perpetually at the edge of starvation. The tale told by Marshall's camera is useful in understanding the tasks undertaken by communications in any society.

The four bushmen hunters, armed only with primitive bows and arrows tipped with a slow-working poison, set out to kill an animal for the village. After a series of disappointing misses one of the men finally wounds a giraffe with an arrow. Now the hunt begins in earnest as the four start to track the wounded beast, which is capable of running for days before the poison finally brings it to the ground.

As the bushmen track the giraffe, they seek messages the dying animal has left behind—a broken twig here, a trampled bush there. Soon the hunters notice the beast's tracks on the shady side of the trees. The poison is working; the sun is beginning to hurt its eyes. At several points in the film the headman, Kaow, picks up the dung of the giraffe, smells it, and crumbles it in his hands. The primitive hunter is analyzing data, thinking in terms of the animal's metabolic rate: is the poison into the bloodstream? Is it being excreted?

Finally the giraffe falls dead and the hunters take it back to the village where a feast takes place that night. While the villagers gorge themselves on the freshly killed meat, the bushmen relate every detail of the hunt for storage in the collective mind of the community. Next time, when the next hunt is held, or when these men have made their last quest for food, this information might prove invaluable to the next group of hunters.

What does this story have to do with communications and masscomm? The hunters in the story are a complex information processing and transmission unit. They sought information about a subject crucial to their lives. When the information was discovered, it was processed, used, and finally passed on to others who could use it in the future. The hunters constituted a highly sophisticated interpersonal communications device.

While we still use such interpersonal communications systems today, we tend to rely more upon the mass media to seek out, process, and then pass

along much of the information that we need daily to survive. Such gathering and processing is done by thousands of persons, each working on a small part of the whole. The information is transmitted from source back to the giant nerve center—a busy city room or television newsroom—almost as quickly as the vital data contained in the giraffe's excretion was transmitted from the bushman's hand to his brain. And then the processed information is spread to millions in newspapers over morning coffee or on television during the dinner hour at night, much as the tale of the hunt was recounted as the hungry villagers filled their bellies with freshly killed meat.

But processing information is only one of the tasks a communications system in any society undertakes. This chapter will outline some of the things masscomm does in our society. In addition, it will attempt to evaluate how well the media accomplish these tasks—and along the way suggest some things masscomm doesn't do but might do to serve better the society in which it exists.

MASSCOMM: WHAT IT DOES

If we gathered fifteen or twenty persons in a room and asked them to tell us what services masscomm performs in our society, chances are we would get fifteen or twenty different answers. We probably all use the mass media in somewhat different ways. But while we might have fifteen or twenty different responses to our question, it would probably be fairly simple to separate these answers into three or four basic categories.

Scholars who have studied this problem have tended to agree that within any society the communications system undertakes a few basically similar tasks. It is important to remember that societies have had the need for communications for centuries before the mass media developed. And these societies survived—in some cases flourished—without newspapers and television.

Harold Lasswell, an eminent political scientist who has written thoughtfully about communications for many years, suggested in *Communication of Ideas* that communications systems perform three societal services. Although Lasswell's ideas were formulated many years ago, they remain perhaps the most thoughtful scholarly evaluation of the problem. Lasswell suggests that one task communications undertakes is the surveillance of the environment for the community. This is the watchdog or sentry role. In primitive societies this task is frequently carried out by one man or a small group of men who scout the forest or the jungle, seeking clues to danger or to changes in environmental conditions. In a complex society the mass media are supposed to tell us what is happening and alert us to change in our environment.

In addition to surveillance, Lasswell suggests that communications systems help correlate the parts of the society to respond to the environment. This simply means interpreting the significance of the data the scout has brought forth. The media attempt to do this in their news analysis or through interpretative reporting or special reports on television.

Finally, according to Lasswell, the communications system is at least partly

responsible for the transmission of our social heritage from one generation to the next. In remote villages that still function under the oral tradition, it encompasses passing along legends and skills from the old to the young. In an industrial society, this education function is assumed primarily by books, films, recordings, and educational.

While Harold Lasswell's model is useful for examining communications systems in general, for the purpose of examining only American mass media it is simpler to break down the various tasks of masscomm in another more descriptive way. In the U.S. today most students of the mass media would probably agree that masscomm undertakes four basic services—an information processing service, a public opinion service, an economic service, and an entertainment service. Surely all mass media don't undertake all these tasks. But daily and weekly newspapers, general circulation magazines, and radio and television stations probably become involved in each of them at least some of the time. Media that fall outside the mainstream of masscomm are more likely to concentrate on a single service, such as leading public opinion or providing information on a specific topic. At the same time, a particular television program or magazine advertisement might perform two or three tasks at once—entertain as well as inform, for example, or shape public opinion as well as service the economy. In real life the lines between these various media tasks are not nearly so clear as they appear on the pages of a book. Nevertheless, describing the operations of the mass media according to various categories of services or tasks allows us to evaluate media performance better and determine what kinds of jobs the media believe are most important.

MOVING INFORMATION ALONG

One of the most important services masscomm performs in modern America is information processing: transmitting news, knowledge, instruction, data, messages, and so forth, very rapidly from one person to another. We expect each day to receive from our newspapers and broadcasting stations a complete summary of important local, state, national, and international events. In our democracy, information about government plays a special role, for the citizen is periodically asked to make basic decisions about political and economic matters. "Give the people the information and let them make up their minds" is an important corollary to the press' axiom of objectivity.

The processing of political information calls for another related task for masscomm, that of the watchdog role noted briefly in the last chapter. From Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to Jack Anderson and CBS, it has been argued that it is the right and the responsibility of the press to scrutinize the operation of government and alert the people if wrongdoing is uncovered. The function of the press is the only professional activity that is specifically singled out in the Constitution for protection from government interference—a clear indication that the Founding Fathers saw the need for unimpeded surveillance of the government. (The fact that these same Founding Fathers kept their deliberations on the Constitution secret, out of

the reach of the press, is frequently forgotten.)

It should also be remembered that ours is a government that runs on publicity. People find out about laws and taxes and welfare programs through masscomm. Without this publicity, the government would have to devise some other kind of system for informing the people about its programs and its policies.

Another aspect of information processing the mass media perform is education—teaching people both in school and outside the classroom with stories on how various institutions work, how to grow radishes or petunias, or ways to save money in computing income tax.

HOW WELL IS THE INFORMATION MOVING ALONG?

While most thoughtful persons would agree that masscomm does, in fact, do the things just described, there would be considerably less agreement on how well these services are performed. How well does masscomm inform us? How much education actually occurs? Critics of the media are often quite severe in their censure of masscomm's performance. For example, they question whether the media do a very good job in presenting a chronicle of the day's events. The summary prepared by the media, they argue, is largely a report of what has happened, not what is going to happen. News about something that has happened is often interesting but not useful. Information about what *will* happen is valuable to the citizen who can then prepare to respond in some way to the impending change.

In the early 1970s the Canadian government published a revealing study of the problems of the mass media in that nation (*The Uncertain Mirror, Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media*). The special committee was especially critical of "after-the-fact" journalism:

In a static, pre-industrial society, the news must concern itself with isolated events which somehow fracture prevailing patterns. COLUMBUS DISCOVERS AMERICA. The trouble seems to be that today, in a society where hardly anybody will die in the town where he was born, where many of our children's lifetimes will embrace not one but several careers, where exploration into our minds and outward to the stars is a constant process, in a society where everything is changing, we're still defining news in the same old pre-Columbian way.

Another criticism that has been leveled at the reporting efforts of masscomm is that many of the events reported would never have occurred if not for the existence of the mass media. This is the so-called pseudo-event syndrome, or the PES, first identified by historian Daniel Boorstin of the University of Chicago. A pseudo-event is an event that would probably not occur if the mass media were not there to create it or report it. "Demanding more than the world can give us," Boorstin writes in *The Image*, "we require that something be fabricated to make up for the world's deficiency." If the reporter cannot find a story, then he must make one up by interviewing a public figure, by finding a surprising human interest in a commonplace event, or by seeking the news behind the news. Or if all else fails, Boorstin suggests, the reporter must give us a think piece—"an embroidering of

well-known facts, or a speculation about startling things to come." We have all read about pseudo-events and perhaps even participated in them. They are generally not spontaneous but are planned well in advance. Often they are arranged for the convenience of the media. For example, in the heyday of campus protests and demonstrations, march leaders soon learned how to schedule "events" so they were early enough to make the afternoon newspapers, yet late enough so the story would not be too stale for the evening television news.

Pseudo-events tend to be more dramatic than real events; they can be planned that way. They are easier to report; they are staged for the reporters. (A pseudo-event can even be restaged. The kickoff for the second half of the first Super Bowl football game was repeated because the television network was broadcasting a commercial when the ball was kicked.) Pseudo-events are planned to be intelligible—more intelligible than real events, which often are confusing. They are more sociable and more convenient to watch because they are scheduled for convenience.

Because it costs money to stage pseudo-events, someone is usually behind the scenes. He advertises his event to get his money's worth. And often masscomm plays the role of the willing dupe in these schemes. For example, Union Oil invited environmental reporters to spend an expense-paid week in Santa Barbara to see for themselves how the oil spill was cleaned up. Or a company may provide a pre-written release for the press cast in such a way as to make the firm look good. "News" films are given to television stations daily. Eastman Kodak will provide free color pictures of the Rose Parade—but one sequence will prominently feature the Kodak float. Alyeska Pipeline Company sends out film of an unperturbed caribou prancing about a mockup of a segment of the trans-Alaska pipeline. See, the film tells viewers, there will be no environmental damage if the line is constructed. One might think that television stations that use this material at all would use it sparingly. But at some stations, at least, this isn't true. "I could use more," one California news director was quoted as saying, noting it was difficult to fill his hour news show with his own film. Spotlight Films in Los Angeles, a leader in producing these pseudo-event films, estimated that Lockheed would have had to pay more than \$500,000 in advertising costs for the air time it received free through the use of a filmed press release. The \$183,000 it cost the firm to produce the film was significantly less than that. The STP Corporation estimates it received \$40,000 worth of air time on a film clip that cost \$2,575.

There are also less obvious pseudo-events in which even the hard-nosed professional journalist is taken in as well. In the early 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy became nationally prominent by staging pseudo-events. The junior senator from Wisconsin would call a press conference in the morning to announce that he would have a press conference in the afternoon to make a startling announcement concerning the employment of Communists in the State Department. The afternoon papers would banner "NEW McCARTHY REVELATIONS EXPECTED." In the afternoon McCarthy would announce he was having difficulty in gaining information from a witness. And the headlines would blare "RELUCTANT WITNESS STALLS McCARTHY REVELATION." And the cycle would continue.

Summit conferences, such as Nixon's visits to China and Russia, also often qualify as pseudo-events, staged, planned, and programmed for the maximum media exposure. The president took more newsmen than diplomats to China with him. And the government subsidized the construction of intricate television relay stations in China to insure maximum broadcast coverage.

Press critics say the media should ignore much of this folderol and concentrate on spontaneous news or on more meaningful information. And this tends to lead to one of the most provocative suggestions of the century about the functions of the mass media.

THE MEDIA AS INFORMATION BROKERS

More information, less news—that's what the mass media should be up to, according to some writers. Stop giving people so much news about what has happened, or who has said what to whom, or who is doing what. Instead, give them information they can use in their daily lives.

This suggestion is based on the premise that much of the editorial nonadvertising copy in newspapers and magazines and most programming on television serves little purpose beyond telling people what is going on. Further, it is built on the notion that there is a broad range of information that could help the average citizen conduct his day-to-day affairs. The United States Department of Agriculture, for example, publishes reports each week about food commodities, household products, and other information that editor Derick Daniels of the *Detroit Free Press* calls "kitchen news." The Food and Drug Administration distributes data on medicines and health products. In the federal government alone there are scores of bureaus and commissions and departments and agencies that process and release valuable reports and information. Little of this reaches the average citizen unless he subscribes to newsletters or reports from one of these agencies. People like Daniels argue that the mass media should spend more time sifting through this kind of information and transmitting it to the people. In other words, they should spend more time on publishing information and less on news.

A clear example of what this means in practical terms is visible in the following little story. Recently the Food and Drug Administration released the results of exhaustive tests that suggested about 400 fairly commonly used "patent medicines"—nose drops, cold tablets, cough syrups, and so forth—were either useless or harmful. Many of these items were commonly carried in neighborhood drugstores. Both television and the press efficiently reported that the study was released. But few publications (the *New York Times* and *Consumer Reports* were exceptions) bothered to publish the list of useless or harmful products. Yet it was the most useful information to readers or viewers. The announcement was news; the list was information. The first was transmitted; the second was not.

The suggested "more information—less news" scheme would call for a small revolution in news departments, some of which are still resting snugly in the nineteenth century. A fundamental change in the old concept of *news*

is required. New kinds of personnel are needed—persons skilled in distilling great volumes of data into neat packages of usable information. The information broker role could touch many segments of the newspaper, magazine, or broadcast station. Court reporting could evolve from the traditional sketching of legal conflicts into the transmission of functional information about how the citizen can use the legal system to help him solve his problems. The women's section of the newspaper, in times past a collection of society news and advice to the lovelorn, could become a consumer news department (as some are now becoming) with information about how to buy food and other consumer goods economically, recipes for tasty and attractive inexpensive food, evaluations of home care products, and so forth. The medical writer could spend less time telling us about projected cures for cancer or heart disease and instead provide some basic information on how we might better take care of ourselves. The time the political writer now spends painting the petty behind-the-scenes feuds could be spent instead pointing to channels in the political system in which citizens can make a meaningful input. Or he could outline the agenda of current local issues on which citizen participation would be meaningful rather than reporting the debate and votes on issues previously decided. To expand the list we need only use our imaginations.

Such a scheme would also require a reconstruction of the form a medium takes. The newspaper, for example, could be restructured in a far more functional fashion. "News" might be more fully digested and synthesized and arranged in a logical fashion—for example, national news on certain pages, state news on other pages, and so forth. Indexes could be used more extensively to pinpoint the location of specific stories. "Information" could be similarly indexed and arranged. In fact, the entire front page of the newspaper could conceivably be devoted to telling readers what is contained in the rest of it.

While such a restructuring scheme might be more useful to readers, advertisers would most likely cringe at the notion. The reader wouldn't be forced to scan the ads, looking for items of interest. He could go immediately to the information he sought (and he might miss the truss ads on page fourteen). It is at this point that the true color of the newspaper would appear—who is it published for, the advertiser or the reader?

Supporters of the more information-less news scheme assert that it would offer some distinct advantages to the newspaper or magazine as well as to the reader. The publication or broadcast medium that gives the reader or viewer usable information can produce a new kind of audience involvement, as the medium becomes more a part of the reader's life. This occurs even today in cases where the medium does publish usable information. Investors find the daily stock market reports indispensable. Many housewives plan their weekly excursions to the supermarket around the grocery ads published on Wednesday and Thursday. The classified ads are an invaluable information source to many buyers and sellers.

That readers and viewers like this kind of material is demonstrated by the success of an experiment conducted in Minnesota. The *Minneapolis Star* recently carried a series of articles that provided Twin Cities consumers with information about television repair services, the quality of ground meat

Television was used as an "information broker when the Public Broadcasting System broadcast "VD Blues." Host Dick Cavett and others used the special program to inform young Americans about one of the nation's leading health problems, venereal disease.



samples purchased at the city's supermarkets and drive-in restaurants, and the effectiveness of various prescription drugs. These stories had little traditional news value, but were designed to give consumers basic data to use in purchasing similar goods and services. Following the series, a readership survey showed that as much as 91 percent of the readers interviewed remembered stories in the series—a phenomenal percentage when it is considered that 25 percent recall is considered good and Ann Landers' columns rarely get higher than 60 percent recall.

News has traditionally been defined as being the uncommon, the plane that crashed, the man who bit the dog, the malfunction in the system. What the advocates of more information-less news seem to be saying is that people need information of a more commonplace nature, information that, while perhaps less provocative than the latest scandal in the Capitol, is far more fundamental to the survival of the species.

MASSCOMM AND GOVERNMENT

The assertion that the media provide Americans with the information needed to understand what is going on in government is often questioned. Since the Republic was founded the mass media have been called on to produce the raw materials for the citizenry to use in making decisions about government and the economy. "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance," Madison wrote late in the eighteenth century. "And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both," he added.

There is no question that Madison has a sound argument, but press performance in this area has been challenged in two ways. The first question is that of the *kind* of information we get about government. Long-time Washington correspondent David Broder has argued that political reporters tend to write for each other and their news sources. A quick scan of the daily newspaper or one evening's viewing of network television news tends to support this notion. Much of the material published about government is designed to build the egos of congressmen and other officials. Other reports often dwell upon the esoteric doings of "behind-the-scenes" government (who said what to whom in which cloakroom). Editor Derick Daniels asserts that the average Capitol reporter writes tons of trivia to keep the door open to his congressman's office so that he'll get the occasional important story when it happens.

The second question involves the *areas* of government that get the most news coverage. Self-government in this country at the national or state level is largely a myth, many observers assert. And the press is reinforcing this myth by telling readers and viewers they are being informed to help them make decisions on vital political or economic matters. How many decisions on matters of national importance, for example, is the average citizen asked to make? We vote periodically on local and a few state issues, and we are asked to elect congressmen, senators, and a president. But on most national and state questions we are not asked for our opinions. Page after page was published about whether or not this nation should build a supersonic transport. Yet few citizens had a role in making the decision not to build the plane. Scores of documentaries have been produced about federal policies of clear cutting on our timber lands. How many people do you know who were asked their opinion on this topic by a responsible public agency that might make a decision on the matter?

Yet there are areas in which citizen input can be effective and meaningful at the local level. In school districts, public utility districts, sewer and water districts, even in city and county government, interested citizens can often play a role in the decision-making process. It is at this level that the citizen can probably make his greatest impact upon his government, living up to the visions of Madison and Jefferson. Fifteen angry utility district residents can often reverse a policy if they appear in force at a public meeting; a petition with as few as a couple of hundred signatures can often intimidate a city council in a medium-sized community. But the news of local government is frequently excluded from masscomm in favor of reports from Washington and other world capitals. (Or if it is not excluded, it is often cast to the inside pages of the newspaper or crammed into five minutes of a thirty-minute television news broadcast.) Media critics such as former editor Carl Lindstrom argue that the local level is where masscomm should be investing its resources, giving people local news and helping them define local issues in which they can participate in a meaningful way.

There is no suggestion made that the press should vacate the halls of Congress just because readers have little opportunity to shape federal policies. We agree that one task the press must assume is that of the watchdog—keeping an eye on the public servants to make certain that

things remain on the up and up. Normally, the press pursues this task with great vigor. And the bows the media occasionally take for digging up dirt here and there are clearly deserved.

It was the *Detroit Free Press*, for example, not the government or a civil rights organization, that discovered the three murders in the Algiers Motel after the 1967 Detroit riot. It was *Life* magazine that first published the information that ultimately led to the resignation of Abe Fortas from the U.S. Supreme Court under a cloud of improper ethics. The press first revealed the questionable qualifications of Supreme Court nominees Haynsworth and Carswell. Pulitzer-prize winning columnist Jack Anderson first revealed the ties between the White House, the Republican party, and International Telephone and Telegraph, and it was Anderson again who brought to light the duplicity in the executive branch on the nation's public policy and its private position on the 1971 Indian-Pakistani war. It was Anderson's former mentor, Drew Pearson, who initially disclosed the scandals in Senator Thomas Dodd's office. And it was the *New York Times* and later the *Washington Post* that first published the now infamous Pentagon Papers.

But lest the press break its arm patting itself on the back, masscomm's job as the watchdog should be put into perspective. There are some chinks in the armor. The watchdog tends to be asleep on occasion.

Media today are often a part of the establishment they are supposed to be watching. In some instances there is a direct connection between the media and the establishment. The Radio Corporation of America owns the National Broadcasting Company. RCA is also a major defense contractor, and as such, is an important beneficiary in the adoption and development of sophisticated electronic weaponry, such as an anti-ballistic missile system. Former Federal Communications commissioner Nicholas Johnson said in testimony on Capitol Hill,

Many Americans will know what they know about the ABM because they learned it from NBC. And the decision in this country on this issue, as on most issues, will be determined by the mass media and what information they decide to put out to the American people. Once again, I am not charging that there has been any deliberate suppression of information or misrepresentation of views by NBC in the service of the broader corporate interests of RCA. All I am saying is that this potential conflict exists; the power exists if they wish to exercise it.

An unidentified executive of WCBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System's New York affiliate, did use this kind of power on one occasion. The matter was a trivial one, but the message was clear. He chastised the news staff of the station for tardy reporting of the scores of the New York Yankee baseball games. "If I have to spell it out for you I will: CBS owns the New York Yankees," he wrote in a memorandum. The network has since sold the major league franchise. And NBC's Chet Huntley was found to be editorializing against the Wholesome Meat Act that was facing a vote in Congress at a time when he and business partners were heavy investors in the cattle and meat business.

At other times the connection between the media and what or who they

The 43 Who Died

An Investigation into How and Why Detroit's Riot Victims Were Slain

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IN THE SPACES of eight short days and hundreds of nights, 43 persons died or were fatally wounded in the streets of Detroit. They were victims of a riot that only the riot itself seemed to know the full extent of.

It is difficult to arrive at any satisfactory explanation. It is tempting indeed to conclude that only the riot itself seemed to know the full extent of the situation in which it was potentially set in motion.

Thirty-two men were arrested on the night of the riot. More than 1,000 armed men were assigned on duty across the city. At least 100 rioters were arrested. A conviction of a rioter was possible only by a major military tribunal.

HUNDREDS of regular Army paratroopers were stationed on the East Side. In the inner city, city and state police and National Guardsmen patrolled. Rioters paddy wagoned, arrested, jailed, paroled, returned to military custody, and released. Rioters were arrested, returned to military custody, and released. Rioters were arrested, returned to military custody, and released.

How the riot started is not clear. How the riot continued is not clear. How the riot ended is not clear. How the riot was prevented is not clear. How the riot was prevented is not clear.

THE CONCLUSION reached is that investigations are still under way. The victims who died were not killed by rioters. The victims who died were not killed by rioters.

At least six victims were killed by the National Guard. Five of these men, the victims of what now seems to be tragic accidents.

Two victims, one a Frenchman, the other a white man, were killed by electric power lines. Five deaths remain. They are 19-year-old boy killed accidentally by a stray paratrooper, a 35-year-old man killed by a stray paratrooper, a 35-year-old man killed by a stray paratrooper.

THE RETURN TO Normalcy. How long it will take to return to normalcy is not clear. How long it will take to return to normalcy is not clear.

With that qualification accepted and understood, here are the principal conclusions of the Free Press investigation into the riot deaths.

It is clear that the riot was not a spontaneous event. It was a planned event. It was a planned event.

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Photo shows a riot victim lying on the ground. Other people are scattered around, some appearing to be in motion or looking towards the camera. The background shows a street scene with buildings and possibly more people.

1 Walter Grzeskowiak
The last known victim of Detroit's riot was Walter Grzeskowiak, 45, shot and killed after midnight July 26 by a stray bullet from the National Guard's firing line. Grzeskowiak was a 45-year-old man who was shot in the back of the head by a stray bullet from the National Guard's firing line. He was shot in the back of the head by a stray bullet from the National Guard's firing line.

2 Sharon Gerson
The death of 23-year-old Sharon Gerson, a white woman, was the result of a stray bullet from the National Guard's firing line. She was shot in the back of the head by a stray bullet from the National Guard's firing line. She was shot in the back of the head by a stray bullet from the National Guard's firing line.

On the fourth day of what was to become a chaotic and uncontrolled riot, the Detroit Free Press reported on the deaths of two more victims. The deaths of Walter Grzeskowiak and Sharon Gerson were the result of stray bullets from the National Guard's firing line.

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The Investigation Team



The three men are members of the investigation team. They are standing together, looking towards the camera.

The investigation team consists of three men who are working to uncover the truth about the riot. They are working to uncover the truth about the riot. They are working to uncover the truth about the riot.

Coverage like this, which exposed the senseless killings during the Detroit disorders, earned a Pulitzer Prize for the *Free Press*. Members of the Detroit police department were later brought to trial in connection with the riot cases, a direct result of this series of articles.

should be watching is less direct. The classic example is the relationship between the press and the leading industry in an urban area. Detroit, for example, is heavily dependent on the automobile industry for its livelihood. Is it any wonder then, that it was not a Detroit newspaper or broadcasting station but an outsider, Ralph Nader, who first alerted American consumers to the hazards and faults in American automobiles? *Unsafe at Any Speed* was the initial shot in what has become a volley of criticism of cars and car manufacturers. Yet it is difficult to believe that this information could not have been brought to light by the Detroit press. For years the auto manufacturers have made new cars available on request to reporters and editors of the Motor City press. "We want you to become acquainted with our products," automotive public relations men announce. And their offers are rarely spurned.

In Pontiac, Michigan, the Pontiac Motor Division of General Motors literally dominated the city and its media. Week after week the local newspaper would publish front-page stories about new sales records at the auto firm, stories that most other newspapers would bury inside if they used them at all. And the day each year the new Pontiacs were introduced, there was a four-color front-page picture below an eight-column banner headline, "197? Pontiac Introduced Today." What kind of a watchdog would a newspaper be in this kind of a situation? When editors and publishers honestly feel that the survival of their community is tied so closely to a single firm, could they in good conscience report information that in turn might damage this firm? And Pontiac is not alone. Nearly every city or town has its goose that lays the golden egg. Throughout the nation, but especially in the South and Southwest, towns feed off local military bases and the local press adopts a pro-military posture. Seattle has its Boeing Company, Hartford, Connecticut, its insurance industry. And while one certainly cannot paint all members of the press with the same brush on this issue, the exceptions only make the rest of the media look worse because they demonstrate that there is a place for the independent newspaper. In most "company" towns, there is very little "watching" of large economic interests, and hardly any "dogging" after stories that reveal the defects in local benefactors.

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

Even editors who sincerely want to give readers and viewers meaningful and complete news about government find the task impossible. Government is too large today. For example, how can a single reporter cover the Pentagon with its thousands of employees and offices? Yet it is rare for a publication or broadcasting operation to assign even one man to this task. Most media depend on the news services—the Associated Press and United Press International—to be their watchdog for the vast military complex, and these wire services generally use one or two reporters for this job.

The reporters who cover a growing government (which includes state and local governments as well) find themselves more and more dependent on prepared news releases or news stories from government information officers. It was reported in the early 1970s that there were more than 50,000

information officers, or press agents, in the executive branch (including the military) of the federal government alone. It is difficult for a single man to make the entire rounds in Washington in a single day even just to pick up prepared press releases. It is very hard to be an effective watchdog in a yard as large as Washington, D.C. And this is a problem the press has not yet solved. Perhaps it is insoluble. It is also frightening. Federal judge Skelly Wright once remarked that governments operate best in a fish bowl. But there are too many fish to watch today. And the media have shown little inclination to undertake the major shift in resources needed to begin to cope with this problem. Few editors would even seriously consider, for example, the suggestion that a newspaper drop its sports coverage and use those resources to expand the coverage of government.

PRESS AND DEMOCRACY

The role of the press in a democracy such as ours is vital. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the operation of American government without the mass media. The publicity function—the relay of important messages from the government to the people—probably justifies the existence of the press. At the same time, continual reporting tends to support the government's authority and in a sense tends to legitimize all that's good and bad about the process. Americans can be thankful, and to some extent proud, that their press has often taken an aggressive position in defending the rights of the people, seeking justice for all men, and exposing corruption at all levels of government. Yet we should be sad as well that there is not more of this aggressiveness. Too frequently the press seems unwilling to devote more of its resources to fighting public battles.

MASSCOMM, THE EDUCATOR

A good deal of controversy reigns over the use of masscomm as an educational tool. Various media are being used more and more each day in classrooms in this country. Sophisticated electronic equipment that offers teachers the opportunity of using multi-media approaches is common in most modern schools and is being used successfully, according to most reports. In addition, books and other printed media such as magazines and newspapers are playing an increasing role in the classroom.

But there is no unanimity about the success of efforts to use masscomm to educate the masses *outside* the classroom. Television has the potential of making every home a classroom and mass education on a gigantic scale is possible. But it can be argued that little of this potential is being used. Commercial television is reluctant to turn the medium over to such a nonprofit venture as education, except perhaps in the predawn hours when most of the audience is asleep. Educational or public television, the poor stepbrother of the commercial broadcaster, has undertaken several projects, but its success has been as limited as its audience.

Some educational psychologists insist that little learning occurs in situations that stress rote memorization, such as "Sesame Street." And unless



An entire generation of American youngsters have grown up as close friends of Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Bert, Ernie, and the rest of the gang on Sesame Street. Although it was clearly the most popular of the public network's offerings, the racial mixing in the cast kept it off the air in some southern communities for many months.

the children can participate in the learning process, the result is usually memorization. These same critics add that such television programs may in fact reduce learning. Mothers who would formerly spend time with their youngsters and attempt to teach them basic skills now plop the child in front of the tube and let the people at NET do their job. The children neither learn from the television program nor have the benefit of mother's help.

The role of newspapers in education is less depressing but not much more encouraging. Publishers have organized comprehensive "newspaper in the classroom" projects in hopes of teaching youngsters how to get something out of the newspaper besides baseball scores and to show them the value of becoming regular newspaper readers. (Of course a regular newspaper reader is usually a regular newspaper buyer.) But few organized efforts at formally instructing the masses through the press have been attempted.

Information processing remains a primary function of American mass media. How well it performs this task in the decades to come could have a direct impact on its ability to remain relevant, meaningful, and solvent.

THE PEOPLE FOLLOW THE PRESS
 FOLLOW THE PEOPLE FOLLOW THE PRESS. . . .

From their very roots, mass media have always had a role in shaping what the community thinks about itself and many other things. The development of printed media centuries ago was tied to the efforts of writers and printers who felt strongly about various issues, usually religious issues, and hoped to shape the thoughts of others on these matters. So the tasks of aiding the development of public opinion on important questions and creating a sense of community for people who share similar geographic boundaries has been a service we have traditionally sought from masscomm.

Most people who own and operate the mass media today would probably contend that this task is undertaken daily and successfully by the press. Others would disagree. And it is hard to declare a winner in the controversy, for both sides are at least partially correct. The mass media do shape people's ideas about contemporary issues, if only by providing the agenda of things about which we will talk and discuss and ultimately form an opinion on. Nothing will kill an issue faster than having the media ignore it. Even harsh comment is better than no comment. Through news stories, editorials, columns, and letters to the editor, the press provides a daily list of topics we are asked to consider. Without this common agenda to work with, it would be difficult for the nation to reach any kind of a consensus on issues—we would all be talking about different things.

Editors and broadcasting executives argue that masscomm goes farther than this in providing informed editorialization that helps people make up their minds and directs the public toward one side or another. This is where many critics disagree; they argue that the press is usually afraid to take a strong stand on most new issues, and that editors and station managers want to stand pat. One such spokesman is Donald P. Keith, who, while he was the editorial page editor of a Pennsylvania daily newspaper in the mid-sixties, wrote (in *Newsweek*, November 29, 1965):

Perhaps one of the effective measures of the worth of the editorial page is the fact that over the last generation most major sociological and general economic advances in our national society have been made in the face of editorial page resistance, and not because of editorial page leadership.

Who is right? The critics or the editors and broadcasters? It is sometimes hard to tell. Occasionally the press does take an active role in attempting to lead the public on some issue. But sometimes there is an underlying motive. For example, in 1971 in Seattle, the *Seattle Times*, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and television station KIRO took strong editorial stands in support of a highly controversial urban renewal project that many persons believed would have destroyed the city's unique Pike Place public market. Most support for the effort came from an organization known as the Central Association, a group of businessmen who had dreamed up the renewal scheme, which had as its goal revitalization of the city's retail business community. The final plan called for a 4,000-car garage, high-rise, high-rent

apartments, a convention hotel filled with retail shops, and so forth.

However, few people in Seattle knew when they read the editorials supporting the project that *Seattle Times* president W. J. Pennington was the president of the Central Association and that the president of television station KIRO, Lloyd E. Cooney, was its vice-president. Or that two of the incorporators of another powerful force behind the project, Central Park Plaza Corporation, a group of local investors who hoped to win the contract to develop the area, were the assistant advertising director of the *Seattle Times*, A. L. Brock, and Dan Starr, the publisher of the *Post-Intelligencer*, the city's morning newspaper. The press took a stand on this issue—but was it the public interest it had at heart, or its own? The people voted the project down. This kind of shenanigan has created cynics of many citizens and in some communities press support for any issue guarantees its failure. (Somebody at the newspaper must be getting something out of it, people say.)

More important, it has been charged that the men who shape the media's position on public issues haven't the foggiest notion of what the public interest really is. Editor William Allen White, who during the Roosevelt era published the *Emporia Gazette*, wrote years ago about "country club journalism." *Cronyism* is another word for it. The publisher and editor of the local newspaper, the station manager—who do they talk to besides their friends at the country club or the athletic club? Who are their peers? The average man? No. They are the bank presidents, department store executives, theater owners, and other leaders of the economic community. White charged that the public interest media leaders perceived was the interests of the economic and social elite, not the interests of the people.

Perhaps White's charge is too broad. Some media leaders do attempt to fathom the depths of real public sentiment. Some editors do attempt to lead the public through support of worthwhile but often unpopular causes. Some publishers and station managers do place the interests of the community in general ahead of the interests of the business community. Critics argue that this is all too rare. And this is perhaps one reason, observers note, that the editorial page on most newspapers has become moribund. It generally represents the status quo.

If one looks at media from an economic standpoint (a realistic way of viewing things) it is quite simple to explain the hesitancy of many newspapers to take radical or even extreme stands on matters of social, economic, or political change. (Most of the American press, for example, stood behind the government in its vigorous prosecution of the Vietnam war. John Knight's newspapers were notable in their opposition to the war as early as 1965.) A mass medium can sustain itself only with mass approval, or at least mass acceptance. For a newspaper to lead a community toward an unpopular but needed solution to a serious problem would involve taking the risk of rejection or reader discontent. Nobody wants to be disliked, least of all the newspaper editor who must try to convince advertisers that people read and love his paper every day.

But perhaps there is even a more fundamental explanation of the media's

apparent reluctance to take a leadership role on many important issues. All institutions tend to benefit from the maintenance of the status quo. Change, especially that prompted from outside the institution, tends to be disruptive of society and its institutions. Today groups representing vested interests usually are most aggressive in promoting change. For example, people who use our natural environment—hikers and campers—most vigorously advance conservation causes. The unemployed march for more jobs. Housewives tend to be active in consumer movements. The press does play a role by publicizing these groups, their actions, and their statements. But rarely do we see the media themselves take a strong lead in such campaigns. The newspaper or broadcasting station usually sees little self-interest in such promotions.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

There are many ways that masscomm influences public opinion apart from strong editorials, stinging commentaries, and firm stands on important issues. By defining the governmental, social, and educational bounds in which we live, by transmitting a shared culture, and by providing a sense of common experience, mass media allow the public to develop an opinion about itself. This is sometimes called the *spirit or sense of community*.

Television perhaps more than the other media most obviously relays this sense of community and togetherness. TV is often called a mirror of our society. It is the composite that brings all the parts together and says this is what we stand for; this is what we are like. It is a reflection of our ideas and our ideals.

But at best, it is an uncertain mirror—one that reflects an ambiguous picture in which each of us projects or sees his own image of himself and society. At worst it reflects fantasy or matter that bears not the slightest resemblance to our values, our concerns, or our standards. To construct a picture of what we are solely on the basis of our media would leave us with both more and less than we really are. From television we would see a society made up primarily of white Anglo-Saxon protestants. From our situation comedies we would draw the impression that most children grow up in a family with only one parent. (And that most of the time the kids are a lot smarter than the parent.) We would see a society in which problems, no matter how great, are always solved—quickly, usually in half an hour.

Our dramas suggest that we value violence as a solution to many dilemmas. Our advertisements show a people who emphasize material standards, who worry more about underarm perspiration odor than starving children, a people who have serious and long-lasting discussions about coffee, irregularity, and whether one headache remedy works faster than another. Television pictures us as a people with few daily frustrations, or as David Susskind has written, “a happy people seeking happy solutions to happy problems.”

Emmy-winning television writer Loring Mandel argues that television has failed because it doesn't truly transmit the substance of our culture.

Television programming tells us certain things, as Mandel wrote in the *New York Times* (March 25, 1970):

That America is traditionally anti-intellectual. A lie. That the Good Man is the Man Who Ultimately Goes Along. A lie. That beneficence is inherent in business. A lie. That love is good, sex is better, and that passion doesn't exist. That any means are justifiable. That passivity is wise. That intensity is a spectator sport. That people bleed only from the corner of their mouths, and that instant regeneration of human tissue is a fact of violence. And by the purposeful omission of material that is relevant to our contemporary situation the entertainment programmers make reality more foreign to us. By expressing simplistic solutions to all problems, they rob us of the tools of decision. The truth is not in them.

We are lost in Kansas City, Mandel concludes, "with a road map for Nashville, and we're going mad from irrelevance."

It is perhaps unfair to look at just this single, often distorted, way in which masscomm transmits a sense of community. For mass media work in many other ways as well in attempting to help us define our environment. Community values can be cast in terms of the achievements of the city or township or county or state in meeting its social and economic needs. By publicizing these accomplishments, masscomm helps promote unity and pride. By telling readers and viewers about a community and its physical and geographic assets, by boosting local sports and cultural attractions, and by identifying citizens who have attained recognition in their endeavors, the mass media help a community define itself and begin to develop a shared consciousness. Most of us are unaware that we absorb this sense of community that the media provide. Yet it is probably in the development of a sense of community that masscomm has its greatest impact in shaping public opinion.

ECONOMICS—THE NAME OF THE GAME

Of all the tasks masscomm performs, none is pursued more vigorously than its economic one. The entire nature of the media's service to the community revolves around economics. And the economic task is the one the media do best, most of the time.

As businesses, the media play an important role in a community. In some towns a newspaper has one of the largest payrolls in the area. The materials essential to produce a newspaper reach far into the national economy to touch forest products, machine products, chemicals and dyes, and office equipment. Newspapers pay lots of taxes. So do newspaper employees, who also buy food and clothing, housing and automobiles. If we expand our example beyond the single newspaper to the giant communications empires of the nation, it becomes apparent that the members of the media are important fiscal citizens.

But of course incidental support of the national economy is not the media's most important economic task. Their primary role in this area is as a showcase for the nation's consumer goods and services. In simple terms, this means getting buyers and sellers together, which is done primarily through advertising in newspapers and magazines and on television and

Viewer letters saved this show once, but after three seasons NBC's economic resolve stood up against well organized campaigns by "Star Trek" fans to keep the show on the air. Despite a large and loyal following, the adventures of Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, "Bones," and the rest of the crew of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* did not fit the "mass programming" guidelines that govern the networks.

NBC Photo



radio. When one stops to think about it, advertising is really the only efficient way the interested customer can find out what goods are available, where they can be purchased, and at what price. This kind of communication is vital in a capitalistic system like ours.

But it may be argued that although advertising is important it should not dominate masscomm to the extent that it does now. The public depends on the media as its only source of information on many topics besides the availability of consumer goods.

For example, masscomm is the only way most people have of getting information about local school board elections, yet few would argue that newspapers and broadcasters pursue this role with the same zeal they undertake their advertising. The reason is obvious, of course. The media get paid (very well, thank you) for publishing so-called information about products and services. They get little monetary reward for publishing news about school board elections. Because advertising dollars are the lifeblood of the media, advertising sets the pace. The size of your daily newspaper is determined not by how much news occurs on a given day, but by how much advertising has been sold that day. The more advertising, the more space for news. Television schedules for autumn are usually set early in the preceding spring because advertisers like to plan their television budgets six months in advance. *Life* magazine did not die because its readers deserted it but

because advertisers found it an unprofitable medium to use to peddle wares. Nearly twenty million television viewers watched "Star Trek" each week but because NBC had difficulty getting advertisers interested, the show was cancelled. The litany could go on for pages, but the point is the same: he who pays the piper calls the tune. And while that might be a fine theory for pipers and songs, it is hardly the kind of philosophical underpinning one would hope to find beneath the media system of the world's most industrialized nation.

ECONOMIC NEWS—FUNCTIONALISM AT ITS BEST

The media do publish economic information outside the advertisements they carry, and in some ways, it is a very valuable portion of their content.

Stock market reports, for example, provide useful, usable information for millions of newspaper readers. News reports about new products, changes or alterations in old products, and price adjustments are also items that can give vital inputs for daily consumer decisions. Notification of lending rates and currency exchange rates, notification of product demonstrations and business and stockholder meetings are all bits of information that are vital to the economic community's operation. This kind of news is the kind people can use. A format of economic information is perhaps the prototype of the functional newspaper.

MEDIA AND CULTURE—THE ENTERTAINMENT TASK

Henry Lewis Mencken wrote many years ago that no one ever lost a dime underestimating the taste of the American people. It isn't hard to see that today Mencken's comment applies to many endeavors of the various entertainment arms of American mass media. Entertainment stands next to advertising as the dominant task of the electronic media and still maintains a high priority in the print media as well. Entertainment is the shill that brings the crowds to media pitchmen.

For example on television, only a small percentage of the programming is not produced as entertainment. Even news programming seems to have a kind of show-biz quality to it, with local stations arranging formats or installing video gadgets to make their presentation of the news more attractive. Anchormen and other news broadcasters are frequently treated like stars in sexy promotional spots for local and network news programs. And according to testimony at recent congressional hearings, the show-biz quality of some news film has been enhanced by staging so-called news events within legitimate events. WBBM-TV in Chicago reportedly aided in staging a pot party in order to film it for a news special. Some network camera crews at the tumultuous 1968 Democratic National Convention reportedly asked demonstrators to throw rocks and light small fires for the benefit of television. And the CBS network went so far as to contribute small amounts of money to a reported planned invasion of Haiti in order to have the right to film the "news event" right from the beginning. (The invasion never got off the ground.)

But the entertainment side of television comes in for the most criticism—much of it unjustified, according to some television spokesmen. Former Federal Communications commissioner Lee Loevinger, for example, argued in an article in *The Journal of Broadcasting* (1968) that most of those who criticize television entertainment are intellectual elites who think of democracy as a system in which they define the public interest. But, the former FCC commissioner said, the public wants its own image, not the image of intellectual elites.

Aubrey Smith has written that television as practiced today is just one of the many windows through which we observe, transmit, and reflect our valuation of society to each other. But because television is a mass medium, it cannot afford to reflect the valuation or culture of only a few of us. It must aim instead to reflect the entire society. In entertainment, this means producing programming that will appeal to everyone, or to nearly everyone. Broadcasters argue that if television does this, it is truly giving people what they want. They support this assertion with reams of rating statistics showing that more and more people are watching television, and that high-class programming doesn't get large audiences, but low-brow materi-



"I Love Lucy" was the first TV situation comedy to garner a mass audience. A product of the "lowest common denominator" school of television programming, the show is often cited as an example of the barren nature of the medium. Despite this, Lucille Ball remains one of the nation's most popular TV performers, and has been recognized as a leading American comedienne.

al, such as "The Beverly Hillbillies," beach party movies, and violence-prone adventures like "The Mod Squad," does.

But there may be gaping holes in the logic of the assertion that by appealing to mass taste the people are getting what they want. What the public wants is what individuals want. Attempting to cater to everyone, or even to a majority, makes it almost impossible to satisfy all or even most of the needs of any individual. If the audience is viewed as a mass it will be offered only the ordinary and the commonplace—and kept unaware of what lies behind the average. The British Pilkington Commission, established in 1960 to study the electronic media, went further and theorized that in time viewers may come to like only what they know. Still, they postulated, if viewers could be offered a wider range from which to choose, they might choose otherwise, with greater enjoyment.

Viewed from one perspective, television appears truly democratic by giving the public what it wants. But perhaps this is a false democracy. It may be patronizing and arrogant as well, because it claims to know what the public is but defines it as no more than the mass audience—and then limits the choice of this audience to the average of experience.

While television undertakes to entertain the masses with great zeal, we often hear that it fails even to carry out this task properly. The mass entertainment it does carry, even by the standards of the executives of the industry, is not of high quality. Few persons inside or outside the industry rose in 1961 to challenge FCC chairman Newton Minow's charge that television was a "vast wasteland." And few flowers have bloomed in that wasteland since. If anything, the game shows are a bit more insipid, the situation comedies a bit more ridiculous, the adventure shows a bit more stereotyped, and the musical specials more blatantly commercial.

There have been a few bright spots. Through the public network, through programs produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation, and from some teleplays, films, and documentary programs carried on the commercial networks, Americans have been treated to some remarkable entertainment. "Civilisation," "The Andersonville Trial," "The Price," "Brian's Song," "A Christmas Memory," "The Glass House," "The Migrant," "The Waltons," and the New York Playhouse productions on the thirties and forties are a few good examples from recent years that come to mind. And when television does program quality programming, it frequently reaches vast audiences, far greater in number than writers even fifty years ago dreamed possible. When Richard Chamberlain appeared in the television version of *Hamlet*, more people saw Shakespeare's masterpiece in that one evening than had ever seen it produced on stage since it was written nearly 400 years ago. We might say that television is a great deal like that fabled little girl with the curl right in the middle of her forehead. When it is good, it is very, very good. But when it is bad, it is horrid.

CULTURE AND THE OTHER MEDIA

Entertainment seems to predominate both film and radio as well as television, but no one seems too upset about the quality of those media these days. Most radio programming is recorded music, with news,

A moving dramatization of the sanity trial of a confederate officer and prison warden after the Civil War, "The Andersonville Trial" brought both American history and high-quality drama into millions of American homes. The PBS special is an example of how TV can expose a mass audience to entertainment most people would not otherwise see.



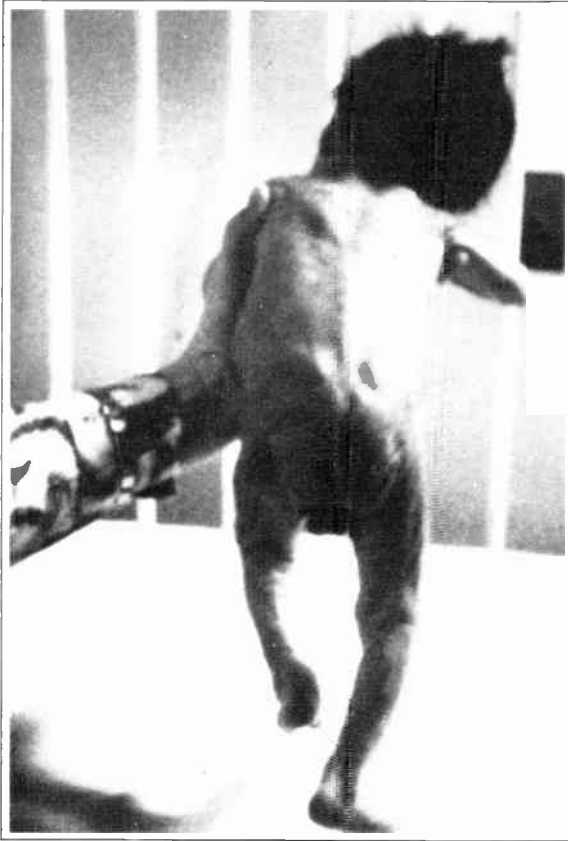
weather, and sports on the hour or half hour. It has been that way for nearly twenty years now, and there doesn't seem to be any indication it will change. The few attempt to do more (usually FM stations with miniscule audiences) can scarcely be called a *mass* medium.

The mass medium of film is ninety-five percent entertainment. Few people go to their local theaters to be informed about anything. The quality of film entertainment, however, generally exceeds the standards of television. Bigger budgets, more time, and the knowledge that the film industry is the one mass medium that must sell itself to the people, not to the advertiser, generally produce higher quality productions.

Most people agree that newspapers are not supposed to be an entertainment medium. Yet too often they are. The comics, horoscopes, advice to the lovelorn, crossword puzzles and other games are all holdovers from an era when the newspaper was the primary mass medium. In those days it was expected to entertain as well as inform. But today the former task has been taken over by the other media, and the newspaper can realistically stick to the job of publishing news and information without denying the public its modicum of fun and games. It has chosen not to, and many feel this is an unfortunate decision.

MASS MEDIA AND THE MASS CULTURE

The mass media play a distinct and important role in American culture because, in large part, the mass culture of America today is a creature of the mass media. Our mass culture has been created, designed, packaged, and marketed since World War I. It is a culture of a mass society, a people with a good deal of leisure time. The culture of earlier eras was largely the product of the people. There has always existed Culture with a capital C, a very



CBS News

"Hunger in America," a remarkable CBS documentary that informed a vast audience that many Americans were starving to death in the land of plenty, demonstrated the power of TV to mobilize a nation. Congressional hearings and legislation followed the CBS report, and many reforms were accomplished.

narrowly defined and impractical mode of expression that represents Society with a capital S. But that was never American culture. It instead represented new-world attempts at emulation of old-world elitism. The culture of this nation was the culture of the people. It was represented through their work, their handicrafts, their songs and dances, and their literature. This was the culture of handmade clothing, of embroidered tablecloths, of folksongs, of legends, and of handcrafted furniture. The people who consumed it created it as well. It was a very practical kind of culture.

With the advent of new agricultural and industrial technologies, man was freed from spending 15 hours a day just to sustain himself. Leisure time became a reality for many "common men" after World War I. The popular culture of the earlier years, the culture created *by* the people, began to disappear and a new culture created *for* the people began to grow. The mass media were an integral part of this growth. They facilitated the movements of large quantities of culture to the people. And, as Karl Marx wrote, "a change in quantity produces a change in quality."

The characteristics of this new culture are agreed on by most "culturalists," but whether it has improved man or diminished him is a matter of some debate. Social scientist Ernest van den Haag, in an article first published in *Daedalus* in 1960, outlined his theory of mass culture and why he felt it had a negative effect on mankind. Van den Haag argued that because mass culture is produced for the people, rather than produced by the people, life is being reduced to largely a spectator sport. We live vicariously the experiences of others, he wrote, and noted the contrast between a young man sitting under a tree on campus playing a guitar and singing, and the same young man with a transistor radio to his ear.

The mass appeal needed to make mass culture profitable deindividualizes us, van den Haag asserts. Producers have become the elites by appealing to consumer tastes, and the ability to bestow prestige and income has shifted from the educated and informed elites to the mass. Mass culture appeals to the base instincts in man, distracting him rather than enlightening him. The amount of mass culture needed to fill the hours of television and radio and the pages of the print media is tremendous. Potentially important talent is diverted toward cranking out acceptable material, away from the creation of art. The writer who is forced to prepare a screenplay in three weeks for "Mannix" might, given time and support, create a fine drama. A musician who with proper encouragement might be writing important compositions instead expends his talent writing commercial jingles.

Mass culture, thrust upon the people excessively, tends to isolate people from one another, from themselves, and from real experience, van den Haag insists. Real life becomes trivial in the face of vicarious experience. Looking at the diaries and letters written by young people a century ago, we can find that leaving home to go to college was one of the most exciting moments in their lives. The exposure to a totally new environment was remarkable and rewarding. Yet why should a young person today be thrilled with going away to college? They have been around the world via television and film. They have been to the moon and back. Van den Haag says that the "total effect of mass culture is to distract people from lives which are so boring that they generate obsession with escape. Yet because mass culture creates addiction to prefabricated experiences, most people are deprived of the remaining possibilities of autonomous growth and enrichment, and their lives become even more boring and unfulfilled."

But other culturalists disagree. Leo Rosten, a writer and editor, charges in "The Intellectual and the Mass Media: Some Rigorously Random Remarks" (*Daedalus*, 1963) that most criticism of mass culture and the mass media that produce it comes from intellectuals who don't understand the media or the people. The deficiencies of the media and what they produce are deficiencies of the masses; he argues, "Most people prefer pinball games to philosophy." Given the limitations of time and space, the "culture" the media produce is more inventive and varied than most people admit. Rosten insists there are good dramas, good comic strips, and good films today, and that the intellectuals usually discover artists in the mass culture long after the public discovered them.

Rosten rejects the argument that the products of the mass media tend to

debase public tastes by purveying cheap, trivial fun. "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" he asks. Was mass culture thrust on a sophisticated public, or was it created in response to demands from an unsophisticated one? Mass culture is not bad, he insists, for a mass society. It fulfills a need and supplies enjoyment for those unable to appreciate culture at higher levels.

Both arguments make sense in this debate. Rosten's philosophy seems to be that shared by most media men. It is true that each day it becomes a little more difficult to determine whether life, or life as seen through the mass media, is reality. Some people won't believe an event they have seen until it is repeated or reported in the media. To many persons real life is not the day-to-day frustrations we all encounter, but the glamor portrayed through the media. What is real? What is reality? Is life a prefabricated experience? Do we view our own existence only through the soft glow of a color television set? We are buying culture from the mass media every day. Commerce is using it to sell us other things as well. Perhaps this really isn't wrong, but only confusing. Maybe we really are lost in Kansas City with a road map of Nashville.

MASS MEDIA AND SOCIETY

While we have talked primarily of four basic media tasks in this chapter, there can be no mistake that masscomm does many other things as well. The mass media confer status on individuals in society by publishing their accomplishments. Masscomm helps define societal norms by publicizing material about human behavior. Even though some people think masscomm stifles individualism and enhances conformity, others think that because there is so much of it, masscomm causes people to turn inward to private life and to drop out.

Masscomm has not planned any of these suspected consequences, yet they do occur and often create serious problems for society. The most recent investigation of television violence is one example of social concern. Is violence in the streets partially a result of violence on the small screen? Are the recent years of turbulence a consequence of turbulence on television? These are questions we will discuss later in the book. But they are good examples of one of the unplanned consequences of masscomm.

Still, the major impact of the media rests in the four tasks detailed in this chapter. It is through processing information, helping to shape public opinion, servicing the economic system, and keeping America entertained that the mass media leave their most important mark on the nation and the society.

In the remainder of the book we will attempt to show how the media go about those four tasks: how they process information, how they select and present entertainment, how advertising and economics relates to both these processes, and the impact this all has on developing some kind of public opinion or sense of community. The way the media operate remains a mystery to most persons. What goes on behind the scenes where key decisions are made is one of the great unpublicized stories in America.

But the way things are done in the media today reflects a great deal of how they were done in the past. So that is where our story must begin—not with today but with a brief glimpse at yesterday.

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3

Media History, Part I

or How We Got
There From Here

It was a beat-up building. The paint, what little there was left, was badly chipped and faded. One rotten gray shutter hung loose on the front window and swung rhythmically in the soft April breeze. The front stairs were of the kind that if you could be sure no one was looking you would prefer to go back to the curb and take a running leap in hopes of hitting the top of the porch rather than walking up those rickety steps one by one. But somehow the vision of a scrubbed college sophomore in a freshly pressed double-breasted blue suit sailing violently through the air in a kind of pseudo-Jesse Owens pose didn't fit my image today. So I cautiously mounted the stairs, one squeaking step after another, until, like Hillary on Everest, the summit was attained.

The porch was out of the 1920s—the kind on which you expect to see a glider sofa or your grandmother with a tray of lemonade and cookies. It was weather-beaten too, a fact that a heavy coat of dust failed to disguise. The bell at the front entrance didn't work, or at least that's what the sign said, but a loud rapping on the massive solid door (they don't make this kind any more) brought a fairly quick response.

He was old, probably sixty-five, a museum curator type with a stooped back, a well-worn gray cardigan sweater, baggy flannel trousers, and wire-rim glasses that tended to slide down his rather crooked pointed nose. But he was friendly enough.

"Can I help you?" he asked.

"Are you open for visitors? I'd like to come in and look around," I said in a rather loud voice, fearing my inquisitor across the threshold was deaf. (Isn't everyone over fifty-five?)

"Not so loud, young man. I can hear you just fine. Why do you want to come in here?"

"This is the Institute of Historical Explanation, isn't it?"

"What's left of it," he said.

"Well, that's why I want to come in. I am looking for some explanations. Surely other people come here looking for the same thing," I asserted

firmly, beginning to tire of cooling my heels on this old porch while facing these meaningless questions. "I am a taxpayer, you know, well, at least my parents are and I . . ." He cut me off.

"Don't get upset. It's just that we don't have many visitors these days, and of those that we get, few are as young as you. College junior, I'd say."

"Sophomore," I said, "at State College."

"Well, come on in and let me see if we can help you. I must apologize about the building. We were across the street until two years ago, in that big red brick building. But they needed new quarters for the Institute of Conspiratorial Explanations and so they moved us over here in this old rooming house. Told us they'd fix the place up, but the budget and all being what it is, well, we did what we could."

The hall we entered had high ceilings and a polished mahogany look. There was a Tiffany lamp—it looked like a real one—on a small table that was placed against the wall underneath a small mirror. Mr. Farthing—he told me his name was Jonas Farthing as he led me into a small room off the hallway—took my coat and hung it on a rack fastened to the wall parallel to the mirror.

"Sign the book," he said, pointing to a rather large leather-bound ledger that rested on a desk, "and tell me how I can help you today."

"I want some information on the mass media," I told him as I scrawled my name and the date on a page near the back of the ledger. The last entry was almost six weeks old, I noted.

"The mass media, well then, you must be in the wrong place. You probably want the Institute of Social Explanations, or the Institute of Economic or Political Explanations. Or even Conspiratorial Explanations across the street. That place has become quite popular since Mr. Agnew was vice president."

"No, I'm in the right building," I said boldly. "You must have something here on some historical explanations of some of the characteristics of the mass media."

"Certainly, but they haven't been really considered for generations. I mean we get an occasional tourist or curiosity seeker, but you must realize that history really isn't too much in vogue now. We haven't had any serious interest in this place since, let's see, it was the summer of '71, when the Pentagon Papers were published. All sorts of lawyer fellows and government men were running about looking for historical explanations of press freedom. But since then, well, Ralph and I have had this place pretty much to ourselves, haven't we?"

I looked around, expecting to see another gnome-like figure standing in the shadows of the stairwell behind me. But my attention was drawn instead to a soft purring at my feet, as a large tomcat with sparkling green eyes rubbed his back against my leg. That was obviously Ralph, and he was leaving a calling card of long gray hairs on my blue suit.

It seemed strange having to explain to the curator of the Institute of Historical Explanations why I wanted to get some answers in this place. He, of all people, should know. But it seemed I wasn't going to get his attention

unless I did. So as Jonas Farthing stared rather longingly at his cat and companion, I attempted to explain what I was after.

"I guess it is rather odd for a college sophomore to come bursting in seeking historical explanations for some of the things the mass media do today, but I really believe that much of the behavior of many of the media institutions is governed by things that have long since passed. I mean, like why do newspapers use headlines? I asked an editor once. He told me they used headlines to attract the reader's attention. People will buy a newspaper that has an interesting front page, he said. But that answer really didn't make any sense. Nearly all daily newspapers are home-delivered. People buy them by the week or by the month and never really see the front page before they pick the paper up off their doorstep. When I asked him about that, well . . . I didn't get too far. I don't know for sure, but I bet that at one time newspapers were sold on the street and an attractive front page was important for sales. So headlines did have a purpose—once. But I wonder if times haven't changed a bit?"

As I began to get wound up, Jonas became less interested in his cat and more interested in the stranger who had darkened his normally quiet doorway.

"And there are other questions as well that seem to have no satisfactory answer. Why does the press insist on a standard of objectivity? If they weren't objective, media men say, the press would lose its credibility, and no one would read newspapers or watch television. But people read magazines and even some TV programs that aren't objective without worrying about credibility. Or why is our press supported by advertising and not by political parties or the government, as it is in other nations? Why does the government regulate broadcasting and not newspapers? There are just lots of questions I think you can answer right here in this building. And that's why I'm here."

"You seem to know your own mind, all right," Jonas said. And for a moment I thought I saw a twinkle in his eye.

"A lot of people try to find all the answers about the press in politics or economics. Some even look for sociological explanations. And since that fellow McLuhan began writing books there has even been talk of expanding the media room at the Institute of Technological Explanations. All there is now is a little alcove off the communications devices gallery. But I agree, I think history has many answers to some of the questions about the way the media developed, or why certain things are done." He smiled and began to walk past me toward the staircase in the hallway.

"Come on with me and we'll see if we can't find some of your answers."

As Jonas walked out into the hallway he stopped abruptly, turned, and his face took on a much more serious look.

"You know a lot of people think that by studying the past they can find out why things happened. They can't. History doesn't reveal the cause of anything. Oh, we have lots of relics and documents and artifacts and other historical material in this building that will suggest reasons or causes. But we can't be certain. For one thing we're looking at the past through today's perspective, with all the prejudices and preconceptions of today. Also, there are still a lot of pieces of our past missing—we know what some of

them are, but there are others we have no knowledge of at all. So if you've come here for assurances and certainties, my boy, we don't have any to offer. We can tell you some of the things that happened, and we can suggest some reasons—this is where the interpretation comes in. But we offer no revealed truth. If you're looking for that, well, the fellows down the street in Sociological Explanations and some of the other newer institutes, they claim they have the answers. But we don't. All we can give out is educated guesses."

As I nodded in agreement, he wheeled around in a way that belied his nearly seventy years and headed up the stairs with Ralph leading the way, leaping from one step to the next.

"The media, ay We haven't been in that room in some time, have we, Ralph? Now that key is on the small key ring. . . ."

After climbing three flights of stairs, we turned down a long dimly lit hallway.

"This room is 'explanations of war,' Jonas said, pointing to a green door. The one right next to it is 'explanations of peace.' First one's much bigger. That one down at the end is the 'rise and fall of empires and nations.' Across from that is 'explanations of violence.' Now we've had a lot of use of that lately. Here we are at explanations of media institutions and characteristics. And if I have the right key—there we go."

The light he switched on revealed a large room cluttered with display cases, bookshelves, and packing cases.

"As you can see, we haven't even unpacked everything from the last move we made."

In the rear corner there was a large stack of what appeared to be newspapers, yellowed and tattered at the edges but seemingly readable. Next to this pile was a stack of magazines and a box that had broken open and spilled recording tapes out onto the floor. Everything was dusty and my first inclination was to sneeze, especially when my guide took a rag off the table and began waving it at cases and shelves, raising the dust momentarily so it might resettle in another place. It was not what I expected, I guess. I was more used to the brightly lit and, I suppose, sterile galleries and display rooms in modern museums. But it seemed somewhat fitting. If we were going to peer into the past, it should be in a room like this and not in one made of antiseptic formica and stainless steel. As Jonas sat down, he slid a large book from the opposite side of the long dusty wooden table and began to thumb through it.

"This is how it all began," he said. "The Gutenberg Bible, printed in the 1450s in Germany, the first book printed with movable type. You just can't imagine the impact the development of movable type had on civilization. Until that time, all books and pamphlets were copied by hand. The price of the second and third copy was as much as the original. The cost was in the handwriting. With printing, while the cost of initially setting the type was high, the price of copies was relatively low. So until printing was perfected it was not possible to produce books and reports and pamphlets cheaply enough to reach the general public. Later, much later, this low cost would stimulate mass education as the availability of inexpensive material gave people the incentive to learn to read."

As Jonas talked, I thought about something sociologist Robert Park had written—that if men are human because they can talk, they are civilized because they can read.

“And the more readers, the more sales of books or pamphlets,” Jonas continued, “which in turn lowered the cost of each item. Printing revolutionized our world and ultimately made the mass media a reality. I often wonder what would have happened if television had been invented before the printing press,” Jonas said, staring off across the room at what appeared to be a vintage 1939 television set with a screen not much bigger than the bottom of a drinking glass. “We would probably have had live pictures of Columbus discovering America,” he mumbled to Ralph.

“When were the first newspapers printed?” I asked.

“In Europe on the continent in about 1609, in England in about 1621. The newspaper was really the first new thing that was produced by printing. Everything else that was printed had been published before by hand, but the newspaper was a brand new idea. It was a creature of the needs and wants of the people, people who wanted to know what was happening. At first, the newspapers sold in England reported only foreign happenings—they were called *corantos* or news books. It wasn’t until 1640 that the first newspaper that reported domestic affairs—*Diurnal Occurrences*—appeared. There was so much going on at that time. Elizabeth’s reign had ended earlier in the century and the Stuart kings had ascended to the monarchy. England was reviving her maritime power. Parts of the New World were still under exploration. Politics was becoming very important to the people. The balladeers and broadside peddlers could not meet the demand for information. In other words, there was a need for some kind of publication that would bring to the people the intelligence they needed and wanted. Hence the newspaper was born. And perhaps that is an important lesson—that the press developed in response to a need for the cheap and rapid dissemination of information.

“The same was true in this country. A different kind of need arose along the Atlantic coast, a need for information about commerce, business, and shipping. Merchants wanted to inform buyers about their wares. Printers responded. The first was Benjamin Harris, who in 1690 published *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestic*. This might have been our first newspaper—except it was banned after the first issue.”

“Why?” I wondered out loud.

“Harris was a rascal. He printed the truth as he saw it. His newspaper appealed to the emotions rather than the reason of his readers. His comments about the British Indian allies were construed to be criticism of the government’s colonial policy. He was accused of bad taste when he reported that the French king had been taking immoral liberties with a married woman (not his wife) and this scandalized the local clergy. The government ostensibly stopped his second issue because he had violated a 1662 Massachusetts statute that required prior government approval of what was printed. But it’s hard to imagine that the colonial government would have approved of Harris’ conception of journalism. It wasn’t for fourteen years more, in April of 1704, that the next American newspaper appeared—

The Boston News-Letter.

Published by Authority.

From Monday April 17. to Holiday April 24 1704.

Let the Flying-Post from Decemb. 2d. to 4th. 1703.

Letters from Scotland bring us the Copy of a Sheet lately Printed there, Intituled, *A Proposition for a Mission to Scotland. In a Letter from a Christian in that Country, to his Friends in this Country, concerning the present Danger of the Kingdom and of the Protestant Religion.*

This Letter takes Notice, That the Papists swarm in that Nation, that they tractick more avowedly than formerly, and that of late many Scores of Priests & Jesuites are come thither from France, and gone to the North, to the Highlands & other places of the Country. That the Ministers of the Highlands and North give in large Lists of them to the Committee of the General Assembly, to be laid before the Privy-Council.

It likewise observes, that a great Number of other ill-affected persons are come over from France, under pretence of accepting her Majesty's Gracious Indemnity; but, in reality, to increase Divisions in the Nation, and to entertain a Correspondence with France. That their ill Intentions are evident from their talking big, their owning the Interest of the pretended King James VIII. their secret Cabals, and their buying up of Arms and Ammunition; whereas they can had them.

To this he adds the late Writings and Actions of some ill-affected persons, many of whom are for that Pretender; that several of them have declared they had rather embrace Popery than conform to the present Government; that they refuse to pray for the Queen, but use the ambiguous word Sovereign; and some of them pray in specific Words for the King and Royal Family; and the contemptible and generous Prince who has shew'd them so much Kindness. He likewise takes notice of Letters, not long ago found in Cypher, & directed to a Person lately come thither from St. Germain.

He says that the greatest Jacobites, who will not quarrel themselves by taking the Oath to Her Majesty, do now with the Papists and their Conspirations from St. Germain set up for the Liberty of the Subject, contrary to their own Principles, but merely to keep up a Division in the Nation. He adds, that they aggravate those things which the People complain of, as to England's refusing to allow them a freedom of Trade, &c. and do all they can to foment Divisions betwixt the Nations, & to obstruct a Redress of those things complain'd of.

The Jacobites, he says, do all they can to persuade the Nation that their pretended King is a Protestant in his Heart, tho' he does not declare it while under the Power of France; that he is acquainted with the Mistakes of his Father's Government, will govern it more according to Law, and order himself to his Subjects.

They magnify the Strength of their own Party, and the Weakness and Divisions of the other, in order to facilitate and hasten their Undertaking; they argue themselves out of their Fears, and into the highest assurance of accomplishing their purpose.

From all this he infers, That they have hopes of Assistance from France, otherwise they would never be so impudent; and he gives Reasons for his Apprehensions that the French King may send Troops thither this Winter, 1. Because the English & Dutch will not then be at Sea to oppose them. 2. He can then best spare them, the Season of Action beyond Sea being over. 3. The Expectation given him of a considerable number to join them, may encourage him to the undertaking with fewer Men, if he can but send over a sufficient number of Officers with Arms and Ammunition.

He endeavours in the rest of his Letters to answer the foolish Pretences of the Pretender's being a Protestant and that he will govern us according to Law. He says, that being bred up in the Religion and Politics of France, he is by Education a Rated Enemy to our Liberty and Religion. That the Obligations which he and his Family owe to the French King, must necessarily make him to be wholly at his Devotion, and to follow his Example: that if he sit upon the Throne, the three Nations must be oblig'd to pay the Debt which he owes the French King for the Education of himself; and for Entertaining his supplic'd Father and his Family. And since the King must restore them by his Troops, if ever he be restor'd, he will see to secure his own Debt, before those Troops leave Britain. The Pretender being a good Proficient in the French and Spanish Schools, he will never think himself sufficiently aveng'd, but by the utter Ruine of his Protestant Subjects, both of Heretics and Traitors.

The late Queen, his pretended Mother, who in cold Blood when the wif Queen of Austria, advis'd to turn the West of Scotland into a hunting Field, will be then for doing so by the greater part of the Nation; and, no doubt, is as Pains to have her pretended Son educated to her own Mind: Therefore, he says, it were a great Madness in the Nation to take a Prince bred up in the horrid School of Ingratitude, Persecution and Cruelty, and fill'd with Rage and Envy. The Jacobites, he says, both in Scotland and at St. Germain, are impatient under their present Straits, and, knowing their Circumstances cannot be much worse than they are, at present, are the more inclinable to the Undertaking. He adds, That the French King knows there cannot be a more effectual way for himself to arrive at the Universal Monarchy, and so ruin the Protestant Interest, than by setting up the Pretender upon the Throne of Great Britain, he will in all probability attempt it; and tho' he should be persuaded that the Design would miscarry in the end, yet he cannot but reap some Advantage by unrolling the three Nations.

From all this the Author concludes it to be the Interest of the Nation, to provide for self defence; and says, that as many have already taken the Alarm, and are furnishing themselves with Arms and Ammunition, he hopes the Government will not only allow it, but encourage it, since the Nation ought all to appear as one Man in the Defence.

The Bettmann Archive, Inc.

America's first newspaper to last more than one edition, the *Boston News-Letter* was the only newspaper in the Colonies for fifteen years. In the first issue, the editor relied heavily on clippings from London newspapers for much of his news. The paper was not controversial, and not very interesting, either.

John Campbell's *Boston News-Letter*. But listen to me rambling on. You said you had some questions. Where do you want to begin?"

"Press freedom," I said. "You mentioned it earlier, and your story about Benjamin Harris fascinates me. What happened between 1690 and today? We don't need government approval any more for what we print. Why do we have this freedom now?"

"Oh, that's a fairly easy one," he replied, motioning me over to the long table where he was seated. "But we have to go back quite a ways." I sat down and began to listen.

"It is simplest to say that the American press—and I am talking about print media such as newspapers, books, and magazines now—is guaranteed its freedom by the First Amendment to the Constitution. You recall:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; of abridging the freedom of the speech, or of the press; of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Those words were written almost two hundred years ago by James Madison and other members of our first Congress. The amendment was approved by the people in 1791. But this explanation of why the press is free is deceptively simple, because the handful of words that is the First Amendment embodies a good deal more than the thinking of even a great statesman like Madison.

"The men who constructed our government, who wrote our constitution during that hot summer in Philadelphia in 1787, brought with them a long and rich experience in the relationship of the government and the press. It was no accident that both the national leaders and the people of this nation believed that some guarantee of press freedom should be included in our Constitution. From the dawn of printing in Great Britain, and later on this continent, men had struggled with the government to unshackle their printing presses. You could say that when William Caxton set up the first press in England in 1476 the press was completely free—there were no restraints at all. But the history of the past 500 years or so has been one of trying to regain that freedom. For in less than sixty years after Caxton began printing, the British government, fearful of the social force of printing, passed laws that prohibited the publication of certain books and required printers to get royal permission before setting up a printing shop. The concept of 'prior restraint' or licensing, made law by Henry the Eighth in 1534 still lives, as we can see by the government attempts in 1971 to stop the publication of the Pentagon Papers.

"Other Tudor monarchs used different schemes to control the printers. In 1557 Queen Mary—they called her Bloody Mary for her purge of Protestants in the realm—established the Stationers Company. This was a nifty idea that appealed to man's basic greed and financially rewarded printers for censoring the members of their own ranks. A printer who was a member of the company was given the exclusive right—a monopoly—to print a certain kind of book. One member printed all the spelling books, another all the grammar books, another all the Bibles, and so on. In return for these

government-enforced monopolies, the Stationers Company (whose members were the only *authorized* printers in the land) sought out bootleg printers for the crown—and for themselves, since pirate printers cut into their income as well. Weekly searches of all London printing houses were made, and reports of work in progress, the identity of customers, and the names of employees were prepared and made available to the crown.”

“This was kind of like a union,” I said.

“A very closed union that was in league with the government. But the agency lasted for more than 100 years as an effective sanction on the press.

“It was Mary’s half-sister, Elizabeth, who made the most effective use of one of the most hated of all devices to censor the press. This was the infamous Star Chamber, originally a tribunal set up to protect the public, which met in a ‘starred chamber’ in Westminster. That’s where it got its name. But its infamous reputation came later, in the last half of the sixteenth century as writers and printers were brought before the court to answer charges of publishing criticism of the government, or for attacks upon the Stationers Company, or for heretical writing against the established church. The defendants in these cases didn’t enjoy the normal protections that most British subjects could expect in a court even in the 1500s. They would be tortured or jailed until they confessed—or remain in prison permanently if they were reluctant to admit their ‘crimes.’ Printers were often arrested without warrants, on the basis of rumors or suspicion. Although the court was unable to hand down capital punishments, frequently the penalties short of death included being branded on the face with a hot iron, having an ear cut off or a nose slit, and spending hours or days in the pillory in Westminster. This was a brutal period for printers and writers who chose to express unpopular views.”

“But why? Why did the government take such strict measures against the press—why did it seek to control all printing?” I asked.

“The best explanation is fear, fear of new ideas. Justice William O. Douglas said some years back that ideas are dangerous, the most dangerous things in the world, because they are haunting and enduring. The crown claimed it was controlling the press in the interest of public safety. Alien ideas could produce unhappiness and dissent, and dissent could in turn produce trouble and violence. To keep people happy and safe, alien ideas should not be expressed. This is an over-simplification, but it was the basic philosophy of the Tudor and later the Stuart rulers. And they truly believed it—that they were playing the role of benevolent monarchs, looking out for the well-being of their people. And most British citizens admired the government. So perhaps they were right. As it turned out, it was the spread of new ideas that later brought the rigid system of controls down around their heads.”

“You mean the people revolted?”

“Not really, in the sense of that word today. But men like John Milton, William Walwyn, Richard Overton, and John Lilburne made the people aware of the values of free discussion. Milton, for example, in his *Areopagitica*, written in 1644, made an eloquent plea for liberty of discussion. ‘Give the people a chance to choose between many points of view; we need

a market place of ideas,' he wrote. Because man is rational, Milton said, he will always embrace the truth—and reject that which is false. He wrote it this way:

. . . though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her (truth) and falsehood grapple; whoever knew truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?

"Milton was arguing that the government need not protect the people—that people are smart enough to protect themselves. His words, however, had very little impact in the mid-seventeenth century. One wonders how much he himself believed them. He turned to censoring publications for the government a few years later."

"Nothing like having the courage of your convictions," I said.

"These were hard times for all. None of the writers mentioned—Walwyn, who argued for press freedom and religious toleration; Overton, who also saw liberty of press as a basic part to religious freedom; and Lilburne—brought about significant changes. But they succeeded in planting a seed that took root and would blossom later.

"In the 1720s a series of essays was written by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon under the pen name Cato. (Few authors used their real names in those days.) The essays—they are on that shelf over there," he said, pointing to a dusty bundle of letters, "were first published in the *London Journal* between 1720 and 1723, and were republished widely in other newspapers and in book form in 1724. Cato caught the imagination of citizens in both Britain and America with his readable and convincing arguments and theories on religious toleration, liberty, representative government, and freedom of expression."

"Why did so much of the early writing on press freedom stem from arguments on religious toleration?" I asked. "With Cato and the earlier writers, religion seemed almost more important than liberty of expression."

"That's a good question, and points up something we should remember about freedom of expression. Throughout history, those who argued strongest for liberty of speech and press were men who had things to say about controversial religious or political or economic issues. To them, freedom of expression was only a means to an end. Few men have been provoked to the defense of freedom of expression solely by deep philosophical considerations. To most, it was a very practical matter. Milton, for example, wanted the divorce laws in Britain made more flexible. When he was criticized in Parliament for writing an unlicensed pamphlet about divorce, he responded with his plea for press freedom. In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries, religious toleration was perhaps the most important topic in Britain. But in order to safely speak one's views on the topic, liberty of speech was required.

"This pattern has been repeated throughout history. Freedom of expression generally has been sought as a means to an end. When the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* argued strongly for freedom of expression in the summer of 1971, they did so not because of basic philosophical

principles, but because they had something to say about the Vietnam war.

"But back to Cato. Even these letters were not the spark of an armed revolt in Britain. Slowly, in both Great Britain and America, people began to demand more and more freedom of expression. And they got it. Our American experience was parallel to the British problems in many ways. After all, the British were in the position of either making or influencing most of our early press regulations. Licensing ended in Great Britain in 1694 when Parliament refused to extend the Licensing Act. But it lasted a bit longer here, until the 1720s. And it died in a far more glorious fashion, with publisher James Franklin's defiance of a Massachusetts General Court order that he not publish a newspaper without government approval."

"Was James Franklin related to Benjamin Franklin?"

"He was Ben's older brother. In 1721 when James began publishing the unlicensed *New England Courant*, all other newspapers in the colonies were published 'by authority' of the government. That is, the contents of each edition were approved by the government. Franklin refused to get permission and helped establish the tradition of editorial independence in this country. At that time Puritan thought dominated the area and when Franklin began printing political and religious satire, he ran afoul of both the government and the church. His attacks on the government were varied, but his most galling criticism centered on the colony's actions against coastal raiders. After publishing a brief notice in 1722 that the government was outfitting a ship to go after the coastal pirates 'sometime this month, wind and weather permitting,' Franklin was hauled before the General Court and held in contempt for affronting the government. He successfully alienated the Puritan clergy when he attacked Increase and Cotton Mather, (you remember them from freshman English) the brilliant but strong-willed disciplinarians of the church who were encouraging citizen support of the first crude attempts at smallpox vaccination. James used the inoculation controversy to attack the Mathers and succeeded in capturing public opinion. The people admired Franklin for printing what many of them thought but were fearful of saying.

"After his jail sentence on the contempt charge, Franklin continued his policy of mockery and innuendo. Again the government moved in and this time prohibited him from ever again publishing the *Courant* or any other paper or pamphlet without the supervision of the Secretary of the Province. James flouted the order, filling the next issue with fresh aspersion. Then he discreetly went into hiding, making brother Ben the official publisher of the newspaper. James was later captured but went free when a grand jury of local citizens ruled that the government's charges against the maverick printer were groundless. So through James Franklin's independence and tenacity, prior restraint of the press was effectively dead in the colonies."

"Then it was in the 1720s that the American press became free?"

"Not really; other battles were left to be won. The question of sedition or seditious libel, for example, was not resolved for about thirteen years until the case of John Peter Zenger."

"What's sedition?"

"This is sedition," Jonas said, holding up a December 3, 1733 edition of the *New York Weekly Journal*. "Or at least New York Governor William

Cosby thought it was sedition," he added, pointing to a story that criticized the governor for allowing French warships to spy on the colonial defenses along the coastline.

"Simply speaking, sedition is criticism of the government, libeling the state, the government, or its leaders. This legal device was used effectively in Great Britain for centuries to stifle criticism. Some say it was the most effective weapon ever used against the press. It was never as effective here, though. And one of the reasons was the Zenger case, which while frequently overrated as a legal triumph, nevertheless remains a great inspirational victory in the press war against censorship.

"Freedom of the press really was not the substantive issue in the case. Again, press freedom was just a means to an end. Money was what the battle was all about, specifically the fees collected by the state after William Cosby was appointed governor, but before he arrived in New York from England. Both he and his predecessor laid claim to this money. Also at issue was money from the sale of public lands, which Cosby hoped to keep for himself. Opposition to the new governor was headed by Lewis Morris, chief justice of the colonial court until he was removed by Cosby, a powerful man interested in the state's politics and its economic promise. John Peter Zenger was the man in the middle, an immigrant printer hired by Morris to publish an anti-Cosby newspaper, the *New York Weekly Journal*. With the aid of Morris associates James Alexander and William Smith, Zenger did his job well, so well, in fact, that in November of 1734, Cosby had the printer arrested and charged with publishing 'scandalous, virulent, and seditious reflections upon the government.'

"When Zenger's trial began almost a year later, one of the two judges on the bench was Cosby's hand-picked chief justice, James Delancey. Smith and Alexander, set to defend Zenger, were disbarred by Delancey when they attacked the legality of the proceeding. Andrew Hamilton of Philadelphia, the F. Lee Bailey of the 1730s, was hired to replace the two New Yorkers. Hamilton, in his eighties, with shoulder-length white hair, opened the trial by admitting that his client had published and printed the newspapers the government claimed to be seditious, an admission that immediately shocked the assembly of spectators. For in those days, that was about the only issue the jury had to decide—whether the accused had published the material. The judges, in this case Cosby men, decided whether the articles were seditious or not. And even the defense of truth was not permitted. It was reasoned that true criticism of the government, which was often difficult to refute, was more serious than false criticism, which could easily be denied. Hence the greater the truth, the greater the libel.

"But Hamilton argued the case of liberty, of the right of free men to publish or speak the truth. In the face of frequent objections from both the prosecutor and the bench, the aging attorney played to the jury. Using arguments first spoken by Milton, Walwyn, Lilburne, and Cato, Hamilton, with a mild voice and a courtly manner, appealed to the twelve citizens to find his client innocent unless they thought the words published by Zenger to be false, malicious, and seditious. And his appeal to liberty of the press was heard. Zenger was freed by the jury."

"Did this end the threat of sedition prosecutions?" I asked.

"Realistically it did, but not legally. The Zenger verdict flew in the face of the established law of the time. His acquittal did nothing to change the law. But it was fair warning to the government that a new mood was prevalent and that the people were not disposed to such kinds of trials. It was the last sedition prosecution in the colonies.

"But press harassment did not end. Fearing that juries would fail to respond properly, colonial legislatures and assemblies found that they could more effectively deal with a 'noxious' press. So instead of indictments for seditious libel or for publishing without a license, printers found themselves with legislative contempt citations hanging over their heads. And this was an effective tool of suppression in many instances in the years before the revolution.

"So you can see that the men who first erected our frail government had much experience to draw on when they considered the relationship between the press and the government. From their writings and their speeches, it is fairly evident that they believed something was needed to prevent a repeat of many of these undesirable experiences. And so in most state constitutions and state charters, and in the Constitution as well, principles of freedom of the press were established for all to see."

"But isn't the First Amendment really pretty vague? I mean, what does it mean, 'no law abridging freedom of speech or of the press'?" This seemed a fair question at this point, I thought.

"It's hard to say what it means. There is even some pretty good evidence that the so-called Founding Fathers didn't know what they meant when they wrote and approved the declaration. Many people today say the First Amendment means what the United States Supreme Court says it means. Others say freedom of the press is what the people will tolerate. And when the people are unwilling to tolerate unpopular opinions, as in the late 1790s and during World War I, freedom of the press means very little. Some people take an absolute position: no law means no law; the government can take no action against the press. Other people think that freedom of the press only prohibits prior restraint—censoring something before it is printed at least once. But on occasion the government—as in the case involving the Pentagon Papers—has asserted that even prior censorship is permissible under the First Amendment. You asked a tough question, one that can better be answered by a constitutional scholar, not the fuzzy-headed curator of this institute. Let's move along to some more history."

Jonas' cop-out on the First Amendment issue seemed honest enough, but there were other aspects of government-press relations I wanted to pursue. I said, "The mass media and the government seem to have associations that go beyond the censor-publisher role. It seems to me that the press spends an incredible amount of time and space talking about government and politics—sometimes, I think, out of proportion to the interest the people have in those topics."

"I would agree, but a democracy supposedly depends on an informed electorate," Jonas reminded me, "and the press is the primary means—often the only one—by which a citizen can find out about his government."

"I suppose that is true," I answered, "and I suppose the government is so

big today, so much a part of everyone's life, that there is a lot to say about what is or isn't going on. Has the press always been this interested in the government?"

"Yes. In fact for many years, it was almost a part of government. It was certainly a part of the political process. Many of our newspapers were supported by political parties and government subsidies. And they reflected their partisan funding. The press was a part of the government process. It was not the cool, dispassionate observer that sits in the top row and comments on the action. It was a part of the action. But that is getting ahead of the story. Let's go back a few hundred years. Did you ever hear of Daniel Defoe?"

"Sure, he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*."

"How about Henry Fielding and Jonathan Swift?"

"British novelists—Fielding wrote *Tom Jones* and *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels*."

"Did you know they were also political essayists who in the 1700s edited newspapers and wrote partisan columns and essays? They were following a tradition almost as old as printing itself. Printing was a means to an end for most publishers. It wasn't really a business. Pamphlets or broadsides and even some early newspapers were published because the editors or publishers had something to say.

"In our own country, the press took a political role from the beginning. Many people believe that without the American press our revolution might never have occurred. In Boston, Sam Adams used the *Boston Gazette* in the 1760s and 70s to take his revolutionary message to the people. The newspaper told the people—and it's unimportant now whether it was true or not—that the British ignored the basic rights of the colonists, that the king had broken a contract and the colonies were no longer obligated to the Crown. Only by revolution, Adams told his readers, could America develop its full promise, its rightful destiny. A shooting incident in Boston became the Boston Massacre in the columns of the revolutionary newspapers. All those who said revolution was too harsh were branded traitors in the press. We had a choice, Adams said, between independence and serfdom.

"Other less passionate writers played an equally important role in politicizing the people. James Dickinson, for example, wrote a series of 12 letters that were published in 1767 in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*. These 'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania' were widely republished throughout the thirteen colonies in the years before the revolution. Dickinson didn't want revolution, but he paved the way for it with his rational, tempered, economic arguments about the value of independence rather than colonial rule."

"I can't imagine that enough people could read in those days that these kinds of publications would make much difference," I said.

"Two points are important. The leaders of the various political groups could read, as could many of their active followers. More importantly, newspapers and pamphlets were read aloud in taverns and alehouses. This was common practice in this age. Reading wasn't required to get the

messages of Adams or Dickinson.

“During the war, the American press helped sustain the spirit of the people. Make no doubt about it, it was a partisan press. Here,” he said, “take a look at this.”

Jonas got up, walked over to a small stack of yellowed newspapers and pulled out a single copy. As he re-seated himself in the padded leather chair, I could see he had a copy of the *Massachusetts Spy*. It was dated May 3, 1775.

“The newspaper was published by Isaiah Thomas, America’s first media baron, I suppose. By the end of the revolution Thomas employed 150 men and had seven printing presses. But be that as it may, read his description of the first battle of the Revolution:

AMERICANS! forever bear in mind the BATTLE OF LEXINGTON!—where British troops, unmolested and unprovoked, wantonly and in a most inhuman manner, fired upon and killed a number of our countrymen, then robbed, ransacked, and burnt their houses! Nor could the tears of defenseless women, some of them were in the pains of childbirth, the cries of helpless babes, nor the prayers of old age confined to beds of sickness, appease their thirst for blood!—or divert them from their design of MURDER AND ROBBERY!

“As your generation might say, that’s pretty heavy stuff that bears only a faint resemblance to the facts. But the facts didn’t stand in the way of the press in attempting to get people involved in the struggle. After the war, the press played an important role in setting up the new government. Newspapers became the platform for writers and essayists with ideas about a new constitution and how the government should be established. And of course the editors had ideas of their own.

“It was in 1787 and 1788 that a most remarkable series of articles appeared, first in the *New York Independent Journal*, and later in newspapers in virtually every state. These were the *Federalist* papers, written by James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton, which strongly supported the newly drafted constitution. It’s hard to say how much impact those essays had on people who were undecided about the new constitution. Those who opposed the new government structure also published arguments. But using the popular press as a forum for the debate on this issue is really quite remarkable. To me this is a very practical use of the media as an instrument to disseminate ideas and information.”

“Were the newspapers aligned with political parties in those days?” I asked.

“Not political parties as we know them, for they didn’t exist. People tended to be oriented toward issues rather than parties and the press would actively take stands on these issues. At the time when the same people began to find themselves together on many issues—especially the constitutional one—political parties began to emerge.

“Many historians have labeled the 1790s the ‘dark ages’ of American journalism because the press became so partisan and so bitter. But the

nature of the newspapers in that era, while dramatically different from the press of today, was only slightly out of character for the time. And the acid and often vicious columns and tracts published by the press varied only slightly from the editorials of, say, the Hearst press in the 1930s. It was a rollicking time, all right."

"How did the advertisers take to such writing and close involvement with politics? Didn't they protest?"

"These newspapers weren't supported primarily by advertising. Hardly any were in those days. And this perhaps is what bothers many people about the journalism of the day. Taking money from a political party and then publishing its propaganda is somehow considered dirty. But taking money from business and industry and then publishing *its* propaganda is not considered dirty. To be honest, this doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. But we can talk about that later. Let me tell you a little more about the press of the period.

"There were two important political parties, and each had its newspapers. The Federalist party, the party of John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and Noah Webster . . ."

"Didn't he . . . ?"

"Yes, he is the 'dictionary Webster.' The Federalists had several newspapers, some directly supported by the party. John Fenno was the editor of the *Gazette of the United States*, which was sponsored and supported by Hamilton. And William Cobbett, a British refugee, published *Porcupine's Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, a brash mouthpiece for the aristocratic and nationalistic ideals of the Federalists. Cobbett used the pseudonym Peter Porcupine, and his newspaper fairly bristled (my goodness, a pun) with innuendo, insult, and accusations against the opposition, the Anti-Federalists or the Republicans. And the smear tactics of the Federalists were duplicated in kind by Phillip Freneau's *National Gazette*, directly subsidized by Thomas Jefferson and the Republicans, and Benjamin Bache's *Philadelphia Aurora*. Bache was perhaps the most brash and caustic of the young editors. He even attacked the character of George Washington, a Federalist who had nearly attained sainthood by 1796. 'If ever a nation was debauched by a man,' Bache wrote, 'the American nation was debauched by Washington.' This was close to treason in the eyes of many, but was not untypical of the kind of writing that appeared in these newspapers. And such reports were widely printed in lesser journals throughout the nation as editors freely picked up the material from copies of these newspapers.

"While the violent side of the partisanship subsided after 1800, much of the press remained at least partially supported by political parties or government until about 1850. At the federal level, the party in power would use patronage—printing contracts primarily—to underwrite newspapers that would in turn support that party. Such schemes were duplicated in states as well. Some newspapers became mouthpieces for the party. But others, like the *National Intelligencer* in Washington, did not sell their independence for political support. They remained impartial in most instances, and even sometimes fearlessly criticized their benefactors if they disagreed with the policies that were undertaken."

"It seems hard to believe that any newspaper could remain impartial in such circumstances. As a reader I would find it difficult to trust a newspaper report about a government program when I knew the newspaper was on the government payroll," I said.

"Do you believe all you read now about government?" Jonas asked. "That's an unfair question that really doesn't answer your question. There was obviously some bias. But the reader had a choice. He could pick from various versions of what happened. And from these versions he could try to reconstruct the truth. Today the reader is given but one version—the so-called objective version. Let me read you something a man named V. O. Key wrote in a book called *Public Opinion and American Democracy*:

The partisan press put a degree of order into the confusing world of politics. The modern press tends to convey all its disorders. Only the best informed reader, who also happens to read one of the best papers, can place events into a meaningful scheme. In a sense the press has moved from the role of actor to that of narrator.

"Bringing order to chaos—this is a virtue, believe me, in political reporting. But there was another advantage to government or political support for the press. The quality and quantity of reporting of government proceedings, especially those of Congress, was very high. With no need to attract large audiences with popular reading fare, publishers of patronage newspapers could concentrate on giving readers comprehensive if often one-sided reports of government debates and actions. With each party having at least one newspaper in the capital, these reports found their way to newspaper readers throughout the nation as local editors clipped and republished these reports.

"But all this began to end by the 1850s. There were a number of reasons. Economics was high on the list. The popular penny press that was introduced in the early 1830s demonstrated that a mass audience could be reached with colorful and interesting, even if not very important, news stories. The mass audience made advertising a viable means of support and gave the press a new financial base. But in an appeal to a mass audience, every person has to be considered a potential subscriber, and the publisher who alienates large segments of these readers with strong political views cuts his own economic throat. As one writer has described it, the press moved out of the councils of government and into the carnivals of commerce. Offense to no one was a strategy; commitment to no philosophy evidently was often perceived as a necessity.

"In a newspaper that came to be filled with entertainment items such as human-interest stories, crossword puzzles, and comics, the news of government—the basic diet of the press in the first half of the century—had to compete for space with news from the race track and the police station."

"But the press still maintains a keen interest in government, doesn't it?" I asked. "What about the fabled watchdog role newsmen frequently refer to—the press looking out for the public interest?"

"Quite true; the press does consider itself a watchdog. It and government have tended to be adversaries from the very beginning. In the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries the government was frequently the censor. When the press became more partisan, it was frequently the spokesman for the opposition political party. It was natural for the press to keep its eye on the ruling faction. A watchdog role did evolve, but as much from self-interest as anything else.

"One of the great battles won by the press was the right to attend and report the proceedings of Congress. Our legislative branches were not always as open as they are now. For decades in England the press was barred from the halls of Parliament. Newspapers would report the debates on the basis of information from observers' memories. Some important Parliamentary speeches were even created by the writers, who sought only to catch the flavor of the speaker's remarks while embellishing their reports with fancy and fiction. Often these speeches, created out of whole cloth, were better than the originals given before members of Parliament. And while the press in this country was allowed access to the House of Representatives at the inception of our Republic in 1789, it wasn't until about 1807 that reporters were permitted in the Senate galleries.

"While the affinity of the press to government is an old one, the relationship has changed markedly in the last 120 years. At one time, news of politics and government was interpreted for the reader from a particular philosophical basis. Happenings were reported in terms of their meanings to a political party. The press was a part of the political apparatus of the country, serving not only as machinery of dissemination but also as an integral part of the creation of policies and messages that guided the country. Today the press tries to limit its role to that of observer."

Jonas looked longingly out a dirty cracked window across the room as he spoke what sounded like his final words on the subject.

"Do you mourn the passing of those days?" I asked. "Aren't things really better the way they are now?"

"Who knows?" he said. "At least in those days we knew the editor was bought and paid for. And we knew who did the purchasing. Today, things are not so clear."

"Do you mean someone is buying editors today?"

"Not in the same sense, surely. But don't we delude ourselves a bit when we assert that a press kept by commercial interests is independent, whereas one kept by political interests is not?"

I wasn't convinced. "No single advertiser today can exercise the power over the press that a single political party could in the 1830s. The press today is supported by more than one advertiser. An editor can anger the A&P or the local department store and still survive even without this advertising."

"True, but you assume that all these individual advertisers have diverse vested interests. I'm not willing to concede that. What the editor is forced to bow to today is the spirit of commercialism. That is, he is bound to the philosophy of economics and business. He can afford to alienate the A&P by saying it charges too much for its lettuce and ground beef. But can he afford to alienate all his supermarket advertisers by printing that they all charge too much, or that they victimize blacks, or that they include too much fat in their prepackaged meat? Or, more fundamentally, could he afford to argue that

the government should limit the profits on the sale of food? I doubt it. I think we are both right to an extent. But perhaps we should consider some of the historical considerations that accompanied the change in economic support from politics and patronage to commercialism."

"That was my next question." As I settled back into my chair Jonas got up and walked across the room to a packing case. Dust flew as he removed a tattered tarpaulin from the case and began taking out more old newspapers.

"Here it is," he whispered.

Jonas held a yellowed newspaper printed on both sides of a single sheet a little larger than a piece of typewriter paper.

"This is the first newspaper printed in America, John Campbell's *Boston News-Letter*, printed on April 24, 1704. If you'll note on the back—an advertisement. Commercialism has been with the press from the very beginning."

"I thought you said political parties supported the early press?"

"They did. They supported some papers completely, some partially, and some not at all. But advertising was a part of most newspapers as well. And some editors were able to make ends meet with the money from the few ads and subscription charges. They didn't get rich, mind you."

"You said that political support of newspapers began to die in the 1850s. Is this when commercial support began to take over completely?"

"To be precise, yes . . . and no. In the first place, some newspapers today receive support from political parties or government, generally in small towns or villages. Most governments are required to publish minutes of official proceedings, ordinances, and other legal notices. Usually the local papers are paid to do this, in return for a certain measure of support for the party in power. For example, in a county where there might be two or three weekly newspapers, if the Democrats are in power, the Democratic newspaper is likely to get the job of printing the legal notices and other county printing such as letterhead stationery, envelopes, and so forth. But back to the past.

"It was in the cities that political support for the press first began to break down. Political parties grew rapidly—and parties and party machines became more important to politicians than issues. The party press became reduced to the position of a sort of house organ of the party organization. In large cities, independently oriented newspapers began to break their old allegiances. New sources of funding were sought.

"But commercial support didn't come all at once. The real movement toward advertising as the primary basis of funding began in the 1830s. But even by 1880 the average newspaper received only about half its income from advertising; the remainder came from circulation revenues and other sources. It's important to remember that before advertising could become a solid basis for support of the press, several changes had to occur in both society and in the press itself. First of all, there had to be something to advertise. Until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, we were a nation that subsisted on handcrafted goods, usually made in the same area where they were used or consumed. If you wanted a pair of shoes you went to the village cobbler and ordered a pair of shoes. The industrial revolution

that mechanized the production of goods changed this situation by giving a producer the ability to create far more goods than could be sold locally. To tell consumers outside his city or town about his works, he needed advertising. And newspapers could provide this service. He also needed transportation systems to move both his goods and the newspapers rapidly to distant places. The railroad furnished a means of bringing both goods and advertising media to people scattered throughout the nation. Despite these factors, most manufacturers were reluctant to advertise in a medium that reached only a relative handful of people—and this was the size of the circulation of most American newspapers in the 1820s and 1830s. Few newspapers could boast of more than 1000 subscribers.

“Then, in 1833, a new kind of newspaper appeared on the streets of New York. It was filled not with the typical fare of serious discussions of government or politics or economics, but instead contained news of violent crimes, reports of tragedies and calamities, and other sensational incidents. Although this information was relatively unimportant, what Benjamin Day was doing with his *New York Sun* was not. He was the forerunner of a major change of direction for the American press. His trivial but readable newspaper appealed to many persons who had formerly ignored the press. And it was inexpensive as well. It sold for a penny, five cents less than the other papers. And this made a difference, because while six cents doesn’t sound like much money to the working man of this era, in the 1830s six cents was the price of a quarter pound of bacon or a pint of local whisky. Within six months, the *Sun* had a circulation of 8,000, twice that of its nearest competitor. This was the beginning of the popular press, and the establishment of a standard of journalism that still exists today.

“While Ben Day was the first to use this conception successfully, those who followed improved upon his idea. Most notable of these was James Gordon Bennett, who mastered this style of popular newspapering in his *New York Herald*. Bennett is fondly recalled by one historian for his wild midnight rides down quiet country turnpikes. He would whip his team violently as he careened through town on the dusty roads, yelling in delirious delight, all the while naked as the day he was born. But most historians remember him as the journalist who altered the function of the newspaper from that of a journal of opinion and ideas to a chronicle of the day’s events. His editors were not writers but newsgatherers. His newspaper, which sold for two cents, was spicy, aggressive, and sensational. It was aimed at the common people, many of whom could read such a newspaper by the 1830s. And most importantly, it contained quite a bit of advertising. The readership of these popular newspapers cut through political interests and consisted of a broad base of people. The advertiser who had been forced to put a small ad in many newspapers bought by a few persons could now put a large ad in a single newspaper that was read by many people. By 1836 Bennett’s *Herald* had 20,000 subscribers. By 1860 it had 77,000.

“The notion of the popular press caught on. Other editors in other parts of the country followed suit. The development of the popular press was really the beginning of the end of the era of American journalism, an era in which a newspaper was published because the editor or the publisher had

THE SUN.



NUMBER 1.]

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1883.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

PUBLISHED DAILY,

BY 233 WILLIAM ST. LEA, H. DAY, PROPRIETOR.

The object of this paper is to lay before the public, at a price within the means of every one, ALL THE NEWS OF THE DAY, and at the same time afford an advantageous medium for advertising. The sheet will be enlarged as soon as the increase of advertisements requires it—the price remaining the same.

Yearly subscribers (without the paper) Thirty Dollars per annum—Cash advertising, at the usual prices charged for the city paper.

For advertisements will be received, if paid in advance, at the rate of three dollars per annum.

FOR ALBANY—PASSAGE ONLY &c.

The large and commodious steamboat **COMMERCE**, Capt. R. H. Fitch, will leave the foot of Canal street on Friday, at five o'clock, P. M. for Albany, stopping at the usual landing places to land and receive passengers. Passages \$1. For particulars apply to the Captain on board.

From New York, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays. From Albany, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays. 233

FOR NEWPORT AND PROVIDENCE.

The splendid steamboat **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**, Capt. R. S. Butler, and the **PRESIDENT**, Capt. R. S. Butler, will leave New York at 8 o'clock, P. M. and Providence at 11 o'clock, M. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. For further information apply to the Captain on board, foot of Canal street, or at the office, 11 Broadway.

FOR HARTFORD—PASSAGE ONE DOLLAR.

Transit by DAYTON. The splendid low-pressure steamboat **WATER WITCH**, Capt. Vandervoort, leaves the foot of Calverton street every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning, at 6 o'clock, and arrives in Hartford at 1 o'clock the same evening. Passages One Dollar—meals extra. The above boat leaves Hartford on Wednesdays, Saturdays, at the same hour.

FOR LONDON.

To sail 16th of Sept.—The new packet ship **Montreal**, Charolais, Master, will sail on the 16th inst. For freight or passage, having elegant accommodations, apply to the Captain, on board, Fleet street, or to **JOHN ORISWOLD**, Agent, 69 South st.

FOR LIVERPOOL.

The fast-sailing ship **Thames**, S. Glover, Master, will be ready to receive cargo in a few days, and have dispatch for the earliest accommodations for both cabin and stowage passengers. For freight or passage, apply to **WOOD & THRELKELD**, 127 Maiden lane.

FOR HAYRE.

The packet ship **Ferocious**, Owen, master, will sail on the 8th Sept. For freight or passage apply to the captain on board, W. W. WALLACE, Jr., 69 South st.

FOR LIVERPOOL.

The packet ship **Roscoe**, J. C. Wilson, master, is now in readiness to receive cargo. For freight or passage apply to the captain on board, foot of Maiden lane, or to **SHIB**.

FINN, GRINSELI, & CO. 126 Frost st.

FOR BRISTON, JAN.

The elegant coppered ship **Orbit** will sail on the 10th inst. For freight or passage, having splendid accommodations, with state cabins, apply to **B. ALMAR & CO.** 24 South st.

FOR NEW ORLEANS.

The very fast-sailing coppered ship **Nashville**, Capt. Williams, will sail on the 10th inst. For freight or passage, having handsome accommodations, apply to **E. K. COLLINS**, 69 South st.

FOR NEW ORLEANS.

The ship **Tennessee**, Capt. Brown, will sail on the 10th inst. For freight or passage, having handsome accommodations, apply to **W. S. HOLMES & CO.** 69 South st.

A lighter is in readiness to receive cargo.

AN IRISH CAPTAIN.

"These are no erect pair of planks as any in the three kingdoms," said an officer, observing a pair to a young student of his acquaintance, "and have done execution before now; at the slightest touch, off they go, as erect as honey, without either rusting or dipping. I never traveled without them."

"I never heard of highwaymen in this part of the country."

"Nor I," replied the officer, "and if I had I should not trouble myself to carry the planks on their account—highwaymen are a species of sharks who are not fond of attacking us soldiers; they know we are a little too hard to crack. No, my dear sir, highwaymen know that soldiers have not much money, and what they have they fight for."

"Since that is the case, how come you to travel always with planks?"

"Because," answered the officer, "I find them very useful in accommodating my little difference I may accidentally have with a friend, or which one friend may choose to have with another."

"Do you often settle differences in that way?"

"Why, I was twice out before I arrived at your age. The first time was with a relation of my own, who said that he would contribute with the others towards the purchase of my first commission; so I sent him word that I would be happy to give him one proof of my very next morning, and when we met, I touched him so smartly in the leg, that he has halted ever since. But all his doubts being now removed, he cheerfully contributed his quota with the rest of my relations, and we have both very good friends ever since."

"Pray what gave you occasion for the second?" said the young student.

"How I began originally is more than I can tell," answered the captain; "all I have is, that a large company of us dined together, we sat long, and drank deep, and I went to bed rather in a state of forgetfulness, and was awaked in the morning from a profound sleep, by a gentleman who began a long story; how I had said something that required explanation; and also that I had accidentally given him a blow, but he supposed I had no intention to affront him, and so he continued talking in a roundabout kind of way, without coming to any point. So I was under the necessity of interrupting him, upon my remembrance, Sir, (said I) I am unable to declare, with certainty, whether I had any intention of affronting you or not, because my head is still a little confused, and I have no clear recollection of what passed, nor do I fully comprehend your drift at present, but I conjecture that you wish to have satisfaction; if so, I must beg you will be kind enough to say so at once, and I shall be at your service." Finding himself thus cut short, he named the place and the hour. I met him precisely at the time. His first pistol missed fire, but I hit him in the shoulder. At his second shot, the bullet passed pretty near me, but miss indeed in his hip, and then he declared he was quite satisfied. So I no longer gave a blow the preceding night, and two wounds that morning, upon declaring himself satisfied, I said I was contented."

"You would have been thought very hard to please, if you had made any difficulty."

"I thought so myself," rejoined the captain, "and so the ally sailor, he being carried home in a coach, and I marching from the field of battle on foot."

"Pray, say I ask if you ever was in a battle?"

"No," replied the captain with a sigh, "I never was; I never had that good fortune, though I would give all the money I have in the world for it, and all the money I can save, which is at least twice the sum, to be in one to-morrow."

"Provided you had a good cause?" replied the young student.

"I should not be squeamish respecting the cause, provided I had a good battle; that, my dear, is what is the most essential to a conscientious officer, who wishes to improve himself in his profession. I have much reason, therefore, to wish for a war; and as the present juncture, it would be much to the advantage of the nation in general, so it is dwindling into a country of ploughmen, manufacturers, and merchants. And you must know, Sir, that I am a pretty formidant, having already shot thirteen shots, and I never was hit but once."

"Thirteen! what have you fought thirteen shots?"

"No, no!" replied the captain, "the last shot fired at me completed only my sixth shot."

Wonders of Literature.—Pley and Lion relate that Myraeodon brought out of ivory a chariot, with four wheels and four horses, and a ship with all her tackling, both in so small a compass, that a lark could hide either with its wing. How should we doubt this, when we find it recorded in English history, as a less questionable authenticity, that in the twelfth year of the reign of Edward, a blacksmith of London, of the name of Mark Seaton, made a lock of iron, steel, and brass, of eleven pieces, and a pipe key, all of which only weighed one grain. He also made a chain of gold, of forty-three links, which he fastened to the lock and key, and put it round the neck of a hen, which drew the whole with perfect ease. The chain, key, lock, and hen, altogether weighed but one grain and a half!

Madriana Junis saw at Mevlin in Erabant, a cherry-stone cut into the form of a basket, in it were fourteen pairs of diamonds, the pearls and rubies of which were cut to be glittered with a good eye.

But still more extraordinary than this basket of dice, or any thing we have yet mentioned, must have been a set of tarney chess at Rome, in the time of Pope Paul the Fifth, by one Otho of Mittelbach, who had purchased it from the artist Ovidius Norkingrave. It consisted of seven hundred stones, which were all perfect and complete in every part, yet so small and slender that the whole could be easily enclosed in a case fabricated in a paperer's of the ordinary size. The Pope is said to have himself counted them, but with the help of a pair of spectacles, for they were so very small that he cannot find out the smallest eye. Although his holiness these counted his own eyes of the fact, he did not, we are assured, require of those about him to subscribe to it on the credit of his infallibility; for he gave every one an opportunity of examining and judging of himself, and among the persons that highly favored, particular reference is made to Gaspar Schiboppe, Johannes Faber, a physician of Rome.

Tarimans, of whose skill no more wonderful things are related, is said to have fabricated iron nails, which moved themselves, so minute in size, that a mouse could carry any one in his shoe; and yet it was powerful enough to grind in a single day grain enough for the consumption of eight men.

of Wharton.—A boy in Vermont, accustomed to being asked what was so proper to Whitting, that, as soon as he was by himself, he unconsciously commenced. When asked the matter of his mouth, chest, and lungs were so completely concentrated in the association, he whistled with astonishing brilliancy. A pale countenance, loss of appetite, and almost total prostration of strength, attended and his mother it would seem to death. It was speedily recognized, which was accomplished by placing him in the company of another boy, who had orders to give him a blow on the nose as he began to whistle.

Published on September 3, 1883, *The Sun* was the forerunner of the American popular press. Benjamin Day's stated purpose for his newspaper: "... to lay before the public, at a price within the means of everyone, ALL THE NEWS OF THE DAY, and at the same time afford an advantageous medium for advertising."

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something to say. It was also marked the dawn of a new era, a time when newspapers existed (as they do today) to report what other people say. Journalists of the old era had a certain contempt for news and regarded it as just something to base an editorial on. But news—meaning anything that happened—became the lifeblood of the new journalist.

“Advertising was to become a staple as well. By 1880 the average newspaper devoted twenty-five percent of its space to advertising. By World War I the ratio of news to ads was fifty-fifty. Today, most newspapers carry closer to sixty-five to seventy percent advertising.”

“Isn’t that rather a perversion of the entire scheme? I mean, newspapers began using advertising to support their publication of information. Now it seems the advertising takes up most of the space in the paper.”

“It is a perversion, in more ways than you know. What do you think determines how many pages your newspaper will print on any day?”

“It probably depends on how much news there is to report.”

“Wrong. It depends upon how much advertising there is. The advertising department tells the editorial department how many pages the paper will contain. The news fits in around the ads. The editor paid a high price for his independence from the politician. But let’s finish our story about the popular press, because it explains some other things as well.

“The size and number of newspapers grew dramatically in the last sixty years of the nineteenth century. And many of the characteristics of modern newspapers emerged during these years, often in response to specific needs or problems. The use of headlines, for example, was never a very important aspect of the press until newspapers began competing for street sales. Editors wanted to attract attention to their newspaper and used headlines to do it. By-lines were unheard of until the Civil War. One of the Union army generals was distressed at the publication of information about troop movements before they happened and ordered that all stories about the Union army carry the name of the reporter who wrote them. Lo, the by-line. Many people believe that the inverted pyramid style of journalism in which the writer tries to summarize all the important elements of the story in the first paragraph stemmed from a Civil War era problem. The telegraph was in its infancy when the war broke out in 1861, but the press readily saw its advantages in moving news stories over long distances in short times. War correspondents began to depend heavily on the telegraph, which was faulty at times. To insure that at least the most important elements of the story got through on the wire, they would give those items first, in the initial paragraph. The summary lead was born.”

“Well, what other way could a news story be written, if not with a summary lead?”

“Chronologically is one way: start at the beginning of the story, use the narrative style, and tell what happened. It is much easier for a reader to follow. It is usually more interesting to read because the climax is at the end, not at the beginning, but it takes longer to read—and to send over the wire.”

“It’s hard to imagine that style of journalism,” I volunteered.

“Many foreign newspapers still use it today. It’s very effective. But let’s move along to another important era in the history of the press: what many



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Bennett is shown in this old woodcut preparing the first issue of his *New York Herald* in his attic room. The editor is generally regarded as the father of the concepts of reporting and news gathering.

historians call the development of the mass press. Many elements must merge before a modern mass media system can exist. Readers—you must have lots of them. Technology—you need the means to print many copies very quickly. You must be able to buy your raw materials at a low cost. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw many of these things appear. Literacy grew by leaps and bounds. By 1890 the average American had a fifth-grade education, more than enough education to read a newspaper with. Technology reached a point where the mass production of large numbers of newspapers was possible. Faster presses, new printing processes, new means of typesetting—all these gave the press the ability to increase its volume. And new developments in paper making significantly lowered the cost of newsprint. In 1850 only about 750,000 daily newspapers were printed. By 1890 this number had reached more than 8,300,000.

“The best potential market for the press—the urban areas—grew most rapidly. By 1890 there were three cities with more than one million inhabitants and eight others had more than 250,000. Contrast this with 1840 when only a single city had more than 250,000 people. Improvements in mass production techniques meant more and more businesses and industries needed regional and national distribution of their products. Increased

advertising was one means of expanding distribution. The readers of this era were different as well. For the first time women became an important segment of the audience when leisure time in the home increased as a result of new labor-saving devices. More and more city dwellers found themselves in jobs stamped with a monotonous day-to-day sameness: arising at the same hour, going to the same place of work, doing the same job, and retiring at the same hour. Boredom set in. Excitement and a new life was sought, vicariously if not actually.

"With these conditions at hand, large segments of the American press was ripe for another shift in direction—to an even more gaudy, more sensational, more garish kind of journalism. And in many major cities, a press emerged that saw as its primary goal not the transmission of ideas, not even the reporting of news, but instead the attraction of the hundreds of thousands of bored urban dwellers as readers."

"What advantages did larger circulations have for these newspapers?" I asked.

"Increased circulation meant increased circulation revenue, and more importantly, higher advertising rates, since ad rates are established on the basis of readership. Material was selected for newspapers on the basis of its entertainment value—how exciting or humorous it was. A fresh genre of 'news' developed: women's news, recipes, advice to the lovelorn, society gossip columns, and news of society parties and weddings and dances. Other kinds of 'soft' news crept into the papers also, as editors and publishers battled to gain circulation. Puzzles and games appeared. Cartoons and comics made their debut before the end of the century. News of crime and passion and violence and romance became the standard fare. One historian has asserted that the press of this period grew up in an attempt to capture the newspaper public whose only literature was the family story paper or the cheap novel. The challenge to reporters became to write the news in such a way that it would appeal to fundamental passions.

"Now, not all editors sought such readers. Manton Marble, the editor of the *New York World* in the 1870s, said that there were not 18,000 people in New York City 'to which a well conducted newspaper could offer itself.' If the circulation went above that figure, Marble said, there would be something wrong with the newspaper. But the *World* was losing \$40,000 a year when Marble said this. And his views were probably not shared by most big city publishers and editors.

"The king of this kind of journalism was probably Joseph Pulitzer, and the crown prince was William Randolph Hearst. Or perhaps their titles should be reversed. In any case, the circulation war between Pulitzer's *World* (he bought the paper in 1883) and Hearst's *New York Journal* typified the worst aspects of journalism of the period. It was a circus. Hearst and Pulitzer continually tried to steal staff members from each other. A measure of success was often which paper could put the biggest hoax over on the readers, or which newspaper could publish the most sensational news story. Just look at some of these headlines in the *Journal*," Jonas said, handing me a few 1896 editions of the Hearst newspaper.

"One Mad Blow Kills Child," "Startling Confession of a Wholesale



The lord of San Simeon, William Randolph Hearst, founded a chain of newspapers that still exists today, a nation news service (INS), a major feature syndicate (King Features), and left an indelible mark—or stain, depending on your viewpoint—on American journalism.

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Murderer Who Begs to be Hanged," "Why Young Girls Kill Themselves," and "Strange Things Women Do For Love," were just a few of the headlines that caught my eye.

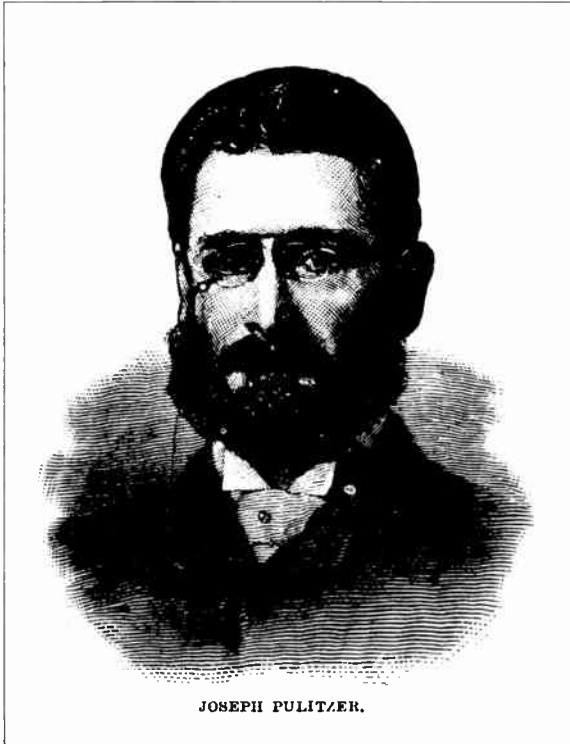
"Looks like interesting reading," I ventured half-laughingly.

"So are police reports. But I don't know how valuable they are. This kind of journalism paid big dividends to both publishers, though, and to many others as well. By the mid-1890s both newspapers had daily circulations above 400,000 and Sunday circulations of more than 600,000. Few newspapers have that circulation even today. The circulation of newspapers in other cities grew proportionately as well. Clearly the mass press, or press for the masses, had arrived. And it brought with it a residual development that was probably far more important than the visible changes in the newspapers. Any guess as to what it might have been?"

The question caught me off guard, as most questions do, I suppose. As I thought, Jonas began neatly stacking some of the newspapers scattered about the table, and Ralph began rubbing his back against my knee.

"It would seem," I said cautiously, "that some of the basic values of the press had changed. I mean, communication of ideas or even news reporting apparently became secondary in many instances."

"Very perceptive, but that was more a symptom of the change rather than



Hearst's New York rival, Joseph Pulitzer, came to Gotham after successfully launching the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* shortly after the Civil War. Today, the *World's* publisher's name is associated with the nation's highest journalistic honor, the Pulitzer Prize, a fact that in no way reflects the original nature of Pulitzer's style of journalism.

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the change itself. The change was that newspapering was becoming a business. Not all newspapers, of course, fit this model initially, but many segments of the press became far more interested in selling than in anything else."

"Selling news and advertising," I chimed in.

"No. Selling people. That is the business of the mass media. Selling people. In newspapers, readers are sold to advertisers. In television, viewers are sold to advertisers. The advertisers in Joseph Pulitzer's *World* would pay X number of dollars for the 400,000-plus daily readers of that newspaper.

"Now, as the press became a business, a big business in many instances with large investments in equipment, enormous circulations, labor relations problems, and so forth, many editors—who were skilled at editing and writing—found themselves incapable of handling these kinds of business management problems. And gradually a new breed of men moved into leadership roles at major newspapers, men skilled in business management. They brought to the press a different set of values than those of the traditional editor, who tended at least to be news-oriented. These managers were generally more interested in balance sheets than in editorial pages."

"This seems like another aspect of the commercialism you spoke of. By placing the business interests first, you need a businessman to run the show," I interjected.

"I wouldn't be quite so harsh. That was the case in some instances. It was another aspect of the movement from a press that existed because it had something to say or because it provided needed information to a press whose main function was to sustain itself, to show a profit for stockholders, and to operate successfully as a business. You see, by definition, the criteria for a business' success are different from the criteria normally applied in determining a newspaper's success. In fact, the standards applied to successful business management are sometimes in direct opposition to those applied in successful journalism. While it's not impossible to operate under two sets of principles or with two diverse goals, it's usually difficult. The time will arrive when a choice must be made. For example, a reporter might uncover information that the local department store is gouging its customers. The store is a big advertiser. Running the story would be good journalism, but probably bad business. Which set of criteria would apply?"

"Or let's take an example from history. Edward W. Scripps is remembered fondly by most journalism historians as an editor-publisher who left his name on many newspapers and newspaper chains. The various Scripps chains still exist today. Well, around the turn of the century, Scripps and his business partner, Milton A. McRae, set their sights on establishing a chain of newspapers in the small but growing cities throughout the Midwest. Scripps would put up a few thousand dollars, hire an ambitious young editor and a business manager, and turn them loose. If the men succeeded, they could obtain up to forty-nine percent ownership of the newspaper. If they faltered, new faces replaced them. And if the paper failed to make a profit in ten years, it was abandoned. Scripps' criteria for a successful newspaper was whether or not it made a profit, not whether it served its readers. If this is the measure of success, an editor will tend to build his newspaper in such a way as to maximize the opportunity to show a profit. Publish lots of soft news or entertainment or sensational kinds of copy. Suddenly the information needs of the community become defined in terms of what readers like, not what they need or could use.

"There were other editors who operated newspapers in the same way. Scripps was far from the worst. Some men operated their newspapers as one would operate shoe factories or carpet companies. Frank Munsey, for example, had made a million dollars with hotels and banks and grocery stores when he decided to enter newspapering as a business. He bought a chain of newspapers and when they failed to add to his income, he slowly killed many of them. The obituaries of the *New York Star*, the *Philadelphia Evening Times*, and others were written with Munsey's pen. He was responsible for the merger of the *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune*—two revered publications founded as popular newspapers in the first half of the last century. Of course the *Herald-Tribune* died an economic death many years ago.

"Cyrus Curtis was another early media baron who measured the success of his publications on an adding machine. Curtis killed six of the seven newspapers he once owned in Philadelphia. He bought the *Telegram* and killed it after he had obtained its membership in the Associated Press. He purchased the *Press* for its newsprint contracts and then killed it as well."

"Is that the Curtis of . . .?"

“Yes, Curtis Publishing Company, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Holiday*, and so forth. Now let’s remember, not all publishers, not even most of them, were as brutal as some of these fellows. Many had a sincere desire to serve their communities and to fulfill some sort of information function. But it is difficult for a man who has grown up outside journalism to share the same values of the editor or the reporter. And even those men who did learn the newspaper business from the inside of the newsroom seemed to take on a new set of values after they had sat in that plush publisher’s chair for a few years. For the most part today, newspapers as well as other segments of the mass media reflect this change toward business that began about 1880. There is too much money at stake in most instances to allow the clumsy editor to make the final decisions. You don’t let the cook run the restaurant; you don’t let the newsman or reporter or editor run the newspaper. But enough sermonizing. Let’s move along to other problems. You must have some more questions.”

“Well, what you have said suggests at least one more question about newspapers. You have painted the picture of a press entering one end of the nineteenth century filled with essays, ideas, and discussion, supported by government, political parties, and other vested interests, run by printers and writers and editors, and circulated to what amounted to a handful of people. The press that emerged at the other end of the century was filled with sensational news reports and entertainment, funded primarily by business and commercial interests, controlled by professional managers, and circulated to hundreds of thousands,” I said.

“That’s an oversimplification, but it’s a good one.” Jonas began to peer at me as he wondered whether I doubted his explanation.

“Well, a press filled with ideas and discussions is usually partisan—it takes sides. What it says is likely to be one-sided. And the press of the early years was that way. But the press we see at the end of the century tended to be objective or unbiased, or at least held up the standard of objectivity as its goal. And nothing you have told me really explains why this change took place.” As the word *place* emerged from my mouth, my stomach emitted a growling sound that startled not only me but Ralph as well.

“Sounds as though you are hungry for something other than ideas,” Jonas quipped. Ugh, I thought. But Ralph smiled. “Let’s find an answer to your question and then find something to eat. Objectivity. If there is a god in journalism, that’s probably his name these days. But, as you say, it wasn’t always that way.”

“Until about the 1830s there really wasn’t the division of labor in newspapers as there is today. Most operations were one- or two-man shops. The proprietors were printers first, then editors and writers. And as we said, most of what was published was essays and discussions. This was true in most of the nation, outside of New York, Washington, and Philadelphia, as late as the 1850s. As one writer has said, the journalists, if we can call them that, believed it was their role to comment upon the news, rather than gather and publish it for its own sake. Probably the first reporters were stenographers who provided their newspapers with transcripts of public meetings, debates, and trials.

“As we have also said, James Gordon Bennett introduced the concept of newsgathering as a primary press function. And this emphasis on reporting began to change the style of presentation. This could really be seen during the Civil War, where a news-hungry readership provided the increased funds needed for editors to hire men whose only job was to gather and report the news. It was at this point that the press began to become a channel for public opinion rather than an organ of public opinion. With emphasis on the reportorial function, editors were probably reluctant to allow their hired help to fill their reports with personal opinions and ideas.

“But also during the Civil War another journalistic institution began to develop, and this institution, the newsgathering cooperative or the wire service, perhaps had the greatest impact on the development of the standard of objectivity. The first cooperative was established in 1848 when six New York newspapers, all of which had correspondents in Boston, agreed that it would be cheaper for them to establish a cooperative agency to cover that city for all six newspapers. Thus Associated Press of New York was born.”

“Is this the same Associated Press we have today?”

“Indirectly. This AP joined with other regional AP’s in later years to form the contemporary version. But on with the story. Let’s assume for a moment that each of the six New York newspapers had a different political philosophy. As long as the news from Boston came from the newspaper’s own correspondent and would only be published in that newspaper, it could be written in the context of that paper’s political ideology. But the newsgathering co-op had to try to satisfy all its members, who occupied various points on the ideological spectrum. And so impartiality, ‘just give me the facts, ma’am’, became the standard—or maybe the goal is a better word. As the newsgathering co-operatives later gained status, local newspapers began to emulate this style of journalism.

“I suppose one or two other factors also played a role in the move toward objectivity. By the end of the 1800s, newsgatherers, or reporters, began to think of their work as a profession and of themselves as professionals. But in those days a requirement of any profession, be it law, medicine, or theology, was that it have a specialized body of knowledge. What specialized knowledge did a newsgatherer have? Many people thought he should be a trained observer who could faithfully relate what he had seen and heard to his reading public. In 1869 Robert E. Lee, the president of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia, after his distinguished military career, suggested that colleges should provide training for people in journalism. Maybe he recalled the incredible distortions and lies that were published about the Confederate army during the Civil War. But while Lee’s proposal died temporarily at least, the notion of professionalization did not. And by the 1880s textbooks describing the skills a journalist should have began to appear. One of these, written by Robert Luce, asserted emphatically, ‘Never put editorial opinion into a news paragraph.’ What had once been but an idea now took on the status of revealed truth in a textbook. Classes were already being taught in journalism at the University of Missouri, and soon journalism departments began to be established at

colleges and universities around the nation. Objectivity became institutionalized.

"I should note in passing, however, that the old journalism didn't die without a fight. Even well into this century editors and reporters complained that objectivity was dull and could never realistically be achieved. Here, look at this. It's a copy of a speech given by an editor in Wisconsin in 1872. 'A good, square, reliable party press will better enable the people to get at the facts on both sides of all public questions . . .', he wrote. And here is Charles A. Dana, one of the leading editors of his day, urging a personal style of writing on his reporters:

The invariable law of the newspaper is to be interesting. . . . The reporter must give his story in such a way that you know he feels its qualities and events and is interested in them.

"But the new journalists won out. The idea that newspapers were too important to be individual organs and should instead be some kind of public institution gave strong impetus to the new impersonal style of writing."

"You sound as though you lament the loss of the old style," I said. "Isn't objectivity really better? I mean, at least this way the press attempts to be fair and honest and accurate."

"Is that what objectivity is? Fairness, honesty, and accuracy? I think you can be honest without being objective. In fact, isn't it honest for a reporter to reveal his true feelings about the story he covers? Wouldn't it be honest if the reporter said, 'The mayor gave a perfectly awful speech today.' And you can be accurate without being objective. Every sentence you write about an event can be accurate representation of some part of that event, but if you don't tell everything that happened, you aren't being objective, or honest. I suppose fairness is the key word. But too many people use balance as a synonym for fairness and objectivity. If you get the opinion of X, you must also print the opinion of Y who disagrees with X. This can degenerate to the point of balancing the remarks of a wise man with those of a fool."

"But certainly the press should be fair. You can't condone a press that sets out to smear or destroy someone by printing lies and half-truths," I asserted.

"No responsible person condones what you have described," Jonas said. "But there is a wide spectrum between half-truths and lies and complete impartiality. Why shouldn't a reporter who has spent three weeks investigating issues such as clear-cutting forest lands or whether or not we should build an SST venture his opinion about the resolution of the problem?"

"O.K., but that's what the editorial page is for."

"Have you looked at readership figures on the editorial page lately? Not a whole lot of people bother to read it anymore. But more important, that is the editor's page. What if he disagrees with his reporter? That means we are denied the benefit of this man's opinion. True, there is no assurance that he will have the truth or the right opinion. But it will probably be an informed one. Let's look at another aspect of the problem. Objective news is dull news; anything impersonal tends to be dry. The characters in news stories

rarely come to life for you the way characters in good novels do. Rarely is a news story warm or rewarding or memorable.”

“But it isn’t supposed to be, is it?”

“Who says? Where is it written that a news story has to be dull? Some stories, usually feature stories, are written in an interesting way today. Granted this is no easy feat, given the restrictions of the third person, stand-offish, cold, dull objective style. But newspapers aren’t the only source of the news today. It’s a buyer’s market. Magazines and television carry much of the same information. A newspaper can’t afford to be too dull.”

“Then you are in favor of the new journalism.”

“You mean objectivity—because that’s what new journalism really is. The narrative, first-person style of writing popular with some young writers is old journalism. But that’s evading your question. I favor the presentation of material in a way that is informative, bright, and interesting, whatever kind of journalism that might be.”

I smiled at Jonas as he finished his sentence. “You know, you’re kind of . . . well, with it, for somebody your age,” I stammered, hoping he wouldn’t take offense.

He laughed and looked at the cat. “That sounds like a compliment, Ralph. Do you think we should repay it by offering to buy lunch?” Ralph purred as Jonas got up and walked toward the door. “Let’s go,” he said. “We can’t get anything to eat up here. We can come back after lunch.”

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4

Media History, Part II

or How We Got
There From Here, Revisited

Lunch was interesting, if not altogether satisfying. It was the first time I'd ever eaten in a diner where I could watch the cook prepare my food, and it wasn't terribly appetizing. But Jonas said he had eaten lunch there every day for the past thirty-seven years, and he looked no worse for it. I was still picking gristle from my hamburger out of my teeth as Jonas sank back into his leather chair in front of the long, dusty table. Ralph curled up under the chair, yawned, and appeared to be headed for a siesta.

"Well, back to work," he said. "Where do we go now?"

"I'd like to spend some time talking about radio and television. But before we do I want you to answer one more question for me about newspapers."

"I'll give it a try," he said.

"When you were talking about the development of the wire services, you mentioned that there were six or seven newspapers being published then in New York City. Now there are only three or four. What happened?"

"The decline has been even more dramatic than that. There were fourteen English-language newspapers published in New York City in 1900."

"Fourteen? Why did they fold up? Were most of them bad papers?"

"Some of them were pretty poor, but that's only a partial reason for their demise. Let's go back a bit to where we left off this morning. Remember, the press that emerged from the nineteenth century was a mass press, attempting to sell itself to as many readers as possible. Objective or uncolored news was the standard. The wire services were being heavily relied on for national and international news. And in order to reach these vast audiences expensive new equipment was being brought in—faster and bigger presses, linotype machines that put an end to the need to set type by hand, stereotyping devices, and many other types of equipment as well. But the kinds of things that made the mass press possible also led to the death of many daily newspapers in America."

"In what way?"

"Well, let's look at a few of these factors individually. Costs, for example. A marginal newspaper—that's one that's barely making a profit, barely

surviving—can continue to compete only as long as its costs remain about the same. With the introduction of new technology, however, newspaper publishers had to make large investments in new equipment to compete with rivals. A newspaper with slower presses had stale news. A newspaper without modern photoengraving equipment couldn't publish pictures. And so on. Failure to compete affected survival. A wealthy newspaper could afford to buy this costly equipment; a poor one could not. Many newspapers bit the dust because they were unable to compete economically. At the same time, the cost of new technology made it exceedingly difficult to start a newspaper that would be competitive. The days of launching one in a large city with only a printing press and a few cases of used type were over. A great amount of money was needed.

"Another kind of economic competition—competition for advertising dollars—also played an important role. Before the mass press, the advertiser who sought to reach the most potential customers in a city was forced to spread his advertising dollar among many small newspapers. But with some papers reaching hundreds of thousands of readers, the seller could concentrate his advertising dollar in a single newspaper and reach nearly as many potential customers. The newspapers that circulated among a small segment of the total population were hurt by this trend. And of course they were the ones that could least afford to be hurt. Also the advertisers began showing a distinct preference at this time for afternoon or evening newspapers. For decades, the leading and largest American newspapers were morning newspapers. Around the turn of the century the evening newspaper became more attractive to advertisers. Men and women with newly won leisure time in the evening began to prefer the afternoon papers. This contributed to a general decline in the number of morning papers.

"And we can't forget that starting in the twenties new media—radio, and later television—began to compete for those advertising dollars. I suppose we might also note that the nation's economy went through a period of inflation and recession just before and just after World War I. The economic climate was not really conducive to any unhealthy business enterprise, be it newspapering or noodle making. Costs of everything went up, then plummeted, then climbed again. It was hectic."

"So again it was economics that dictated survival of the media," I said.

"Yes. But there were some other factors as well. When newspapers began to appeal to mass audiences they lost the individual character that had made them so attractive to many readers. Slowly they all began to look alike. The wire services and the growing newspaper syndicates compounded the problem. Most newspapers carried the same kinds of news, often the same stories from the Associated Press or the United Press. Many papers carried the same features, the same comics, and the same columns. There really wasn't much difference between most of them. A reader who might have purchased two or three papers before this standardization set in now found that the three looked pretty much the same. One would do just fine. If most people buy just one newspaper, there's really no reason to have more than a couple of them in each city. Whatever else you can say about our economic system, the market itself is fairly adept at adjusting the number of producers needed to satisfy demand.

"Finally, many newspapers didn't die; they were brutally killed, either in mergers with other newspapers, or through elimination as unprofitable business ventures. One way to stop competition is to buy it out. Publishers of economically healthy newspapers could afford to purchase weaker newspapers. In addition to the physical assets, such as the printing plant and offices, they would also get the circulation of the smaller paper. When the *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune* merged in 1924 the readers of both newspapers began getting the *Herald-Tribune* instead. In some mergers, the weaker paper was just killed. Subscribers were added to the circulation lists of the strong newspaper.

"Chain ownership of newspapers—the concentration of ownership into fewer and fewer hands—also began to develop in earnest just after the turn of the century. As some publishers came into control of newspapers in widely scattered cities and states, they began to treat their various properties more and more like any other business venture. If the paper showed a profit it survived. If it didn't it would die, regardless of its value to the community. I told you earlier about men like Frank Munsey and Cyrus Curtis; this was their heyday.

"So you can see there were several factors that probably had an impact on the decline in the number of daily newspapers in America. Early in the twentieth century we reached a peak of about 2,600 dailies. Then that number began to decline until the early 1950s when it seemed to stabilize somewhere around 1,760. And that's what we have today. But when we talk about today we aren't talking about history. So let's move along. You said you had some questions about radio and television."

"Right. But I really don't know where to begin. I guess there are two related questions I want to ask. First, did economics have as much impact in the development of radio and television as it did in the development of the newspaper press? And also, why, when our newspaper system is dominated by local operations—since there really are no national newspapers—why is broadcasting dominated by national operations, by the networks?"

"Well, let's explore your assumption in the second question before we look at radio. In a real sense we do have a national newspaper press much like our broadcasting industry. I admit we have only two or three newspapers that are distributed nationally. But we have no radio or television station that broadcasts nationally. Our newspapers are filled with articles and pictures and columns that are nationally produced for distribution in local newspapers. For example, the same AP story about the president's news conference will be published in hundreds of local newspapers, just as the CBS network report on the same conference will be broadcast over hundreds of local television stations. Less than half of what appears in both newspapers and on television is produced locally. So there is surprising similarity between the two systems. But that's avoiding your questions. Let's take a brief run through the history of radio and I think you'll find some of the answers you want.

"No one person really invented radio. It developed as the ideas of many individuals accumulated—men such as James Maxwell, a Scot who investigated electromagnetic fields; Heinrich Hertz, who first sent electronic



Somewhere West of Laramie

SOMEWHERE west of Laramie there's a broncho-busting, steer-roping girl who knows what I'm talking about.

She can tell what a sassy pony, that's a cross between greased lightning and the place where it hits, can do with eleven hundred pounds of steel and action when he's going high, wide and handsome.

The truth is—the Playboy was built for her.

Built for the lass whose face is brown with the sun when the day is done of revel and romp and race.

She loves the cross of the wild and the tame.

There's a savor of links about that car—of laughter and lilt and light—a hint of old loves—and saddle and quirt. It's a brawny thing—yet a graceful thing for the sweep o' the Avenue.

Step into the Playboy when the hour grows dull with things gone dead and stale.

Then start for the land of real living with the spirit of the lass who rides, lean and rangy, into the red horizon of a Wyoming twilight.



JORDAN
JORDAN — MOTOR — CAR — COMPANY, "The Christy" "Dino"

The Bettmann Archive, Inc.

Magazine advertising clearly troubled many newspapers. This ad for Jordan motor cars, which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, one of America's leading mass circulation publications during the first half of the century, is fondly recalled by advertisers and readers alike and is a forerunner of modern advertising. It is one of the first instances in which the advertising man concentrated on selling his reader the romance of owning a flashy car, not the car itself.

signals through space in 1888; Guglielmo Marconi, who conducted the first successful transatlantic tests of radio signals; and Lee De Forest, who was able to organize these electronic signals through the use of a vacuum tube and made voice transmission possible. De Forest put Enrico Caruso on the air in 1910 in a broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. There was interference, including snatches of ribald talk between two unidentified amateur radio operators. The *New York Times* even reviewed the event. Look here," Jonas said, pointing to a small item in the January 14, 1910 edition of the newspaper. "The homeless song waves kept losing their way," the reviewer reported.

"While people were attracted to the printing press because they had something they wanted to say, they were first attracted to radio because it was an interesting gadget to play around with. In the early days of broadcasting what the listener picked up on his homemade set was not nearly so important as where it had come from. Radio buffs would gather and trade tales. 'I picked up Kansas City last night.' 'Really? I got Chicago and Detroit.' There was no programming; most of what was carried was talking. Typical of the early broadcasters was Charles Herrold."

Jonas turned around and pointed to a table pushed against the far wall. It was piled high with gadgets made of wires and metal tubing. The entire contraption was covered by two or three fairly large cone-shaped devices.

"That was part of Doc Herrold's rig. It looks pretty crude, but it worked. He started broadcasting in 1909 from the Garden City Bank Building in San Jose, California. He helped many of his listeners build their crystal set receivers. He had a faithful audience of about twenty listeners in the beginning. After he made some early voice experiments he began weekly broadcasts on Wednesday nights, playing phonograph records he borrowed from a local music store and presenting news bulletins. When the Herrolds' first child was born in 1914 its first cries were broadcast to the couple's friends in the area. The war put Doc out of business, since most of the material required for the development of radio was needed to build the tools of war."

"Where did these early broadcasters get their money? Did they carry commercials?"

"No. In fact the first commercial interest in radio came not from broadcasters but from radio equipment manufacturers such as Westinghouse, General Electric, and American Marconi, a U.S. branch of a British company. By the end of the war, the real potential of broadcasting both as a medium of communication and as a commercial enterprise was pretty apparent. As it happened, the patenting process had left all the major American firms interested in broadcasting without a complete set of the patents needed to push ahead strongly in radio. The company that came the closest to having a complete set was American Marconi. The mere prospect of this foreign-owned firm dominating the American market was frightening to many, including the U.S. Navy, which suggested that the government move in and monopolize radio communications in this country.

"It was about this time that Owen D. Young, chairman of the board of General Electric, suggested that American radio interests buy out American Marconi, pool all the patents, and establish a home-grown monopoly. And

this is what happened. Ultimately, General Electric, Westinghouse, AT&T, and other American interests formed the Radio Corporation of America to take over the assets of American Marconi. In the pact that followed it was agreed that GE and Westinghouse would use the RCA patents to manufacture radio receiving and broadcasting hardware. RCA would act as the sales agent for these firms, and AT&T would maintain control over telephone communications, including the exclusive right to manufacture and sell radio transmitters. They each got a piece of the pie.

"Radio began to boom in the early twenties. The number of stations on the air multiplied rapidly. The number of receivers sold each month skyrocketed. But the market for receivers held up far longer than the market for transmitters, and it wasn't long before AT&T saw that it had ended up with the smallest piece of pie."

"It's hard to imagine the phone company getting the smallest piece of anything," I muttered.

"Everybody has to learn sometime," Jonas replied. "In any case, at this time all three partners in the RCA combine owned radio stations. GE and Westinghouse operated their stations to stimulate the sale of radio sets—which they manufactured. AT&T, on the other hand, didn't manufacture radio sets and had a different reason for owning a station. It conceived of radio as a kind of extension of telephone service. Radio was something people could use to communicate with other people, a lot of other people. And just as it cost a nickel to make a phone call, when AT&T opened station WEAJ in New York in August of 1922, the company planned to charge a toll to those who wanted to broadcast over it."

"You mean, people would pay to use the station?"

"That's right. And when they paid their money they could do anything they wanted, within limits. Even before the station went on the air prospective customers expressed an interest in using or hiring its facilities. The first customer was a Long Island real estate firm that paid AT&T \$100 for ten minutes of time to tell listeners about available properties. The program resulted in the quick sale of two apartment buildings. And radio advertising was born. Up to this point it was assumed that an advertiser would have to operate his own station to peddle his wares, as Westinghouse did with KDKA in Pittsburgh. But now AT&T showed that toll broadcasting could work. By 1926 WEAJ was grossing \$750,000 annually. Other stations rapidly followed suit.

"But this wasn't the only mark that the telephone company left on broadcasting. AT&T was interested in experiments that would link several radio stations together for the simultaneous broadcast of a single program. Again, AT&T conceived of customers leasing these expanded facilities to reach an enlarged audience. Using beefed-up telephone lines, the first linkup was achieved in 1923 when WEAJ fed a program to WNAC in Boston. The first permanent network was established later that year. And by 1924 WEAJ had a regular six-station chain that broadcast three hours of network programming a day."

"What were the other companies—GE and RCA—doing all this time?" I asked.

“Not very much. In fact, the radio group—RCA, GE, and Westinghouse—was forced to the sidelines during these developments by the telephone company. By agreement, RCA could not sell radio time nor could it use AT&T telephone lines for broadcast purposes. So when RCA attempted to establish WJZ as a rival to WEAF in New York, it was severely handicapped. WJZ cost RCA almost \$100,000 a year to operate and brought in no income whatsoever. When the radio corporation tried to establish its own network it was forced to use inferior Western Union telegraph lines that were never designed for voice transmission. Nevertheless the radio group had built a network of fourteen stations by the end of 1925. WEAF boasted a chain of twenty-six stations at the close of the same year.

“But the folks at the telephone company, for some reason, got tired of broadcasting and felt that all this dabbling in radio had diverted them from their primary role in telephone communications. So in 1926 AT&T sold out to RCA. In simple terms the agreement gave the telephone company exclusive control of telephone communications, including the network relays. The firm also got \$1 million for WEAF. In exchange AT&T surrendered its exclusive claim on transmitter manufacturing, agreed to lease radio relay facilities to RCA, and never again to enter broadcasting. So AT&T continued to profit from broadcasting through leasing interconnection facilities for the networks and RCA was given a free hand in the development of commercial network broadcasting. A month earlier the owner of a single inferior network, RCA now found itself the proprietor of two efficient radio chains. To handle this chore the radio group established a new subsidiary, the National Broadcasting Company, with RCA holding half the stock and GE and Westinghouse sharing the remaining half.

“NBC maintained the two radio chains, which were called the *red network* and the *blue network* after an RCA engineer used colored pencils to trace the broadcasting webs on a U. S. map. A red pencil was used for the WEAF network, a blue one for the WJZ chain. It frequently got confusing for the announcers, one of whom haltingly proclaimed early one morning during a station break, ‘This is either the red network or the blue network of the National Broadcasting Company.’ The federal government forced NBC to sell the blue network in 1943 and it became what we call today the American Broadcasting Company. The third network, CBS, was founded in 1927 by a group of independent broadcasters, but didn’t take on serious proportions until William S. Paley, a cigar manufacturer, bought a controlling interest in the company in 1928 when he became impressed at the impact radio advertising had on the sales of his stogies. Whew. That’s a lot of talking at one time.”

“Yes, but it’s fascinating to see how the networks took shape.”

“I think you used the right words: took shape. Because nobody really planned how they should develop, or how they might develop to best suit our communications needs, or even how they might be structured to best suit the needs of radio listeners. If anything determined the development of the great networks it was probably the economic policies of the great electronic corporations like RCA and GE. But I’m beginning to moralize again. Let’s get on to your next question.”

With that, Jonas shifted in his seat, raising his legs to the table at which he sat. Ralph moved from his well-warmed spot under Jonas' chair into his master's lap, and began the perilous journey across the leg bridge that spanned the chasm between the chair and the table. When the cat reached the table he curled up next to a pile of ancient yellowed newspapers and closed his eyes again.

"Are you out of questions?" Jonas asked me.

Startled back to our conversation, I replied quickly, "Oh, no."

"Well . . ." Jonas drawled.

"Freedom," I stammered. "Freedom of the press: isn't broadcasting considered press? How can it be controlled by the government like it is? What about . . ."

"Hold it," Jonas said, raising his hand. "Let's go one at a time here. Freedom of the press is a big enough topic to begin with."

As he spoke he moved his feet back to the floor, leaving Ralph stranded on the table, got out of his seat and walked over to a large file cabinet. After briefly scanning the labels on the various drawers, he pulled open the third from the bottom, shuffled through some dusty documents and pulled out a sheaf of papers.

"This is it," he said as he handed me the papers. "This is the basic charter that defines the freedom of the press for the broadcaster."

The sheaf of papers turned out to be an Act of Congress, the Federal Communications Act of 1934. It was about sixty pages long, not counting the several amendments tacked on at the end.

"This law fairly well defines the limits of freedom for the broadcaster, what he can and cannot do, and also what he must do."

"That was one of my questions," I said. "This morning we talked about press freedom and all the battles that were fought to free the press from the censorship of the government. How can we have a law like this to control radio and television when we couldn't have one for newspapers and magazines and books?"

"That's a question a lot of broadcasters ask today. To answer it we have to look at some of the differences between the printed communications system and the electronic or broadcast system. Do you recall this morning when we talked about press freedom in England that I told you about an organization called the Stationers Company that regulated the number of printers in the realm? I said that before a man could use a printing press, he had to be a member of this organization."

As I nodded affirmatively, Jonas went on.

"Well, the reason many people thought such an organization was needed was because anybody could own a printing press—well, anybody who could afford one. In other words, there was no limit on the number of printing presses that might exist. Theoretically there could be a press in every home today and we could all publish our own magazines and newspapers. Of course this is economically impossible. But we are into the world of theory."

Again I nodded my head in agreement with Jonas. "What you are saying is that there is nothing but economics—money—to stop me from having my own printing press. But what has that got to do with broadcasting?"

"Be patient, my lad. I am getting to that now. Imagine for a moment that for some reason—perhaps a shortage of raw materials or lack of needed technology—we could only build two thousand printing presses. In other words, that's all that would exist."

"Okay, I'm with you so far."

"All right, who should own or control those two thousand printing presses? Should it be first come, first served? Should it be those who can afford to pay the most for them? Should the government own them? This is the dilemma that was faced in broadcasting, and I say *was faced* because with changing technology it is a problem that tends to be diminishing today. But it was a serious problem in the 1920s. Broadcast waves are transmitted through the airwaves. It's called *the spectrum* or *the ether* by engineers. Like an interstate freeway, there is only so much room on this spectrum; only so many signals can be broadcast at one time. If more signals are broadcast than the spectrum can accommodate, they begin to overlap. When this happens you hear two different voices or sounds coming out of the radio speaker simultaneously.

"Somebody had to decide who would be able to use this limited amount of air space. And this is where the government and the Communications Act of 1934 came in."

"In other words, in 1934 the government decided which persons would own the various frequencies that exist in the airwaves?"

"No, it wasn't as simple as that. I think if we go back a few more years you will understand this whole situation a bit better."

"As I mentioned earlier, radio started as a small conglomeration of private citizens who thought that this was a pretty nifty gadget. There was no such thing as commercial broadcasting. The Navy was interested in radio, because for the first time the brass could keep track of its ships. Before radio, when a ship left port it was gone until it returned to land and could report by telegraph. But with radio the Navy could remain in contact with the fleet. The admirals apparently felt this new communications device was too important and too valuable to have a bunch of private broadcasters mucking it up, so they sought regulation of radio. Also, radio signals from ships returning to the U.S. with survivors from the sunken liner *Titanic* were blocked by the broadcasts of amateur radio operators. This was the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back. Against the strong protest of the radio amateurs, or hams as they are called, Congress passed the Radio Act of 1912. When it was signed by President William Howard Taft it seemed the end of freedom to many broadcasters. But the law really introduced only minor restraints. It required a station license for transmission. The law also provided that all transmission must be carried out or supervised by someone with an operator's license. The successful completion of an exam was required to obtain one. As supervisor of this new radio medium, the secretary of commerce could assign a broadcaster to a wavelength, or frequency. But he could not refuse to grant a license. Anyone who walked in the door could get one. This turned out to be the fatal flaw in the measure.

"After a slowdown caused by the war, radio began to take off in 1919 and 1920. It was in 1920 that the government established a separate license

category for commercial broadcasting. There were only three stations providing regular services during that year. By 1924 there were more than 500 stations broadcasting regularly. And it was during these four years that a lot of other things began to happen as well. When the twenties began, all commercial broadcasters were on the same frequency—360 meters or 833.3 kilocycles, which was the frequency allocated by the government for news, lectures, and entertainment.”

“Does that mean they were all at the same spot on the dial?” I asked.

“Exactly.”

“Well, how could they broadcast?”

“In the beginning when there were only a handful of stations it wasn’t too bad. They shared the frequency—each station broadcasted at different times. But as more and more stations came on the air, things began to get hectic. It was up to the broadcasters in a city or region to divide the time. With an increasing number of broadcasters, one station might have the airwaves only from noon to 4 P.M. on Thursdays. Another station would come on from 4 to 8 P.M. and so on. In some cities agreement was easily reached by the stations. But in other towns—well, I remember one night in Kansas City. WDAF, the station owned by the *Kansas City Star* newspaper, regularly went off the air at 7 P.M. to let another Kansas City station, WHB, take over from 7 to 9 P.M. But one day, it was learned that a local politician was going to appear on WHB and blast the *Kansas City Star*. So WDAF didn’t leave the airwaves at 7 P.M. No one spoke, but they left their transmitter on, tuning and detuning the frequency. All we received on the radio set that night was a high-pitched *woooooooooooooooooooo* sound. It was weird, and definitely maddening. As stations multiplied, this happened more often. For three successive Sundays in 1922, two stations in Washington, D.C., broadcast church services at the same time over the same wavelength. The result was anything but heavenly.”

“Ooooo,” I said, “bad pun.”

“Well, so much for humor. Things could also be jarring. Let’s say a little fifty-watt station broadcasted from 6 to 7 P.M. You had to turn the volume up all the way just to hear the program. At 7 P.M. along comes a 10,000-watt station, and with your volume jacked up all the way, it would blow you right out of the room.

“In addition to sharing frequencies, stations had to stay alert for any distress signals and leave the air when an SOS was broadcast from a ship at sea. I recall one night in Schenectady, New York—I was listening to WGY when the radio announcer came on the air in the midst of a variety program and said: ‘Miss So and So has just sung “All Through the Night”. We will now stand by for distress signals.’

“But the technical problems were not the only sore spots in broadcasting. As soon as the possibilities of the new medium became obvious, the airwaves were filled with a motley group of propagandists, religious zealots, demagogues, and hucksters, all seeking to reach the audience with whatever it was they were selling—everything from wood alcohol to immortal souls. There were peddlers and astrologers and fortune tellers, experts on dandruff and falling hair—well, just about everything you can imagine. I

suppose the story of Doctor John Romulus Brinkley pretty well sums up the kind of weirdos that often inhabited the airwaves in those days."

"Who was Dr. Brinkley? Was he a medical doctor or what?"

"Kind of a medical doctor. He had purchased a medical diploma from a diploma mill in St. Louis. It cost him \$100. That was fairly common in those days. After an unsuccessful stint as an Electro-Medic Doctor in Greenville, North Carolina, where he sold injections of colored distilled water for \$25 a shot to patients who complained they lacked vigor, Brinkley took a job in the medical office of Swift and Company, the meat packers, in Kansas City. He later moved to Milford, Kansas, and set up a drugstore in a doctor's office. One day when an elderly citizen of Milford complained to Brinkley of his failing manhood, the doctor recalled the buck goats he had seen while working for Swift. 'You wouldn't have any trouble if you had a pair of those buck goat glands in you,' Brinkley told the patient. 'Will you put 'em in?' the patient asked. Brinkley did and a career was launched. With the money he got from the operations—for which he charged up to \$1,500—he built a small hospital and a radio station, KFKB. With a transmitter that reached throughout the Midwest, Brinkley gave his listeners medical lectures, fundamentalist religion, accordion music, yodelers, and Western singers. But it was his medical lectures that held most of his listeners spellbound. He prescribed his now famous goat gland operation to men who complained that they were listless. For others he would prescribe combinations of his phony patent medicines, which he would ship throughout America by mail. When the American Medical Association attacked him, called him a fraud, Brinkley counter-attacked over his radio station, called the AMA the 'meatcutters' union'. All the while he built his legend he prospered, buying his wife large diamonds, building a huge mansion, touring the nation in his private airplane or Cadillac automobile.

"Well, to make a long story short, the government finally caught up with Brinkley when newspaper exposés and medical society pressure came to a head in 1930. He lost his station in Kansas and went to Mexico and built an even larger transmitter to boom his medical gullery back into this country. For ten years he carried on his border raids until U.S.-Mexican treaties dealt a death blow to his 100,000-watt radio station, XER. And so ended Dr. John Brinkley. Although he was the worst, he was representative of many 'peddlers of the air' who victimized the American people in the early days of radio.

"As competition between broadcasters became more frenzied, as stations stepped up their power, jumped frequencies, and changed hours to gain commercial advantages, as advertising became more excessive and often offensive, two groups of people began to get annoyed: the listening audience and the responsible broadcasters. Listeners were tired of the chaos and pandemonium that filled the airwaves. Responsible broadcasters were fearful that listeners would begin to boycott the entire medium because of irresponsible radio men. Both groups complained to Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover."

"The same Herbert Hoover who . . ." I tried to ask.

"The same Herbert Hoover," Jonas assured me. "And in response to

these complaints Hoover called a series of National Radio Conferences beginning in 1922 to try to solve some of the problems of broadcasting. Delegates to the meetings represented the various interests in radio broadcasting, industry, government, commercial and amateur broadcasters, and others. In practical terms there was little Hoover could do, since the 1912 law gave him little power to regulate the new industry, and Congress seemed unwilling to increase his power at this time. But upon the insistence of broadcasters and others, Hoover began to take a firm hand in broadcasting regulation. First he enlarged the usable spectrum, allowing broadcasters to move about on the radio dial. After the fourth national conference Hoover began turning down requests for licenses—'Sorry, all full,' he told applicants. He also began to impose broadcasting schedules on stations. He gave the most powerful stations the best frequencies and time slots and severely penalized broadcasters who failed to hold their assigned wavelengths or ignored time schedules. Occasionally he even closed down their stations. And broadcasting began to shape up; a kind of regularity became noticeable to listeners. But Hoover was taking all these actions without any legal authority to do so. And in time it caught up with him.

"Eugene F. McDonald was one of those who believed that Hoover was exceeding his authority. McDonald owned station WJAZ in Chicago and a small company known as Zenith Radio. When the secretary of commerce announced he welcomed a legal test of his authority, McDonald challenged him in court—and won. The federal court ruled that Hoover had exceeded his authority and that our system of government did not permit 'the play and action of purely personal and arbitrary power.' Hoover sought to appeal the ruling, but the Attorney General's office convinced the secretary the court was right, that under the 1912 law he did not have the legal power to refuse a license, assign broadcasting hours or limit station power."

"What happened then?"

"What would you expect to happen?"

"More chaos, I suppose."

"Right. Stations across the nation began to increase their power, move to more attractive frequencies, and broadcast during the prime listening hours. Scores of new stations erupted. Bedlam became the status quo. Clearly it was time for Congress to step in. And it did. In 1927 the first major piece of broadcasting legislation was passed—the Radio Act of 1927. That law—and it is much like the 1934 law you have in your hands—was a very comprehensive regulation; it covered much ground. You see, Congress was faced with a real dilemma, which is probably one reason it was reluctant to act for so many years. What should be done with broadcasting? Should the government take it over and operate the radio system? That's what's done in most other nations, or should private enterprise be permitted to move in and monopolize the airwaves? The first option—government ownership—seemed out of the question. This was 1927, remember, the era of Calvin Coolidge. We had a very conservative Congress that had earlier, in 1918, rejected a government takeover of broadcasting. But at the same time, it was a Congress much attuned toward conservation of national resources—and the broadcast spectrum, the airwaves, is certainly a valuable natural re-

source. The scandals of the plundering of America's oil reserves for private profit—the Teapot Dome affair—had barely cooled down. You remember—no, you probably don't. In any case, there was a general public revulsion about private exploitation of public resources. At about the same time Congress was fighting to save many of our wild rivers and streams from the grasp of private hydroelectric power companies. So the legislative branch was not about to give away the airwaves. A compromise was reached instead. The public would maintain ownership of the airwaves, but private enterprise would provide the broadcasting service."

"A kind of rental or lease agreement?" I asked.

"Well, sort of. The plan was simple. The private broadcaster must have a license to operate his station. Licenses are granted by the government. The Radio Act set up a five-man board, the Federal Radio Commission, to administer this process. Before an individual was granted a license or before his license was renewed, he was required to show that he would serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity. Thus the government, in the name of the radio listener, was given the authority to assign frequencies and, within limitations, set standards and make rules for the operation of radio stations."

"Did this solve the problems?" I queried.

"Yes, most of them. Shortly after the FRC was established order once again returned to the airwaves. Some stations were shut down, others were moved to new frequencies, and still others had their power reduced. Radio began to develop in a fairly orderly fashion. You could turn your radio set on in the evening with a fair amount of assurance that you could hear more than just a jumble of sound."

"If the Radio Act of 1927 worked so well, why was a new law passed in 1934?"

"The 1927 law was a good law, but it didn't go quite far enough. It became apparent, for example, that regulation of radio and regulation of telephone and telegraph traffic were closely tied. Yet the FRC had no power over the latter. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office in 1933 he commissioned a study of all the regulatory agencies. On the basis of these reports the president recommended that Congress create a new agency to administer and regulate all aspects of communications. So in 1934, after a good deal of haggling, Congress passed the measure you are holding, the Communications Act of 1934. The act provided for replacement of the five-man FRC with a seven-man Federal Communications Commission, and this body was given the authority to regulate all wire or radio communications. Other than that change and the provisions about regulation of telephone and telegraph communications, the new measure was quite similar to the 1927 law."

As Jonas finished he reached over to the table and rescued Ralph, who had awakened from his nap and was pacing along the table edge, seeking a soft landing spot on the floor below.

"Government regulation of broadcasting was justified on the grounds that since there was a scarcity of broadcast spectra or airwaves, these resources should be preserved for public use," I said, trying to put what Jonas had said into a summary of sorts.

“That’s about right. But there is really a larger question. Let’s assume that regulation of broadcasting is required to maintain some semblance of technical order in the airwaves. Someone must choose who can use them, when they are to be used, and for what purposes. There must be a traffic cop, and we have decided that government should keep the traffic running smoothly. But does this traffic cop function also imply government control over the substance of broadcasting—that is, telling broadcasters what kinds of programs to present and what kinds not to present, telling them what they can say and what they can’t? To extend our analogy, should the traffic cop be able to tell people not only when to stop and go, but what kinds of cars to drive, where they should be going, how long they should stay, and so forth?”

“Does the FCC do that now?” I asked.

“Many broadcasters think that is exactly what the FCC does, and to a limited extent I would agree. I’m not certain whether it is right or wrong, whether the government should be able to exercise this power, even if it acts in the name of the people. But that’s a different story, and one we shouldn’t be concerned with now.”

“You just can’t raise a controversial question like that and then just stop,” I said anxiously. “That isn’t fair.”

“Oh yes it is. Because that is a question you can find an answer to—if there is one—someplace else.”

(Editor’s note: Should the traffic cop tell the broadcaster what kinds of programs to carry? What is the public interest? Who defines it? Is the broadcaster or the critic right? And what about Naomi? Tune in to chapter nine for a fuller discussion of contemporary regulation of broadcasting.)

“While I’m not too happy about it, you win. Let’s talk about radio and advertising and network programming. Something you said earlier suggests to me that advertising—which we take for granted now on both radio and television—wasn’t really a part of the electronic media in its early days.”

“You’re right; it was not only missing from early radio programming, but when it did arrive, it was looked down on by many serious broadcasters. After the early AT&T experiments with leasing time, several important leaders, such as Secretary Hoover, and many broadcasting executives as well condemned the practice as being against the best interests of broadcasting.”

“What did they talk about between records if there weren’t any commercials?” I asked jokingly.

“Oh, you are confused, aren’t you? The only thing that was looked down on more than advertising in those days was the playing of recorded music on the air. That was a sin of the highest order. In fact, when Hoover was handing out frequencies just before he was challenged in court, the stations that got the worst dial positions were those that played records. It was just quite unheard of in better broadcasting circles.”

“Well, what happened? All there is on most radio stations today is records and commercials. Those who didn’t like these practices couldn’t have known what the people really wanted,” I said.

“Or what the broadcaster really wanted. But let’s take a look at how this

change evolved. At first, even advertisers weren't too impressed with radio as a sales tool. But as more and more of them paid tolls to get their products described on the air, and as sales did increase, the new medium's economic potential became more evident. Early radio spots were merely product descriptions or statements that a department store had just received a new shipment of men's overalls or women's dresses. There was no attempt at hard sell. As the end of the decade approached, however, several things that would ultimately shape commercial broadcasting happened simultaneously.

"Radio networks began to expand, both in the number of affiliates or stations in the chain and in the amount of programming they offered. The days of *ad hoc* programming—tying two dozen stations together for a single broadcast—were ending, and the two NBC networks and CBS began to supply stations with regular programming features. Live musical programs were the early mainstay; there were symphonic concerts, and the music of dance bands was broadcast from large hotels. There were a few dramatic series; some had a historical flavor such as "Great Moments in History," and some were more homespun such as "Real Folks" and "Main Street." The importance of this early network programming, however, was not the kinds of programs that were carried, but that *any* program was carried. For, you see, the local station, the primary element in the broadcasting chain, was beginning to relinquish its program production role. Stations were content—in fact eager—to stop creating their own programs and instead broadcast programs sent by NBC or CBS. Obviously I am oversimplifying things because many local stations did continue to produce programs right up till the end of big-time radio. But for many radio stations the increasing supply of network programming was very attractive. It was of higher quality than they could produce themselves, and it cost less to broadcast; in fact, local stations often received money for broadcasting it.

"At about this same time advertising salesmen began to see the great advantage of radio advertising for products whose sales depended on constant repetition of their names. Some such products were beginning to have sales problems. Brand-name coffee, for example, was feeling the pinch of the cheaper supermarket coffee."

"Like they still grind at the A&P store."

"That's right. Canned soup sales were hurting as families began to drop the soup course from their dinner menu. The use of pretty women as advertising symbols for cigarettes was becoming a drag on the market. Tobacco processors now had a story to tell about scientific tests, a story that few persons would bother to read in print. Instant packaged desserts came along—remember J*E*L*L*O, Jello?—and the gasoline people were just introducing ethyl to auto owners. Radio was good for advertising these kinds of things. And suddenly huge expenditures of advertising dollars were available to finance programming. Shows that were creaking along on small budgets found new revenue, lots of it. The effects on programming were pronounced and noticeable. With big money at stake, shows with more popular appeal were sought to attract listeners for the advertising messages. In 1929 Rudy Vallee, sponsored by Fleischmann's Yeast, enlarged the traditional dance band programming formula by introducing radio personal-

Freeman F. Gosden and Charles J. Correll, two white men, were the radio voices of Amos and Andy. This very popular program hit its peak in 1930, but lasted for many years. NBC attempted to bring the adventures of the Fresh Air Taxicab Company to television in the fifties, but the show wasn't successful enough to keep it on the air in the face of protests that it was a racist view of black life styles.



ities. The same year saw the introduction of 'Amos 'n' Andy,' one of the most popular programs ever broadcast on radio."

"In a way, radio seemed to be going the same way the printed press went. As the medium became more attractive to larger audiences, more advertisers came along and it became a big business that sought to make itself attractive to larger audiences in order to get more advertisers . . ." I said.

"You made your point, and I suppose the analogy is a fair one—with two exceptions. Up to this point radio had made little effort to be a serious information medium as the press had done before mass newspaper came along. Broadcast journalism really didn't begin in earnest, for example, until the late 1930s. So what we are talking about is a change in the kind of entertainment programming, rather than a change from information or serious discussion to more entertainment programming. Also, and this is more important, the print media were never controlled by the advertiser to the extent radio was in the early 1930s. Now I know that needs some explanation. There was big money involved in network radio. By the mid-1930s some programs had budgets as high as \$250,000. And when big money is involved, those who are paying the bill want to be certain they are getting their money's worth. While most ad agencies and sponsors believed in radio as a medium, they also believed that it was a medium that was particularly open to abuse. It could easily alienate the public."

"What do you mean?"

"Imagine for a moment that you are a widget manufacturer and your products are advertised on the 'Play of the Week Theater.' Let's say that one week a play that is a little off-color or risqué is presented. Or a drama that says some bad things about democracy or the Boy Scouts or motherhood or apple pie is broadcast. This might make some listeners angry. And these listeners just might say the hell with widgets, I won't buy the product that sponsored that crummy show. You follow me?"

"Right."

"Okay. Now what are your options?"

"Well, I could stop advertising on radio, but that wouldn't solve my problem of selling more widgets. I could just sponsor good programs, ones that wouldn't offend listeners."

"Good. And that is exactly what happened. To stem what they considered abuses in programming, ad agencies and sponsors began to exercise more direct control over the arrangement and production of all programs. In the past the control of these matters was left to the station or the network. The network would create the program, hire the talent, and produce the show. It would go to the advertiser and say, would you like to sponsor this show, or would you like to buy two minutes of this show? But with the new scheme the ad agency or sponsor would create the show, hire the talent, and produce the program. The sponsor would then buy thirty minutes or an hour of network time on which to air the program. In this way the sponsor maintained complete control over the program content, the performers, the time it was broadcast, and so forth. The program could even be developed to meet the sponsor's sales problems. He could produce a woman's program to sell face soap or a man's program if his product were pipe tobacco. A major shift took place, then, as the advertisers for all intents and purposes took over the control of network radio. Often a single advertising agency was responsible for supporting as much as ten percent of the network's programming schedule. This kind of money brought with it a great amount of clout. The merest suggestion from a courageous network executive that he might set aside a few prime hours a week for something different or unusual or instructional or informative could bring a swift reminder from the old ad agency that they could take their business elsewhere."

"Couldn't all the networks have acted in unison on something like this? The advertiser would then have nowhere else to go," I said.

"But that was never tried. And the advertisers ruled much of network radio for nearly two decades. Some of the programs spawned by advertising were just what you might expect—bland, cheap, and uninspired. The dramatic serials broadcast in the afternoon and evenings are a good example of some of the worst network programming of the period. They called them 'soap operas' because they were usually sponsored by soap companies, and you can still see the remnants of some of these on daytime television. Ask your grandmother about some of the originals on the radio. Each of them had a little slogan or tag line that attempted to describe the story. There was 'Stella Dallas,' *the true-to-life story of mother love and sacrifice*; 'The Romance of Helen Trent,' *the story that asks the question, can a woman over 35 find romance?*; 'When a Girl Marries,' *the story of Joan Field and Harry Davis, and of every girl who has ever been in love*; 'Mary Noble, Backstage Wife,' *married to matinee idol Larry Noble, dream sweetheart of a million other women*; and 'One Man's Family,' *dedicated to the mothers and fathers of the younger generation and their bewildering offspring*—there were 'Ma Perkins,' 'Portia Faces Life,' 'Just Plain Bill,' 'Our Gal Sunday,' and many others as well."

“You’ve got those pretty well memorized. You must have been a pretty big fan yourself.

“It didn’t take daily listening to memorize the tag line. But I was a regular listener to many programs—not the soaps, but some of the other products of network radio. Some of it was quite good, or at least we thought it was. It’s funny, but radio listening was kind of a group sport in those days. The whole family would gather around the radio set, and as often as not stare at the box. It was not uncommon to spend the better part of the evening listening to favorite shows.”

“I suppose the programs were a lot like those on television today?” I asked.

“Yes, and no. There were the same kinds of programs—television has not added a new *kind* of program. But I think most critics feel that network radio was probably a bit more substantive than today’s television. Maybe it’s just a function of looking at the past as the good old days. I don’t know. But I have many fond memories of that era.”

Jonas got up and walked over to a cluttered shelf and picked up a large, worn scrapbook.

“Pictures carry memories, and there are lots of both in this old scrapbook. Come take a look at it with me. Maybe you can get the feel of what I am talking about better.”

I pulled my chair over next to Jonas as he repositioned himself in front of the table. As he blew the dust off the cracked leather cover of the book, it appeared that Jonas’ mind was beginning to range far beyond the confines of this room. His eyes began to glisten as he described the pictures on the first page of the time-worn volume.

“These were some of the great stars of variety shows in the era. There’s Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Edgar Bergen (he’s Candy Bergen’s father, you know) and Charlie McCarthy. And look over here, that’s Fred Allen, perhaps the greatest wit radio produced. Each week millions would anticipate with delight their trip down Allen’s Alley and visits with Senator Claghorn, Mrs. Nussbaum, Titus Moody, and the rest. It was Allen who once said that they call radio a medium because nothing on it is ever well done.”

“You could say the same thing about television—only more so,” I ventured.

“There were some great mystery shows on as well,” Jonas remarked as he flipped the page. “Here is a picture of Tony Randall. He played one of the characters in the famous adventure series, ‘I Love a Mystery,’ the adventures of Jack, Doc, and Reggie. Each week these three characters would set off on the wildest escapades. The show was created by Carlton Morse. Another radio producer was Phillip H. Lord, who created ‘Mr. District Attorney’ and ‘Gangbusters.’ ‘Gangbusters’ always opened with sirens howling in the night, the clatter of machine guns, and the marching tread of convicts. It was sponsored for years by Doan’s Liniment. And of course ‘The Shadow,’” said Jonas, pointing to a picture of Orson Welles. “Did you know he played the Shadow for a time?”

“No. This was a very popular program, wasn’t it?”



George Burns and Gracie Allen, man and wife both in real life and on stage, were among a fairly small group of performers who became household fixtures during the ear of network radio. Along with Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Ed Wynn, and others, the team made a successful move to television in the fifties. Gracie Allen was the first of a long line of "dingbat" wives that included Lucille Ball in "I Love Lucy," Eva Gabor in "Green Acres," and Jean Stapleton as Edith Bunker.

"There was a fantastic Shadow cult. The main character was Lamont Cranston, a wealthy young man who, during a stay in the Orient, learned the hypnotic power to cloud men's minds so that they could not see him. The only person who knew the identity of the Shadow was Cranston's 'friend and companion' Margot Lane. Do you recall the opening—'*Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows.*' an ominous filtered voice would say, and laugh. To some listeners the Shadow was so convincing that during the war with Germany they wrote the network demanding to know why Lamont Cranston was not using his secret powers against the Nazis."

"That seems incredible. How could anyone believe he existed?" I asked.

"You must remember that radio can be much more realistic to many people than television could ever be. Television is forced to create a visual image that normally reveals the artificial nature of the story. In radio, on the other hand, a voice is all you hear. Your imagination does all the rest. You have far fewer clues to the authenticity of the production. The demons you can create in your mind from a radio program can be far more hideous and yet far more realistic than anything television or film could bring to you. In fact they used to call dramatic radio the theater of the mind. Two of the most frightening programs were 'Lights Out' and 'Inner Sanctum.' I can vividly remember the opening: 'Good evening, friends, this is Raymond, your host, welcoming you in through the squeaking door to the Inner Sanctum.' If you weren't already scared to death, just to make certain you would be, you turned off all the lights in the room. 'We have another tale to thrill you and chill you. Won't you come in and have a seat? No chair, you say. Why don't you try that black box over there? It's nice to have someone here who really believes in black magic, the supernatural, zombies, and goblins. What's that? You don't really believe in those things? Well, our story tonight is

about a man who didn't believe in them either. But he found out he was wrong—dead wrong, ha, ha, ha, ha. . . .”

“Hey, you're giving me goose bumps.”

“Just imagine listening to that in a dark room. Here, look at this page. ‘Superman,’ ‘Terry and the Pirates,’ ‘Dick Tracy,’ and my favorite, ‘Buck Rogers.’ Buck, Wilma, and Doctor Huer roamed the airwaves starting in 1932 after beginning as a comic strip. The trio visited all parts of the universe in search of Killer Kane. Buck was armed with his Molecular Contractor Beam Projector, which shrunk you, and his Molecular Expansion Beam Projector, which enlarged you. He was impregnable.”

“Sounds pretty far out, to me.”

“It was far out, but strangely many of the futuristic inventions that Buck and his pals played around with are now actual weapons. Buck's ray gun, for example, was a prototype of the laser beams of today. But most of it was fantasy. There were also some more down-to-earth heroes as well. Tom Mix, one of the greatest radio heroes, existed in real life. ‘The Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters are on the air. And here comes Tom Mix, America's favorite cowboy. . . .’ Then Tom would launch into one of radio's first singing commercials to the tune of ‘When It's Round-Up Time in Texas.’ ‘Hot Ralston for your breakfast, start the day off shining bright. . . .’ Tom Mix was a master of conviction. He was a rodeo champion and had had an active military career, including a ride up San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt in the Spanish-American War. Tom and his straight-shooter pals even knew their adventures were being broadcast. Some episodes detailed how they studied their scripts and recreated their adventures. Sometimes the broadcasts were even interrupted by scoundrels who wanted to get Tom off the air.

“Tom was one of a series of radio heroes sponsored by food companies who urged listeners to take an active part in the program by purchasing premiums or tokens. You know, two box tops and ten cents. And in those days some of the tokens weren't too bad. They were usually rings, although Captain Midnight would sell you Ovaltine Shake'm Up Mugs too. In addition to leaving a neat green circle on your finger, the rings would whistle, glow in the dark, imprint secret emblems, flash coded messages, magnify and look around corners—often a single ring would do all these things. You sometimes spent weeks with them just figuring out how they worked. Sky King and Jack Armstrong were other ‘real’ heroes. Jack was a student at Hudson High School. In his first episodes he solved problems that plagued his school—finding out who broke into the principal's office, who cheated on the exam, and so forth. But later he began to range worldwide and became a high school dropout, even though he supposedly studied while he traveled. Jack was the All-American Boy and the model for many young men of that era.

“Here, look at these three radio heroes,” Jonas said as he turned the page of the deteriorating scrapbook. “Know who they are?”

“The one on the left is the Lone Ranger, the one on the right is probably Sergeant Preston, but I don't know the other one.”

“That's the Green Hornet. All three of these radio shows originated from

WXYZ in Detroit, but were broadcast nationwide via the network. The Lone Ranger was the most famous of the trio, galloping out of the old radio set every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 7:30 P.M."

"Did you listen to most of these shows, the Lone Ranger, I mean?"

"Sure."

"Did they ever explain how the masked man got his name?"

"In the first episode. A band of Texas Rangers was ambushed by the infamous Hole-in-the-Wall gang. All the lawmen except one young ranger were killed. While he lay unconscious he was taken to safety by an Indian. When he awoke and saw the Indian he asked, 'What of the other rangers? They were all my friends. One was my brother.' The Indian—Tonto—replied, 'Other Texas Rangers all dead. You only ranger left. You Lone Ranger now.'"

"Ugh," I said. "That's pretty bad."

"Ugh, but true," Jonas replied. "Sergeant Preston followed the Ranger, and the Green Hornet was the last of the trio. The Hornet was much like the Lone Ranger; he used a gas gun to disable his victims but never killed them. He was the publisher of a large newspaper who became a masked crusader at night and sought to rout the evil that plagued his city. The Lone Ranger had a white horse named Silver and a sidekick. The Hornet was transported in a sleek black limousine called Black Beauty, driven by his companion, Kato. The musical themes for both shows came from the classics—the *William Tell Overture* for the Lone Ranger, the *Flight of the Bumblebee* for the Green Hornet.

"And then there were the detective programs," said Jonas, flipping the page to reveal portraits of a series of serious-looking gentlemen, all wearing trench coats with hats pulled down about their eyes. "Here's Brad Runyon, the Fat Man, Johnny Dollar, Nick Carter, Boston Blackie, Richard Diamond, Mike Shayne, and the Falcon. All hard-boiled, tough, underpaid, and suckers for a statuesque blonde.

"But I think my favorite programs of the era were the dramatic anthologies. Some of the grandest moments in radio occurred on these shows. The 'Lux Hollywood Theater' was probably the most popular, despite its lack of dramatic achievement. Each week a guest host, often a Hollywood producer or director, would introduce a sixty-minute version of a current motion picture or some well-remembered classic, often with some of the original cast. The show inspired many imitators, including 'Mr. First Nighter,' 'from that little theater just off Times Square,' and 'Grand Central Station'—the crossroad of a million private lives, the gigantic stage on which are played a thousand dramas daily.' But probably the most prestigious of the dramatic anthologies, although not the most popular, was 'The Mercury Theater of the Air.'"

"*War of the Worlds*. Orson Welles," I thought out loud.

"Well, that was the most famous production. It scared the pants off most of America."

"I've always wondered how could a radio program do that? There was almost a national panic, wasn't there?"



"Lux Hollywood Theater" each week whisked millions of listeners away to mystery, adventure, and romance. While it rarely achieved dramatic heights, its cast each week normally featured well-known Hollywood personalities, such as Marlene Dietrich and Douglas Fairbanks (right).

"You must remember the state of the world in October of 1938. Tension was high. Many people believed—correctly—that war in Europe was imminent. Maybe we were ready for a good scare. A funny thing about the production: most people who worked on the story feared that few persons would take it seriously enough to listen to it. After all, a story about an invasion of Earth by Martians in giant machines is rather outrageous. But the script, which was adapted from the old H. G. Wells story, was constructed neatly as if a normal evening of broadcasting was being interrupted by bulletins about the invasion. The people at CBS thought it was believable enough from the beginning. They made Welles make thirty-eight script changes—renaming the National Guard the militia, the U.S. Weather Bureau the Government Weather Bureau, and so forth. But that apparently didn't help listeners distinguish fiction from reality.

"Immediately after the show began at 8 P.M. on Halloween night the police began calling CBS studios asking them what was going on. This was the first hint to the network that something was amiss. Listeners began to call newspapers; the *New York Times* got nearly 900 calls. Catholics called



Culver Pictures

A much younger and thinner Orson Welles at work as a leading character during his broadcast of "War of the Worlds." The program, probably the most famous of any radio broadcast, demonstrates how the listeners' imaginations play a crucial role in the success of radio drama. A similar TV program would have difficulty in creating the same audience reaction because the television viewer can't close his eyes and let his own mind fill in the pictorial details.

their priests to confess. By 8:30 the highways along the East Coast—the invasion supposedly began at a place called Grovers Mill, New Jersey—were jammed with motorists. Sailors on shore leave were summoned back to ships. A power failure in a small town in Washington was all that was needed to convince residents there that the end was indeed upon them. Hundreds of people reported they had seen Martians. All in all it was a very frightening evening. After the hoax was exposed the people were mad. When the program was rebroadcast in Quito, Ecuador, listeners were so enraged at being tricked they burned down the radio station. In this country people merely wrote nasty letters to CBS. For a time it was feared the broadcast would doom the Mercury Theater. The FCC moved in quickly and after a short investigation changed some broadcasting policies. For example, fictional news bulletins were banned from the air. But instead of killing the Mercury Theater, the program showed sponsors its potential as an advertising vehicle. A canned soup company agreed to sponsor the series and shortly the 'Mercury Theater of the Air' became the 'Campbell Theater.'

"Did you hear the original broadcast?"

"Yes."

"Were you frightened by it?"

"No comment."

“While it’s a hard admission for me to make, old-time radio sounds kind of exciting.”

“Sure it was exciting. But it was a lot more as well. It took the mind of the country off the hard times of the thirties. Like television today, it was a kind of showcase for our dreams, the fantasy worlds that most of us visit once in a while. Radio showed an America that really didn’t exist, I suppose, except in our fondest wishes. Some of the programs left an indelible mark on our culture; others have been quickly forgotten. But while it existed, radio was a common experience for the family to share, something that helped us laugh or let us cry.”

“When did this kind of radio end? And more importantly, why did it end?”

“It just didn’t stop one day. It sort of faded out in the late 1940s and early 1950s. I’d say by 1955 it was pretty well dead, with a few exceptions. Although even then there were those who said it would someday return. The *why* part of your question is harder to answer. Interest in network radio began to diminish at about the same time as interest in television began to grow. Sponsors were quick to see the potential of the new visual medium. Most felt they could not afford to make large advertising expenditures on both radio and television. And by 1952 they were ready to abandon radio like the bones at a barbecue, as Fred Allen said. Strangely, all the while that television was getting on its feet, radio paid the bills. It was like presiding at your own funeral. Some attempts were made to save network radio. Advertising rate structures were overhauled, nighttime hours were given over to television, and advertisers got discounts on radio spots. Even new sources of business were sought as attempts were made to appeal to smaller national or regional audiences. But the networks couldn’t seem to make it work. To many network bosses the two media were the same: television was radio with pictures. Most really didn’t see that TV and radio were very different. A television viewer doesn’t need to use his mind to fill in the details of a dramatic story or a comedy broadcast. The very stuff of radio—imagination—is the antithesis of television. Network radio and television are operated by the same people, so we can only assume that it was a conscious decision on the part of these men to discontinue big-time radio programming. The people who believe that radio and television are about the same assert that network radio could never exist next to television. But they forgot that in Great Britain radio programming of the kind found here in the thirties and forties has found a large and interested audience even today.

“But television was the new medium in America. And initially, at least, it provided the kind of substance that the audience wanted. It was only after television found that it could no longer afford the room for a Sid Caesar, or a ‘Playhouse 90,’ or a ‘Defenders,’ or an ‘Omnibus’ that many persons nostalgically remembered the good old days of network radio. Goodman Ace, an outspoken magazine columnist who himself was a radio and later a television writer, made a comment about this in 1966 that I clipped. Look here:

‘Thirty-five years ago Messrs. Paley, Stanton, and Sarnoff [these are CBS



NBC Photo

Today only a fond memory, "Your Show of Shows" was a staple of the early American TV connoisseur. Restaurant owners complained that the normal late-evening dinner crowds disappeared as patrons ate early, then hurried home to watch Howard Morris, Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, and Carl Reiner on NBC.

and NBC executives] became the proud proprietors of a class entertainment medium. Television 1966 finds them operating run-down second-run movie houses, open all night, and showing B pictures along with quickie, two-reel comedies for which the Phoenicians will have to invent another letter.'

"Sounds a bit bitter, doesn't he? But he reflects the feelings of many who grew up working in radio and then saw it abandoned for what they believed was a gadget. Fred Allen, who became bitter because he never found a place on television, said that TV was the triumph of equipment over people. He added that the minds that control it are so small that you could put them in the navel of a flea and still have room beside them for a network vice president's heart."

With that Jonas closed his scrapbook, got up and walked across the room, replacing the worn collection of memories on the shelf. It was time to change the mood, I thought.

"You implied that television really didn't get started here until the late forties. My father was in Britain during the war and he told me that many people in London had television sets before 1940. Is that true?"

"Yes. Television was around in one form or another for many years before the late 1930s. The first patents for a device to send pictures by wire were



NBC Photo

The NBC broadcast of the opening ceremonies of the 1939 New York World's Fair. The TV camera (arrow B) is focused on President Franklin D. Roosevelt (arrow A). Note the newsreel cameras to the left and underneath the television camera. Newsreels, shown in all movie theaters before the cartoon and main features, were the only means Americans had of seeing moving news pictures before television news broadcasting became common.

issued in Germany in 1884. In 1930 an Englishman, J. L. Baird, was selling television sets to the public for about \$130 each and broadcasting video signals on BBC transmitting equipment after the close of the radio broadcast day. Commercial television would have probably developed more rapidly in this country were it not for the success of radio. The large broadcasting networks, which would later push television, could see little advantage in developing a medium to compete with radio, which was just beginning to take off. We had experimental TV broadcasts in this country as early as 1927, but we were behind the British in developing television for public use. The coronation of King George VI was televised in England in 1937 and regular broadcasts began in 1938. American television didn't go public until 1939 when RCA put a few sets in the stores for \$625 each. The radio corporation used the New York's World Fair as kind of a promotional device to sell the sets. The opening of the fair on April 30, 1939, was telecast, including remarks by President Roosevelt. RCA displayed television sets at the fair with screen sizes varying from five to nine inches. A few programs were telecast each day, some from studios in Radio City, others from a mobile



This is a photograph of the single camera used by NBC at the nation's first televised baseball game, a contest between Columbia and Princeton. The several hundred viewers who saw the telecast must have felt like they were watching the game through an electronic knothole in the fence. When a runner attempted to steal second base, who did the cameraman focus on—the catcher? the runner? the second baseman? This is a good reminder to viewers today that much happens outside the view of the camera.

NBC Photo

unit. Presentations from the studio included bits of opera, plays, jugglers, puppets, and kitchen demonstrations. One of the first mobile telecasts was a Columbia-Princeton baseball game. One camera, stationed along the third-base line, attempted to cover all the action. It was awful. At a later game between the Brooklyn Dodgers and Cincinnati Reds two cameras were used. But that still wasn't very many when you consider that today NBC frequently uses as many as ten cameras to broadcast the World Series or the All-Star game. Other mobile telecasts included a fashion show from the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, boxing or wrestling matches, skaters at the Rockefeller Center, or planes landing at LaGuardia Airport."

"Gee, that sounds thrilling. Planes landing at the airport?"

"You must remember that in those days television was a toy by many standards—an expensive toy, but a toy nevertheless. In the early days of radio people didn't care what they heard so long as they heard something. In the early days of film, people were fascinated by the moving object on the screen. In fact, one of the first real motion pictures was a film of a man sneezing. In the childhood of television it was the same way; people were fascinated by the picture, almost any picture. Some people might argue that television viewers really haven't changed much at all. In any case, TV caught on slowly."

"I can see why. Planes landing at the airport!"

“Now, be nice. TV was expensive, and new. A year later there were only a handful of stations on the air. World War II literally stopped the development of the medium. Programming was limited on the six existing stations to four hours per week. The materials needed for receivers as well as for transmitting equipment—aluminum, cobalt, and copper—were needed by the military. And the electronic firms that produced broadcasting equipment in peacetime were busy making another electronic gadget—a lot like television—called radar.

“But after the war expansion began and the FCC began issuing television station licenses to most of those who sought them. By autumn of 1948 there were more than 100 stations operating throughout the nation. And that’s when the FCC first began to note the trouble.”

“What trouble?”

“When television became a reality, the FCC allotted a small portion of the so-called spectrum for telecasting. I think the commission thought it was enough, but the FCC really didn’t know a great deal about television signals, how they acted, or how far they would go. For example, television waves travel in a straight line. You might therefore suspect that two stations outside of each other’s line of sight, that is, over the horizon from one



An early experimental TV set with a screen not much larger than a pack of playing cards. All three pieces of equipment were needed for the receiver.

The Bettmann Archive, Inc.

another, could share the same frequency. But TV signals bounce off hills, mountains, clouds, and buildings. And interference did result between television stations and between television stations and nonbroadcast communications systems. So on September 30, 1948, the FCC ordered a freeze on the granting of all television licenses. The halt was only to last a short time, until solutions to the interference problems might be found. But the Korean war extended the freeze until June of 1952. No licenses were granted during the period."

"Did all big cities have television stations before the freeze?"

"No, many did not. And social scientists had a field day comparing the behavior of people in cities that had television to those in cities that didn't. The attendance at movies, sporting events, and nightclubs dropped significantly in television cities but remained constant in non-TV cities. Restaurant owners complained that patrons in TV cities ate early and rushed home to watch Sid Caesar. Radio listening dropped in cities with television while network radio enjoyed a last big fling in those cities without the tube. Bookstore sales and visits to public libraries also declined in cities with television.

"Two other problems came up at this time in regard to the development of television: the use of some channels for educational purposes and color broadcasting. Do you want to hear about them?"

"Why not?" I said, sinking a bit farther into my cushy leather seat.

"Let's look at the color question first. Some people argue that we could have had good, clear color television in this country long before we did. These people argue that when the FCC was faced with two competing color systems back in 1947, they gave approval to the wrong one. Just after the war CBS demonstrated a color system it had developed. The system involved a rotating wheel and gave brilliant, stable colors. But broadcasts on the CBS system could not be seen on the existing ten to fifteen thousand black-and-white television sets in use. RCA, which had led in the development of television was scornful of the CBS system. RCA publicly condemned it because it was incompatible with the black-and-white sets, but it's likely that its private concerns revolved more around the tremendous economic advantage CBS might gain if its system was accepted. After the CBS demonstration RCA told the FCC that it would develop a system compatible with existing television sets within six months. It kept its promise. The colors were crude and unstable, but it was compatible with the existing systems. So the FCC gave the go-ahead to RCA. This left CBS and many other persons interested in the early development of a usable color system dismayed and disappointed. One result of the FCC's ruling was that most Americans bought one or two black-and-white sets before color was developed sufficiently to interest most viewers."

"But if the FCC had approved the CBS system," I said, "all those people who had television sets would have found them useless. Probably the development of the entire medium would have been slowed down while the industry retooled to meet the standards of the CBS system."

"No doubt about it. It was a tough decision. But I'm still not certain it might not have been better to go the other way from the beginning. Most people didn't buy television sets until the early to mid-fifties. By then, they

probably could have invested initially in a color set. But who knows?

"The educational television question was interesting also. The notion of setting aside a small portion of the broadcast spectrum for educational use was not a new one in 1948. Years earlier a few FM radio channels had been set aside for this purpose. But no one had seriously suggested this scheme for television until FCC commissioner Freida B. Hennock raised the issue shortly after being named to the commission in 1948. Commissioner Hennock enlisted the aid of various groups of educational radio broadcasters and began lobbying strongly to reserve a portion of the television spectrum for educational use. These groups vigorously lobbied to win their fight. They conducted one of the first content analyses of television programming to help them make their case. The National Association of Educational Broadcasters began tabulating information about commercial television broadcasting in January of 1951 and discovered, for example, that during a single week of telecasting in New York, viewers witnessed nearly 3,000 acts or threats of violence."

"You mean people were concerned about television violence even then?"

"That's right, and this kind of data had a great impact on many people. The FCC agreed in 1952 to reserve 242 channels for educational purposes. The agency had little to lose. If, as many people said, the educators didn't use the channels, the FCC would have at least offered the chance. If the idea worked, then the FCC could claim to have led the way in educational broadcasting. And of course the scheme did work, if not exactly as people first thought, as these channels—there are many more of them now—form the basis for the growing public television network."

"Where did the commercial broadcasters stand on the issue?" I asked.

"That's hard to say. There probably wasn't an industry position. Some people interested in commercial broadcasting—generally people who didn't have licenses but wanted them—thought it was a poor idea since it depleted this very scarce resource. But others, people who had already had licenses, saw the educational broadcaster as one less commercial competitor. So there was probably a split.

"The licensing freeze went off in June of 1952 and 700 applicants, mostly commercial ones, lined up for licenses. The big television boom was about to begin. The rest is recent history. You know, it's a funny thing about television. Most of the people who run it have never really figured out what it is all about. As I said earlier, the early network brass conceived of it as radio with pictures. I suppose it is understandable, because most of them were fresh out of network radio. But even today few television people realize the visual capacity of the medium. Nearly all the different kinds of television programs that are telecast originated in radio. We are really hung up in a linear thought process. And the amount of innovation in the medium has been minute. The basic formats of radio—situation comedies, variety shows, westerns, mysteries, quiz shows—abound in television. They *are* television.

"Initially, programming was of chief concern to television. While advertisers were interested in the new medium, its circulation—the number of television sets in use—was very low. So programming that would make families want to buy a television set was needed. It was one of the few times

in the history of the medium—and the cynic in me is coming out now—that programming priorities superseded all others. Some people call it television's Golden Age. Comic geniuses like Sid Caesar and Ernie Kovacs appeared weekly. There was an abundance of live original drama on anthologies such as 'Studio One,' 'Philco Playhouse,' 'Circle Theater,' 'Goodyear Playhouse,' and 'Playhouse 90.' There were hard-hitting documentaries like 'See It Now' and thought-provoking cultural presentations like 'Omnibus.'"

"Why don't we have programs like that now?" I asked.

"I don't think there is a single answer to your question. Some people believe that this kind of programming was aired to attract the wealthier and better-educated part of the public, the people best able to afford the high cost of a television receiver. Once these people had their sets other, cheaper kinds of programming were substituted. Other people suggest that many talented actors and writers and directors were lured away from the tube by movies, where money was better and schedules were more leisurely. Network programming people will tell you that people don't like that kind of television any more (maybe they never did) and show you ratings to support this argument. Others will tell you that that kind of programming is too costly and that the networks can't afford it. I suppose there is some truth in all those answers. But I think that television showed a promise in those days that it has never really fulfilled."

As Jonas finished his sentence I glanced out the window. The sun was low in the western sky. Evening was approaching. The noise on the street below was noticeable now as workers began their daily pilgrimage home. As if the same thought had struck us simultaneously, Jonas stood up, stretched his arms above his head in a way that pulled the sweater above the top of his belt, and began to look for Ralph.

"It's getting late," he said as he readjusted the worn sweater. "And I know a cat that is probably getting hungry."

"I guess I'm hungry too," I said. "I think time got away from us there in our little historical excursion."

Ralph yawned as he pulled himself from under a low table base. When Jonas saw the cat he began to walk toward the door. "Time to close up shop," he said, looking at me. As we crossed the threshold Jonas switched off the lights. I quickly glanced over my shoulder as we stepped into the corridor, but the dirty window panes and the fading sunlight had darkened the room where I had spent the better part of this day.

"Did we help you?" Jonas asked as we walked toward the staircase.

"Very much. Perhaps not as I thought you would. I guess I expected names and dates—that's what history so often is. But you gave me some ideas instead."

"What kind of ideas?"

"Well, ideas about the economics of the media, for example. I think people tend to forget that media are businesses, operate as businesses, and make decisions on the basis of business. This has apparently been an important factor in shaping the mass media into what exists today. I think your ideas on the development of objectivity and political journalism have

made me curious enough to find out more about these subjects.”

“Then it wasn’t a wasted day,” Jonas said as he began to walk down the stairs. “I told you before we began that we really didn’t have any pat answers to most questions. What I have given you today are a single man’s impressions of some of the events and trends and conditions of the past. Make no mistake, it’s not the gospel. Beware of people who claim to know the only truth about something.”

We were at the bottom of the stairs now. As Jonas handed me my coat, Ralph scampered away and ran toward what I assumed was the back of the building, probably a pantry or small kitchen. “He knows where the food is,” Jonas said laughingly.

As I walked toward the door Jonas put his hand on my shoulder.

“Come back again,” he said.

“I will,” I said, rather perfunctorily.

The grizzled little historian opened the heavy door and I caught a soft April breeze as it floated in from the street. A noise in the rear prompted me to turn my head as I walked onto the porch. Ralph peeked out from behind a half-closed door at the back of the hallway, cocked his head, and meowed softly. Jonas smiled and winked at me. Yes, I thought, I’ll be back.

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5

Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Newspapers

but Were Afraid to Ask Your Paper Boy

WASHINGTON—The American newspaper, seeker of truth, defender of the weak, champion of the people, died early this morning in the nation's capital. It was 270 years old.

The newspaper, which was born in Boston and lived at one time in nearly every community in the country, succumbed to what doctors described as an "inability to respond to the changing world."

There are no survivors.

The death of the newspaper is something that people have been writing about for a great many years in this country. When the number of dailies first began to dip seriously in the twenties, dire predictions about the fate of the press began to appear. And then there was radio and television. Who needs a newspaper any more? We can get all the news faster from the electronic media.

The man who has been most active recently writing the obituary of the print media is Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian pop-philosopher who has borrowed heavily on the ideas of Harold Innis in his lengthy discussions of communications. McLuhan charges that printed words and written sentences are contrary to man's inherent nature—that the one-step-after-another sequence of data consumption is unnatural. Reality is not linear, as the printed media would force one to assume. The electronic media that can invade many senses at a single instant produce the "all-at-once" environment of the seventies. Print is a hot medium, the former English professor asserts; it provides plenty of highly defined information for a single sense—the visual one. Television, on the other hand, is a cool, low-definition medium that provides a minimum of information, but involves all the senses. There is high participation and involvement. The electronic media are today; print is yesterday. The entire nature of man is being

reshaped by the new media, and the generation gap, accelerated mobility of public opinion, abrupt changes in life styles, and so forth, have already resulted. And this is only a mild preliminary, according to McLuhanistic dogma, to the convulsions ahead that will necessarily swallow up the printed word.

No one knows if Marshall McLuhan is right or not, not even Marshall McLuhan, for most of what he has told us about the media has been presented in the form of revealed truths, not testable hypotheses. For example, his suggestions imply a decline in both reading skills and interests. But neither appear evident at this stage of the game. In fact, reading skills in young people seem to be increasing, not declining. Most tests show, for example, that the average child in the 1960s (and this was our first television generation) was superior to his counterpart from the 1950s in reading, comprehension, word recognition, abstract reasoning, and understanding mathematical concepts—the traditional intellectual activities. And the tremendous increase in the number of books and magazines and newspapers that are published and sold each year tends to belie the McLuhanistic dirges for the printed form.

In time, we may find that McLuhan and the other doomsayers are right. But for now we are left with the old Scottish verdict, *not proven*; and Tom Wolfe's haunting query—*what if they are right?*

THE LUMBERING GIANTS

The print media in America are surprisingly healthy for the most part. Television might be newer, radio might be more fun, and film might be more glamorous. But the printed media, specifically newspapers, are the lumbering giants of masscomm, economically sound, socially respectable, and still getting more than their share of the action.

And that's what this chapter is all about—the American newspaper. Books and magazines are also forms of print media. If we had the time and space, book publishing would be fun to consider. But we have neither. And there is some question today (at least in this author's mind) whether magazines are truly "mass" media (that is, circulated to a large heterogeneous audience). There are only a couple of mass-circulation, general-interest magazines left. Most others are aimed at specific groups. So we are putting off a discussion of magazines until chapter eleven when we consider the way masscomm has responded to the fragmented society.

In this chapter on newspapers we want to concentrate on two or three things. First, since we are all consumers of newspapers, it will be helpful to understand how the news gets into a paper. How is it gathered? Who decides whether a story will be used or not? What is its source? Since the way that a newspaper does things has a direct impact on what a reader sees in his evening or morning paper, we will take a look at some of the internal habits, systems, and pressures that can be found in most newspaper offices. Finally, it's only fair that we try to view some of the problems that beset this important business. These too have an impact upon what does or does not appear in the paper.

However, before we can begin to describe the newspaper, it would probably be helpful to describe the newspaper industry.

THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

According to author and critic Ben Bagdikian, a newspaper is a publication that carries information on newsprint (a particularly cheap grade of paper) for a general audience, and is issued daily, on Sundays, or weekly. This is as good a definition as there is. There are approximately 10,000 such publications in the United States. About 1,760 of these are issued daily; the rest appear once, twice, or even three times a week. When the word *newspaper* is used people tend to think of the big city daily newspaper. But actually most newspapers aren't like that at all. Some years ago Professor Jack Lyle looked at the Los Angeles–Long Beach metropolitan area and discovered this conglomeration of publications that qualify as newspapers: twenty-two general circulation daily newspapers; 100 free circulation weekly papers or shoppers' guides (they're called *throwaways*, not because that's what readers do, but because that's how they are distributed); fifty "paid" general circulation weekly papers; ten semi-weekly papers; one Spanish language daily newspaper; three Japanese-language daily newspapers; several weeklies aimed at black readers or ethnic groups; and editions of both the *Wall Street Journal* and *Christian Science Monitor*, which are printed in Los Angeles.

Needless to say, this is not a typical situation. Most American cities are fortunate if they have a single daily and a handful of weeklies. But the point is still well taken: although large metropolitan papers account for much of the circulation of American newspapers, they are a small numerical proportion of the industry.

While most things in America continue to grow, the number of daily newspapers hasn't increased much in the past 20 years. And in the 40 years before that there was a sharp decline in the total number of dailies from a high of about 2600 in 1919. (Of the 2600, 2200 were English-language general-circulation newspapers.) The apparent numerical stability of the number of dailies since the mid-fifties is deceiving in two ways. First, the numbers game does not reveal that each year many newspapers fail and close their doors. Others start fresh, or shift from weekly to daily status. In 1969, for example, twenty-eight dailies began publication, eleven suspended publication, five merged with other newspapers, and four became weeklies. There was a net gain of eight papers that year.

The other deception concerns the kinds of daily papers that remain from year to year. Generally there has been a steadily diminishing number of newspapers in the large metropolitan areas and a steadily increasing number of dailies in the small towns and cities. In 1910, for example, fifty-five percent of the cities with a daily had two or more competing papers, papers with different owners. Today less than five percent of cities with dailies have competing daily newspapers. New York is the only city in America with more than two competing dailies. Big city papers have failed

and closed, or have been sold and became part of combinations that exist in places like Milwaukee, Kansas City, and Louisville where a single owner controls both morning and afternoon papers. As the big city papers were falling away, smaller dailies sprang up, primarily in the suburbs.

While the number of daily newspapers has remained fairly constant during the past twenty years, daily circulation has not. But again the numbers tend to be deceiving. The American Newspaper Publishers Association, a trade association that represents newspapers' business interests, points out that daily circulation continues to rise each year. Currently, about 65,000,000 copies are sold each day. In 1946 daily circulation was only 51,000,000.

But circulation increases are not keeping pace with population increases. That is, while the adult population increased by thirty-two percent between 1946 and 1970, newspaper circulation went up only about twenty-two percent. In terms of households rather than population the statistics are about the same. From the early fifties to the end of the sixties there was a one-third increase in the number of households in the U.S. Newspaper circulation increased by about twenty percent in the same period. The average American home received 1.2 papers in 1952; the same home received only about one newspaper in 1970.

One explanation for the lag in circulation that newspaper publishers don't like to face is that young people (aged 20–29) seem to be reading fewer papers today than in the past. And since there are more young people than ever before, this has serious implications for future circulation. Researchers haven't yet been able to decide whether this lower readership is a function of this group's age—that is, whether once these people move into the over-thirty category their reading habits will pick up—or a function of “something else”—in which case these people might never change their reading habits. If it turns out that it isn't age, that “something else” has affected reading habits, the “something else” will probably turn out to be many things.

Television could be a villain. The new life styles in America might provide another explanation. Reading a newspaper takes time. When a man or woman gets married, settles into a home, and has a family, the time available to read a paper increases. Marital, domestic, and familial activities are changing today. Marriage is often coming at an older age and traditional family life is beginning to crumble. This might be a factor in reduced readership. Some people also suggest that the audience for newspapers is changing faster than papers are changing. That is, young people today tend to be better educated, better informed, and more affluent. They find much of what appears in the papers less than useful. They are bored with the plethora of entertainment features. They can afford to find entertainment in other places and don't need crossword puzzles, comic strips, and humor columnists. The newspaper has less to offer this group of young people. This is a factor recognized even by some progressive newsmen. J. Edward Murray, managing editor of *The Arizona Republic* told *Newsweek* magazine a few years ago: “The newspaper audience is growing to intellectual capacity and appetite more rapidly than we are upgrading newspaper content.” Whatever the cause, the decline of newspaper readership by

young people should give serious pause to editors and publishers interested in the continued prosperity of the printed press.

WHO READS THE PAPER?

Perhaps it's time to consider briefly who *does* read a newspaper. The only qualification needed is literacy. Only three percent of Americans don't meet this standard, but that percentage is not averaged equally over the U.S. population. Only two percent of whites are illiterate, but one in ten nonwhites don't have the basic skills needed to read a newspaper. Inferior education is the best explanation for this statistic. This suggests, of course, that newspaper readership would be lower among nonwhite groups. And this is true—but for reasons that go beyond literacy. Minority-group members often find little that interests them in the paper. Until recently media did not perceive these people as a significant purchasing power in a community. Minority social clubs were ignored on the women's pages. Minority service clubs were rarely given the same coverage as their white counterparts. Because minorities were grossly under-represented in government and economic and educational policy making, this avenue toward newspaper coverage was closed as well. And threats of boycotts by minority readers were usually met with editorial yawns, since advertisers seldom attempted to reach minority consumers anyway.

Many minority-group members tend to be economically deprived. Once the press tended to "look out" for these kinds of people. But, unfortunately, the modern newspaper has abandoned its once-proud role as champion of the underdog. Today it most effectively represents the interests of the merchant class—business and commerce. Whereas at one time the plight of the poor and the friendless was of real concern to newspapers, it is clearly less so today. In most major cities at the turn of the century, leading papers provided medical clinics for the poor and delivered free ice in low-income neighborhoods in the summer. Christmas dinners were provided for the indigent. The press was at least partially motivated to such behavior in the hopes of adding these citizens to their subscription rolls. But at least the poor were courted by the press. Today they tend to be ignored except when they make news.

Add these factors to the dismal employment record of minority group members and you can readily understand why the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders took the press to task in 1968. "Along with the country as a whole, the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white man's eyes and a white perspective. That is no longer good enough," the commission wrote. Some changes have occurred, but the newspaper press has a long way to go in winning back the support and readership of blacks and chicanos and orientals. Studies show that the newspaper falls far behind television—and even trails radio—as a source of information for low-income minority people. In Detroit during the 1967 riots, most blacks perceived radio to be the most trustworthy news source, especially those radio stations that were operated by blacks. Similar situations have been found elsewhere. So readership of

the press among minority groups and low-income people tends to be low—lower than it should be if literacy alone were the problem.

THE TYPICAL READER

The typical newspaper reader in America, according to a recent study by the RAND Corporation, is probably married, has a family, and is what statisticians call a householder, someone who owns a home or lives in an apartment. The typical reader probably makes more money and has more schooling than the average citizen. It is also likely that he has a good job and is politically active to some extent, such as in voting regularly or working on school bond levies.

Since Americans seem to be making more money, becoming better educated, finding better jobs, and so forth, it would seem to suggest that increases in newspaper reading should be ahead of or at least equal to population growth. Why aren't they? All we can offer are some educated guesses: People who used to read two newspapers now read one paper and a news magazine. There is more competition for the reader's time. Television viewing uses up a large share of leisure time. There are fewer newspapers in most cities. And there are probably other reasons we haven't thought of, as well.

As to the old battle about which medium most people use to get their information about what's going on, it's a toss-up. Different surveys "prove" different things. Whether newspapers or television comes out on top is usually related to whether TV or newspapers sponsored the survey. Television can tell a great deal about a single newsworthy event; therefore a survey that asks, "Where did you get most of the information about the earthquake in Peru?" will tend to favor television. Similarly, television tends to come out on top in surveys that allow multiple responses to the question, "Where do you get most of your information about what is going on in the world?" Multiple response means the respondent can answer *newspapers and television*, or either *newspapers* or *television*. But a survey that asks the respondent about a broad range of news items favors the print media since a paper can publish a great many more stories than television can broadcast in a half hour. Consequently, research sponsored and released by the Television Information Office tends to show more people use television. Similar surveys sponsored by the Newsprint Information Committee favor newspapers by a wide margin.

THE NEWSPAPER BUSINESS

Despite the somewhat gloomy picture of newspaper circulation noted earlier, the newspaper business remains good. It is one of the most powerful businesses in America. Newspapers are the nation's fifth largest employer and rank tenth in terms of the value of goods shipped each year. At the beginning of this decade the newspaper industry was one of the ten fastest growing industries in America. In terms of advertising dollars spent, the newspaper gets as much as television, radio, and magazines combined.

Newspapers get a little less than thirty cents of every dollar spent for advertising. That totaled around \$6 billion in 1970. This was a 500-percent increase in revenue from 1946. During the same quarter-century expenditures for national advertising in newspapers were up over 300 percent and local advertising expenditures increased by more than 400 percent. Total advertising expenditures were up by about 400 percent, while the U.S. gross national product increased by only 340 percent in the same period.

These data become even more meaningful when looked at in a different perspective. The average manufacturing corporation had about a five-percent profit on sales after taxes in a recent year studied by the RAND Corporation. During the same year RAND reported that the average profit on sales after taxes for newspapers was almost nine percent, or about 76 percent higher than the national average for all industries. According to *Editor and Publisher*, a newspaper trade journal, one paper with a quarter-million circulation made a profit of nineteen percent, or \$2.5 million, in 1965. And a top official of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, which represents about 1000 newspapers with almost ninety percent of the nation's daily circulation, estimated recently that profit margins in the newspaper business range from eight to twenty percent. Most other industries fall in the five to seven percent range.

RAND has translated some of these percentages into real money. It goes like this: An average medium-sized daily newspaper, circulation 36,000, had about \$100,000 in assets and \$100,000 in revenues in 1940. That year the paper probably showed a loss. Today, the same size newspaper has assets and revenues of \$4 million each and will show a profit after taxes of about \$300,000. The newspaper meets a \$1.5 million annual payroll and pays about \$250,000 in various taxes.

While there are obviously newspapers that have difficulty making ends meet each year, the industry as a whole is highly profitable. With the exception of a relative handful of newspapers, most are individually or family owned. Fewer than twenty have offered stock for public sale, something that is more common throughout the rest of American industry. While many press dynasties are crumbling, personal names like Gannett, Ridder, Scripps, Hearst, and Knight still tend to dominate the newspaper business, as corporate entities like Litton, GM, GE, and AT&T dominate other industries. The immense economic strength of the American newspaper business is one of its most important virtues: it can afford to remain independent from government and special interest groups. But at the same time, as we will note later, there are potential seeds of destruction in this financial security. For the more American newspapers identify themselves as successful businesses, the less they have in common with most people in this nation—the people who happen to be their readers.

THE NEWS FUNCTION

Of all the mass media, the newspaper is most committed by tradition and conception to a news function. Its name alone—*NEWS*paper—suggests that

its primary role is gathering and dissemination of information. So it is curious, indeed, that one of the most serious problems the printed press faces today is continuing its dedication to the news function. Former editor Carl Lindstrom wrote some years ago in *The Fading American Newspaper*, "Most of the ills and failures of modern journalism can be attributed to the fading consciousness of the newspaper function. This is, of course, to supply news." We will talk more about this criticism later, but we should keep in mind that news is the traditional business of newspapers as we trek through the beginning of this chapter.

Localism is another characteristic of American newspapers. No single paper is readily available in all parts of the nation at its time of publication, as many are in England, Russia, Japan, and other nations. There is really no national daily newspaper. The structure of the industry tends to be local: the newspaper is produced locally from components constructed in other parts of the nation and then shipped to the local production centers. This process is quite different from the production of automobiles or soup or shoe polish, which tend to be produced in a single location and then distributed nationally.

Why the emphasis on localism? Lots of reasons. First is time and space. Newspapers still pride themselves on getting fresh news to their readers. Who can forget the old saw "There's nothing older than yesterday's paper?" But America is a vast nation. And the combination of distance, transportation costs, and time make shipment of a newspaper from New York to the West Coast impractical. The *New York Times* can send its editions to the coast at a special rate, but it takes about four days. Although lots of people will wait four days to read the *New York Times*, the same cannot be said about most other newspapers. The structure of our political system also tends to dictate localism in newspapers. We tend to be a nation of local governments. There are estimated to be nearly 100,000 governmental units nationwide, over 100,000 schools and universities, and millions of businesses and associations. These kinds of institutions, spread to all corners of the nation, generate much news and information that is important to the residents of the local communities. Since news is generated locally, it makes sense that it be reported locally.

Finally, and this is probably the most important reason, most advertising revenues in this nation are spent locally. Five-sixths of the average newspaper's advertising is local advertising. Less than twenty percent comes from national sources. The newspaper is an ideal medium for most local advertisers such as car dealers, supermarkets, department stores, and furniture outlets who seek to advertise many items in a single ad, something that neither television nor radio can handle efficiently.

The community roots of the American daily newspaper is probably one of its greatest strengths. Despite the inclusion of international and national news in the local paper, its coverage of city and county events and happenings is its most important asset, which cannot be efficiently duplicated by the electronic media. Many commentators feel that the success of the newspaper press in the decades ahead depends largely on how much publishers and editors realize and capitalize on this unique advantage.

WHO DECIDES WHAT'S IN THE NEWSPAPER?

The motto of the *New York Times*, which the newspaper displays proudly each day on its front page, is "All The News That's Fit to Print." It should come as no surprise to most readers that the *Times'* boast is something less than the truth. The newspaper carries much less news than is fit to print. A more accurate motto might be, "All the News That Fits, We Print."

The question of which news is printed and which isn't has long fascinated social scientists. Researchers have also been interested in who decides what news is fit to print. To the devotee of the late show who is fascinated by the "newspaper" movies of the thirties and forties, it might come as a shock to find that *anyone* decides.

The decision about what goes on in the paper is made by many people, some of whom don't even work there, but are employed by one of the many newsgathering agencies the press depends on for its international and national news. We must begin by understanding that much of what happens in the world is not seen by anyone, let alone by a reporter. And most of what is observed is not seen by a trained reporter. The damage, destruction, and death wrought by the tidal wave that struck what was East Pakistan in 1970 was not reported for days. It took that long for word to reach civilization that the catastrophe had occurred. Of those events that are witnessed by journalists and reporters, many are never recorded. They are unimportant or sometimes too difficult to understand or explain. So much of what goes on never even reaches the international press services, the great clearing-houses of news and information.

But what about that material the wire service does collect and report? How much of that is sent to the local newspaper? A twenty-year-old study (but the only one we have) of the Associated Press estimated that between 100,000 and 125,000 words of news copy flowed daily into the AP. Of this amount, the AP editors selected and transmitted throughout the United States about 57,000 words. This is about 283 items. From this mass of news, a typical state AP bureau (Wisconsin was used in the study) would select about 77 items or about 14,000 words for transmission to the average medium-sized daily in the state. That would be the substance of the AP report for that newspaper. The state bureau would add news at that point, about 66 items totaling 6,000 words. So the average medium-sized daily editor would receive about 122 items from the AP for publication. Of these he typically selects around 74, about 13,000 words. From the enormous number of happenings or things observed, the newspaper buyer finds out about only a fractional percentage. To paraphrase folk philosopher Flip Wilson, what is seen is rarely what you get. And even of those stories you get, you, the average newspaper reader, will only look at about 25 percent of them.

The man at the newspaper who decides what will be published is called an editor, but social scientists have picturesquely dubbed this individual a gatekeeper, a man who checks each item as it comes through the gate, letting some in and rejecting others. This person (there aren't many female newspaper gatekeepers yet) has considerable influence at a newspaper. On

a day-to-day basis he probably has much more to say about what goes into the newspaper than the publisher or the editor-in-chief. But this apparent power or freedom can be deceiving, for these men, and there are usually three or four of them at a medium-sized daily newspaper, are confronted with several factors that limit their decision-making power.

FACTORS IN NEWS SELECTION

Since the gatekeeper is the man who selects the news that will be published in the newspaper, one might think he has power. But he has less freedom than one might suspect. Various factors weigh heavily in his decision-making processes. The news policy of the paper is one. A policy story is an item on a subject about which management usually has distinct views. At a newspaper you won't find these policies posted on the company bulletin board or published in the employee's handbook. But through an elaborate socialization process described by sociologist Warren Breed in *Social Forces* nearly twenty years ago, they are known and generally followed on most newspapers. Policy is exerted through a system of rewards and recognitions that are given to the reporter or gatekeeper by the newspaper, not by its readers. A story written in opposition to policy might be cut or not run at all. The writer may not receive a by-line, an important reward to a newsman. The story might be buried on the inside rather than given good play on page one. Often editors exert policy through story assignments, assigning policy stories to reporters they are confident reflect management views. While both reporters and gatekeepers have means of circumventing some of these pressures, policy nevertheless plays an important role. It might be policy to run only favorable stories about the largest local industry and give them good front page play. It might be policy not to run stories about a city's drug problem. Policy sometimes gets so petty as to forbid references to the town's competing newspaper, if there is one, or to the local television station. The gatekeeper must be aware of these policies if he is to retain his job.

Another limitation he must cope with is that of space. There is only so much room in the newspaper. Generally, the day before a paper is published, the news editor or managing editor is given dummies of all the pages in the next day's paper with the advertising already blocked in. A dummy is a layout or sketch of a newspaper page. It is up to the gatekeeper to fill up the remainder of the paper, which averages twenty-five to forty percent of the total paper, with material other than advertising. If this sounds like a perversion of the entire information process, the tail wagging the dog, it's because it probably is. Yet this is the way the system evolved. The size of the American daily newspaper is probably determined more by the shopping habits of the community than anything else. Because Thursday, Friday, and Saturday are usually the busiest days at the supermarket and the department store, papers generally contain more advertising on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, which means more pages, which means more news.

In addition to space limitations brought on by advertising, there are

certain nonadvertising features that appear in the paper every day that also must be included before news can be added. Comics, crossword puzzles, Ann Landers or Dear Abby, medical advice, television listings, the weather map, stock market reports, and so forth, are among these items. These often take up as much as twenty percent of the news hole (what's left after advertising).

One of the criteria of a good gatekeeper (from the newspaper's standpoint) is his ability to estimate how much news will be needed and pass only that amount through the gate. If the gatekeeper doesn't send out enough news, a crisis occurs: the entire publication process stops while additional items are edited, set in type, and then added to the half-filled pages. Meanwhile, most of the craftsmen in the back shop—the printers, and so forth—go on overtime pay rates. Truck drivers who deliver the newspapers also go on overtime and paper boys are forced to stand around waiting for the newspaper. In the case of a morning newspaper, the delivery boys might have to go to school and leave the papers undelivered. This all costs money. But at the same time, if too much news is sent out, if more than can be used is processed, it is a waste of employee time, another costly error. So precision in estimating the quantity of news needed to fill the paper is highly desirable in a gatekeeper.

The greatest limitation of all, however, is time, something that is rarely on the gatekeeper's side. One assumes, perhaps, that when he arrives at work he will be presented with a vast array of the possible items he might include in that day's paper. He can then rank them in order of importance and select the best items for use in that edition. But this is not the way it works. In fact the gatekeeper *never* has all the possible news items before him at one time. Let's look, for example, at a typical afternoon daily newspaper and the order in which news stories are selected.

It takes between eight and ten hours to actually produce (process copy, set type, print, and so forth) the newspaper. It would probably be possible for the paper to hire enough men to do this job in three hours, but they would have nothing else to do the rest of the day, so it would hardly be economical. So as soon as the gatekeeper arrives at work in the morning (or sometimes even the afternoon before) he must start filling some of the pages of his newspaper. The items used are often called *time copy*—they are generally stories that have a timeless quality about them. It doesn't really matter when they are run. You know, things like wheat harvests are down in Nepal, scientists discover cure for bunions, mother of eight swims the Channel. All the while the editor is filling up his pages, new stories are coming into his hands from the wire services and from the reporters on the staff. But, as Ben Bagdikian has pointed out in *Information Machines*, "because each story he sends out reduces the remaining space, any succeeding story of the same importance has less chance of being seen." The system, Bagdikian correctly asserts, is biased in favor of old news. The earlier the story reaches the gate, the better chance it has of being published.

Increasing the size of the newspaper does not really help solve the problem. It only means that the gatekeeper must begin filling up these extra

pages a little earlier. It takes the same amount of time to fill the last five pages of the paper—the front page and four inside pages—whether the paper has eighty or fifty pages. So the editor is pushed into the same time bind. He is forced to use up his extra space at the beginning of this time cycle, not at the end when he has finally seen all the possible items he can select from. Bagdikian concludes, "Each story is not judged solely on the basis of its importance compared to all other stories available that day. Instead it is compared to stories already committed to print and to stories not yet seen."

In the future, new transmission processes will likely make it possible for the gatekeeper to examine most of his news before he is forced to make his decisions. And new processes might significantly shorten the production time needed to produce the paper. But these changes are many years off for the average newspaper.

Both wire services presently do use methods that in a small way reduce the time it takes to process copy. Previously, all wire copy came through the teletype machine. The story was ripped off, edited, and then given to a typesetting machine operator to set in type. Now, wire services provide newspapers with paper tape as well as a printed copy of the story. This tape may be fed directly into an automatic typesetting machine that prepares the story for printing. This does increase the speed of the process, but at a significant cost. Formerly, the story could be closely edited—words changed, sentences rewritten, and paragraph order altered—with little added cost. The story was not set in type until after it had been edited. But with the tape system, which is called TTS, the story is often set in type before it is edited (since you can't edit the tape). Corrections, alterations, and changes require additional manual typesetting, which is costly. Hence if a story needs to be shortened it is more economical to lop off the last paragraph rather than trim several paragraphs by cutting excess words and sentences. Progress has a price.

The limitations on the gatekeeper increase rather than diminish the importance of his job. Much news is never used. A medium-sized daily rarely uses even half of the wire news it receives. At a metropolitan newspaper with more news sources the rejection rate is far higher. Most local news is used, but only because the selection process occurs before the story is written, when the reporter is assigned to cover the event or story. Selection is a key factor in what goes into any newspaper. The gatekeeper's professional judgment, tempered by time, space, policy, and lastly, his personal prejudices, dictate his choice. Let's move now to the results of that choice.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWSPAPER?

Most of what is in the daily newspaper is advertising. Most papers carry between 60 and 75 percent advertising. Advertising pays nearly all the newspaper's bills. That dime you plunk down on the counter for your evening paper hardly pays the cost of the newsprint and delivery. According to Ben Bagdikian in *The Effete Conspiracy*, at a typical paper about

one-fourth of the employees are engaged directly in selling and preparing advertising copy. In 1940 the average American daily had 27 pages; 25 years later it had 50. Of the additional 23 pages, 20 were devoted exclusively to advertising and only three carried news.

There is little question that in most instances advertising takes precedence over news. If a space problem suddenly arose where it became a question of leaving out an advertisement or a news story, there is little doubt how such a matter would be resolved at the typical newspaper.

While advertising pays the bills, it is also the bane of many newspapers. On some occasions it directly interferes with news policy. During the recent grape and lettuce boycotts, for example, it was not unusual for a supermarket to threaten to drop its advertising from the newspaper unless coverage of the food boycotts was tempered. Unfortunately, with food advertising providing nearly fifteen percent of advertising revenues, some newspapers gave way.

Advertising also sets the paper's commercial tone. Downtown businessmen frequently exercise an inordinate amount of leverage with the publisher. The booster spirit of many smaller dailies ("nothing bad happens in our town") is a direct result of this commercial pressure.

There have been attempts to publish newspapers without advertising. They have failed. The most important attempt was made by Marshall Field in 1940 when he established the adless New York tabloid, *PM*. By 1946 the paper was forced to seek advertising to sustain itself. Two years later it died. Many felt that this experiment wasn't a fair one, since *PM* had more qualities of a literary journal of opinion and interpretation than of a newspaper. Its high quality may have scared off many potential readers. But others feel the experience was conclusive: readers *wanted* advertising, so much so that *PM* was forced to include information about sales and merchandising in its news columns.

How much would an adless newspaper cost a buyer? The estimates vary. A paper that now costs 10 cents could cost from 18 to 30 cents, depending on such matters as overhead, staff, and so forth. But newspaper publishers would probably rather rely on advertising dollars than circulation revenues because advertising provides a fairly regular cash flow and because it attracts some readers. There is also concern that a consumer who casually spends a dime for a newspaper today might be more hesitant about laying down a quarter, for example. Since newspapers tend to carry a great many minority appeal items that most people don't read, a buyer might begin to ask himself if he wants to spend 25 cents for a publication that contains a lot of information he isn't interested in. But these questions shouldn't trouble us a great deal since the chances of most of us reading an adless newspaper in the foreseeable future remain slim.

As a kind of compromise solution a few newspapers have experimented with a standardized news hole. That is, every day the editor has at least *X* amount of space for news, no matter how much advertising there is. This simplifies planning, since he can count on that space for a story. Also, it bases the use of news on a more journalistic and less economic standard. Such schemes have met with varying degrees of success.

THE NEWS HOLE

In trying to outline the content of the newspaper beyond its advertising matter, there is a clear risk of overgeneralization. Statements will be made in this section that obviously don't apply to some papers. There are exceptions to every rule, and this is especially true in newspapering. But we will be on target for the great bulk of papers, the ninety percent or so that aren't Pulitzer Prize winners. If what we say doesn't apply to the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times*, it is unimportant, because most of us don't read those newspapers. Most of us read papers like the *San Diego Union-Bulletin* or the *Grand Rapids Press* or the *Tampa Tribune*. And most of what will be said does apply to them.

The simplest division of nonadvertising matter is between what the newspaper produces itself and what it buys. It is about evenly split most of the time. Let's look at the latter first—the purchased material.

The news service or wire service has become an integral part of the American newspaper business. So much so, in fact, that if you took half a dozen newspapers from various parts of America and cut off their mastheads (their names across the top), it would be very difficult to guess where they were published. They all would tend to carry the same wire service accounts of various national and international events. The major impact the wire services have had on the American press is standardization.

The AP is a news cooperative association of papers that have agreed to supply each other with news. Of course the agency also maintains a large staff of its own reporters, but every paper that belongs to the AP must provide the cooperative with news from its own circulation area. And about one-half of all news the AP transmits is provided by its members.

Because the AP is a cooperative, newspapers belong to the AP; they do not buy news from it. Membership dues are based on the extent of the service to which the newspaper subscribes and its circulation. We have to guess at the dues—perhaps as much as \$2,500 per month for a newspaper with a circulation of about 100,000. No member knows what any other member pays. No bills are sent; the assessment is by draft against the newspaper's bank account.

The AP is incredibly powerful. It can insist that all but the very large metropolitan newspapers put news on the wire before publishing it locally. But the AP was once even more powerful than it is now. Until 1915 member papers were forbidden to use any other news service. This stopped when the Attorney General said he thought it violated the antitrust laws. Until 1940 members enjoyed onerous "protest rights" that were effective in stifling newspaper competition. Let's say, for example, that you wanted to start an afternoon newspaper in Mudflats to compete with an existing morning paper, that was a member of the AP. You could not get a membership in the AP unless your morning competitor agreed to it, or unless four-fifths of the membership voted to override his veto. Of course this seldom happened with the "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" policy of most members. But if you wanted an AP membership you generally had to buy a newspaper that had one. The Supreme Court outlawed this practice in 1945 as

restricting competition. Now anybody can get an AP membership—but it is still very expensive.

While the AP shares the weaknesses of all wire services, it has a special one because of its nature as a cooperative. This is the limitation of the wire. Or put another way, it is the weakness of democracy. Every member of the AP has an equal right to ask for whatever it wants. Since the smaller papers tend to need more and tend to be more numerous, they can dominate. The news cooperative is limited in what it can send through a few wires at about 60 words a minute. Consequently, the daily AP report is a news synthesis consisting of news to keep everybody happy. If your local editor feels it is important to run the full text or even long excerpts of an important Supreme Court ruling, he must get a majority of those on the circuit to agree. Often, if not frequently, this is impossible.

The other major U.S. wire service is United Press International. The service was founded as United Press in 1907 by Edward Scripps, proprietor of a large chain of afternoon newspapers. In those days AP tended to cater to morning newspapers since most of its important members were AM's. (AM is a morning paper; PM is an afternoon paper.) Because of the protest rights policy Scripps also found it difficult to gain AP membership in a city with an existing AP newspaper. So he formed the United Press Association, beginning with 250 subscribers, to provide an alternate news service. In 1958 the United Press merged with William Randolph Hearst's International News Service to become United Press International.

UPI is not a cooperative. Subscribers buy their news from UPI and have no obligation to contribute anything, except money. Despite the fact that both agencies offer about the same kind of services—world, national, and state news, features and photos—there are, and always have been, some differences between the two. The AP writing style has always been rather stodgy, dull, and lifeless. The agency has a fair record for accuracy, but lacks the flair of the UPI. Starting late and with a definite economic handicap, United Press needed something to attract subscribers. It worked on developing a dynamic writing style and provided newspapers with human-interest news and feature stories. To this day the agency maintains the reputation, deserved or not, of being the brighter of the two news services. But it also has the reputation of being the less accurate. Many old-timers still remember when United Press ended World War I four days early. General manager Roy Howard, who was at American naval headquarters in Brest, flashed an erroneous message to the U.S. that the Germans had surrendered. By a stroke of bad luck the censors passed it and wild celebrations began in the streets of New York on November 7, 1918—four days before the actual armistice. Despite the fact that AP has similar horror stories in its portfolio, many newsmen have never forgiven the UP for this mistake. And because the agency is understaffed and has to do much of its reporting by telephone or depend on untrained “stringers” for news coverage, its reputation for inaccuracy is annually fortified. While the UPI may be first with the story—it carried the initial bulletin on the Kennedy assassination, for example—in many newsrooms editors will wait for the AP to confirm.

Except for large metropolitan newspapers, dailies depend on one or both

of these wire services for nearly all their international, national, and state news. And this presents some problems. The standardization of news coverage we spoke of earlier is one difficulty. Accuracy is another. Newspapers, at least most of them, have reluctantly realized they are no longer the first with the news. And at many of them, getting the story right is more important than getting it fast. But speed is still important to the wire services. This is partially due to outmoded inter-agency rivalry (both AP and UPI boast in their weekly newsletters about beating each other on a story by two minutes or twenty minutes) and because the agencies serve radio and television, which tend to dwell on being first with something. There is a surprisingly large amount of incorrect information sent over the wires because of this—some of which is never corrected. Also, wire services can make a newspaper lazy. They provide plenty of copy to fill up an edition. Sometimes an editor will even let the wire service do work his own staff should be doing. Rather than send a reporter out to cover a local story, he will rely on the wire service account. Finally, the wire services have lifted from the shoulders of the local editor the responsibility of deciding the relative importance of various news stories. At the beginning of every news cycle (morning for PMs and afternoon for AMs) the wire service sends a budget—a list of the important stories it has transmitted or will transmit during the cycle. If a story breaks during the cycle, the wire service will inform the editor it is important by labeling it a bulletin or a flash and ringing bells attached to the teletype machine. Most editors use this budget to plan their front pages—and that explains why on any given day the front pages of most newspapers tend to look alike.

So your daily newspaper buys a large percentage of its news from either the AP or the UPI, or both. International news tends to be catastrophe-oriented. Such events are easy to cover, make good headlines, and are traditional. *Fortune's* former editor Max Ways has described the wire services as "the least innovative, most tradition-bound of all journalistic institutions." A foreign journalist has criticized the international news coverage in the American press—provided primarily by the wire services—as being obsessed with the obvious.

Despite such valid criticisms, wire services do provide a window on the world to readers in small communities, a window that wouldn't exist if the wire services didn't. It would be financially impossible for most newspapers to maintain even a small staff of correspondents abroad or in Washington. It costs a newspaper about \$50,000 a year to keep a correspondent overseas.

The AP and the UPI aren't the only wire services an American newspaper can use. Many smaller services also exist, and these are often connected with a major newspaper. A metropolitan paper like the *Washington Post*, with its great resources, will have not only the AP and UPI, but the *Chicago Tribune-New York Daily News Service*, the *London Sunday Times Service*, Reuters, the *Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service*, and the Dow-Jones financial wire. The most important of the smaller services is the *New York Times* wire, which allows papers throughout America to carry some of the best items from the *Times* the same day they are published in New York. These are all subscriber services.

NEWS SYNDICATES

The publisher can also buy nonadvertising matter from what are called news and feature syndicates. These organizations do not use wires to transmit their material to their subscribers, but instead use the postal system to send stories, columns, and cartoons to various newspapers. Syndicates were first organized around the turn of the century. The first one, which is still going strong today, is the Newspaper Enterprise Association. These agencies provide newspapers with non-timely material from specialists. Political cartoonists and columnists like Jack Anderson are syndicated. The comic strips are syndicated features, and a newspaper might buy from several different syndicates just to get the package of strips it wants. Ann Landers and Dear Abby are syndicated; so are the medical advice columns, the crossword puzzles, the dress patterns, and Believe It Or Not. Humor columnists like Art Buchwald and Arthur Hoppe are syndicated and follow in the footsteps of such great syndicated humorists as Mark Twain and Will Rogers. There are syndicates that specialize in science news; others provide financial and economic information.

Most syndicated material is what we call "soft." It is easy for the readers to take because it is entertaining rather than informative. Like a drug, readers can become hooked on it. It is not unusual for a newspaper to fill twelve to eighteen percent of its news hole with syndicated material. Its great advantage is that readers have the opportunity to read the thoughts of important commentators, to chuckle a little at the antics of a Charlie Brown or Beetle Bailey, or to wonder at the sanity of some of Ann Landers' correspondents. But it adds significantly to the "sameness" of the daily press.

Because hundreds of newspapers buy material from a syndicate, the cost to any single newspaper for such items is relatively low. For example, it is much cheaper for an editor to buy three or four political columns than to hire a first-rate political columnist to write for his newspaper. But the syndicated columnist must necessarily confine his work to something that will interest all his subscribers—national affairs. And that's one reason for the paucity of comment on local and regional problems in the daily press.

Newspapers that use much syndicated matter (and most do because of its popular appeal and low cost) frequently get complaints from reporters and writers who resent not being able to have their ideas published on the opinion page because the space is filled by the "faceless" syndicate writers. They argue, correctly, that unless young writers are given the opportunity to develop their talents at local newspapers, a shortage of talented articulate columnists will develop.

WHO IS BUYING WHAT?

There is one other major source of non-locally produced material, and it is a more important source than one might think: the various associations and public relations agencies that flood newspapers with press releases. A surprisingly large number of these are used in one form or another. One source estimates that about eighty percent of the average newspaper's

nonadvertising matter originated completely or virtually completely with the news source itself. This estimate is probably far too high, but a substantial portion of the news in our paper was planted there by someone trying to sell us something—an idea, a product, whatever.

A great many people in the world feel they need to improve their public images and increase their public acceptance. Doctors want people to like doctors. (Patients won't wince so much at their bills that way.) Foreign governments want Americans to like them so that we will visit their countries, invest business capital, or loan them money. Flour companies want people to use more flour when they cook. The airlines want people to fly rather than drive. The oil companies want people to drive rather than fly, and so forth.

Some of this public urging can be done through paid advertising. But advertising has two drawbacks. People see an ad and say, "That's an ad. That man is trying to sell me something. I don't know if I should believe him." In other words, advertising tends to have a low credibility. And of course one must pay for an advertising message. So most politicians, agencies, businesses, institutions, industries, and foreign governments like to get their stories into the news columns when they can. Their messages suddenly become more believable and cost less. Infiltrating the news columns can be done in many ways. The most obvious means is to send out a blatant press release. To wit: "The Widget Manufacturing Company proudly announces the opening of its new widget factory in Rundown, Indiana. The new plant will employ 48 men and stimulate \$900,000 worth of new business annually."

This kind of public relations is very common today. Look at the food section of your newspaper. Nearly all the printed recipes there have been sent to the newspaper by food companies or trade associations. And of course the recipe normally includes the use of the food item produced by the company or promoted by the trade association. The National Nut Association will give away recipes for nut bread and nut cake and nut salads. A prepared-food firm like Kraft will supply recipes using salad dressing or mayonnaise, knowing that they are likely to get a large share of all salad dressing purchases. Other kinds of businesses do the same thing. Kodak, for example, sends out reams of material on how to take better snapshots, knowing it will get the lion's share of money spent on film and film processing. Gasoline companies like Mobil and Chevron and auto makers like General Motors send out stories describing fascinating places to visit in America, most of which can only be reached by automobile. The airlines provide the press with stories and photos on exotic foreign vacation spots, knowing the traveller will probably have to use a plane to reach these destinations. The travel pages of newspapers are filled with these kinds of materials, all manufactured for the paper by PR specialists in the company.

Other "information sources"—governments, political parties, and politicians—provide the same kinds of free material. For example, editorials are written by fringe political groups such as the Americans for Constitutional Action and business associations like the National Association of Manufacturers, or labor unions like the AFL-CIO or professional societies like the American Medical Association. These editorials are sent to newspapers at no cost. If an editor sympathizes with the messages, it is more economical for

him to use the canned item than write his own opinion. (And if he doesn't have an opinion, maybe the prewritten editorial will give him one.) For example, the AMA provided newspapers with a wealth of stories and editorials during its battle against Medicare some years ago. A large amount of this matter appeared unaltered in the press: prepackaged ideas, just add ink and stir.

For years the Dominican Republic retained a public relations firm to upgrade its image in America. Not infrequently, stories would appear in various newspapers describing the desirability of the Dominican Republic as a vacationland, or the great things that President Trujillo (later assassinated) had done to improve the national economy, or how thirty-seven percent of all quava nuts were harvested in this "garden of the Caribbean." Nationalist China and some Arab nations have used similar ploys to boost their stock in this country. Smaller newspapers, those without great resources for news services that cost money, often find such releases attractive and use them without so much as a rewrite.

On occasion the public relations man will go to a news syndicate rather than to the newspapers, or to one of the many press associations that maintain quasi-legitimate reputations in the mass media business. (These are not to be confused with state press associations that act primarily as advertising representatives for weekly or small daily newspapers.) If the press agent can plant a story with a syndicate, it would go out under the syndicate name and editors wouldn't even realize it began as a press release. Hundreds of these are used each year by unsuspecting newspapers and read by millions of unsuspecting readers.

In both of the first two instances the newspaper gets the material prepackaged, ready for use. But in this day of affluence, another technique is often used to get the company story across—and it basically involves buying the reporter. Not with money; there is little payola in newspapering. But with a junket, a free trip to cover a story.

It's difficult to estimate how much material in the newspaper has been generated by someone with a vested interest. Even the editor might not know, for he is frequently taken in as well when source-generated matter comes in via a wire service or a news syndicate. But one doesn't need a comprehensive study of the press to make some guesses, and those that guess high would probably be more accurate than the low guessers. There are few cues for the reader to use to identify source-generated material. There are no warning signs as the law requires with advertising matter. The blatant press releases—the ones that use brand names—are easy to spot; the others are not. The editor probably comforts himself with the notion that this "free" copy cuts his costs. And it does. But it also cuts into the credibility of his newspaper—his *entire* newspaper, because readers can't distinguish the planted stories from the real news. The editor might ask himself if this might not be too high a price to pay.

LOCALLY PRODUCED COPY

While wire news, syndicated material, and publicity releases do make up a great deal of what goes into a newspaper, local news, or material produced

by the newspaper staff itself, should constitute at least half of the news content of any newspaper. Newspapers carrying any less than half really are not on the job.

Local news can be the real strength of the daily paper. It has little competition in this area. Local radio and television stations just do not expend the manpower and resources needed to cover the local news comprehensively. A television news staff at a good-sized station might have fifteen to twenty men. At that, they generally are forced to work in teams, one cameraman paired with a reporter. Some personnel are confined to the station to rewrite news, edit film, and so forth. Probably only three or four news teams take field each day. A medium-sized daily has three to four times that many people gathering news. At the same time, television (radio rarely makes a serious attempt to cover local news) is limited to a thirty- to sixty-minute presentation of the news that has been gathered. Compared to the average newspaper, few news items are transmitted in that short time period.

Without belaboring the many weaknesses of television news, the single fact is that covering the news, especially the local news, is a game newspapers can play better than anyone else. So it strikes many people as being odd that the newspaper doesn't spend more time playing this game rather than attempting to compete with television and radio in the entertainment business, or in covering world and national news. Former editor of the *Hartford Courant* Carl Lindstrom wrote nearly fifteen years ago in *The Fading American Newspaper*, "To the degree that it [the press] washes over into unrelated areas of mass appeal at the expense of news dissemination does it dissipate its influence and betray its reason for being."

HOW THE NEWS IS COVERED

While newspapers use various schemes to organize their newsgathering efforts, most share common attributes that we can discuss briefly. Newsgathering is generally divided up by subject areas. At large newspapers there will be scores of subeditors in charge of various departments—real estate, sports, women or society, travel, entertainment, books, religion, maritime, food, and many others. At metropolitan newspapers it is not unusual to have subdivisions within these categories. For example, within entertainment there might be subdepartments that cover film, cabarets and nightlife, art and music. The material that falls outside of these various departments—the bulk of the hard news—is handled by the city desk. Reporters who work on the city desk work in the city room, or work "cityside." It is sufficient to say that the geographical limits of the work these people do range far beyond the city.

News is gathered by reporters through two systems—beats or daily assignment of stories. James Gordon Bennett is the man we can blame for newspaper beats, but perhaps blame is not exactly the right word, for the system does have its virtues. The city desk is divided up into various beats, their scope depending on the size of the paper. At our average medium-sized daily, we would probably find a police beat, court beat, city hall beat, political beat, county beat, business and industry beat, and an education

beat. There might be a few others or a single reporter might cover a beat that combines two of these subject areas. The virtues of the beat system are that it permits the reporter to learn about what he is covering, make friends and gain the confidence of his news sources, and develop insights about the people and processes he is reporting about. Let's use the police beat for an example. It is not much of a trick to learn to cover the police station. In a few days a reasonably bright reporter knows who to ask for the information on yesterday's arrests and where to find traffic accident reports. But this is only the routine part of the job. It takes much longer to learn how a modern police department operates, to earn the trust of police officers who are primary news sources, and to learn the modicum of law needed to understand the criminal justice system. The reporter who is really serious about what he is doing will go further, much further—studying the system, making himself widely known in the department, snooping, and asking questions. It frequently takes many months to gain the ability and confidence needed to be an effective reporter. And of course this time is available under the beat system.

But the virtues often pale in the face of other problems. Reporters who cover a single beat for a long time often begin to think like their news sources. A police reporter complained that after a year on the beat he began to think like a cop and to talk about good murders and bad murders. Friendship with the news source often develops and tends to jeopardize the reporter's effectiveness as a newsgatherer. The news source replaces the reader as the reporter's primary constituency and stories are sometimes written to keep the source happy, not the reader informed. In return, the source will reward the reporter with an occasional news tip or other favor. The relationship becomes comfortable for both parties. The news source is confident that he won't get burned in print by his friend, the reporter—at least without prior warning to give him a chance to prepare a rebuttal. He knows if the reporter finds dirt under the rug, he will generally check with him first before releasing the story. At the same time, the reporter is comfortable knowing that he won't get scooped by another newspaper or television station. His news source will give him the story first or at the same time, or even tip him off when the competition begins to dig below the surface for a news story. While all this might be peachy-keen for the reporter and the news source, it is not so good for readers who might end up less than fully informed about all that is going on.

The other basic means of newsgathering is to assign reporters to stories on a day-to-day basis. The city editor or the assistant city editor keeps track of what is going on in town and sends out his general-assignment reporters to cover stories that fall between the cracks in the beats. For the reporter, it gives him a kind of daily variety that is nice. But he often isn't very knowledgeable about the story he is covering, and frequently his stories reflect this.

The content of the newspaper comes from many sources and is gathered in many ways. What appears in the newspaper is shaped as much by tradition as anything else. And this leads us to the final section of this chapter—a look at some of the problems facing newspapers today that we should be concerned about.



The city room in most metropolitan daily newspapers has changed little in the past half century. The horseshoe-shaped table in the foreground is the copy desk, the center of editing activity and the home of one of the paper's "gatekeepers."

A GLOOMY PORTRAIT

Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart once wrote a song entitled "If They Asked Me I Could Write a Book." Most people who have studied the newspaper industry in America respond in about the same way when queried about problems in contemporary newspapering. The subject is book-length, but we will attempt to outline and identify several main areas of concern.

Curiously enough, most newspapers are out of date. Not just because they can no longer be the first with the news; TV and radio now do that. The problem is far more serious and its dimensions are far wider. Internally, the newspaper business is plagued with outdated personnel policies and labor relations.

Only recently has college training become a prerequisite for work at most newspapers. Today most reporters have at least attended, if not graduated from, college. Many, but probably not most, have degrees in journalism or communications. Such a degree is becoming more common each year. Yet you might be surprised to know that less than twenty percent of all journalism school graduates go into newspaper work. And many of those leave in a few years.

The reasons for this are legion. Newspaper work tends to look more

glamorous than it really is. It can be tedious and routine much of the time. There is probably an oversupply of people who want to work at the better newspapers and an undersupply of those willing to work out in the boondocks. Rather than work on a small paper, many journalism graduates change their career plans and enter public relations, teaching, business, or other allied fields. Newspapers have in the past gone out of their way to make journalism unattractive to many young people. The pay is low; it's going up, but it is still low. A journalism school graduate can often make as much money as an unskilled laborer in a well-unionized industry such as auto making as he can as a beginning reporter at most newspapers. It has only been in recent years that a few publishers have bothered to even send editors to campuses to interview seniors. For years other industries have stormed the colleges and universities to nail down the best prospects, while newspaper editors have waited for the youth with the fire in his or her eyes to come to them.

Low pay and lack of recruiting are not the only unattractive features about the printed press personnel policies. Many larger newspapers insist that a reporter spend a two- or three-year internship on a smaller newspaper before they will hire him. (IBM doesn't ask the bright college graduate to work for three years at a smaller data processing firm before it will hire him. Nor does General Motors or ITT. But it remains a policy at many newspapers.)

If the personnel policies tend to reflect the nineteenth century, labor relations can only be termed prehistoric. The craft unions involved in publishing newspapers are some of the strongest and most incestuous ones in the nation. Unless you are a brother or an uncle or a son or a cousin of someone in the union, barriers to membership are often insurmountable. In the automobile industry a single union represents nearly everyone in an auto plant. Most industries have attempted to follow this model and to centralize representation for simplicity in bargaining and wage negotiations. But it is not unusual for a metropolitan newspaper to deal with 14 different unions. Reporters and clerical personnel are represented by the American Newspaper Guild. In addition to the Guild, a walk through the back shop of most newspapers will reveal many different unions that represent typesetters, photoengravers, paperhandlers, pressmen, press wipers, mailers, drivers, mechanics, machinists, electricians, painters, building cleaners, elevator operators, carpenters, and janitors. Each has a separate contract with the paper. Each will honor picket lines erected by the other unions. For example, Detroit newspapers were shut down for nearly a year in the late sixties because of labor problems. As the newspapers reached settlement with one union, another would ask for a contract reflecting similar wage increases and benefits.

But the unions aren't the only ones who use concerted action. Publishers in cities like Detroit have joint publishing (really non-publishing) agreements: when one paper is struck the others will shut down out of sympathy or for some such reason. And the readers are left with no newspaper. One reason for this incredible mish-mash of labor contracts is union pressure—each union wants to survive and is willing to merge only if it retains its

identity. On the other hand, publishers have discouraged merger. They fear a single strong union. The results of this archaic relationship are often prolonged strikes, which only demonstrate to readers how little they really need their newspapers.

Newsgathering itself is out of date in most newsrooms. As was discussed in chapter two, news is still defined in traditional ways. Many newspapers have a tendency to build newsgathering schemes around buildings rather than people. The beat system encourages this. News is something that happens at the police station or at the court house or the city hall. The press also has a tendency to simplify even the most complex news, or leave it out completely. There is a preference for the story the press knows it can tell—which often leads to ignoring stories that need to be told. The press favors the dramatic conflict in which most issues can be reduced to two sides. Guillermo Thorndike, a Peruvian editor, commented that this tendency “reflects a lack of knowledge of the issues because one usually has a simple answer for a question he doesn’t understand.” His description of the American journalist: “honest, but ignorant.”

Former editor Max Ways argues that journalism still sees local news as local news and national news as national news. Few papers have discovered that this is one and the same, he writes: cities share problems, states share problems. Yet the newspaper remains the haven of parochialism. Other critics assert that newspaper editors cater to readers too much. If the readers want more funnies, give them more funnies. Many papers are reluctant to run long analyses or interpretations because readership studies show most people won’t read them. Critics assert that the press has a responsibility: if it were selling peas and carrots it could follow consumer whims, but information is too important and citizens need it whether they think they want it or not.

Finally, it may be argued that the press remains story-oriented: nothing can be reported unless it is a story. This immediately eliminates much information that legitimately qualifies as news but takes the form of a trend or a process. Examples: The press would surely publish a story about the closing of a local plant that puts 400 men out of work. This comes under the business beat. It is a violent, dramatic event. Less dramatic, less perceptible, less violent, is the number of jobs that have been affected in the past twenty years by computer technology. Yet it is more significant news. Another example: The courts tend to be reported in the same way as they were 150 years ago. The paper notes when a man is arrested, arraigned, tried, and sentenced. Yet most of the judicial process occurs at times other than these. Eighty-five percent of criminal defendants never go to trial—they plead guilty and are sentenced. Justice has become a bargaining session. And much of it goes unreported because there is no traditional news peg or visible action.

Reporting styles also tend to be out of date. We are using techniques that have existed for more than 100 years. The new journalists are scorned by many editors who really don’t understand what writing is all about. Notions about objectivity, the inverted pyramid style of reporting, headlines, and other fairly fundamental aspects of journalism are rooted deeply in the

industry and are rarely changed or even challenged. The front page of today's average daily newspaper looks pretty much like one that might have been published sixty years ago. Type is bigger, there are more pictures, and the page looks a bit jazzier, but it is all window dressing. The stock is the same. James Gordon Bennett, who flourished as an editor in the 1840s, could walk into most newspapers and feel at home. (And he would be welcome in many.) The press must begin to drag itself into the last half of the twentieth century. It will be a struggle but the very survival of the press might depend on its ability to become contemporary.

TROUBLE IN THE NEWSROOM

Newspaper publishers today are facing a revolution in their newsrooms. At many newspapers, reporters are becoming disenchanted with the views their employers express on the editorial pages. Young reporters especially, who are often committed to environmental or social causes, are distressed at the conservatism of most newspaper policies. Reporters are also frustrated by the economic practices of the press—the entangling alliances most newspapers maintain with local business and industry. In the past, such complaints, when voiced, were met with “If you don’t like it, quit.” Today these complaints are raised more loudly and more often than ever. And the pat argument that the publisher’s views will dominate because he puts up the money and takes all the risks no longer satisfies the young activists. Some papers have attempted to compromise by allowing dissident staffers to prepare special weekly sections that deal with problems they consider important. Such sections contain viewpoints that differ dramatically with those of the publishers and are prepared in a non-traditional new journalism style. Other newspapers have set aside space on the editorial page for their reporters to comment on pressing problems. But most papers, unfortunately, have responded to such demands in the traditional way—“If you don’t like it, quit.” Young journalists are becoming frustrated. Coupled with low pay, this frustration is driving a great number out of the profession.

In some major cities local journalists have begun monthly reviews of the local media. The *Chicago Journalism Review* is the granddaddy of the metropolitan press critiques that now exist in numerous cities or regions. Although both their circulation and influence remain small, these publications provide a sounding board for newsmen concerned about their communities and the mass media that serve them. They raise ethical questions, assess press-government relations, call editorial policies into question, and seek reform. While most publishers don’t like such publicity, it is bearable mainly because the reviews tend to circulate only among other journalists or journalism educators. The public—which needs most to be exposed to these reviews—rarely sees them. Although such journalism reviews often resemble pulpwood crying towels for reporters and newsmen, they are, nevertheless, an important symptom of a serious problem that has erupted in the city room, one that newspaper owners will ultimately have to face.

MINORITIES AND THE PRESS

Blacks, orientals, chicanos, and others are deeply concerned today over the number of minority group members employed by the press. Women fought this battle years ago when editors believed that there was no place in the newsroom for a woman. Those females who did successfully storm the newspaper's doors were quietly closeted in the women's department, writing wedding stories and clipping recipes. But because of many courageous female journalists who refused to take *no* for an answer, today the woman's place in the newsroom is fairly well established and fifty percent of journalism school graduates in the 1970s are women.

But other minorities have not fared as well. In the spring of 1972 the American Society of Newspaper Editors was able to find only 235 minority group professionals on daily newspapers out of a total of 40,000 editorial employees. Only three of these were in a management-level position. Despite an announced intent to get more minorities into journalism, newspapers have failed to do so. Much of the blame can be placed on personnel policies. In an era in which American industry suddenly discovered the black man, newspapers refused to compete with salaries or recruiting techniques. Editors still expected the young black or chicano to come to them and to work for a wage significantly lower than he might get elsewhere. One can even question the dedication of the industry toward its announced goal. In 1972, several years after the "Get Blacks into Journalism" movement was started, the American Newspaper Publishers Association offered only \$23,700 in scholarships for 52 black journalism students. This amounted to less than \$500 per student and constituted a contribution averaging \$22.50 per ANPA member. This from an industry that has one of the highest profit margins in America. Minorities are becoming impatient with promises. And this is another problem that will come to a head in the seventies.

THE UNBELIEVABLE

Many people just don't believe what they read in the paper anymore. Ex-vice president Agnew didn't invent this credibility gap. There are a multitude of reasons for such an attitude. Readers are smarter and more cynical than ever before. They have been led down the primrose path too many times by politicians and the press. Also, they no longer depend on the newspaper as the sole source of information; they can use magazines, books, television, or radio.

As participation in government and social affairs broadens, more and more readers find themselves as a part of news events, and they are becoming aware that the way the newspaper described things isn't really the way it happened. Rather than meeting this charge with an honest answer (every newspaper story is a subjective account, a single man's perception of an event) the press has stood blithely behind the bastion of objectivity, insisting that its story is the one true account.

The press has also lost credibility through some of its own actions. Take sports reporting, for example. Sports are rarely written about in a critical fashion. Reporters tend to fawn over events, not report them. Most sports fans are keenly aware that professional sports and, to a large extent, major college sports are operated as businesses. Yet many sports writers (not all of them; times are beginning to change) still report the big leagues as if they were just a bunch of the guys playing ball out in the park. This is incredible to most fans and nonfans alike, but the sportswriter tends to write for the team—the players and the owners—rather than for the fans. If he told it like it was, he would quickly become *persona non grata* at the ball park. His fellow reporters wouldn't think much of him either, since a single realistic report would make their stories look bad.

Another credibility gap exists in reporting other topics. Although newspapers are quick to criticize public officials who fail to act with candor, the press itself clings to the canard that it is objective, that it prints only the facts. To get stories newsmen often compromise their independence and form alliances with government officials. Accuracy is often sacrificed for speed and simplicity or for newspaper policy.

A recent study of the coverage of a pollution controversy in a large West Coast city turned up specific examples of these kinds of problems. The polluter was the city's largest industry—a smelter. The Tacoma, Washington, newspapers, taking the traditional business booster role, refused to acknowledge the pollution problem for years, calling the poison effluent "smoke" whenever the subject was discussed. Not until a governmental agency was formed to attack air pollution did the newspapers acknowledge the problem. In the coverage of the legal hassle that followed, reporters for



A victorious Harry S. Truman holds up a copy of the *Chicago Tribune* that informed its readers in large bold type that Thomas Dewey had defeated the president in the 1948 election. Although errors of this magnitude are rare, enough mistakes creep into the daily paper to sustain the skepticism most readers have about the accuracy of the popular press.

Wide World Photos

the newspapers candidly admitted they were often confused by the technical nature of the information. But instead of seeking help, they avoided reporting information that they didn't feel they could explain. One reporter said that when he had to shorten his stories, he would sacrifice that part of the information that was "least dramatic," not the part that was "least important."

For years the press has perpetuated the myth that much of our government is run by shadows and illusions, the "usually reliable sources" or "high government sources" that seem to be the source of so many news stories. Politicians often use this device—"this is what's happening, but don't quote me"—to their own advantage. They can speculate on what is happening without looking like fools if things don't work out. When these reports from "usually informed sources" turn out wrong, it is the press that is left with egg on its face, not the politician, who can deny he ever said it. This does little to improve newspaper credibility among readers. For example, in 1970 many PM's went to press with a wire service bulletin quoting "reliable sources" that President Nixon would not sign an important education bill into law. By the time most readers got their newspapers the president had signed the measure, which evening television news reported accurately. The *New York Times* would not by-line James Reston's columns, "By a high official of the *New York Times*." Similarly, Walter Cronkite would not consider doing the evening news with a bag over his head and his voice disguised. Yet little is thought about publishing news of government in this fashion. More honesty is needed.

Lastly, the press is unfortunate in that at a time in history when it is economically mature (that's a euphemism for it's big and powerful) the average man is beginning to distrust bigness. Big government, big business, and big education have all come in for their lumps of late. Big press has as well. Spiro Agnew's revelations that much of the American media were owned by large chains, conglomerates, and broadcasting groups have only confirmed what the average reader has always believed. The fact that Agnew was selective in his criticisms, aiming only at anti-administration media when pro-administration chains offer much larger targets, is immaterial. He is right in what he says. Bigness is no longer a virtue in America except among the big. And since most readers don't fall into this category, their perception of their newspapers and what they publish is affected.

TOMORROW

The last major problem facing the newspaper is *tomorrow*, for if the press is outdated today, it will be even more so in the days to come. The continued transmission of printed news and information and entertainment from a production center to reader by truck and bicycle is fairly remarkable in an era of electronic communications. Technology exists that can transmit the same material into the home via wire, but it is just too costly at the present time. Newspapers have done little in the past three decades to prepare themselves for such a revolution. Today, when this challenge is thrust in their faces, publishers frequently respond with witty remarks like, "You

can't spank the puppy with a television set," or, "You'll never be able to line the bottom of your bird cage with transmission cable." In this way perhaps they comfort themselves with the hope, at least, that some form of newspaper will always be needed. Very little of the industry's earnings have been spent on research to cut costs or modernize techniques. It has been only recently that computers have been introduced into the industry. And most often the first thing a newspaper does when it gets a computer is to program it to handle billing, not to handle information processing.

Although the newspaper form may soon disappear, the institution can still exist. There will be few changes in getting the information from the news source to the production center. It is the delivery process that will be radically altered. The newspaper can continue to exist as a newsgathering agency, if it adjusts to the new technology and doesn't try to hang doggedly onto its nineteenth-century delivery system.

THIRTY MEANS THE END

In 1949—twenty-five years ago—social psychologist Harry A. Overstreet wrote this about the American press: "Newspapers . . . are part of the money-making culture in which the prime value that attaches to most things produced is their exchange value—their salability." Overstreet went on to say that the primary "hunt" conducted by editors and publishers has been for a formula that would guarantee the largest possible audience. Once the formula is found, Overstreet continued, there is more profit in sticking with it rather than growing to a new level of insight and discrimination. Overstreet might have made this observation yesterday. It is remarkable that any major institution as important as the newspaper industry has changed so little in the past two and a half decades. The press today maintains the same virtues and strengths it had when Overstreet wrote his evaluation. It is still the most economical way to transmit the great volumes of information and news to the millions of citizens of this nation. It remains staffed by many dedicated, hard-working, and socially interested employees. It is the best way to offer consumers a window on the marketplace. But its greatest strength remains what it might be—its promise.

And that, perhaps is its greatest failing as well. For it might be a good deal more than it is now. At the beginning of this chapter the author attempted to refute the notion that the print media were dying or that the newspaper was dying. They are not—yet. But they could die a most inglorious death, one caused by commercialism and ignorance. In 1960 editor Carl Lindstrom wrote, "Newspapers today have only two major problems. One is to stay in journalism, the other is to stay in business." Many newspapers have proved that today it is still possible to stay in business without staying in journalism. But in the future it will become increasingly difficult as readers find more and more diversions to compete for their time and money. Unless the press reshapes its goals and begins to provide readers with useful and meaningful information—which will be the definition of journalism in the next decade—it will find that its success in business will falter as well.

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Radio

or "Come On, Let Me Show You
Where It's At"

Announcer: The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Welles and the "Mercury Theater of the Air" in *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells. Ladies and gentlemen, the director of the Mercury Theater and star of these broadcasts, Orson Welles.

Welles: We know now that in the early years of the twentieth century this world was being watched closely by intelligences greater than man's . . .

Jingle: More muuuuuuuuuusic, K*O*Mmmmmm

DJ: Welcome back to boss radio number one, the top sound in the top city. Cousin Brucie layin' 'em on you til seven when brother Jack B. Nimble rocks in with more of the hits on the big eleven. (Cue music) And now more outtasight sounds, far-reaching wails and good vibes with Dental Floss and the Cavities, the first of eighteen nonstop hits in a row from your man Bruce.

American radio has changed dramatically in the past 30 years. And all the important changes can be discovered just by reading closely the two passages above. The first contains the opening lines of Orson Welles' famous production of *The War of the Worlds*. The second represents what might be heard on at least one radio station in almost any American city today.

The differences are striking. The Welles' production was a dramatic presentation given in an era when radio was filled with drama, comedy, and variety programs. As Cousin Brucie says, recorded music is about all that's programmed on modern radio. *The War of the Worlds* originated in New York City and was broadcast to millions of Americans over a radio network—a linking of several hundred stations. In the seventies nearly all radio programming is produced (if that word is accurate) locally by individual radio stations.

The Welles' production was broadcast in the evening hours, prime radio listening time, to a vast audience of all ages. Nighttime radio today is

generally regarded as the domain of young people. Prime radio time is early in the morning and late in the afternoon as millions of commuters, momentary captives of their radio hosts, wend their way along crowded freeways to and from their jobs. Finally, the quality of radio broadcasting has shifted dramatically from what was once considered a fairly high-class entertainment medium to a barren desert of commercial messages, dotted here and there with musical oases.

Elsewhere in this book we have tried to explain why these changes took place. "The public eloped with a brazen but seductive hussy called television and radio suddenly became an abandoned orphan," former ABC commentator Edward P. Morgan said in a speech entitled "Who Forgot Radio?" at American University in 1965. In this chapter we hope to shed some light on contemporary radio and its consistent partner, the record industry. After a brief introduction to radio, an outline of the kinds of stations that operate, and some words on economic support, we will attempt to trace the roots of contemporary radio programming—the disc jockey format. We will also examine the important ties that link radio and the record industries together and take a brief look at both record making and modern music.

THE SHAPE OF THE BUSINESS

There are about 7,000 commercial radio stations broadcasting in the United States. They can be heard on the more than 330,000,000 radio receivers in the nation, nearly a third of which are in automobiles. According to studies, radio ranks third as a source of news, and is the third "most believable" medium in most persons' opinion. Faced with a choice of having a single medium, more people would select television or newspapers than radio. Yet radio is the most immediate medium, the one that people turn to first in an emergency. When the East Coast was blacked out for many hours in November of 1965, portable radios constituted the chief source of information for the confused and often frightened populace. But except for those rare emergencies, radio has abdicated its role as an information medium to become an entertainment medium. For listeners—and radio has twice the popularity among teenagers as adults—the medium has moved from the foreground of their interests to the background. Radio is something you can listen to while you are doing something else. Television is generally tied to the electrical wall socket. Newspapers and magazines are bound by an overland distribution system. But, like the ubiquitous crushed styrofoam cup and the empty beer can, wherever you go, there's radio.

It will probably come as news to most of you, but radio plays a far less important role in our society than it does in the rest of the world. On that two-thirds of the planet that is economically and socially underdeveloped, radio is a vital part of the communications and information process. It can transcend the physical distances wrought by mountains and jungles as well as the intellectual distances shaped by illiteracy. In some of the remotest parts of the world a visitor will see inhabitants walking down dusty roads with small transistor radios clasped over their ears. Social scientists call it the

“transistor revolution” and some pin great hopes of human improvement on it. Most of these foreign broadcasting stations are not privately owned and hence are not concerned about profits and commercial advertising. The government subsidy that funds them usually insures that they will be information-oriented rather than entertainment-oriented.

Because of its ability to travel almost anywhere, and because of the great number of radio receivers in use—about one and a half for every person in America—radio has the appearance of being the “massest” of the mass media, and it is. But strangely enough, it also has the physical and economic structure needed to become a fragmented medium, serving smaller and smaller segments of society; “narrowcasting,” if you will, instead of broadcasting.

Because radio costs less to operate than television, it can afford to pick out a segment of society—a small subgroup—and make an appeal to it. Some newspapers and magazines can do this as well, and many small publications are reaching out to special interest groups today. But when print media seek to appeal to a small subgroup, they tend to lose the quality of mass media (that is, media that appeal to a large heterogeneous audience.) The publisher who seeks to prepare a newspaper for left-handed billiard players faces economic limitations on his distribution. With as few as 1,500 copies he can reach all the left-handed billiard players on his subscription list. But no one else will see the newspaper. However, radio can program for the same 1,500 left-handers without diluting its essence as a mass medium, for anyone else in the community can eavesdrop.

THE AM DIAL

The two kinds of radio sets you might most likely find in a home or car are AM receivers and FM receivers. AM is the most common and the most commercial, and really is the heart of the radio system in this country. Two-thirds of all broadcasting stations are AM and there are far more AM receivers than FM ones.

AM stands for *amplitude modulation*. This term has to do with the way the radio waves are sent from broadcaster to receiver, and that’s all we’re going to say about it. For decades American AM radio was dominated by the radio networks—NBC, CBS, and later ABC and the Mutual Broadcasting System. Programs that originated in New York, for example, were sent to your local stations via cable and then broadcast over the airwaves to your receiver. The decades of the thirties and forties are known variously as the golden era, big-time radio, or the heyday of broadcasting. Compared to radio in the seventies there is some accuracy in all these labels, although as radio historian Jim Harmon has written, those days of radio will always seem a little better than they were.

Television was developed by the same men who controlled network radio. It didn’t make much economic sense to these men to promote television viewing in the evening on one hand and at the same time offer a full slate of network radio programs at night as well. It would only tend to confuse advertisers. So slowly, but surely, network radio began to disap-

pear. The first shows to go were the big-budget evening programs that conflicted with evening TV time. (Television began by broadcasting primarily in the evening.) Next went the daytime shows as television expanded its daytime hours. Weekend radio services faded out as well as sports began to dominate the tube on weekends. And the story goes on.

Well, this was fine for radio networks—but what about all those stations that had been broadcasting network radio programs. What were they to do? Music programming seemed to be the most logical answer. Production of drama or comedy or variety was too expensive for most local stations to undertake. Music programming was cheap. All you needed was a turntable and some phonograph records. Oh, yes, and a man to play them and read commercial messages, the disc jockey.

YOUR PAL, THE DISC JOCKEY

Nobody really knows the origin of the disc jockey format. Many different individuals played records over the air in the early days of radio, some going as far back as 1906. Playing recorded music was frowned on in the twenties as a misuse of the valuable radio spectrum, but as more and more stations went on the air, recorded music became more common since the cost of live talent programs was prohibitive.

Playing recorded music involved legal hazards for many years in this country. The Federal Communications Commission, the agency that attempts to regulate broadcasting in the public interest, insisted that each time a station played a phonograph record, it had to be identified as such on the air. (This was designed to discourage stations from broadcasting recorded music.) In 1940 the FCC changed its rules to permit announcements on the half hour rather than following every record. Today the announcement that "some of the programming heard on the station has been prerecorded" is broadcast only once or twice during the entire day.

Recording artists and musicians also discouraged broadcast of recorded music by placing warnings on their records, "NOT LICENSED FOR RADIO BROADCAST." They did this for two reasons. First, they feared that broadcasting records would hurt record sales. This notion was widely held until the fifties, when it was shown that radio would normally boost the record sales, not damage them. Also, many artists like Bing Crosby and Fred Waring had exclusive radio performance contracts with the networks. They were fearful that broadcasting their recorded performances on non-network stations would damage the relationship.

This issue was resolved in 1940 when a U. S. Court of Appeals ruled that once a broadcaster had bought a record, he could do anything he wanted with it—broadcast it, break it, use it for a frisbee—regardless of the wishes of the artist or record manufacturer. When the Supreme Court sustained the lower court ruling by refusing to hear plaintiff Paul Whiteman's appeal, the disc jockey's position was given a solid legal foundation.

While phonograph records had been played on the air for many years, it was not until the thirties that the record introducer gained as much prominence as the record. An announcer named Martin Block broadcast

records on WNEW in New York during the recesses in the infamous 1935 Lindbergh kidnapping trial, which was carried on many stations. In a short time Block's fame skyrocketed with the program he called "Make Believe Ballroom" in which he created the illusion that he was broadcasting music from a large ballroom. Block carried the fantasy to the point where he would "talk" with the various performers who were appearing in the "Make Believe Ballroom."

Students of the disc jockey quickly point out that Block had borrowed the format from a Los Angeles announcer named Al Jarvis who broadcast records in 1932 on KFVB from "The World's Largest Make Believe Ballroom." But as so often is the case in the entertainment business, the originator frequently takes a back seat to the man who makes the idea work—and Block did just that. At first, advertising salesmen at WNEW were reluctant to try to sell time for Block and his disc jockey format, so he went out and found his own sponsor—a firm that manufactured and sold reducing pills called Retardo at \$1 per box. The day after Block's first commercial solicitation, WNEW received 600 orders for Retardo. By the end of the week the number totaled almost 4,000. Within four months it was estimated that Block had an audience of four million listeners and before 1935 ended the "Make Believe Ballroom" was on the air two and a half hours each day. It was sponsored in quarter-hour segments by various promoters. By 1941 Block was getting 12,000 letters each month and had twenty-three sponsors and a waiting list.

Block's success was not lost on radio stations throughout the rest of the nation. And as network programming began to fade from the airwaves, more and more stations began to install disc jockeys. Radio stations in the postwar era had a new look. They no longer resembled theatrical stock companies. Their economic base was the disc jockey. In his comprehensive three-volume history of broadcasting, Erik Barnouw described the simple needs of the station using such a format: "It might need a writer for announcements or promotion material. Commercials tended to be taken care of ad lib by the disc jockeys themselves with the help of material provided by the sponsors. The station scarcely needed a studio. News programs called for a . . . news ticker. . . . Engineers and salesmen were the main need." The cost of such a format was low, and in most instances the sponsors waited in line to be squeezed in someplace on a show.

The disc jockey emerged in the fifties as the demigod of modern radio. He was frequently as glamorized and idolized as the stars whose records he played. But despite the tinsel he was basically a salesman. Station owners loved him because he cost them very little. In the early days he often sold his own spots. He still does today, to some extent, though time salesmen have picked up most of the routine of the job. His success as a salesman depends upon how well-known he is, how many listeners he can command. The more listeners, the bigger the name, the higher the price he can charge for spots on his show. And the more spots he can get. So in the beginning DJs promoted themselves with everything from glossy pictures for teenage girls to cutting ribbons at the opening of supermarkets and department stores. The disc jockey would do remote broadcasts from butcher shops or shopping centers. On Friday and Saturday nights he frequently took a stack

of 45s out to the local high school and played them over the PA system while the kids danced the Chicken and the Bug.

To the teenagers, the DJ was somebody who dug their music, who understood their problems, who knew that only a "bird dog" would cut in on a slow dance. To housewives, he was a man around the house after the family had left for the day and the kitchen got quiet and lonely, someone to share that second cup of coffee with. The drive-time jock was a traveling companion to the men, a pal during that long ride to work, somebody who understood the feeling of four-putting the seventeenth hole on Saturday.

The disc jockey continues to hold forth as the super medicine man of the second half of the twentieth century. Each day he drives his wagon up to millions of doorsteps, draws in the people with slick music from a plastic disc, and then proceeds to burden the crowd with his various pitches. He is a superstar in an invisible world. To most people he is only a voice, and often when he shows up in person the fans are disappointed at what they see. Day after day he spends his working hours talking to four walls and a small microphone, often wondering if anybody out there is listening. His job security is as good as his ratings. If they begin to slip, he might soon find himself moving on. If he is good, he can make lots of money—some DJs have incomes approaching a quarter of a million dollars a year.

Initially, the most important talent the disc jockey needed—in addition to his witty patter and his ability to man two turntables and a tape recorder, and keep a program log up to date—was the ability to pick hit records before they became popular. The DJ would program his own show. There was always the illusion that the four hours the jock spent on the air was the only time he worked during the day. But usually he came to the studio several hours before his program to answer mail, meet with sponsors, and select the records he would play during his program. Certainly the popular songs would be included in his stack, but he also would try to pick out several of the newer records that he believed would appeal to his audience.

As soon as record companies began to realize that radio play didn't hamper sales but actually boosted them, they became interested in radio. They began giving radio stations free copies of their new releases. Promotion men began calling on disc jockeys, telling them the virtues of the newest record their company had produced, urging them to give it some airplay. ("It's a comer. It's number 16 in Paducah this week.") Soon record manufacturers realized that airplay not only boosted sales but that the success of their product depended on radio, and ultimately on the favor of the disc jockeys. So it wasn't long before promotion men began to give more to the jocks than just advice. At Christmas time the disc jockey (because he was such a good friend of the company) might get a new set of golf clubs or a hi-fi or a basket of fruit laced with a dozen bottles of Canadian Club. By 1956–57 the competition between companies became more cutthroat and gifts weren't sufficient. Money began being passed under the table—fifty bucks to give a record some airplay, or maybe a hundred or two hundred. When the payola scandal broke in 1959 one jock reported he had received about \$36,000 from eight different record companies during the sixteen months between June of 1958 and October of

1959. There was a kind of national scandal, since it followed on the revelations that some of television's biggest quiz shows had been rigged. Congress investigated and passed laws against paying disc jockeys to play records. Many jocks lost their jobs and were ruined for many years. Alan Freed, one of the most important DJs in the short history of the profession, was fired from WABC in New York when he refused on principle to sign a statement that he had never received payola. Other jocks quit and went to the Coast to seek new employment. In hearings before Congress, some tried to defend the practice. Stan Richards of WILD in Boston said there was nothing wrong with payola. "This seems to be the American way of life, which is a wonderful way of life. It is built primarily on romance. 'I'll do for you. What will you do for me?'"

But the bloom was surely off the rose. Many people were disappointed to find that their contemporary heroes had clay feet. (Jack Armstrong and Tom Mix wouldn't have fallen victim to such an evil system.) Other people weren't surprised, and some were even relieved. One man said he was pleased to find out about payola: "All the while I thought the disc jockeys were playing that kind of music because they liked it." In time, largely because of the transient nature of the radio audience, the disc jockey was back in good stead, and today remains the fundamental element in radio programming. But the scars left by the scandal are important, for they have a great deal to do with the music the listeners hear each day.

Fearful of more scandals, radio stations sought means to make the payment of payola to disc jockeys impossible. The key to any system was simple—just take away the DJ's power to select the records he would play. If he couldn't pick what to play, there would be little to gain in giving him payola. So broadcasters developed various schemes that vested the programming power in the hands of the station, not the DJ. And today most disc jockeys have very little to say about what records they play. At some stations they are not only told what records to play, but when to play them. Program directors—middle management radio personnel—might develop the play lists for the jocks. Or a station might go to a play list built exclusively around the forty records that sold the most copies in local record stores. New records for the radio station might be selected by the management or at sessions at which *all* the DJs would audition the new records.

More recently, specific programming services have been developed. Small companies (small only in size, not in dollars) do nothing but listen to all the new records that are produced each week (and there are a lot, as about 6,000 singles and 5,000 albums are produced each year) and then send out tip sheets, such as Bill Gavin's Tip Sheet, listing the most popular records, the new records that have the best chance of becoming hits, and the pick of the new albums. Radio stations can subscribe to such services for an annual fee. Despite the efforts of the stations, reports run rampant throughout the industry that payola is still alive and well and is frequently used to get airplay for a record that may not otherwise get on the station's play list. Grand jury hearings in the summer of 1973 focused on the use of drugs and sex to win airplay for new releases, and the aroma of new payola scandals hung heavy in record companies and broadcast studios.



Another group of artists that managed to successfully bridge the gap between the pre- and post-Beatle eras of music were those in the Motown stable of Berry Gordy. The "Motown Sound," a slick soul sound that had a strong appeal among all races, is still an important element in modern American music. These are the Temptations.

The change in programming schemes brought an added, unexpected benefit to radio stations, which went beyond the attempt to take the play list out of the hands of the disc jockey. It permitted the station to develop some kind of broadcasting format, or sound. If all the disc jockeys picked their own music, each program would have its own personality. But if the station picked all the records, the station itself could have a personality, a *sound*. And this is the heart of modern radio. Today almost all radio stations have formats ranging from classical music to acid underground rock. (There are some stations that claim they have no format, but having no format is really a format.) Station owners often insist that a format is necessary to maximize control over a significant share of the market. Michael Shain in a long article in *Broadcasting* magazine (1971) wrote, "Radio has realized the days of mass audience are a thing of the past. Stations are now carving out their hunks in terms of age, sex, and most recently, psychological characteristics, or psychographics. No one station can any longer be all things to all people. Each needs an identity." Broadcaster Hal Neal is less kind: "The reason for a format, of course, is to take an average talent or inferior talent type guy, put

him into the mold that can carry him. And if he does what he is told, he's accepted." Whatever the reason, formats are a fundamental part of radio in the seventies. The disc jockey is still at the center of the music format but has become less a director of the show and more an actor wedded to a prepackaged script.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The music format remains the most common programming scheme in American radio today. Radio is well suited to broadcast music, especially FM radio where fidelity is of high quality. Some broadcasters who own or have access to both AM and FM frequencies as well as a television channel have even experimented with simulcasting music on all three media. If the listener positions his receivers according to instructions from the station, he will literally be surrounded by music.

Other stations use recorded music as a supplement to a richer format that in a small way attempts to fill the void left when network radio died. WJR in Detroit, for example, which many persons consider the nation's best radio station, offers listeners a variety of music and non-music fare. The station features the standard personality disc jockey during drive times and in the midnight to dawn slot. But during the remainder of the day it concentrates heavily on live music, recorded classical music with intelligent commentary by an expert on fine arts, humor and commentary from both network and local personnel, 15-minute news segments throughout much of the day with an hour and a half of news and comment in the dinner hour, and scripted music programs in which a carefully written narrative accompanies a series of thematically similar recordings. But stations like WJR, "The Great Voice of the Great Lakes", are indeed rare.

Stations that do rely on the music format generally also offer listeners capsulized editions of news, weather, and sports on the hour or half hour. Sometimes these ingredients are added in a true spirit of public service, but other times they are included only as fillers between commercial messages. The typical broadcaster today relies heavily on the news wire and the special five-minute summaries prepared hourly by the wire services especially for radio. An announcer (generally called a *newsman* because he reads the news) will rip off the copy minutes before newstime and present the headlines in staccato fashion—often without having looked at them previously. Sometimes this "rip and read" formula backfires. On the day Black Muslim leader Malcolm X was murdered in New York, one Iowa announcer flashed the bulletin to his listeners that "Malcolm Ten was shot today."

PUT ANOTHER NICKEL IN

A tight program scheme or format dictates what music will be heard on most radio stations. And within the music format genre there are a wide variety of different approaches, ranging from classical to hard rock on a musical scale. Yes, there are a few AM stations that still play classical music—about a dozen at last count. FM has become the new retreat of classical music. This

represents a distinct change in American broadcasting for there was a time, not too long ago, when AM radio not only broadcast classical music but supported it financially as well. NBC, CBS, and Mutual all supported respected symphony orchestras at one time. But radio has gotten out of that business, at least in the United States. The respected British Broadcasting Corporation still has its own widely renowned symphony orchestra. And the Japanese broadcasting network, NHK, financially supports three symphonies as well as several light orchestras. In fact, NHK has succeeded in a little more than a generation in giving a large portion of the Japanese people an appreciation for Western classical music. In the United States, radio tends to play music, but not directly support it.

Moving down the musical spectrum from the classics, one encounters the *good music* stations that tend to steer away from the heavier rock sounds. This kind of format rarely attracts large numbers of listeners, but those that do listen tend to be better educated and more affluent, which gives the station an edge in advertising rates, because it appeals to an audience that is more likely to buy. WJR in Detroit, for example, counts among its listeners many of the major executives of the automobile industry and carries commercial messages aimed specifically at them. Ads for roller bearings and for tool works companies, for example, are often aired. There aren't many people in the market for roller bearings, but purchasing agents at Ford, GM, and Chrysler do buy millions of them. Few cities can support more than one or two "good music" stations.

The *middle-of-the-road* or "*MOR*" station falls between the good music and the rock categories. The MORs play the softest of the rock and the loudest of the "good" music. This kind of station frequently attempts to build up a personality cult around its record spinners, and sometimes it appears that music is secondary. These friends of the housewife and buddies of the commuter often carry high ratings during drive time, 6 to 10 A.M. and 3 to 7 P.M., when adult radio listening is at its peak. The MOR station sounds a lot like radio sounded when the disc jockey first emerged—unplanned and rather hectic at times. But usually it is as tightly programmed as the prototype rock stations.

The contemporary sound in radio (that's what the programmers like to call it) is the *rock* station, the battleground for the jingle warfare of the airwaves. Within the rock format there are variations, but they appear important only to those who know and love radio. Critics call the stations "screamers" and describe the format as one "with an extreme foreground treatment, playing only the top tunes with breathless and witless striplings making like carnival barkers."

The heart of the rocker is the chart—top 30, top 40, top 50, and so forth. Record sales, or jukebox plays, are charted each week. These are songs with proven appeal: someone has paid money to hear them. The records are scheduled in sequence and played over and over during the week. A few album cuts are sometimes thrown in, and a few new songs are featured as well. But the charted records are the heart of the scheme.

One variation in the rock format is the *personality rocker* which is a station like the MOR mentioned earlier that attempts to create listener

interest in the disc jockey himself. WMCA in New York rode the crest of popularity for years with the “Good Guys” format, and at KHJ in Los Angeles the “Real Don Steele” captured the ears of teenyboppers throughout Southern California. The most successful prototypes for this kind of personality appeal were Alan Freed and Murray the K, both of whom broadcast from New York in their heyday.

Some rock stations have successfully integrated tunes that were formerly popular—golden oldies, blasts from the past—into their format and capitalized on the nostalgia craze of the early seventies. Often the format is one of half oldies, or two to one from the “vault of gold.” In 1972, stations like WCAU in Philadelphia, WIXZ in Pittsburgh, KWIZ and KNEW in Southern California, and KUUU in Seattle all significantly boosted their ratings with the “where have all the good songs gone” format.

Other “contemporary” radio stations have attempted to capture a soul sound, with heavy emphasis on blues and ethnic music. Scores of AM radio stations in America are programmed primarily for black audiences, although they frequently have listeners outside this group. (Tragically, most of the soul stations aren’t owned by blacks. Surely one of the great dilemmas facing the electronic media is the lack of the means to increase black and other minority-group economic participation in broadcasting.)

Some AM stations have even successfully programmed “hard rock” or “acid rock” or “underground rock.” The audience for this kind of pure rock is small; the heavy sounds turn off most listeners. The greatest success for such a format has been in the FM field. KDAY in Santa Monica, California, first succeeded with this format on AM. It featured a long play list (meaning that it played lots of different records), limited commercials to eight minutes each hour, and tried to create personality DJs who were knowledgeable about the music they played but not “jivers” like those on the screamer stations. The successful format was quickly copied elsewhere.

Perhaps the most interesting concept in rockers is the *more music* format, first promulgated in the sixties by men like Bill Drake. Drake was born Philip Yarbrough in 1937 and cut his teeth in radio spinning country and western tunes on backwater southern radio stations. In 1961 the owner of KYA radio in San Francisco gave Drake a chance at overhauling his rock station, which was at that time running behind the pack in the ratings sweepstakes. When he began work at KYA it was the prototype rocker, with music coming last, after the commercials, DJ chatter, jingles, air horns, and gongs. Drake’s formula was to clean up the station and clear away the clutter on the airwaves. He toned down the station’s rock image and began playing softer—but still popular—music. His theory was if you don’t like it, don’t play it. He depersonalized the disc jockey and emphasized music instead. Split-second timing was the key to his format, with a plethora of mini-jingles announcing what was coming up next. Disc jockeys were instructed to talk over both the intros and endings of records and often commercials were spaced to allow two and three record sweeps. Time was told only with numbers—it was 12:30, not half past the hour. And news was used to gain a strategic advantage in the battle for listeners. Drake’s theory was that many listeners will tune out news. If station KOMM carried its five minutes of

news at twenty-five minutes after the hour, a Drake station would carry the news at twenty minutes after the hour. Listeners would switch their dial when the news came on KYA at 12:20, but switch back when KOMM news came on at 12:25 and then stay with KYA until the next news cycle began. A Drake trademark was 20/20 news, twenty minutes before and after the hour.

The Drake format is a superslick sound. Most disc jockeys hate it and say that Drake is turning his back on what's really happening in music—progressive rock and soul. (But although the criticism may be valid, we must remember these are the same DJs Drake told to stop talking and play more music.) And the formula has been successful. In the early seventies there were at least forty stations that had the Drake sound and paid the young man more than \$100,000 annually for his programming service, which includes weekly play lists and predictions of new records. He has attained such importance in the record industry that many recording companies don't feel a record has a chance to succeed if the song doesn't appear on the Drake play list. Drake's success with the AM format has pushed him into even more programming in FM, which we will talk about shortly.

Probably the one remaining important subgroup in the variety of music formats is the country and western station, or what many people used to call "hillbilly" music. Following a decrease in the number of C & W stations during the past ten years, a renaissance of sorts has taken place and new "country" stations are popping up in many parts of the nation, including some large sophisticated eastern urban centers such as New York City. Country music is adult music, and its popularity might be a reaction to the youth orientation of pop music in the past three decades. Bill Sherrill at Columbia records calls it humanitarian music, music that talks about human problems at a very mundane level—about love and cheating, about drinking and the daily frustrations most people share. Rock, on the other hand, confronts issues on a grander scale—war, ecology, and racism are popular themes. One reason the number of country music stations have decreased is because country and western sounds have begun to infiltrate popular music. (At the end of this chapter, when we talk about pop music, we will try to point out the extent of this infiltration.) The remaining "barefoot" radio stations have adopted a top-forty kind of format, using C & W charts rather than pop music play lists.

Although music remains the basic AM format, it is not the only one. In recent years two innovations have been introduced, neither of which has been an overwhelming success. Phone-in programming was very popular for a while. Some stations went almost exclusively to this scheme, while others just used it an hour or two each night. This kind of format adopts two of America's basic rural pastimes as its attractions—listening in on the party line and talking at the town meeting. The premise is simple: the average citizen probably has something to say about most issues, so let him call the station and give his ideas over the air. A fairly glib host is required, as well as some special tape recording equipment that permits the station to broadcast the callers on a five- or eight-second tape delay (to give the station the chance to censor obscenity, libel, or other noxious remarks). But the program still retains the spontaneity of a live broadcast. With a good host

and a good topic, this kind of programming was often popular. But after a while listeners got tired of hearing generally uninformed people, most of whom had a petty complaint or a plan to save the world. Also, the same callers tended to monopolize the lines. In any case, the format began to fade.

But it didn't die completely. In fact, in 1973 call-in radio was given a new breath of life when several stations shifted the flavor of the telephone discussions from social, political, and economic issues to more earthy subjects—mainly sex. During discussions that the radio hosts described as “frank and honest but not dirty,” listeners were asked to give their views on extramarital relations, premarital sex, group sex, and so forth. Many listeners have responded favorably to a limited amount of this kind of programming, especially when the phoned-in comments are interspersed between records.

The other innovation was kind of a throwback to early radio as many large-city stations went to a 24-hour all-news format. Although it sounds exciting, public interest-oriented and all those good things, in fact it was usually a bore. The idea was fine, but most stations refused to put out the cash to hire enough newsmen to do the job. So listeners would hear about the same news with maybe twenty minutes of new material, in one-hour cycles. The first hour was great, the second hour was even okay, but by the third hour listeners began to know the news headlines as well as the readers at the radio station. Only large cities can support such stations, and few all-news stations still exist.

Music remains as the staff of life for the AM radio station, and there is nothing to suggest that this will change in our lifetimes. If we begin with the premise that the medium of radio tends to be background rather than foreground, music is an inexpensive, noncontroversial, and usually profitable programming concept. In the years to come we will probably see program formats play an even more significant role. The old-timers of radio despise the format; it means a loss of freedom to them. But the younger generation of radio hands understand it, have a feel for it. As Arnold Passman wrote in his book, *The Deejays*, “It speaks their language. If they have a sense of freedom, and they are no way near their politically active and socially experimenting peers, it may be in the vocal furor they are asked to create. The medium's message (any medium's) seems to be: Out of passion comes chaos, and out of chaos comes order.” In contemporary radio it is often the listener who creates the order.

FM, THE OTHER DIAL

“A poor and distant cousin,” or “broadcasting's obstinate orphan”—those were the kinds of words generally used to describe FM broadcasting during the first quarter-century of its uninteresting history. People who didn't like radio listened to FM, which began its broadcasting life in about 1940. Although it had always enjoyed significant technical advantages over AM—it has less static, better fidelity and little fading or overlapping background noise—FM never really caught on. One reason, and a good one, was that not many people had FM receivers, and it is impossible to pick up FM

frequencies on standard AM radios. Also, most FM licenses were held by the owners of AM stations who broadcast the same programming over both frequencies. But in the mid-sixties things began to change. The number of receivers began to increase rapidly as people bought AM-FM radios. Next, the FCC ordered AM-FM station owners to broadcast different material on their FM outlets at least half the time. Forced to fill time, broadcasters began to innovate with programming that would be inconceivable on AM with its massive audiences.

The success of FM in the past ten years has been phenomenal. About one-third of the people who listen to radio today listen to FM. In 1962 the FCC reported there were less than 1,000 commercial FM stations on the air. By 1972 the number stood at nearly 2,400. The price of FM licenses skyrocketed as people began to line up for the scarce franchises. In late 1971 it was estimated that an FM station in New York with a good signal was worth \$2.5 million. A Philadelphia FM station that was purchased for \$350,000 in 1968 was sold for \$1 million in 1971.

The success of FM is easy to understand. In the mid-sixties AM radio was the epitome of commercial media. Programming was standardized and aimed at a teenage audience. The top-forty sound with its hyped commercials and screaming deejays had been around for about ten years, and some people were beginning to tire of it all. FM was low key. It had few commercials and tried to soothe rather than swing. Because it was not aiming at a mass audience (it didn't have to with its low overhead) it could afford to do things that AM radio could not. It could specialize—aim at a fragmented audience. Some FM stations featured jazz, or progressive rock, or classical music exclusively—all served up, as *Newsweek* put it, by DJs who sounded as if they were drifting off to sleep.

But the "good"-music, less-chatter, and fewer-commercials format was not FM's only advantage. Because it was programmed for a small audience, it could afford to offend others and could be ideological. In Boston, for example, WBCN gained new popularity during the campus turmoils by disseminating information about anti-war meetings and rallies. And KMET in Los Angeles provided listeners with a community switchboard service that gave callers advice about solving problems—like what to do when you're busted or where to take someone with a drug overdose. A chain of stations under the Pacifica banner began broadcasting heavy intellectual and politically left kinds of programming to the delight of students and others as well. An AM station, hung up on ratings, would have a difficult time with that kind of programming, but the small FM stations are generally not burdened with such problems. FM has become a kind of cult medium for the counter culture, whatever that is. It is also attractive to minority groups who find that they can afford to get into FM, whereas AM radio remains out of reach. (One estimate is that an FM outlet costs about one-fifth as much as a comparable AM station.) So today much of FM is programmed for fragments rather than for the whole of society.

It is much more difficult to make generalizations about FM programming than AM programming. The spectrum of difference is wider in FM. Some stations attempt to appeal to the standard audience that seeks a background medium. Lots of music, much of it on tape, is the format. Bill Drake, whom

we discussed earlier in connection with AM formats, has found similar success in peddling FM formats—"Solid Gold Rock" and "Hit Parade 74" (75, 76, 77)—to FM stations. The Drake package comes on stereo tape with shortened commercial times, rapid-fire station breaks, and a depersonalized disc jockey all included. The station fills in the commercial slots, plugs in news and weather on the hour if it chooses, and rolls the tape. It can be broadcast with no more studio personnel than an engineer. Other programmers have jumped on the format bandwagon as well, and the automated FM station is becoming fairly common with "Music Only for a Woman," "Nashville Sounds," and other programming creations competing with the Drake sound.

Classical music still can be found on FM, as can jazz and the hard underground rock. Some FM stations attempt information formats or call-in formats or discussion formats. Imagine almost any other kind of programming schemes and you can probably find an FM station that uses it. With low overhead, low production costs, and virtually no promotion costs, these FM stations are making it.

Strangely, the very success FM is enjoying carries with it the seeds of destruction of the medium as we know it. Flush with its phenomenal success, FM could become giddy and foolish and attempt to gild the lily by increasing commercial time, by seeking a wider audience, or by becoming less controversial. All this of course would only create high-fidelity, static-free AM service—of which there is already more than enough. The reasons people like FM are the reasons it has not, until recently, been very successful. It tends to be amateurish on occasion; it is not seeking everyone as a listener; it carries few commercials (and those that it does carry tend to be delivered—sans jingles—as though the audience barely passed the eighth grade). A slick commercialized FM would probably die.

A more encouraging trend in FM is the movement by a handful of stations toward financing by subscription. Radio in general is a commercial medium. Although newspapers get fifteen to twenty-five percent of their revenue from subscriptions, radio and television get all of their money from advertising. Recently some FM stations have attempted to supplant some or all of their advertising money with subscription revenues. These stations appeal to the members of their audiences to subscribe to the station for, say, \$25 per year. An FM station can survive on a fairly small budget once its initial capital expenditures have been paid off, since radio costs tend to be people costs. There are a certain amount of material costs—equipment must be maintained and replaced—but nothing like the material and delivery costs that a newspaper has. There is no paper or ink to buy. There are no trucking or delivery costs to get the product from the plant to the home. Radio uses the free airwaves. Although no one will get rich, a small FM station that uses volunteer labor, of which there is often plenty, can exist on a budget of perhaps \$35,000 a year. It doesn't take a great many subscribers at \$25 or \$50 a throw to accumulate this amount.

While it's often hard work raising the money, subscription financing brings with it many advantages. The radio station is free from commercial pressure. Its audience is fairly well identified—the people who gave

money—so programming can be designed to cater to their interests. An audience that pays to support a station will have greater listener involvement in it and may perhaps even participate in some ways in its operations.

Subscription financing remains a small venture at present. These FM stations probably do a better job in serving the basic information needs of their listeners than any other broadcasting medium. Whether such a scheme is practical for larger radio stations or for television is highly questionable. But even its limited success could stimulate experimentation in other means of financial support that might portend a different future for at least FM radio.

AND THE MUSIC GOES ROUND AND ROUND

Because music is the basic element of most radio programming today, we should perhaps take a glimpse at the record industry during our odyssey through the airwaves. Record producers and artists are probably more aware of the interdependence between the two media than the broadcasters are. Jac Holzman, president of Elektra Records, recently said, "The bulk of radio is irrevocably wedded to the music industry. We need each other desperately. We both have a story to tell. We both tell our story with the aid of the other." From our discussion of radio programming, it should be fairly obvious why radio needs the record industry—it is the basic wheat for radio's bread of life. But perhaps the reverse—the record industry's dependence upon broadcasting—is not so clear.

At about the time network radio was in its death throes and AM radio was discovering the disc jockey, the structure of the recording industry was dominated by a handful of very large record companies such as RCA, Columbia, Decca, Mercury, Capitol, and so forth. They controlled the business to the extent that it was nearly impossible for a performer to succeed as a recording artist if he was not under contract to one of these giants. Certainly many smaller record companies did exist, especially in the South, but the success of artists on these labels was minimal. For example, Elvis Presley recorded several sides for Sun Records in Memphis early in his career, but he did not attain national popularity until RCA purchased his contract. The recording facilities provided by the large company, its supporting talent base (guitarist Chet Atkins supervised the early Presley recording sessions), its promotion and distribution capabilities, and, finally, its legitimacy among both record buyers and radio stations, were important factors in Presley's stardom. The legitimacy factor cannot be overlooked and might even be the most important one. To busy radio station program directors or even disc jockeys, the promotion man from RCA had a far greater chance of having his record auditioned than the man from Sun Records. The airplay for Presley's songs was the key to success.

So the recording business wasn't really very democratic in those days. All performers had to pass through a fairly narrow funnel—the recording companies—on their road to success. And only a small number would fit through that hole. If you were blacklisted, unloved by the industry, or trying to do something a little different, you were out of luck. A great many

talented performers never had a chance to do their thing on records but were confined to performing in saloons or on long and unrewarding one-night concert tours.

Today the recording industry is structured far differently and has the appearance of being a good deal more democratic. Success, however, remains as elusive as ever. A contract with a major record company is not a prerequisite to success in the recording business in the seventies. Records on hundreds of labels have become popular in the past few years. Today anyone with a little cash can make a record and stands a chance, however slim, of hitting the big one, the million seller. With the needed capital—maybe \$1,500—you and your three best friends can rent a recording studio complete with engineering staff and make a tape recording of your version of "Moon Over Miami." You can then have the tape transferred to a master disc. You might form your own production company and pay someone to press as many copies of your record as you think you can sell. Then you might form your own distribution firm and set out to peddle your disc to the world.

Make no mistake; this kind of system always existed. A performer could have done the same thing in 1954. But the independent recording and production facilities were not so common, and it just wasn't done. So the business looks more democratic today than ever before, and we can be assured that any young person with talent—if he can scratch together the few bucks he needs to make the record—will be given widespread public exposure and stardom will follow. Right? Wrong, dead wrong.

The neck of the funnel is still there—except today it isn't disguised by the large record companies. In 1954 the big companies would produce only what they could get on the radio and sell. That was the real gate for the performer, the potential popularity of the product. It is the same today. But the person the recording artist must convince is not the record studio man, it's the radio station man. Few records enjoy any success at all if they do not receive widespread airplay. It's true that there are exceptions to this rule. Classical recordings still sell, a small amount, without airplay. And at least a couple of rock groups, Grand Funk and Black Sabbath, have become very popular without the benefit of major broadcast exposure. Both groups have built their success on live concert performances. Grand Funk, for example, is popular enough to sell out Shea Stadium for an evening performance. (Even the Mets can't do that often.) The electric excitement generated by a typical noisy Grand Funk concert has created a vast appeal that has resulted in the sale of more than twenty million albums and singles. But this group is a fluke. In the real world, success for a record is virtually impossible without airplay, continued broadcast on the radio. Carole King's album *Writer* sold only about 6,000 copies until she received massive exposure on radio and television because of her *Tapestry* album. In a few short months the sales of *Writer* jumped to 300,000. "The album didn't get better—it got exposed," said Jac Holzman. The Elektra Record executive adds that it often takes time to condition broadcasters that a recording company has a superstar—sometimes as much as two years, sometimes never. Holzman pointed to such "stars" today as James Taylor and Carly Simon who recorded for a long

time before they became "overnight" successes—the success being brought on by sudden exposure on the air.

"The Beatles had plenty of records before [their songs received airplay]. It's not the public that turned them down. The public never heard them. Radio ears are a lot farther behind record ears, which they should be. But I don't know if they should be *that* far behind," Holzman added.

It is rare, then, for a performer to succeed without radio exposure. And with about 500 single releases and only a few less albums cut every month, the competition to catch the ear of the radio station is keen. Couple this with the tightening top-forty formats, or the trend in the early seventies of playing the oldies—well, it can be very discouraging to the young performer. Radio tends to be a good deal more conservative than recording companies. Recording companies have a kind of obligation to put out material the artists (established artists) might want to expose. But radio has no obligation to air it. The capital investment in radio is far greater (AM stations in major markets are worth millions) than the relatively small investment of the record maker and the artist. Radio also is regulated by the government—the Federal Communications Commission—and the record companies are not. This fact came home clearly a few years ago when the FCC warned stations about playing songs whose lyrics were drug-oriented. Although the structure of the recording industry encourages experimenta-



James Taylor was an "overnight success" who worked for many years to win his fame and fortune. Featuring the soft sound, programmed into radio by Bill Drake and others, and sought after by record buyers seeking an alternative to the loud and often raucous rock that represented both the music and the social scene of the late sixties, "Sweet Baby James" joined artists like Carole King and the Carpenters to mark new musical milestones in the seventies.

tion, the tightening formats of radio tend to limit this freedom. And finally, a radio station makes no money by selling records, despite the fact that it does a good job of it. A radio station is paid for the advertisements it carries. Frequently, playing lots of new and different songs can interfere with its ability to sell advertisements. (The old rating game.) Stan Kaplan, owner of two "contemporary" stations in the South, wrote recently that what the record companies don't understand about "that great, unwashed audience out there is that they have a choice. They can turn that dial and tune you out. And I'm not about to take a chance."

So there is a kind of continual warfare between the industry and the artists and the radio stations. Record companies want the radio station to play new material; broadcasters want to play established hits. One record promotion man said he would rather that the station play a new song on any label than an established hit, even on his label. An established song is already selling. The recording company wants to move new sounds. Record companies would like the radio stations to increase the length of their play lists, to play more records. Broadcast management likes to keep the play list short, maybe sixty records total.

Today the recording industry is seeking new ways to promote records to avoid the bottleneck at the radio stations. Many companies are subsidizing concert tours for their artists, in hopes of duplicating the success of Grand Funk and Black Sabbath. Some recording artists are writing and scoring films. Isaac Hayes, for example, scored the movie *Shaft* and the album of the film score received wide publicity even before the title song became popular through airplay. Television appearances are also being used, as are promotional tours to universities and colleges. At a baser level, record companies are using advertising on radio and in underground and campus newspapers in an effort to sell records. And then there is the good old record store promotion.

Some artists have been successful in selling records these ways; others have found that certification by a semi-professional publication like *Rolling Stone* also promotes record sales. But for most, the commonest route is still through the swinging doors at the local radio station, and this will probably remain true for some time. A recording artist doesn't make much money unless he hits it big. An artist gets about 4.5 cents per single copy sold and the writer gets 2 cents. So a performer who writes his own music gets 6.5 cents per record. So selling 100,000 singles, which sounds like a lot, only brings in \$6,500. And if this is split up by four or five people after all costs are deducted, there isn't much to go around. The million seller not only brings in a great deal more money directly, but results in related benefits such as lucrative television appearances and concert tours. The purist in music can sit back and be content to just make a living, forget the popularity bit, and sell a few thousand "good" albums. But the temptations toward riches are real and often overpowering.

Both record companies and radio stations vehemently deny that they in any way dictate the public taste in music. Jac Holzman said: "We provide a delectable smorgasbrod for the public to choose from and the public makes the choice. But we may push the tuna fish." This is probably true to a large

extent for the recording industry today. But one would have to be naive to believe it about radio stations. By limiting the public's exposure to fifty or sixty records per month, the popular tastes tend to be shaped by radio station play lists. Radio does influence our musical likes and dislikes. And as long as the medium remains the neck of the funnel through which most popular music must pass, it will continue to shape tastes.

I'D GIVE IT A 65. THE TUNE'S NOT MUCH, BUT I LIKE THE BEAT

Because music is the primary component of most radio programming today, and because it is an effective means of communication—a kind of mass medium itself—there should be a place for a discussion of modern music in a book on masscomm. But even if there weren't a good reason to include material about it in this book, we'd probably do it anyway—because it's something that's fun to talk about.

Most people like music. Of all our cultural or artistic forms, it is the one most people are involved in, either as performers or patrons. There are a lot of theories as to why people like music. There are even quite a few different ideas about why people enjoy popular music. It touches on actual needs and concerns in people, some say. Songs that become popular play on a deeply felt need all of us have for a feeling of community with other people. Although we may listen to popular music by ourselves, we nevertheless have the assurance that the isolated and individual feelings we experience with a song are in fact experienced by many other people as well. Sociologist David Riesman, author of *The Lonely Crowd*, goes even further and suggests that when we listen to popular music, we listen in a context of imaginary others: our listening is a reaching out, an attempt to find some connection with other people. Writer-critic Greil Marcus approaches the subject in a similar way, but begins with the assertion that no two people ever hear the same song in the same way or connect it with the same things. Still, a kind of communication exists. The song holds all the truth of the moment for both listeners. They both know it, Marcus says; they both accept the validity of the metaphor. The truth of these theories about the popularity of music remains a mystery that will undoubtedly trouble mankind for ages. One of the occupational hazards facing people who write about popular music, especially rock music, is the danger of taking both the music and the audience too seriously.

One of the serious problems that has long plagued popular music is that it has come to us with so few defined standards. Today, as in the past, an artist's worth tends to be defined by how many single records or albums he can sell. This is not a standard at all, probably; it's a cop-out. But it's the yardstick that most people use. And the music that approaches the status of a mass medium, either on its own or through radio, is the music that is successful when measured by this yardstick. We can knock it, we can try to come up with something else, we can form cults around true artists—but we can't ignore the notion that the best definition of popular music is music that is popular. With that caveat in mind, let's proceed.

SING THE SONG, MAN

While you can look at the evolution of music during the past twenty years in a number of ways, it is most interesting to focus on what the songs were saying and what kind of music was being recorded.

The popular music being produced in the early fifties was still post-war in nature. Song lyrics tended to be concerned with love, lovers, and kind of an unreal fantasy world. It was natural that the yearnings of the thirties and forties, periods of depression and brutal war, would reflect the desire for a simpler, more pleasant world. But as normalcy returned in the Eisenhower era, the music began to heat up. The real world with all its warts became a topic dealt with regularly in contemporary songs. In the early sixties folk songs and folk singing became the rage, and many of the labor songs of the thirties caught on again. Soon the drift toward realism found its way into more popular music, and songs about civil rights, war, drugs, and sex (not love) began to appear on the popularity charts. According to historian Robert Rosenstone, the portrait of America painted in many of these kinds of songs, which are still being written today, is that of "a repressive society, one which places little value on personal freedom; a nation whose institutions and values are debased and crumbling, and can probably be saved only through some kind of cultural and/or spiritual revolution."

Why these kinds of themes emerged is hard to say. And it is dangerous to generalize for the millions of Americans that made Bob Dylan's "World War III Blues" and Pete Seeger's "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" popular also made Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Berets" a big hit. There tends to be a built-in cultural lag in most media—film and music probably have the least. Music can help young people define and codify mores and standards of their own transient subculture. The message songs of the late sixties and early seventies—and let's remember other traditional themes remained popular as well; in fact, they tend to be growing stronger today—put to music the themes of popular intellectualism that were in vogue during the period; that is, the rat race, the lonely crowd, white-collar frustration, and so forth.

But the revolution in music in the fifties involved more than song lyrics. The music as well, the basic form of the song, underwent important changes. Many of the rules of the past were forgotten by people such as Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly. "The new music," as one critic wrote, "swung free, embraced chaos, and laughed at the notion that there could be anything more worth celebrating than the present." There were few encumbrances from the past. The rules that had existed became guidelines, not strictures. Both the lyricist and the song writer found a new freedom. But we are getting ahead of our story. For this new freedom just didn't descend one day on a shaft of light from heaven. The new concepts in music that emerged weren't really new at all, but had been submerged under a layer of conventionalism and propriety.

The "new music" of the fifties had in fact existed for some time as rhythm and blues in the black ghettos of the urban sprawls. Small record companies had put this music on plastic and they were known as "race

records" in the business. While many whites enjoyed and respected this music, broadcasting these tunes was never considered. That is, until 1954 when disc jockey Alan Freed, nicknamed "Moon Dog" by his Cleveland, Ohio, fans, began playing these records to audiences of primarily white teenagers. His success was immediate: he had struck a nerve that was ready to vibrate. Suddenly groups with "outlandish" names like the Moonglows, the Penguins and the Chords began edging their songs onto the popularity charts—not just the black-oriented rhythm and blues charts, but the straight top-fifty charts in *Billboard* and *Variety*. The major record companies, still unsure of this new development, contented themselves with putting out "cover" records of the black songs by groups such as the McGuire Sisters and the Crew Cuts. These generally bowdlerized versions of the rhythm and blues songs like "Sincerely," "Earth Angel," and "Sh-Boom," were stripped of their true basic essence and presented in a scrubbed and polished fashion more in tune with middle-American ears. Sometimes the lyrics were changed radically, as with Hank Ballard and the Midnighter's version of "Work with Me Annie." The song was a big hit in the rhythm and blues market with the phrases like, "Work with me Annie, let's get it while the gettin' is good." Prudish white folks, mainly broadcasting executives, found such lyrics disgusting. So a major record company took the catchy tune, changed the lyrics, and Georgia Gibbs recorded it as "Dance With Me



Bo Diddley featured a kind of bump and grind shuffle rhythm that was very popular in the fifties. While Bo Diddley enjoyed a modest success, his influence—both musical and otherwise—on other artists was probably more important. Elvis Presely watched Bo Diddley perform at the famous Apollo Theater, learning how to move on stage.



Many people think that Richard Penniman, known to music fans as Little Richard, is still the King of Rock and Roll. With a career spanning more than two decades (several lifetimes for the average pop musician), Richard's performances today are as exciting and electric as they were in the fifties.

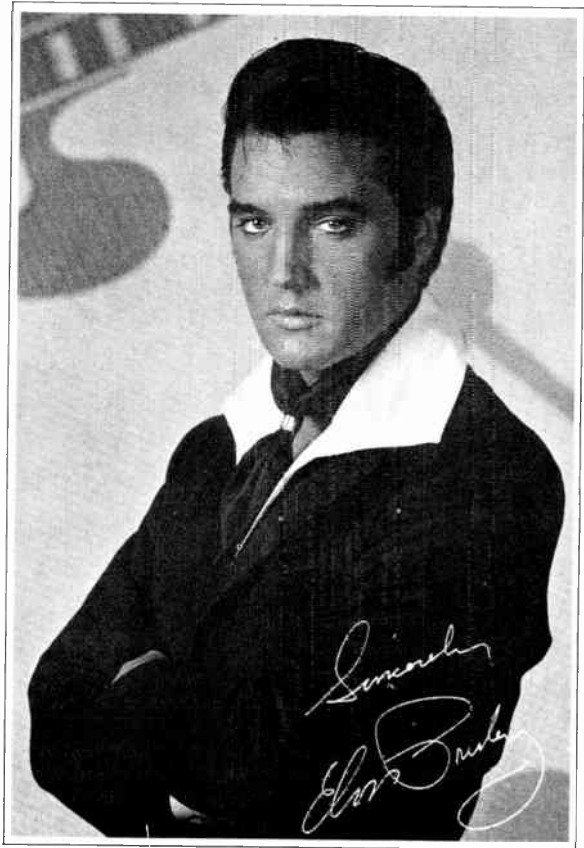
Henry" and made it a national hit. It was fairly common for the cover record (the white copy) to be a far bigger hit than the original version.

The music itself was different. It was a remnant of a particular potent strain of urban blues that had swept the nation in the late thirties. The black groups emphasized the beat with electric rhythm and bass guitars, piano and drums, and then featured solo performers who worked way out front with the lyrics. Although it was an old and radically racial sound that Freed was playing for his listeners, the kids loved it. And as if to signify its acceptance by the new audience, Freed dubbed it "rock and roll."

Numerous performers made the era significant musically. Chuck Berry, hammering out his Chicago bar blues style on tunes like "Maybelline," Richard Penniman—better known as Little Richard—with his delta blues boogie chords on the piano, and Bo Diddley, whose style was later successfully copied by other artists, are just three that come to mind.

It was some of the worst of this new music that put rock and roll over the top. A fairly mundane country and western musician named Bill Haley recorded two songs—"Shake, Rattle and Roll" and "Rock Around the

As popular today as he was when he emerged as the first white hero of rock and roll, Elvis Presley made rock and roll self-sufficient. Considering the on-stage antics of contemporary groups such as Alice Cooper, it is hard to imagine that Presley created such a stir because he wiggled his hips when he sang. When he appeared on the Ed Sullivan TV Show, the cameramen had orders to show him from the waist up only.



Clock"—and they really caught the nation's fancy. "Shake, Rattle and Roll" had been a fair hit in the rhythm and blues market for Joe Turner. But again, because of bawdy lyrics, radio stations wouldn't play the Turner version. It wasn't until Haley changed lines about getting out of bed and washing face and hands into lyrics about getting into the kitchen and washing pots and pans that the song became acceptable.

Although there could be no mistaking the popularity of groups and artists such as these, it wasn't until a country boy named Elvis Presley came along that the new music gained stability—and respectability. Presley began with Sun Records in Memphis. He brought to the recording studio traditions as diverse as the gospel sounds of the revivalist religious sects, the country sounds of the deep South and the delta blues. Agents of the Radio Corporation of America saw him performing at a disc jockey convention in Miami in 1955, bought his contract, and launched the singer on a phenomenal career. Presley's success with songs like "Heartbreak Hotel," "Hound Dog," and "All Shook Up" proved that rock and roll—theoretically

a fusion of country and western, pop, and rhythm and blues—could appeal successfully to audiences of all three. His recognition by a major record company as well as his appearances on the Jackie Gleason and Ed Sullivan Shows gave needed respectability to the new music. His later career, through films, personal appearances, television, and records is one of the remarkable episodes in American entertainment history. He is a phenomenon—nothing more, but nothing less.

Presley's success and popularity convinced the other major record companies, who had been sitting on the sidelines, that there was money to be made with rock and roll. For example, Capitol Records found Gene Vincent and successfully recreated the Presley sound in Vincent's only hit release, "Be-Bop-a-Lula." Dot Records signed and promoted Pat Boone in its attempt to show that you didn't really have to be greasy looking to dig rock and roll. But the first creative genius of the new music was a young man from the Southwest named Buddy Holly. Holly and a group called the Crickets had a tremendous string of hits that included "Peggy Sue," "Maybe Baby," "Rave-On," and "That'll Be the Day." But Holly was more than a hit maker; he was the developer of many innovations in recording that are still



The most original and creative of all the early rock and roll performers, Buddy Holly created an entirely new way of making music. Holly became appreciated more after his death, when serious musicians saw the real importance of his innovations. At the same time, his music is loved and remembered by tin-eared rock fans whose criterion for judging a song is whether or not it has a danceable beat.

MR. TWIST HIMSELF

CHUBBY CHECKER

IN HIS
FIRST
DRAMATIC
ROLE!

DON'T
KNOCK
THE
TWIST

STARRING
LANG MARI GEORGINE
JEFFRIES · BLANCHARD · DARCY

and
GENE
CHANDLER

THE
CARROLL
BROTHERS

LINDA
SCOTT

THE
DOVELLS

VIC
DANA

Written by JAMES B. GORDON
Produced by SAM KATZMAN
Directed by OSCAR RUDOLPH
A FOUR LEAF PRODUCTION
A COLUMBIA PICTURES RELEASE



This movie poster from 1962 advertised one of the movies produced to take advantage of the public's new interest in the Twist. Chubby Checker, an originator of several new dances during the period, played a fairly minor role, but was a good attraction to bring fans to the theater. The movie also featured the Dovells, exponents of Dick Clark's Philadelphia Sound, who popularized the Bristol Stomp.

fundamental to music today. He was among the first performers who was also a song writer, arranger, and record producer. This is common today, but it was unheard of in 1957. Recording from Norman Petty's studio in Clovis, New Mexico, Holly used his voice and the song lyrics to create an entire musical package—the words complimented the music and vice versa. The songs were all conceived as records and could have no meaningful existence as sheet music. There was little distinct separation of the words, the singer, and the music. Again, while this is basic to the best pop music today, it was revolutionary in the fifties. Buddy Holly died in a plane crash in February of 1959 along with two other pop music artists, Richie Valens and the Big Bopper, a disc jockey turned performer. What might have been a remarkable career was cut short on this day, which songwriter-singer Don McLean called “the day the music died” in his recording of “American Pie.” There were other innovators as well during the era, but none that reached the level of Holly. Phil and Don Everly, vocally close to the conventional country and western style, left their mark on contemporary music through their instrumental arrangements—rich acoustic guitar accompaniments—as well as in their success in popularizing basically country songs. Texan Roy Orbison, one of the best pop baladeers to emerge during the era, also left his mark on pop music. With the Everly Brothers, Chuck Berry, and Eddie Cochran, Orbison had a great influence on the style of the Beatles. Orbison, along with Del Shannon and Gene Pitney, proved that good entertainers could be good businessmen as well. He built the model for the enterprise-oriented rock music stars of the future. As the fifties ended, it was clear that rock and roll was not only good music, it was good business.

THE SIXTIES ARRIVE

At the opening of the next decade, several musical trends emerged. Formula rock began to appear—that is, precisely planned excursions into record buyers' pocketbooks by talented, but not necessarily creative, musicians. This was the *find out what will sell and cut it* (sometimes known as the *take the money and run*) school of music. Preeminent in this category was a group called the Four Seasons, shepherded to success by record producer Bob Crewe. On hit records like “Sherry,” “Big Girls Don't Cry,” and “Hang on Sloopy” the Seasons presented a style that was first used by the Diamonds in 1957—a solid clunk beat under shrill harmonies and the falsetto lead of Frankie Valli. Between 1962 and 1965 the Four Seasons had ten songs in the top ten.

Phil Spector also emerged at the beginning of the sixties as a man with a formula and went on during that decade to reap rich rewards with his remarkable talent and energy. Spector, who Tom Wolfe described as the first tycoon of teen, had a large chunk of the music industry in his pocket when he was twenty-three years old, an age when many young people are still looking for a career. When he was seventeen he wrote his first hit, “To Know Him is to Love Him” and made \$20,000. He followed this with another hit, “Spanish Harlem” and by nineteen was in charge of artists and repertoires at Atlantic Records. He formed his own record company, Philles Records, in 1961 and by the mid-sixties had produced a string of hits

including "He's a Rebel," "Da Do Ron Ron," "Be My Baby," "Fine, Fine Boy," and "Breakin' Up," which sold more than thirteen million records. The Spector formula was simple: rather than put out ten to fifteen records per month, put out just one, but put everything into it. And he did just that as songwriter, record producer, talent scout, and musical arranger.

It was at the beginning of the sixties that a musical dance craze hit the United States for the first time since the thirties. The Twist, the Fly, and the Limbo became popular fare at house parties and in discotheques where dancers rocked to Chubby Checker and Joey Dee and the Starlighters. ("Hey everybody, it's Pony time.") And finally, some "area" sounds—that is, music that could be associated with specific geographic areas—became popular. The success of Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" sustained a South Philadelphia sound with performers like Fabian, Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell, Bobby Vinton, and others. From California a kind of "surf sound" emerged, promoted most vigorously by the Beach Boys.

Most significant, though, was the development of a melange of musical material called *soul* by what critic Albert Goldman in *Freakshow* called "the General Motors of rock," Motown in Detroit. With performers like the Four Tops, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, the Temptations, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Stevie Wonder, and of course, the Supremes, owner-manager-founder of Motown, Berry Gordy, Jr., turned out (and is continuing to turn out) a remarkable series of hits. He too had a formula that had the beat as its basic ingredient. His drummers were told to abandon the traditional two and four style of drumming and were instructed instead to "bark at every beat." Gordy then amplified the beat in every way possible with tom-toms, cymbals, and anything else he could find and created a driving, pounding sound. Gordy hired top writers—most notably Eddie and Bryant Holland, Lamont Dozier, Norman Whitfield, and Barrett Strong—who succeeded in adding a genuine contemporary voice to black music. Critic Goldman wrote: "In their best work they (Motown) can telescope into three relentless minutes the events of a whole evening in a storefront church while dislodging the conventional facade of the love story."

The music from South Philly, the Seasons, and Motown—all were riding the crest of popularity in this country in 1964 when a remarkable new era quietly began. A group of four musicians, organized originally as a school-boy skiffle band known as the Quarrymen, had been performing in a club in Liverpool. They were playing what some critics have called souped-up rock, music influenced strongly by some early U.S. rock and roll performers like Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry. They had had a few records that were moderately successful, but were really quite crude. They couldn't read music—they could barely play their instruments. They were, of course, the Beatles, and they soon became the center of a pop music revolution.

The Beatles were remarkable in many ways. As the sixties progressed the group emerged as true musical talents. At the same time, they had incredible commercial success. In March of 1964 they had the top five records in the nation. Each new single and album marked some new achievement. They borrowed freely from other less successful groups, but they also innovated. Their *Sergeant Pepper* album marked the first time an artist presented a suite of songs in a specific order. Until *Sergeant Pepper*



A picture taken in 1964 of the Beatles. After they had been recording for only a few years, much of the music that had come before them seemed as out-of-date as the car in this picture.

the performer just slapped a dozen songs into the package and out it went. Since that time the album itself has become a kind of creation with artists retaining contractual rights to approve the record jacket and liner. Foldout pictures, and liner gimmicks like packing records in women's panties are all part of the business today and stem largely from the initial inventiveness of the Beatles.

The Beatles innovated musically as well. What they brought to America initially was a musical style that had grown up here but had been forgotten. As the Beatles matured, new ideas and concepts emerged in their music. But as in life, maturity in music is usually followed by death, and in 1970 the group broke up amid rumors of internal strife and unhappiness. Each went his own way, for better or worse.

The Beatles brought more to America than their music. With them came the beginnings of a new life style, a subculture that took root here and revolved around music, film, clothing, hair style, and, often, drugs. It was a new expression of youth, a kind of final rejection of many of the values of what they believed to be an old order. Albert Goldman has best summed up the contribution of the Beatles:

They generated with their poetry, music and wit a whole new milieu of discotheques and light shows; of long hair, mod fashions and hippie costumes; of groupies, dopers, and teenyboppers. Standing above their world like the zany sorcerers in the Magical Mystery Tour, they controlled its emotional climate season by season, for the better part of the decade.

The Beatles also opened up a new, much younger, generation to buying and listening to records. The audience and artists grow together today. Today it is possible for an artist to remain saleable for eight to ten years, whereas in the past most artists disappeared within four years. Record sales went up thirty-four percent between 1964 and 1966, the early Beatle era.

Other record producers, who viewed the success of the Beatles for Capitol Records with interest, invaded Merseyside and didn't leave until they had picked it clean of every last guitarist. Talent was a secondary consideration in the search. Imported music was in. If a group or performer was longhaired, loud, and British, it had the combination for success. Some of the worst music ever recorded was foisted on the American public during this era. And the standards set by musicians, record producers, and the audience often sunk to new depths. Unfortunately many of these standards are still used today.

Two kinds of music dominated the British invasion that followed the Beatles. A kind of happy music was performed by groups like Freddie and the Dreamers, the Dave Clark Five, and Gerry and the Pacemakers. A heavier sound, with roots in American blues, came from more substantial groups like the Animals, the Yardbirds, and the Rolling Stones. This latter aspect of the British heritage remains alive today.

A NEW DECADE APPROACHES

At the close of the sixties and the opening of the seventies, a kind of anarchy existed in the music world. Most of the old rules and formulas lay by the wayside. "Do your own thing" was the best advice a young singer could get. Consequently the music itself was a mixed bag. The first signs of audience fragmentation in the music market began to appear. The supergroups like Cream sought to appeal to a more sophisticated rock-oriented audience. Performers like the late Jimi Hendrix, whose appeal was limited to still a different kind of audience, still found a mass market for records like "Purple Haze." A whole new genre of music labeled "bubblegum" by its detractors enjoyed a great success among younger teenagers (actually ten- to fourteen-year-olds). Groups like the Ohio Express, the Monkees, the Archies, and so forth—often created out of whole cloth in some recording studio—rode high on the charts and made lots of money.

A gutty sound of realism, a kind of people music, was promulgated by artists like the Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin, and Sly and the Family Stone. And in the middle most people found artists like the Doors, the Buckingham, Otis Redding, the Young Rascals, the Association, Simon and Garfunkel, and many others acceptable. Traditions were broken. Slickness was out, sincerity was in. The "Ugly Duckling," like singer Melanie,

frequently became a kind of anti-artist. Critic Goldman attempted to assess the audience when he described Melanie as the “perfect entertainer for the more immature members of a generation that likes to see its heroes hung up, embarrassed, and off key.” A big chunk of the new music audience was hung up on egalitarianism and someone exercising a hard-earned skill often didn’t excite them. “These kids can’t stand professionalism” Goldman wrote, “because it makes them feel inferior.”

As we moved into the seventies, faced with the closing of the rock palaces, the Fillmores, the popularity of clearly inferior music (which was really nothing new), and the breakup of the Beatles, many people began to ask—“Is rock dying?” The answer most often given was an unequivocal yes . . . and no. There was no doubt that music was changing; the audience was ready to move on to new kinds of things. The musicians themselves had prompted some of the changes. The Fillmores closed because groups like the Stones preferred to play a one-night stand in Shea Stadium to earn their \$250,000 rather than play two weeks at the Fillmore. The fact that listening to music in a football stadium is like playing a Mozart sonata on a banjo (you



The girl who said she wouldn’t be professionally satisfied until she approached the excellence of blues singer Bessie Smith, Janis Joplin emerged from the acid era of San Francisco rock. A tragic figure, her life seemed filled with constant frustration despite her immense talent and success.

Her death recently, marked by the drug culture in which she often worked and lived, reflected the disillusionment many contemporary performers find in fame and fortune.

Otis Redding died in a plane crash in Madison, Wisconsin, at the peak of his career in the late sixties. He was an exciting performer; his "Dock of the Bay" remains one of the few classics from that era of modern music.



lose a good deal of the detail and refinement in the process) didn't seem to bother these performers. To hell with the audience.

It was in the sixties and early seventies that the "technological era" of music peaked, and recording groups often worried more about pre-amps, cross phrasing, feedback, wah-wah, and so forth, than their music. As commentator Harry Reasoner said, "the trouble with modern musicians is that most of them are electricians." Again the audience began to tire of gimmickery, as the electronic equipment took rock artists away from their roots. The drug thing had an impact as well. It meant nothing to the hardcore rock cult, but to the average record buyer the deaths of stars like Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix were meaningful. Whether or not these deaths were actually related to drugs, most people believed they were. Some record companies like MGM went so far as to purge themselves of both songs and singers that had the remotest connection with drugs.

But mostly, people wanted a change. And so new trends began to emerge. A softer sound found a ready audience with many persons tired of the "raucous noise" of rock. Groups like the Carpenters, Bread, and the Bells, and single performers like Carly Simon, James Taylor, and Carole King, and balladeer Neil Diamond had great success singing softly about love and romance. Religion and the Jesus movement infiltrated pop music and we woke up to find songs like George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord," Judy

Collins' "Amazing Grace" and Ocean's "Put Your Hand in the Hand" in the top 40. And the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" left its impact on music. (Initially, many radio stations forbade the deejays to call the show by its proper name, and instructed them to refer to it only as "Superstar", so as not to offend some of its "Christian" listeners.)

Jazz began to enjoy a renaissance, and some rock groups like Chicago and Blood, Sweat and Tears built small bands around a jazz-rock sound. Imagine the shock of youngsters spawned on string guitars, basses, pianos, and drums when they first heard a trumpet in a rock group. Some groups went even further and used the classics and classical musicians in reaching for a new sound. Procul Harum recorded a successful album, from which the hit single "Conquistador" was taken, with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.

But the most interesting development in the modern era has been the successful mingling of pop and western and country sounds, much to the chagrin of the country and rock purists. Eddy Arnold first took country music "uptown" in the late forties when he attempted to take the twang out of his records by adding lush strings to his country love songs. He was successful, but no one else copied him. In the early days of rock and roll many of the pop performers came out of country and western backgrounds, but their music was basically pop. It was a group of newcomers in the Nashville music scene that finally broke the bastions down, mellowing the



Charley Pride, who today sits securely atop the world of country and western music, is the first black man to even approach success in this area of modern music. His performing excellence apparently overcame any hesitancy country fans had in applauding the music of a non-white.

traditional country sound to make it more appealing to general audiences. Guitarist Glen Campbell skyrocketed to fame using basically country folk songs—"By the Time I Get to Phoenix," "Wichita Lineman," and "Gentle on My Mind"—and led the way. Ray Price broke out as well with ballads like "For the Good Times," in which he dropped the whining steel guitar in favor of strings. This was a profound embarrassment to old-timers like Roy Acuff who were frankly dumbfounded to see new country singers like Charlie Pride, a black man who pronounced it "I'm moving on" rather than "Ah'm mooovin' awn", popping up frequently on the Lawrence Welk show.

Economics was a big reason for the switch. It was the difference between selling 70,000 copies of a record and a half million. Traditionalist Webb Pierce can make about \$6,500 off the 100,000 singles he sells of a song he writes and sings. Roger Miller, on the other hand, made close to \$130,000 off the two million recordings of "King of the Road" that were sold. Also, younger singers who found themselves uncomfortable in the rock culture of pop music found working in the country milieu more to their liking. At the same time, they weren't willing to drop their pop interests in favor of the country traditions. So they attempted to bridge the gap. There is little chance of country losing its identity; there will always be a hard core of both audience and performers. But more and more country performers like Lynn Anderson, Jodie Miller, Roger Miller, Kris Kristofferson, and Glen Campbell will find their hit records at the top of both the C & W and pop charts.

At about the same time the country performers were breaking out of Nashville, rock performers began to break in. The Byrds recorded Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" in a classic country style. Dylan himself recorded an album, *Nashville Skyline*, with a country flavor. The country

The "Man in Black" first became popular with audiences in the fifties and sixties with Western-style songs like "I Walk the Line" and "Ring of Fire." But a bout with drugs and hard times intervened before Johnny Cash's even greater success in the late sixties and seventies. The popularity of his ABC television show—the first weekly program to be nationally broadcast from Nashville—was an early sign of the growing popularity of country and western music in America among traditionally pop music audiences.



sound began to take hold in the work of many artists. The result of both these trends is that Nashville has become a recording center in America today ranking with Los Angeles in importance. And a lot of young people are singing songs their parents would have considered pretty cornball in the forties and fifties.

REMEMBER ME? I'M TEEN ANGEL

There is little question that music has changed a great deal since "teen angel" haunted the city streets in the mid-fifties. If a prediction might be ventured, music will continue to proliferate, to seek the fragmented audiences of the future. As FM radio develops, as more people purchase their own means of replaying music—tape decks, for example—performers will find that success is possible by appealing to less than the mass audience. The least extreme of the current offshoots will undoubtedly work their way into what we might call "middle music" and wind up on the popularity charts, which will remain the most widely used criteria for musical success.

AM radio—the medium that devours most of the music—will probably remain static—if a pun is acceptable. There is little need for it to change. Newspapers will be forced to change in order to survive. Television will be asked to make substantive modifications because it is at the center of the communications revolution. But radio isn't that important in the eyes of most people. It's no longer the basic part of life that it was in its golden era. It has been supplanted at stage center by slicker, more inviting pitchmen. Many remain who mourn its passing.

For they remember that in its heyday radio was a family medium, a medium that developed as an art to quicken all the senses. As Robert Paul Dye wrote, "Radio once allowed the listener to participate." The theater of the mind, they called it. No one could tell you, radio historian Jim Harmon has written in *The Great Radio Heroes*, that the monsters were too gruesome because you could make them as gruesome as you liked. And radio had a soul in the thirties and the forties, one we would call cornball today. Moral absolutes like fair play, justice, kindness, patriotism, and honor ran through most scripts. Hero of radio heroes Jack Armstrong put it succinctly when he told his pal Billy Fairfield: "When I think of this country of ours with millions of homes stretching from sea to sea and with everybody working and pulling together to have a nation where people can be free and do big, fine things—why, it makes me realize what a terribly important job we've got ahead."

Radio rarely moralizes any more; generally it lacks the courage to be moral, so it spoofs instead. And its audience is rarely shocked into moral consciousness or fired from moral consideration. Instead, contemporary radio has a tendency to mire its audience in ambivalence. Its heavy emphasis on advertising probably more than anything else dictates what modern radio really is. In a speech in 1965 entitled "Who Forgot Radio," commentator Edward P. Morgan decried the blatant commercialism of AM broadcasting, charging that "the industry littered the street of dreams with garbage."

AM radio tomorrow will likely remain in the background, a position it has held since it underwent its major transformation in the late forties and early fifties. Some of FM radio will probably move into the foreground, but most of it will stay in the background as well. Radio is rarely used in this country as a primary source of anything. News seekers use newspapers and television. Entertainment lovers watch television and film. Music fans listen to tapes and records. Radio is just there.

An interviewer once asked the Beatles how they rated their music. "We're not good musicians," they replied, "just adequate." Astounded, the interviewer responded, "Then why are you so popular?" The rock group answered, "Maybe people like adequate music." People must like adequate radio as well since that's what most of it is. And it's likely to stay that way. It could be so much more, but there is apparently so little need.

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7

Television: the Glowing Eye

It was 10 A.M. on a cold February morning in the nation's capital. On the Hill, in one of the congressional hearing rooms, Senator William J. Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was interrogating George F. Kennan, an authority on Sino-Soviet relations, about the larger implications of American involvement in the Vietnam War. The hearings had been going on for several days as the heated debate on the Americanization of the Southeast Asia conflict continued at the highest levels of government. Citizens of the nation for one of the first times in history were privy to congressional discussions on a major foreign policy question as the National Broadcasting Company focused its television cameras on the participants in the jammed hearing room. But viewers of the nation's other television networks, CBS and ABC, were watching other things. On ABC a movie was being shown, while at CBS the umpteenth rerun of "I Love Lucy" was playing, to be followed by reruns of "The Real McCoys" and "Andy of Mayberry." At CBS, spokesmen reportedly said, "We just didn't feel it was the kind of thing to carry."

It was chilly for autumn in Washington. The long, slow procession wound its way along the streets of the nation's capital under a sad grey sky. The small boy stood with his mother as the cortege began to pass sluggishly by. As the coffin approached, the youngster's mother bent and softly whispered instructions in her son's ear. Three-year-old John Kennedy straightened and saluted the casket bearing his slain father's body. And the nation watched and wept.

Television: moments of despair, moments of greatness. We can all point to other instances when the industry showed its absolutely worst side to the nation's viewers. Few applauded, as we have said, when the second half of the Green Bay-Kansas City Super Bowl game had to be restarted because the network was broadcasting a commercial when the ball was kicked. And serious questions of the medium's public responsibility were raised in 1961 when all three networks turned down President Kennedy's request for a half hour of air time at 8 P.M. to explain to the people of Mississippi and the nation the steps he was taking to insure James Meredith's right to enroll at

the state university. By the time the President addressed the nation at 10 P.M., rioting had broken out on the Ole Miss campus.

Equally numerous are instances of the medium at its best: ABC's magnificent coverage of the Summer Olympics in 1968 and 1972; the 1951 coverage of the Kefauver crime hearings when television cameras focused on the twisting and turning hands of the accused Frank Costello as he was interrogated; or Kenneth Clark's lucid and picturesque thirteen-week journey through Western "Civilisation"—each instant a memorable occasion.

Any discussion of television must recognize both the high and the low points in the short history of the medium. Television has been around only for about thirty years, but a lot has been crammed into those three decades. In the beginning there were many who didn't think TV would last. "People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night," they said. Pseudo-intellectuals made a fetish of not owning an "idiot box." (Some still do today.) Preachers predicted that television would corrupt the morals of the young. Other critics predicted with equal certainty that Russia and China, countries in which TV had yet to hit the mass market, would be given the edge in the Cold War because Americans would be softened and diverted by the new medium. But most people put television into their homes as soon as they could afford the price of a set.

Television remains controversial today. There are strong opinions about the tube. As Eric Severeid has written, "Until a few years ago every American assumed he possessed an equal and God-given expertise on three things: politics, religion, and weather. Now a fourth has been added—television." Most of what is written or spoken about the newest mass medium is opinionated and rarely evaluative. Professor Richard Stonesifer relates the story of being introduced at a dinner party as someone who was getting ready to do some writing on television. "For or against?" he was immediately asked. Stonesifer noted that such a rejoinder would not have come had he been identified as someone who was surveying books or art or music or the theater. People are rarely for or against cultural forms. Yet it is surprising how actively they take sides in discussions about television.

We don't need to look very far to find such opinions—usually negative ones. Television is "the least grateful, most abrasive, exhausting, money grubbing, coldblooded showplace the world of entertainment has ever known," commented the editors of the now defunct *Show* magazine in the early 1960s. "If television can be said to have any values at all, it is those of the salesmen, big businessmen, manufacturers and showmen who control it—essentially materialistic values," wrote educator Harry Skornia in *Television and Society*. "A television man himself described the medium as "a gigantic electronic medicine wagon with a Hollywood cast, whose entire reason for being lies in its ability to gather millions of men, women, and children to see and hear the advertiser's pitch." British intellectuals are fond of calling it "the idiot's lantern." And Americans have dubbed the box the "boob tube."

There is a great temptation in writing about television to jump on this bandwagon. It takes little time to prepare a blanket indictment of the entire

industry. But those memorable moments we noted earlier keep gnawing in the back of the mind. There is no doubt that television is not what many would like it to be. It is questionable how much service it provides for society beyond basic entertainment and economic tasks. Rarely does it meet the high standards it might attain, standards once outlined by E. B. White:

I think television should be the visual counterpart of the literary essay, should arouse our dreams, satisfy our hunger for beauty, take us on journeys, enable us to participate in events, present great drama and music, explore the sea and the sky and the woods and the hills. It should be our Lyceum, our Chautauqua, our Minsky's and our Camelot. It should restate and clarify the social dilemma and the political pickle.

But it is also not entirely the vast wasteland it is often pictured. Critic Stonesifer (*Television Quarterly*): "I have read too many bad Elizabethan and Jacobean plays to denounce categorically everything of television's attempt at drama as a decline from some past and largely imagined theatrical majesty."

What is bad on television is fairly innocuous, not evil, although since its inception it has been charged with various social and physical crimes, such as engendering violent behavior, inciting riots, damaging eyesight, contributing to heart disease, and stifling both our conversational and reading habits. But little research has been done on these kinds of problems, and that which has tends to be inconclusive. The cross television must bear is what it is not, not what it is. As the Carnegie Commission reported in 1967: ". . . the problem is not so much what has been done with it so far as what has not been done—yet."

In chapter two we explored some of the things TV might be doing; we were critical of the medium for not taking itself more seriously as an important element in our national communication system. In this chapter we will consider what the medium *is* rather than what it might be. In attempting to explain and evaluate its essence we will outline its structure and economic base. We will look at the programming limitations of a commercial government-regulated medium. We will explore the public television system as an alternative programming service and cable television as an alternative delivery system. And when we are done we will hopefully have a better idea about why Tuesday's television schedule is what it is.

Too many people today dismiss television out of hand. It's too important for that. Outspoken critic and former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson reminds us that "everything we do, or are, or worry about, is affected by television."

Some supposedly smart people still refuse to own a television set. They can't be bothered with all that nonsense. Writer and critic John Mason Brown argued that such people deny themselves participation in life today. "They are horse and buggy," Brown wrote, "they are atrophied; they are self-exiled from the world. They suffer from the most painful illiteracy, which is that of the literate."

Television is the youngest in the family of masscomm. There is much we

still don't know about it and what it does to us, so we must proceed cautiously as we begin our exploration.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

In the beginning God created man in his own image; and man created radio, and then created television in the image of radio. For good or for worse, television has inherited its basic structure from radio. It has the same financial underpinnings; it uses the same programming concepts as radio once did; even its notion of scheduling programs for an hour or thirty minutes is a direct steal from radio. And why shouldn't it be the same? For as we have said so many times, the same men who controlled network radio were instrumental in the development of television as a viable commercial medium.

Physically, television has come quite a way in the past thirty years. When World War II ended, only six stations were on the air, and there were about 10,000 television sets in use. Today there are nearly 700 commercial stations on the air and more than 200 educational outlets. Television, like radio, occupies multiple spots on the broadcast spectrum. As we have AM and FM in radio, we have VHF and UHF in television. Very high frequency (VHF) stations—and about 590 of the total commercial stations fall into this category—are the AM of television. The VHF station's signal is stronger and produces a sharper picture on the receiver. If you are a broadcaster, it is desirable to have a VHF station. In a town like Madison, Wisconsin, where only one of three stations are VHF, the VHF broadcaster has a great advantage over the UHF broadcaster in both building an audience and capturing advertisers.

Jackie Gleason is a man who successfully entertained people through television for more than a decade. As Ralph and Alice Kramden in "The Honeymooners," Gleason and Audrey Meadows continued in the tradition of many successful network radio "couples" like Burns and Allen, Jack Benny and Alice Faye, and Fibber McGee and Molly. Can such entertainment—which has such wide appeal—be condemned out of hand?



Ultra high frequency (UHF) is a part of the spectrum opened up only after it became clear that the demand for television service would exceed the amount of space available on the VHF bands. It wasn't until the early 1960s that receiver manufacturers were forced to build UHF tuners into television sets. Unlike FM radio, where reception is better, UHF broadcasts tend to be technically inferior except in the best of circumstances.

According to recent statistics there are nearly ninety million television receivers in the United States, nearly a third of which are color sets. Television reaches more than ninety-five percent of the homes in America. But how much do people watch their sets? For years the A.C. Nielson Co., the research firm that conducts television ratings, has reported that people watch between four and six hours a day, or on the average, thirty-five hours a week. But let's examine those statistics. Nielsen is in the business of selling his research results to people who have a vested interest in people who watch lots of television—advertisers. This might explain the great difference in Nielsen's findings and those of pollster Louis Harris, who doesn't sell his results to advertisers. Harris reported recently that the average American watches TV about seventeen hours a week. Women watch more than men, people who went to college watch less than people who only finished the eighth grade, blacks watch more than whites, and people who earn more than \$15,000 a year watch nearly two hours less each week than people who earn less than \$5,000. According to the Harris poll commissioned by *Life* magazine, "the heaviest TV viewers of all are those categorized as 'lonely and alienated,'" people who admitted to interviewers that they don't plan their free time well. While this hardly boosted the spirits in the industry, other Harris data were even more distressing. The pollster's revelations about public attitudes on television were summarized by *Life* in the form of a message viewers would like to send to the broadcasters:

We're still watching television but we're enjoying it less. Your mass programming tactics are not working very well. By trying to reach everybody, you are pleasing only a minority, and a shrinking minority at that. Most of your programs appear to be aimed at somebody else, not me. . . . Many of the entertainment shows you put on—which add to more than two-thirds of all TV fare—leave us cold, even though we do watch them. In news and sports, you're doing a fine job. But too much of what we see is bland and boring. Much of our watching is done only when there's nothing better to do.

Viewers told Harris they wanted more plays and dramas, more new movies and live sports. They said they wanted fewer crime stories, situation comedies, Westerns, talk shows, quiz shows, and soap operas. A third of the people said television was better today than ten years ago; a third said it was worse. A third said they watch more today; forty percent say they watch less. The industry could use this data to their own advantage in planning for the future. Time will tell whether they do.

THE SKELETON

The institutional structure of the television industry is dominated by five elements—the local stations, the various networks, the stations owned and

After World War II, strange-looking gadgets began to appear on the roofs of American homes, and a middle-aged vaudevillian became everybody's Uncle Miltie. Milton Berle was the first major entertainer to head his own TV show—starting in 1948. His popularity soon earned him the title Mr. Television.



NBC Photo

operated by the networks, program syndicates, and station groups or chains. Each of these five elements plays a part in the overall fate of television programming.

Of the nearly 900 or so television stations in the country, most are joined during viewing hours in one of four national television networks—NBC, CBS, ABC, or the Public Broadcasting System. These four networks provide much of the programming broadcast over the affiliated stations. *Network* is really a poor term to describe these organizations, for one gets the impression that all the CBS stations, for example, are tightly tied together, and they are not. Most of them aren't owned by CBS, and they have the right to refuse any program CBS sends. The networks don't broadcast anything themselves. They primarily send programs through wires, to a local affiliated station, which then broadcasts them. So if there were not CBS affiliates we wouldn't see Walter Cronkite tonight despite the fact he might be reading the news "direct from the CBS newsroom in New York." The networks exist solely as programming units to provide television programs and other services that are then broadcast by the local station.

The local stations produce programming themselves. They usually have

news programs, sports, and perhaps a local interview show; they run movies and often broadcast church services on Sunday morning. In addition to taking programming from the network or producing it themselves, they can buy programs from another source—program syndicates, the third major element in the structure of the industry. Shows such as “Merv Griffin,” “Mike Douglas,” “Doctor in the House,” “Wild Kingdom,” and so forth are produced by organizations independent of both the networks and local stations. Local affiliated stations and the 100 or so stations that don’t have a network affiliation buy programs from these firms. The programs come to the station on videotape and are replayed on tape machines.

The two other major elements in the broadcast structures are really economic subgroups contained within the structure outlined above. The FCC has for years prohibited anyone from owning more than seven television stations, only five of which may be the more powerful VHF stations. All three networks each own seven stations. These are called O & O stations, owned and operated by the network. In addition, other entrepreneurs have purchased up to seven television stations to form station groups, much like newspaper chains. Examples are the Storer Stations, the Westinghouse Group, the RKO-General Stations, and so forth. The O & O stations and the station groups are important because they tend to be located in the nation’s largest cities like New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. Recently the FCC has tightened up its rules on the ownership of more than two stations in major markets, but this did nothing to affect the existing ownership patterns. CBS’ O & O stations, for example, can reach an audience of tens of millions of people each day. Organizations with such power can make a maximum impact on broadcasting.

In the end, the local station is probably the most important element in the structure of American broadcasting, for it has the final say over what will be seen on your television set each night. The local broadcaster is also responsible to the federal government for every word and picture he transmits. But the networks are also important because they provide the vast majority of all programming that is telecast. With this edge, plus their powerful owned and operated stations, the networks wield a powerful stick in deciding what we will see on the tube.

Today, programming syndicates and station groups are also influential, for they have access to vast numbers of viewers. A popular syndicated feature could displace a network program on many network affiliates as well as draw viewers away from network stations to watch the independent channels. If a station group were to announce that it would not carry a network series in lieu of a program it had developed itself or a syndicated program, this would significantly lower the ratings for the network show, and probably shorten its television life. Such is the struggle that goes on day in and day out in the higher councils of the television industry.

AN AMERICAN DREAM

Nicholas Johnson tells the story of a recurring dream that has plagued him during his years in working with broadcasters as a member of the Federal

One of the top-rated shows on TV, "All in the Family," brings a huge audience to CBS for more than just the 30 minutes the Bunker family are on. American TV viewers tend to be lazy and reluctant to get up and switch channels. Hence, a popular show usually increases the audience for the shows before and after it, whether they deserve it or not.



Communications Commission. Johnson's dream is about America's last day: the bomb has fallen. The last television station in the nation is running its 27th rerun of "I Love Lucy" when the station manager scurries across the studio floor, heading for the control room. To interrupt the program for a news bulletin? No, to put that last commercial on the air and into accounts receivable before his antenna tower finally melts and falls to the ground.

We have repeatedly stressed in this book the businesslike nature of the mass media. It is especially true of television. Sponsors have an incredible amount of pull at the networks and at local stations. If there is a comforting fact about this state of affairs it is this: things used to be even worse. We previously noted that in the early 1930s advertisers took control of radio, fashioning most of the prime-time programming. Although the advertiser was never involved to that extent in television programming, there was a period when the networks sought to sell entire programs to advertisers, who would then sponsor the show for the full season ("Chevrolet Brings You 'Bonanza,'" "Ford Presents 'The FBI'"). Advertisers even participated to a limited extent in program development. But in the mid-sixties this system began to distinegrate as the networks began to take a stronger hand in programming—not that they really wanted to (it is very comfortable to know that a newly developed program will have a sponsor for a year), but because they were forced to. Advertising on television—which sometimes runs as much as \$140,000 a prime-time minute now ("All in the Family")—got too costly. A single advertiser couldn't afford to take an entire show for thirty weeks. Often he didn't want to take the risk of tying himself up for an entire season with a show that could be a real loser.

It was ABC, which has always been the shrimp of the networks, that first cracked the dike. With fewer affiliates, ABC has not until very recently been able to command the vast audiences of its commercial rivals. NBC and CBS were able to find enough big advertisers to sell their programs; ABC was

not, so it began selling spots or time on an a la carte basis. And now this scheme predominates in all three commercial networks. The scatter plan, as it is called, permits the advertiser to buy time where he wants it, on the shows he wants, on the nights he wants. This offers several advantages to the adman. First, he can reach more television viewers. If Widgets sponsors "The Nurd Jones Show" week after week, the only people to hear the message will be Nurd Jones viewers. In a scatter plan the company can buy time on "The Nurd Jones Show" plus other shows as well and reach many more people, but not as often. For example, Proctor and Gamble buys time on as many as thirty to forty different shows each year.

The advertiser also averages his risks through the scatter plan. If Nurd Jones bombs, Widgets won't be stuck with sponsoring a loser all year. Finally, the plan lets the advertiser determine his advertising expenditures for the season more wisely. Nurd Jones is on every week, and a single sponsor would have to advertise every week. Through a scatter plan Widgets could skip a few weeks and run more spots just before Christmas when people buy more widgets.

The scatter plan has one advantage for the networks as well. Through a system of bartering, the advertiser who wants to buy time on the highest-rated shows can be forced into buying time on some losers as well. The sale of a minute for ten weeks on "All in the Family" might be contingent on the sponsor also buying a minute for ten weeks on "Barnaby Jones," which normally finds itself in the bottom half of the ratings. Thus although the way commercial time is sold has changed, the advertiser still has much control in programming decisions.

Because the advertiser likes to plan his advertising budget about six months in advance, the annual television schedules at the networks are usually finalized in February and the shows go on the selling blocks soon after. A few years ago, when advertisers decided they didn't like to buy time on the early evening kiddie shows, the networks moved all the kids' programs to Saturday morning. When the advertisers said they wanted more football on television a few years ago—well, you know what happened. From Saturday afternoon till Monday night—wall-to-wall football. So the advertiser is still the king, but his throne is a little lower than it used to be.

Giving advertisers what they want has paid off for television. It is a very lucrative business. Although it is hard to accept this assertion on blind faith, the author admits it is often difficult to document it in terms of a single station. The reason is that broadcasters work hard to hide their financial glories in masses of other irrelevant data. For example, RKO General, Inc., a subsidiary of General Tire and Rubber Company, is an important broadcast group that owns five television, six AM, and six FM stations. When someone inquires about how much money the company is making, the RKO General people whip out a financial statement that shows the firm only made a five percent profit (after taxes) last year. That isn't so hot. But the financial data include material on all the properties of the conglomerate—the seventeen media units, one radio and one television advertising firm, a sound studio, six Pepsi-Cola franchises, three hotels, a tape duplicating service, a television set leasing company, a Muzak franchise, and an electronics manufacturing company. It is impossible to tell from this statement exactly how

much the broadcasting operation made but it is fair to assume that it supports some of the other less lucrative ventures.

A few studies of the profitability of television have been made, however, and some data exist. Ron Powers and Jerrold Oppenheim, writing in the *Columbia Journalism Review* in 1972, concluded that, "Our study reveals that television stations and networks are robustly profitable institutions—the public breastbeating of their executives and public relations departments to the contrary. Even more dramatically profitable are station groups. . . ." Some of the data produced by Powers and Oppenheim reveal that where most industries maintain a profit margin of about six to seven percent, broadcast groups show profit margins of from 36 to 22 percent. One group, Capital Cities Broadcasters, had a profit margin of 47 percent in one recent year. The returns on sales for broadcasting stations in 15 large cities range from 47 to 30 percent. In 1970, which was a poor year according to most broadcasters, 82 percent of all VHF stations showed a profit and 83 percent of all network affiliates did the same. Only the UHF outlets were hurt, with only about one-third reporting a profit. Of the 420 stations in black ink, 19 reported \$5 million in profits before taxes and 123 others tallied more than a million dollars before taxes. In 1972, the three commercial networks and 690 commercial TV stations had \$3.18 billion in revenue—up 15.6 percent from 1971. Pre-tax profits were \$552 million, nearly 42 percent higher than in the previous year. In testimony given before Congress by specialists in media finances, it was reported that the average television station recovers its full investment twice over and earns a reasonable return to boot in three years. A British press lord, Roy Thomson, once referred to a broadcast license as a license to print money. And he wasn't far wrong for the VHF station in one of the top 40 or 50 markets in America. The networks tend to be equally lucrative, although again the financial picture of an insti-

For the big money that TV puts into professional football these days, it gets the right to call many of the shots. A network man on the sidelines will signal the referee if a time-out is needed for a commercial break, and sometimes, according to some coaches, these "TV time-outs" are called at a time that hurts one team or the other.



tution like CBS Television is buried in a jumble of bookkeeping for record companies, guitar manufacturing, book publishers, and other interests.

But all is not sweetness and light. There are some danger signs on the horizon, especially for the networks. Some people suspect that because escalating programming costs have forced up the price of advertising time that networks are in danger of pricing themselves out of the market. A look at pro football programming offers a good example. When television discovered the NFL two decades ago it was only a cut above the bush leagues. Salaries were tiny—hardly even salaries. Player benefits were nonexistent. Good college players could go out and make more money selling insurance than playing pro football. In 1956 CBS paid the fabled Green Bay Packers \$35,000 for the rights to televise all their games for the season. But while television was discovering football, the pros were discovering the golden goose—the TV network that was willing to pay a guaranteed income just to televise games the teams would play anyway. So the teams began to ask for more money each season for TV rights. And then everybody else got into the act. Players demanded better salaries—Donny Anderson signed with Green Bay for \$600,000 for three years. Team members wanted a pension fund as well. Since stadiums have a limited capacity and the fans will only pay so much for a seat, most of the money needed to meet player demands (plus higher profits for the owners) had to come from television. In the early 1970s each of the sixteen teams in the National Football Conference—the old NFL—got \$1.5 million for television rights for a single season. That's quite a bit more than \$35,000.

The networks aren't philanthropies, so they passed this cost along to the advertisers, who initially were all too willing to pay the bill. But lately things have been changing. One-minute spots on CBS Sunday football were going for \$70,000 a minute in 1972. For \$46,000, the average cost of a prime-time minute on a weeknight evening, the advertiser can reach twice as many people. So we find NBC losing \$1.5 million on its telecast of the Super Bowl in 1969 and ABC, which sank \$13 million into television rights and production costs for the 1972 Summer Games, losing money on the Olympics. And we even find NBC having trouble selling the good old World Series. The same kind of problem exist in other aspects of television programming as well.

But increasing costs are only one problem. In 1972 we saw the television networks facing these additional problems:

- A cigarette ad ban that cost the networks about \$200 million in revenues
- The prime-time rule limiting the amount of network programming a local station could broadcast that cost the webs \$170 million
- Tremendous agitation to cut or wipe out commercial advertising in the kiddie corner on Saturday morning (next to soap operas and the "Tonight" show, this is the most lucrative aspect of broadcasting)
- Political advertising being limited and facing the threat of being stopped altogether
- President Nixon joining the Hollywood craft unions in calling for fewer reruns (running a show twice is often the only way a network can get its money out of it)

- Many stations being faced with costly license renewal battles
- The FCC ruling that networks could not own cable television systems and limiting their ownership of radio and television stations in a single market to one station
- The FCC also forbidding the networks to syndicate reruns of their old programs (they must sell them outright now)
- The advertiser getting mad about the number of spots on television

These factors, coupled with a growing audience for the public network and television's poor image in many viewer's eyes (*vide* the Lou Harris poll) prompted sleepless nights for many broadcasting executives. When one vice president quit NBC he predicted that the networks would be nonexistent by 1980.

But don't sell your CBS stock yet. With all the troubles ahead the networks will undoubtedly survive—at least during our lifetime. A peak of growth was hit in the early seventies. (After a peak comes a recession, and then a plateau.) The broadcasters would like nothing better than to create the image that they are dead broke. It would be a good excuse to avoid some of the public service duties the government has been insisting on of late. At present at least, such a financial state is only a well-conceived image.

THE OLD PRE-EMPTION GAME, OR WHY CAROL BURNETT IS ON AT 11 A.M. ON SATURDAYS IN MILWAUKEE

Whether or not a television show gets on the air—especially a continuing show, a series—is largely a matter of economics. Network programs have many hurdles to leap before being sent out over the wire. But even if a show is broadcast there is no guarantee that we will have a chance to watch it. The local station is given the option of accepting or rejecting the program. An affiliate that accepts ninety percent or more of the network programming is given high marks. One that accepts eighty percent or less is considered poor by the network. Every time a local station cuts a program it reduces the program's national audience, lowers its ratings, and lowers the price the network can charge for spots on the show. If a great many stations reject a show (as was the case with "The Monkees" program a few years ago) it can kill it. So networks will pressure affiliates to accept as much programming as possible. If the percentage gets too low the network may decide to shop around for another affiliate in the market.

The decision at the local station is often guided by economics. And to understand this we need a short lesson in how a station gets paid. What follows is clearly an oversimplification, but it will serve our purpose.

Our station, KOMM, is affiliated with the GBS (the Great Broadcasting System), which on Tuesday nights at 8 P.M. sends out a program called "The Divorce Game." Many people erroneously believe that the local station must pay the network for the programming. Not so. The network pays the local station for carrying the show. The station receives from the web between ten and fifteen percent of what it would charge advertisers for the same time slot. In a major city a television station can sell time at about \$200

per rating point. So if "The Divorce Game" carried a rating of 20, the station's income for carrying it from the network (*off the line*, it is called) would be figured this way: 20 times \$200 is \$4,000 per minute, times three (three spots in the thirty-minute show) equals \$12,000, divided by ten percent. The station would get about \$1,200 just for carrying the half-hour program. Plus it could sell ads itself on the hour and half-hour at the full rate. Sounds like a good deal.

But let's look at the other options. The station could produce a live program on its own, maybe a thirty-minute teleplay or a variety show, rather than carry "The Divorce Game." It could sell time in this program at the full rate, \$200 per minute per rating point. But costs are high for local production. You could figure on spending about \$25,000 per week for a half-hour show, or \$5,000 per night. Let's figure cost on that basis.

"The Divorce Game" has a rating of 20, but it is unusual for a local show to have a rating of more than 10. Ten times \$200 is \$2,000 per minute, for three minutes is \$6,000 per night. When you deduct the \$5,000 production cost, you can see the profit is lower even before we subtract items like the fifteen percent the advertising agency takes and the eleven percent the station's advertising representative pockets. It is financially smarter to carry the network show unless you can be assured of a very high local rating.

But there is one other option. The station could pre-empt "The Divorce Game," but rather than producing its own programming buy something like a syndicated show or a movie to fill the time with. The initial costs of running especially a high-quality movie are not much lower than the expense involved in local production. But the movie runs two hours—thus cost is spread out. And it can be reshowed (and reshowed) and then resold. Finally, the movie is certain to get a larger audience. But even with a ten rating the station could take in \$24,000 for the two hours (minus the ad agency and station rep's cut, but not counting the extra two minutes that can be sold in the hour). This is far more profitable than taking programming off the line, which might produce \$6,000 in revenue over the same two-hour period, or producing your own show, which might lose money.

It is a sad state of affairs, but the fact that the audience in Milwaukee might like to see "Mannix" or "Medical Center" or "The Carol Burnett Show" at the time it is carried by the network is usually unimportant if the broadcaster sees the opportunity to make more money pre-empting it. Often the program will be cut completely and will never be shown in the local area. Other times it will be rescheduled to Saturday or Sunday or after the 11 P.M. news. *Variety* television critic Les Brown once wrote that broadcasters are one part conscience and nine parts profit motive. While this might be a harsh judgment, the broadcaster tends to reinforce this image each time he capriciously restructures the network programming schedule to show reruns or aging movies he has bought just to increase his profits. Few would complain if he pre-empted network feeds to present "quality" programming such as local public affairs shows and programs designed to meet community concerns. But this is rarely the case.

Economics is a basic part of broadcasting; television is a business. And

there is nothing inherently wrong with that. But the broadcaster has a responsibility the noodlemaker or widget manufacturer doesn't share, for he profits from the use of a valuable and limited natural resource—the public airwaves. Ed Murrow observed in the mid-fifties that networks and television stations should not have to operate as philanthropies. "But I can find nothing in the Bill of Rights," he added, "or the Communications Act which says they must increase their net profits each year lest the Republic collapse."

WHAT YOU GET IS WHAT YOU SEE

While the man in the local station is the final authority on what you will see on television, the programming that comes into his station each day has already been passed through numerous other "gates." A finished television program is not the result of any single man or even group of men. Although an author has command of his book and a painter can dictate what will be displayed on his canvas, a television writer or producer must deal with scores of other individuals, all of whom are employed by someone to make certain that what finally appears on the screen meets certain standards. "Programs on any level," Professor Richard Stonesifer has written, "do not arrive before us by some electronic immaculate birth, spring like Venus full-blown from the swirling seas. . . . A finished television program is the result of a series of accommodations—and compromises."

The commercial nature of the beast, the cause of most of the criticism of TV, prompts most compromises as well. The medicine-show nature of the medium, in which programming acts as the snake charmer or dancing girl to bring in the crowds to listen to the medicine man's pitch, establishes basic programming limitations. The more attractive the dancer, the more daring the snake charmer, the bigger the crowd. But any snake charmer or any dancer will bring in some people. The mere fact that there is a show in town always generates a crowd. And this is a crucial factor in program selection. *Variety's* Les Brown quotes one broadcasting executive as saying, "We don't pick shows we think will have the best chance of being popular. We're attracted to those that have the least chance of failing." Roll that around in your mind a bit and you will see there is a significant difference between the two standards.

It is legitimate for the advertiser to ask how many people he is buying when he takes thirty seconds on "All in the Family." How does the broadcaster know how much to charge? In a grocery store there is a scale; we can weigh the hamburger. If we are selling lumber we can measure how many board feet the customer is purchasing. But with people, well, we have to count them. Now there are probably lots of systems that could be used. Everybody watching "All in the Family" could raise a white flag over his home and the networks or advertisers could hire a fleet of planes to fly around the country and count flags. But that wouldn't be very practical. Yet a system somewhat like this—the infamous rating system—is what is used. Let's take a look at this much maligned system of counting people.

THE RATINGS

Although we may not like it, we can't deny the fact that ratings do influence what we see on television. And some form of rating will probably always exist. An advertiser is not going to spend millions of dollars on television time without knowing what he is buying or, more accurately, how many people he is buying. Newspapers, whose television columnists tend to be highly critical of ratings, use a similar system. Circulation figures reveal to the advertiser how many members of the audience he is buying when he purchases a quarter page in the *Daily Bugle*. Because there is so little competition between newspapers today (although nothing like the fierce competition among the three commercial television networks), the ratings newspapers use don't seem so onerous. But in the days of circulation wars, publishers and editors used every scheme they could to attract an audience and hence increase their ratings.

The ratings used by television are not inherently evil themselves. It is how the medium uses them that most people find objectionable. If a broadcaster selected programming on the basis of its merit and then used the rating system to count the viewers' heads so he would know how much to charge the advertiser, few people would complain. But broadcasters don't do that. They program to build audiences so they can charge high advertising rates. Ratings are then used either as hatchets to cut off shows that don't pull a massive audience or as kinds of divining rods to tell the broadcaster what kind of program will bring in the largest audience, so he can duplicate it (or triplicate it) next season. Ratings, for all their weaknesses, have taken a bum rap as the villain in television. The real scoundrel is the man who programs to build high ratings. That is where the denominator (and it's usually pretty low) is set in the equation. Remember, broadcasters seek programs that won't fail, not those that will succeed.

What are the ratings? They are not popularity contests. The show that gets the highest rating each month or week is not necessarily the most popular show on television. The ratings are merely a reflection of viewer preference for one program over the other shows that are being broadcast at the same time. Let's say there are three channels in your town and three programs are on at the same time. When "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" gets a very high rating, all it means is that people preferred that show over the other two programs that were being broadcast at the same time. It doesn't tell how popular the show might be if it were pitted against a fourth show or broadcast at a different hour.

If this suggests to you that the success of a television program may depend upon when it is on and what its competition is, you are dead right. Some programs, like the legendary "Dick Van Dyke Show" (the first one), the "Man from U.N.C.L.E.," "Bonanza," and "Hawaii Five-O" were dying until they got a time change that moved them up against weaker competition. Other shows, like "Marcus Welby, M.D." won high ratings primarily because of the programs broadcast at the same time. Initially, "Welby" was up against the CBS News Hour and NBC public affairs specials every week—weak competition in entertainment-oriented America. Some movies

While the fame of most TV shows is fleeting—American audiences are terribly fickle—“Gunsmoke” has remained a popular program for nearly two decades. First on radio with William Conrad (“Cannon”) as Matt Dillon, and then on TV, the show’s cast has remained virtually intact with the exception of the departure of Dennis Weaver as Chester and the recent retirement of Amanda Blake as Kitty. This picture is from an early episode in the series. Jim Arness’s brother is Peter Graves, “Jim Phelps” of “Mission: Impossible.”



have gained fantastic ratings when they were programmed against unpopular shows. “Gidget Goes Hawaiian,” one of the worst movies ever made, ranks as one of the highest-rated movies ever shown on television. The night the beach party romp was shown on CBS, both NBC and ABC were broadcasting nondescript documentaries. Also, a very popular program can increase the ratings of programs that precede it and follow it on the same channel. American viewers don’t like to get up and change the channel.

There are many ratings firms in America, but the two biggest are the A.C. Nielsen Company and the American Research Bureau (ARB). The Nielsen ratings are the most important, so we will concentrate on those. This company selects a sample of homes—1,200 to be exact—that represent the viewing habits in sixty million-plus American households. Two common criticisms of the ratings are that the sample is too small and that sampling doesn’t really work. But most experts agree that it is plenty big—you could probably sample effectively with as few as 400 properly selected households. And time and again sampling has been proven to be an accurate means of determining attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of large groups. No, if proper procedures are used, the sampling technique is not the problem in the Nielsen ratings.

The Nielsen Company attaches a tiny 16-mm. film unit (audimeter) to the television set in the sample home; it indicates when the set is on and to

what channel it is tuned. This gadget is the major difference between the Nielsen method and its competitors. ARB, for example, tends to rely primarily on asking people what they are watching or what they watched, but respondents have been known to fib when asked what they are watching.

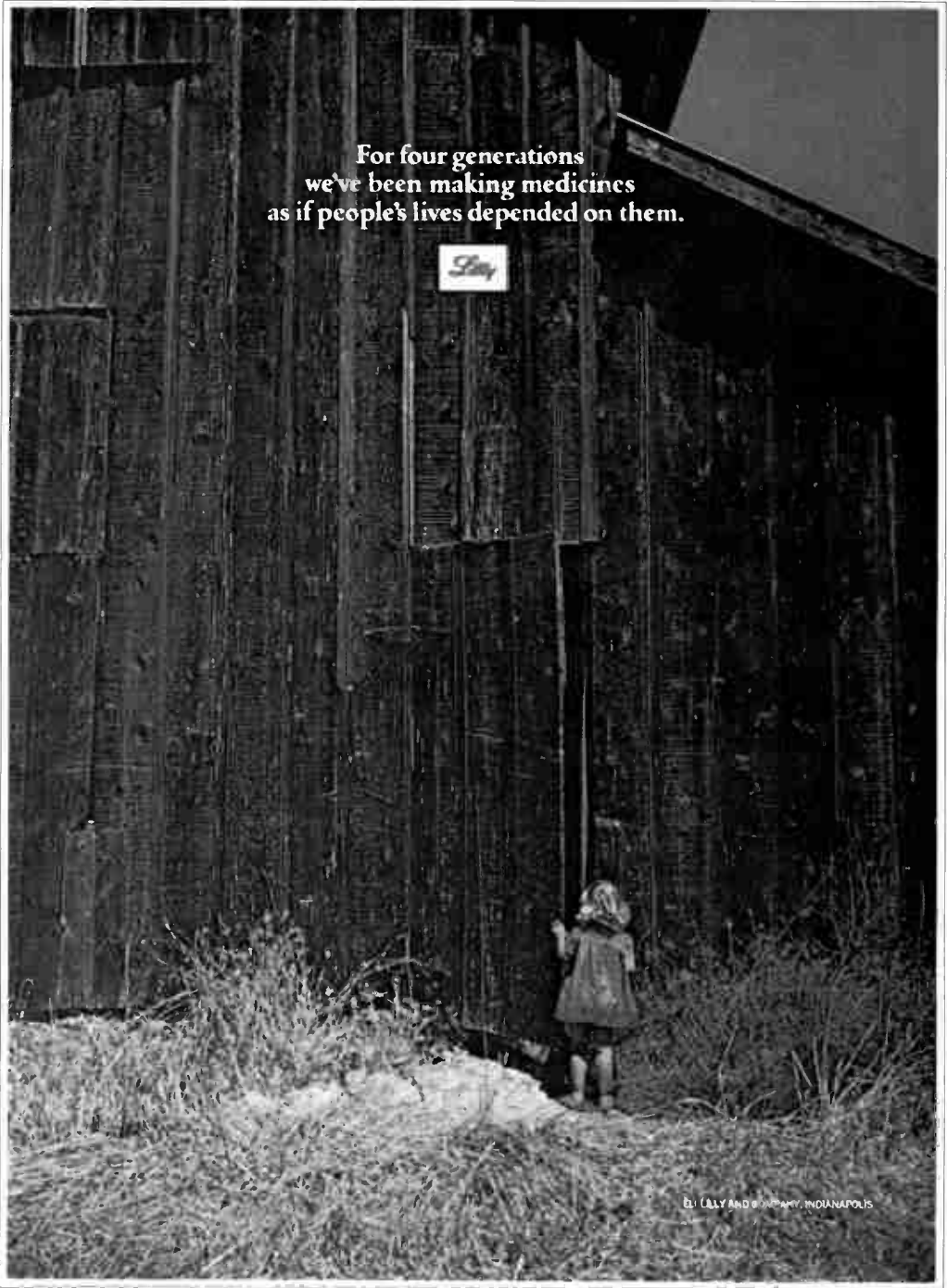
Nielsen also supplements its audimeters with diaries. These are placed in 2200 homes, and each week viewers in 550 homes (one-quarter of the sample) submit a detailed outline of the week's viewing—what programs were watched, by channel and name; number of persons viewing the show, and age and sex of each. The diaries are used by Nielsen to thwart the major criticism of the audimeter system—that the device tells when a set is on but not if anyone is watching it. This criticism was given credence when in testimony before Congress one viewer in Nielsen's sample admitted she often turned the set on to entertain her dog, that she wasn't watching it but the animal was. In this case that dog represented more than 500,000 viewing homes.

From the data Nielsen gathers each week two kinds of head counts are produced. The first is the program rating—the number of sets tuned to a particular show in relation to the sixty million television households in America. A rating of 17 in prime time is satisfactory. This means that the sets in 17 percent of all homes equipped with television were tuned to that show. That's more than 10 million homes, and if you multiply that number by 2.3 (the average number of people in a television home) you get the estimated audience size.

But the "rating" is secondary to "audience share," the second head count. The share is the *percentage of sets in use* that are tuned to a particular show. The broadcaster hopes to get at least one-third of all viewers for his show, or a 33 percent share. Above 35 percent is a great rating. Below 30 a show can get into trouble. Below 25 and it's doomsday. But you can see from this why so many people can get upset when a show goes off. Even a show with a 10 rating has about 14 million viewers. A novel can be a bestseller if only 50,000 copies are sold; a play that packs 1,000 people into a theater nightly is a hit; if five million people see a movie it is successful. But the measure of success is much higher in TV—you must please 20 to 25 million people. Television writer-producer Bruce Geller ("Mannix" and "Mission Impossible") said: "It's perfectly possible to write beautiful plays for a mass audience. But that doesn't mean one can write a beautiful play that will be simultaneously appreciated by 50,000,000."

Nielsen audimeter data are called *home data*. ARB and Nielsen diary data are called *people data*. And today the latter is becoming more important than the former. More and more advertisers want to know not only how many are watching but *who* is watching—how old, what sex, what education and income. A person's socioeconomic profile has a good deal to do with how much more he or she will spend. Young people with a high income are the best consumers. Children, older people (over 49), and poor people all tend to buy less. (But they watch more TV.) It is obvious why wealthier people buy more: they have more money. But why young people? One answer provided by Lieberman Research, Inc., is that younger people receive the advertising pitch better. They are more gullible, they absorb

For four generations
we've been making medicines
as if people's lives depended on them.



ELI LILLY AND COMPANY, INDIANAPOLIS

Courtesy of Eli Lilly and Company

While hard-sell advertising is still common, many manufacturers have instead chosen a different, softer approach to attract the busy reader. This is a good example of that idea.



Across Puget Sound and back for \$1.50

It's the five-hour special excursion fare for foot passengers.

Good on any ferry on the Seattle-Bremerton or Seattle-Winslow routes. Round trip for \$1.50, take the kids for 75¢. Just reboard within five hours or less.

Your trip begins at Seattle's waterfront. Pike Place Market. Clam chowder. An international pleasure fair. Then you're off to Bremerton to see the battleship *Missouri*. Or ride the new jumbo ferry SPOKANE to Winslow on Bainbridge Island.

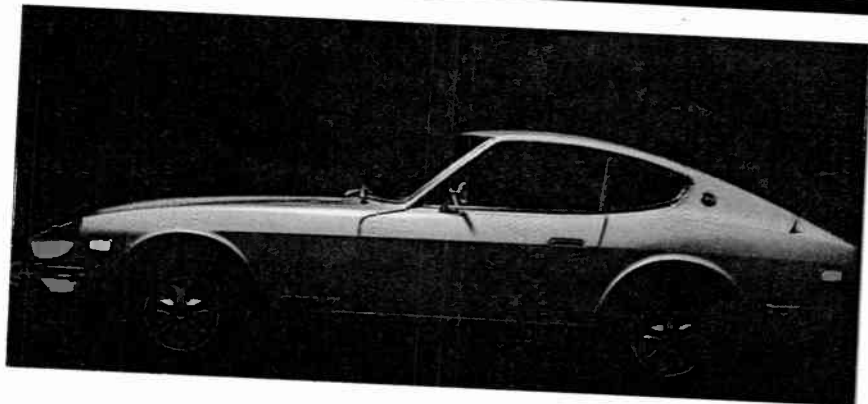
All aboard.

**Washington State
Ferries**

Seattle Ferry Terminal
Seattle, Washington 98104

One of the most successful regional magazines is *Sunset*, "the magazine of western living." Its regional character and distribution allows advertisers like the Washington State Ferry system to purchase economically a full page for a message primarily of interest to those in the Pacific Northwest. A full page in a national mass circulation magazine would cost the advertiser more than it would be worth, since so many readers could never have access to the product.

A far cry from "Somewhere West of Laramie," this ad for Datsun is nevertheless aiming to appeal to the same emotions of readers—the romance of owning an attractive automobile. The understated and low-profile approach of the car-maker is a popular mode in contemporary advertising.



The Sensuous Car by "D"

If you knew cars before your alphabet. If the Paris Auto Show is more important than the Rose Bowl. If you take two parking slots because you're paranoid about dings. If you enjoy getting where you're going rather than arriving there.

If this is the way you are, our machine is lovingly designed for you. It's not just a car, because a car performs ordinary functions, like a refrigerator or washing machine. Rather, 240-Z is a gran turismo automobile, designed and built by gentlemen to whom an automobile is a work of enduring art.

Another word about 240-Z. It is not a plaything of the idle rich. It is not painstakingly handcrafted over a period of months, which as you know can result in ill-fitting parts and high costs. What it is, however, is a mass-produced automobile of exceptionally high quality. The best of two apparently contradictory worlds: affordable price and mystique... a Datsun Original. **Drive a Datsun, then decide.**



High Noon

At a time like this, you probably don't care that we spend extra weeks aging and fermenting our beer. Or that we personally select our hops. Or use only pure artesian brewing water. But you'd taste the difference if we didn't. So we do. Olympia. It's the Water. And a lot more.

Many people think the best thing about TV is the advertising. Millions of dollars are spent each year just to create the commercials we watch on TV. Olympia's "It's the Water" TV campaign is one of the ads people generally say nice things about.

Marlboro



Features Marlboro Red,
Marlboro World Class,
Marlboro 100's,
Marlboro Lights.

You get a lot to like in Marlboro Country.



Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking is Dangerous to Your Health.

© 1997 Philip Morris Inc.
Tobacco products are addictive. They may harm you.
This is a pay per view advertisement. © Philip Morris Inc.

Government restricts advertising in a great many ways. One of them is apparent in this ad—the Surgeon General’s warning. This ad and the others of its family attempted to portray an image of the Marlboro man—a rugged outdoorsman. This advertising campaign was one of America’s most successful.

The American forest still belongs to the American people.

1225 public and private forestland and suitable for commercial trees.
 19% owned by the public and governmental agencies.



And to a *lot* of people. To begin with, four million individual Americans own 39% of the entire forest—a forest that's still nearly three-fourths as large as it was when Columbus landed.

Then, too, *everybody* shares ownership in that 19% of the forest owned by federal and state governments which supplies so much of the raw material for building our houses and cities and making our paper products.

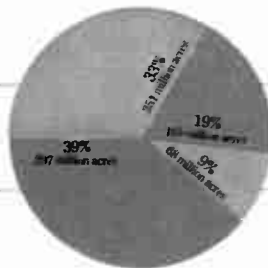
And when you add the 17 million acres of forestland that's been set aside for parks and wilderness areas, and the government land not suitable for growing commercial trees, the American people—individually or collectively—own 91% of America's 753 million acres of forest.


So if the forest industries seem

to own more than their 9%, it's probably because with responsible, scientific management they've been able to make this 9% produce 26% of all the raw material we need for today's wood and paper products, and still keep America green and growing.

Source: Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service

For the whole story on America's forest today, get "Forests USA"
 For your copy of this full color, 16 page booklet,
 send 25¢ to AF, P.O. Box 963, Arlington, Virginia 22216.

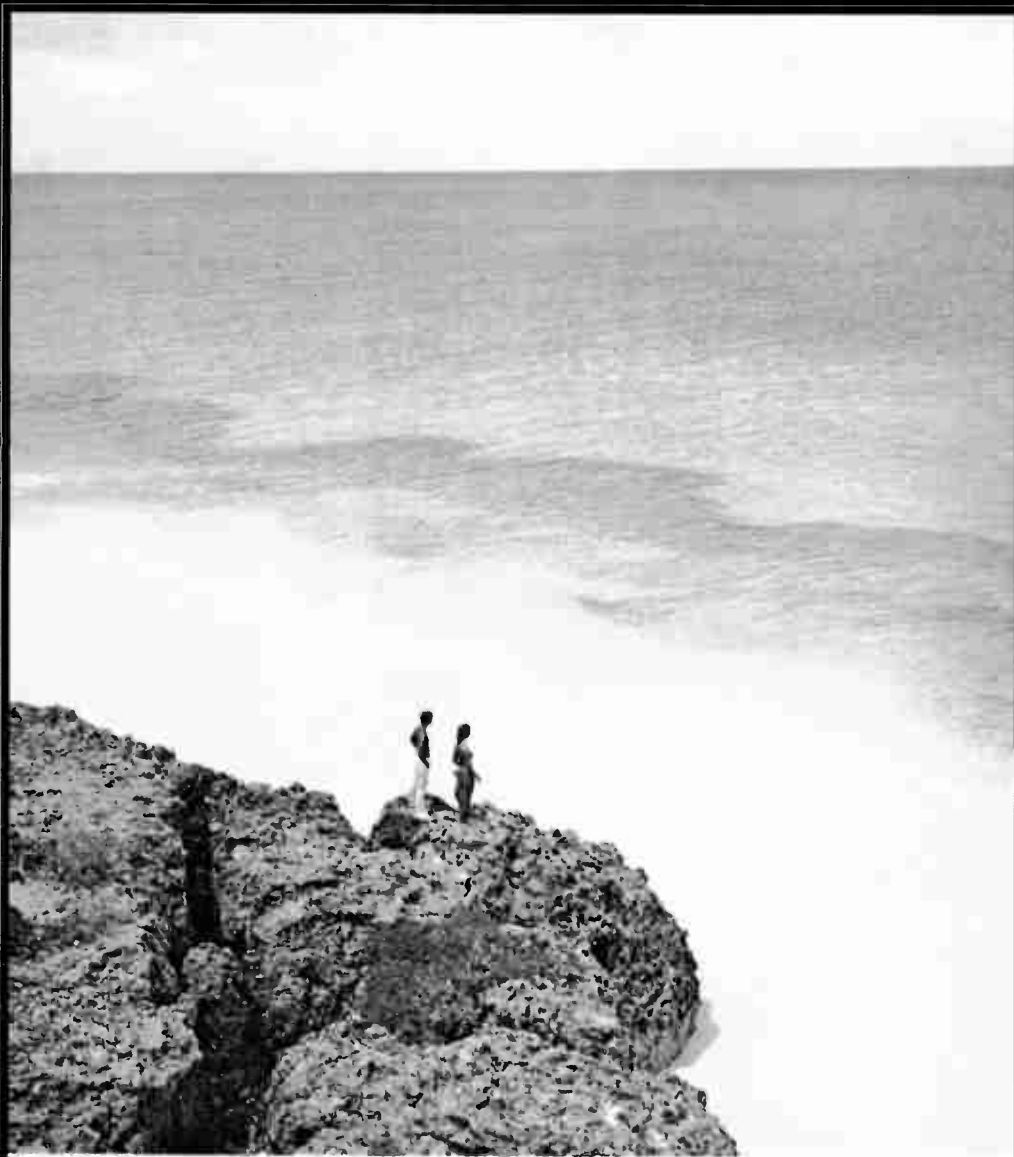


Name _____	
Address _____	
City _____	
State _____	Zip _____
 American Forest Institute	



In addition to flooding newsrooms with press releases, many industries use advertising to tell their story to the American public. The American lumber and forest products industry designed this campaign to counter attacks by environmentalists that the woodsman were raping the forests of the nation. This is one means someone with an idea has to gain access to a medium—buy space. But it is an expensive means that few can afford.

This ad appeared only in magazines with special audiences, such as *Harpers*, in order to reach the targets of its campaign. The general audiences of massive magazines, such as *Reader's Digest*, would probably not be interested in a Bahama vacation.



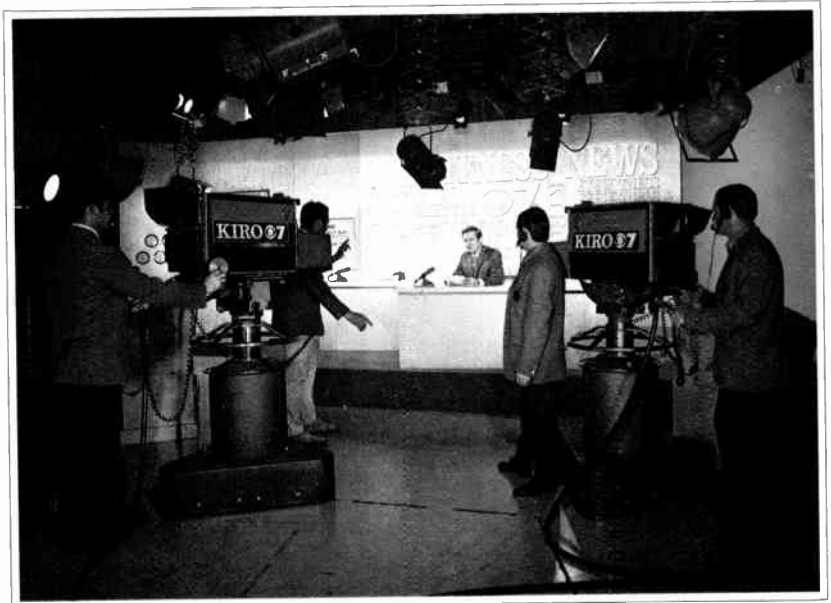
Come to Exuma. You'll never leave and always come back. Unforgettable is the only word that tells you something about Exuma: Emerald cays; in water so clear you can see the ocean floor in depths of 60 feet. A golden sea garden that stretches for 22 magnificent miles. Spectacular caves on Compass Cay and Staniel Cay. Exquisite Stinking Island. Beautiful Elizabeth Harbour. Bonefishing flats to the horizon. Cracked conch at the "Three Sisters" Goombay at the "Flamingo, Fin and Feather." Salt beds; and sisal palms. And comfortable accommodation. See your travel agent or write for our "Exuma" brochure. Bahama Islands Tourist Office, 200 Southeast First Street, Miami, Florida 33131.

Bahama Out Islands. Not out of the way. Just out of this world.

This modern radio studio is a far cry from the early rigs that Doc Herrold used to broadcast to Bay Area residents in the early part of the century. The modern DJ must be facile and able to keep lots of different things going at the same time.



A TV broadcast is a complex and complicated affair, involving many more people than those you see on camera. The cumbersome nature of broadcasting equipment has long been an impediment to flexibility, but today miniaturization is making TV a more portable medium.



advertising messages more readily, and they are more likely to try different brands and learn about and use newer products.

The name of this people game is called *demographics* and any good media buyer at an ad agency can tell you, for example, that children and older people are the most prominent television viewers on Friday and Saturday nights, that women are heavy viewers on Monday night, and that Sunday tends to be family night. He or she could also tell you that people over 50 watch more television than most other people and that people under 35 watch less. Television programming today is being keyed more to buyers than to viewers. "Star Trek", for example, never had a huge audience. But its relatively small audience of younger, wealthier people kept it on the air for as long as it stayed. Conversely, a couple of years ago CBS cut some of its most popular shows from its lineup—"Beverly Hillbillies," "The Red Skelton Show," and "The Ed Sullivan Show"—because they appealed to older or rural people, neither of whom are good buyers.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE RATINGS?

The ratings are vulnerable to criticism on two fronts. First (and Nielsen and ARB and others can take this rap), they have technical weaknesses. For example, you have to watch television to be a Nielsen home. Yet many people don't watch television so the sample is skewed to TV viewers. In fact, many contend that Nielsen has a 50 percent refusal rate in seeking names for his sample. For years Nielsen excluded blacks from the sample—he said he couldn't get cooperation in placing audimeters in black homes. More than likely, advertisers weren't interested in blacks as a consumer group. We have noted the criticism that just because a set is on doesn't mean it is being watched. The Nielsen diaries are supposed to protect against this kind of error, but they have other weaknesses. People might not fill them in until the end of the week and then might not remember what they watched. They also might not tell the truth or might be embarrassed to report they watched a certain program.

The other criticism is more functional and should be aimed at the broadcaster who uses the ratings to program television for mass tastes. Whenever you attempt to please everyone, or nearly everyone, you usually wind up really pleasing no one. What you produce is something a lot of people will watch, something that is acceptable to a great number but really pleases no one, something that won't fail, but really never succeeds. Jack Gould, former television critic for the *New York Times*, argues logically that public taste might better be expressed if the broadcaster took a leadership role and offered a wide variety of items. Gould writes:

I recall no survey, for example, that said that Shaw's *Pygmalion* should be turned into the musical *My Fair Lady*, and that it would be a great success and that it would delight millions. No, Lerner and Loewe and the rest of them had an idea and they had enough faith in their own judgment to go out and try it and it was successful. . . . I think here is basically the weakness of the leadership in broadcasting; they're not really putting out the kind of network programs they would like to put

out. They're just putting out what is economically feasible. . . . As of now the leaders of the industry have virtually abandoned the field of entertainment.

Television executives can argue that they are giving people what they want; just look at the ratings. But are they? The ratings indicate merely what is most popular of what is offered; they do not necessarily indicate anyone's true preference. People probably really don't know what they want because they are unaware of the vast number of possibilities. And even if they did know, how could they articulate these desires? Write letters? Even the 115,000 letters that flooded NBC protesting the network's plan to cancel "Star Trek" numerically represented far less than one-half of one Nielsen rating point. The trend toward demographics in counting could bring about small but important changes in television. For in those few instances in which the surveyor has asked "Who is watching?" it was revealed that "buyers" tend to like better quality TV, public affairs, and drama.

No one can expect a businessman to buy television time blindly. You and I wouldn't spend our money that way. (For example: here is a sack of apples. It costs \$1. But I won't tell you how many apples are in the bag.) At the same time, however, we can deplore the use of these head counts to program television. We should expect broadcasters to lead in developing our cultural tastes and interests, not follow, seeking the programming dimensions that the most people will tolerate.

BEYOND THE RATINGS

The rampant commercialism in TV, signaled by the reliance on the ratings for television programming, has led broadcasters and advertisers to some wretched excesses in program planning. The man who makes out the schedule each year does so with the aid of a special ingredient—fear. Failure to reap high ratings almost assuredly means movement downward on the corporate ladder. So with visions of people pies and audience shares in their heads, programmers at the networks seek guidelines and formulas to increase job security.

In his book *Televi\$ion, the Business Behind the Box*, Les Brown lists other factors or guidelines or rules used in program selection. The networks rarely deal with amateurs, for example. It takes a professional to bring in a program on time and within budget. And if the "pro" has a good track record—that is, has had other hit shows like Bruce Geller, Jack Webb ("Dragnet," "Emergency," "Adam-12"), Quinn Martin ("Twelve O'Clock High," "The FBI," "Cannon"), or Sheldon Leonard ("Make Room for Daddy," "That Girl," "The Dick Van Dyke Show"), so much the better.

A new show should look slick to make up for any lack of substance. It should have a series concept (suggest an endless stream of episodes). Some good shows, like "Gentle Ben," have died because they really weren't series. ("How many things can a kid do with a bear?"). Some bad shows, like "The Shirley McLaine Show" and "The Jimmy Stewart Show," for example,

Jack Webb is not only an actor, he is also a TV producer with a history of success. From his original "Dragnet" series in 1952, pictured here, to contemporary highly rated shows like "Adam-12" and "Emergency," Webb seems to have the ability to capture the public taste when it comes to drama about police, firemen, or other public officers.



NBC Photo

have also died for lack of a series formula. A continuing element is needed, something to appeal to people week after week.

Programmers want new shows that will get an audience in the first week or so—shows that start out strong. If they miss the early audience, chances are that viewing patterns will be set by the third or fourth week of the season. A new TV show should also be easy to like, Brown says, with heroes and heroines who are not complex, but easy to understand. Villains should be easily identifiable. Finally, the *Variety* critic asserts that a successful new show will suggest newness but will really be familiar—maybe a standard plot device in a different setting. "My Three Sons" was successful: a widowed father raising three boys. The same formula in Rome with widowed father raising girls: "To Rome with Love." Make it a mother and move it to Cape Cod and add a ghost: "The Ghost and Mrs. Muir." Move it out West: call it "Bonanza." Add music: "The Partridge Family." Change parent to uncle and add butler and you have "Family Affair." Take widowed mother with children and widowed father with children, put them together: "The Brady Bunch." Following these rules doesn't necessarily insure success, but it makes program planning a good deal safer.

Survival of a television show depends upon maintaining a respectable audience share, or having good "circulation," as it is now called. Some shows are cancelled before they go on the air. An ill-fated hay burner of a few years ago entitled "Dundee and the Culhane" was programmed as a result of a strong pilot film. But after viewing the first episodes of the program before they went on the air, network programmers decided it would be a bomb. The show was cancelled in September, although the episodes already produced were broadcast.

The cost of a show also has a great deal to do with its survival. Cheapies like quiz and game shows can survive despite the bad ratings. "The Dating Game" and "The Newlywed Game" were good examples of this. They cost only about \$20,000 to produce, whereas the average half-hour series could run as high as \$100,000 or more weekly. What about critical reviews? These are rarely a factor. A show with high rating and poor critical reviews will last. The networks will attempt to salvage a program with poor ratings but high critical reviews (such as "My World and Welcome to It," or "He and She") with a time change or heavy promotion. But if the ratings aren't up by February, goodbye. Bad reviews, bad ratings—well. . . .

In a system of commercial television like ours, the advertiser has a major role in dictating—often indirectly—what appears on the screen. Most advertisers want programs with a large audience, programs that will not offend, those that often appeal to the lesser instincts in man. In this sense, the sponsor clearly hinders the development and refinement of television. But by the same token under our system it is the sponsor and all that is good and bad about him that assures the survival of the medium.

GOVERNMENT PRESSURES

While the commercial basis of television remains the single most influential factor in determining what will or will not appear on the screen each day, other pressures exist as well. Broadcasting is the only medium that works under direct government control on a day-to-day basis. It is regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. Although the FCC will be discussed in far greater detail in chapter nine, one aspect of federal regulation has such a direct bearing on programming that it needs to be noted at this point.

In the late 1960s many television programming syndicates began making noises about the network monopoly in prime-time programming. (Prime television time are those hours between about 7:30 P.M. and 11 P.M.) The syndicate bosses, especially the people at Westinghouse, complained loudly that because the networks programmed solidly between 7:30 and 11 P.M. each night, the independent producer had no opportunity to sell his programs directly to the local broadcaster for prime-time showing. The syndicates finally won a hearing before the FCC and ultimately won their case. In its prime-time rule, the commission limited network prime-time programming to three hours each evening.

Why was such a ruling made? Well, to the FCC, the local broadcaster had been under the thumb of the powerful and greedy networks for years. Now he would have an extra half hour each night for his own programming. Given this opportunity, the local station would fill this thirty minutes with meaningful public affairs programming, local forums, sparkling variety shows, or purchase bright and innovative programming from the syndicates that raised the issue in the first place.

But that's not exactly what happened. What ensued instead was a minor disaster born out of the commission's mistaken belief that everything wrong with television was the network's fault. The first season, most affiliates filled

the extra half hour with reruns of old network programs. The few syndicated shows that were produced were for the most part half-baked and ill-conceived. In the second season when the FCC forbade use of reruns during the thirty minutes, the stock of syndicated programs ran even thinner. Rare was the station that attempted to use the time for local programming other than showing travelogues or presenting bland "news interview" shows filled with talking heads. Those stations that did do creative things were the same ones that had always done creative things.

Not only didn't the prime-time rule have any positive effects, it had several negative ones. For one thing, it challenged the networks to make their annual bundle of profits in three hours each night rather than in three and a half. Everything that wasn't a sure money-maker went out the door. In the first season prime-time news specials were at an all-time low. The weekly CBS news and public affairs hour on Tuesday night was shuttled to the Sunday afternoon ghetto to be pre-empted half the year by football games. The ruling also killed the remote chance that the networks would expand their thirty minutes of nightly news to an hour. The strongest argument for this proposal—which had been haunting the network halls for several years—was that an hour news show from 6:30 to 7:30 would be a good lead-in for the rest of the evening programming. But with the locals taking over the 7:30 to 8 P.M. slot, the idea lost even that limited appeal.

Few people outside the independent programming syndicates thought the rule was a good idea even before it went into effect. The networks stood to lose a bundle of money. Local stations had no desire to invest in local programming; it might cost them money. If they wanted to do that, they could have done it without the rule. And of course, no one consulted the viewer. In the spring of 1974 the FCC modified the rule, giving networks back the 7 to 8 slot on Saturdays and Sundays and the 7–7:30 period on week nights. But both the webs and their affiliates seem adjusted to the change, and the fall TV schedules indicated that the networks were only claiming the extra hour on Sundays.

Once burned—well, that usually does the trick for most people. But not for the federal government. In 1972 the Justice Department announced that it was going to bring action against the networks for monopolization of television programming. The heart of the suit was an antitrust action, an attempt by the government to decentralize programming and get advertisers and small independent television producers back in production. Wresting program control away from the sponsors was one of the monumental achievements of the last quarter century. Now the government wanted to give it back. Independent television producers were forced to seek network support for their efforts because of high production costs. (An antitrust suit will do nothing to lower production costs.) Even to the most hardened critics of television, it was fairly clear that massive antitrust action was not the solution to the programming problems that plague the industry.

Although direct government pressure on the media is not common, special interest groups frequently use the federal agencies as a sounding board to bring pressure to bear on television in support of one cause or



Television has always sought to capture the young audience, and one of its earliest attempts centered around this smiling puppet named Howdy Doody, and his pal, Buffalo Bob. The show was innocuous but harmless. And in the rush toward capturing the nostalgic fifties, Bob Smith has become a campus hero of the seventies. Can Clarabell be far behind?

NBC Photo

another. And this problem deserves some attention if only because it is happening more and more in America today. We previously said that at one time or another television has been considered the cause of most of the great social ills of the world. In the past people were content just to complain that TV was immoral, that it might damage eyesight or diminish reading skills, or that it could provoke violent behavior. But beginning in the late 1960s words turned to deeds as social action groups began to assault the visual medium with charges that its patent medicine commercials were creating a drug-oriented society, that its violent dramas were at least partially responsible for the increases in violence on American streets, and that its heavy commercial emphasis was creating a consumer psychosis. Women's groups and others sought to remove patent medicine and vitamin pill advertising from children's television. They were successful, as both drug companies and the networks cleared the Saturday morning hours of such material. These same groups sought to reduce or eliminate the number of commercials shown during the Saturday morning hours. A study commissioned by Action for Children's Television showed that there was a sponsor's message about every three minutes during the kiddie cavalcade. The commercial messages bombarded the children, who in turn bombarded parents with demands to buy nutritionless cereals, expensive toys, and worthless gadgets. The networks reminded the activists that television sets

were equipped with *off* and *on* switches and that parents might consider supervising their children's viewing habits more closely. This argument, however, lost its vitality in the face of vacuous children's programming—which improved very little until the early seventies. Saturday morning is one of network television's foremost gold mines and the webs were reluctant to give in, although some compromises were made.

The violence question reached such proportions that a government commission was formed, a study was undertaken, and reports were issued. The findings were less conclusive and remain controversial. The government report found that television violence did not normally have an effect on most children. In some circumstances, the report concluded, with some children, television could instigate aggressive behavior. The study was termed a whitewash by critics, who noted that the industry had the power to veto the appointment of any of the members of the commission's advisory committee. The networks seemed ready to accept the findings, especially those that showed that violence had decreased in all categories of network programming except in children's cartoons. (The committee had termed the animated features the most violent type of programming on the tube.)

But the debate didn't cool with the report, which only added fuel to the smoldering coals. Voices got louder and, as so often is the case, it became more and more difficult for quiet and rational comments to be heard. Lost in the shuffle was one element that seems central to the problem: few people have bothered to ask *why* there is violence on television. One side shouts there is; the other side shouts there isn't. One team yells it does produce aggressive behavior; the other side says it doesn't.

Television probably mirrors America's society as well as any other



Along with the multitude of junk shows sent at the kids, the youngsters of the fifties were also treated to some quality entertainment. Kukla, Fran, and Ollie hit the networks in 1949 and are still delighting children and adults in the 1970s. Burr Tillstrom is the gifted puppeteer behind the Kukla-politan Players.

medium. It shows our hopes and dreams, our fears and ills—and our violence. One often gets the impression that many of the vigilantes of the airwaves are more eager to erase the image in the mirror than the violent way of life that is being reflected.

In an article in *TV Guide*, television writer Gene Roddenberry, creator of “Star Trek” and other programs, offered a unique explanation for television violence, blaming it on the networks’ and sponsors’ reluctance to allow ideological controversy on the screen: “Plays must have conflict; conflict is the source of drama. If writers aren’t allowed to do shows about ideological conflict, they’ll do shows about physical conflict. If you can’t show moral struggles over controversial issues, you’ll show life-and-death struggles over noncontroversial issues. The excessive reliance on physical violence was caused by censorship. Further censorship is not the solution.”

The censorship of which he speaks is that born of the commercial nature of the medium, about which we have spoken, and the natural conservatism of the medium, our next topic for discussion. The first commandment of television is Thou Shalt Not Offend. People who are offended will not buy the sponsor’s product—at least that’s how the song goes. And they will switch channels, and there goes the rating. What this has produced is *El Blandsville*. In the same *TV Guide* article, writer Rod Serling complained “a medium best suited to illumine and dramatize the issues of the times has its product pressed into a mold, lily white, and has its dramatic teeth yanked one by one.” Examples are numerous. Some kinds of ethnic material are strictly forbidden. When Archie Bunker began spouting words like polack and spic on “All in the Family,” the show was heralded as a brave new world of programming. Yet the actor was only repeating words that had been non-malicious common fare in music halls and vaudeville palaces for almost a hundred years before the middle of this century. Writers, when seeking to tackle tough social problems like prejudice and discrimination must find acceptable villains and targets. Serling tells the story about attempting to write a play in which a Jew was the subject of harrassment by townspeople. Such a victim was not acceptable, so an unnamed foreigner, an alien, was substituted. A dramatic program attempting to expose the White Citizens Councils that exist in some cities in the South was stopped before production began when protests hit the networks—from the White Citizens Councils.

Ethnic and national and racial groups themselves had made strong attempts to stop certain programming practices. Those of Italian and Sicilian backgrounds succeeded in stopping syndicate-buster Elliot Ness on “The Untouchables.” The show was termed derogatory to those nationalities since many villains in the series shared that ancestry. Inspector Erskine no longer refers to the Mafia or Cosa Nostra on “The FBI”—they are called *syndicated crime* now, as a result of pressure from the same groups. Mexican-Americans killed the Frito Bandito, a cartoon character used by Frito-Lay to advertise corn chips.

The Catholic Church is highly sensitive to material about the Catholic Church; professional associations frown upon their members appearing in a negative light. The American Bar Association wants all lawyers portrayed as

Television took a giant step forward in 1973 when ABC broadcast "That Certain Summer" as one of its made-for-TV movies.

For the first time the medium dealt with the problem of homosexuality in an adult and forthright manner, and did so in a moving and meaningful drama. A strong and sensitive performance by Hal Holbrook, who has a long list of quality TV credits to his name, including "Mark Twain Tonight" and "The Senator" in NBC's "The Bold Ones," enhanced the program.



straight shooters; the American Medical Association demands that doctors be pictured as brilliant surgeons. Teachers' groups raised a major stink after one episode in which Mr. Novak, a high school teacher, not only smoked a cigarette but took a drink as well. Political issues were for years banned from drama or comedy series and only recently have matters like abortion, homosexuality, drug abuse, and divorce been permitted on the screen. A common nemesis of television writers are the pressure groups determined to rid the airwaves of any concept that does not flatter their collective image, or that conflicts with their official versions of the good and the true. America in the seventies is especially sensitive to ethnic slurs and the purging of such material was applauded by many who failed to realize that censorship of any kind tends to impede, not enhance, the search for truth.

The banner under which the networks and television stations march when they conduct their cut-and-slash raids on television scripts is that of the NAB, the National Association of Broadcasters. This organization is a trade association of broadcasters and has as its primary mission the promotion of broadcasting. Some years ago, the association, which represents about sixty-five percent of all television stations, promulgated a non-binding code of programming ethics. The document has been described as reflecting the attitudes of the Bible Belt, the religious orthodoxies, the business community, and Madison Avenue—people who historically have never had fresh, brave opinions. The basic criterion used by the NAB code in evaluation of programming is taste—good taste, bad taste. The networks keep a close eye on all programming to insure that it meets code standards. From the point of the completed script through the several production stages until the final video tape, network censors supervise the work. CBS has a staff of more

than forty censors whose sole job is to bleep material considered offensive. Three-fourths of all the Smothers Brothers' programs underwent the knife—including a skit performed by Elaine May about television censorship. In 1971 an episode of the ill-fated "Young Lawyers" was censored; the two lead characters, Zalman King, a white, and Judy Pace, a black, were shown socializing at a cocktail lounge. Paramount Pictures, which produced the show, and ABC substituted a white girl for Miss Pace.

Censors are down on words like *damn* and *hell*, although such words began to be heard more often in the early seventies due to the broadcast of all-American movies like *Patton* in which four-letter words ran throughout the dialogue. Bathroom stories are also considered taboo. It is not uncommon for television to edit out as much as thirty minutes of sex, nudity, and violence. Sometimes this is done successfully, as in *Goodbye, Columbus*, without damaging the integrity of the story. In other cases it hasn't worked as well. Network censors virtually destroyed an important subplot in *Diary of a Mad Housewife* through their reluctance to televise the scenes between Carrie Snodgrass and her film lover.

Local stations do their fair share of censoring themselves. Some stations refuse to air controversial programs at all. Many CBS affiliates refused to carry the network's two-part abortion episode on the popular "Maude." Segments of shows are cut locally or excluded. KIRO in Seattle was showing the 26-part series "Toward the Year 2000" in 1972. But the Mormon-affiliated CBS station yanked one episode consisting of a discussion of sex research and what effect it will have on the population in the year 2000. Even the eminence of the program's guests, sex researchers Masters and Johnson, couldn't save the show, and what was a 26-part series in the rest of America became a 25-part series in the Pacific Northwest. Local stations frequently scream loudly if networks get too permissive. In 1969 when ABC aired the first (and last) "Turn On" show, the network received assurances from nearly one-half of its affiliates that they would not carry it again.

Finally, the nature of the medium places many non-doctrinal limitations on television production. The clock is a major factor for most writers and producers. Television and radio are the only media in which a creative talent must produce material that fits within 26 or 52 or 78 minutes. When a dramatist writes a play for the theater he has a notion in the back of his mind about how long his audience will sit still, but he is not forced to resolve his dramatic conflict in 52 minutes down to the second. There is rarely a limit placed on an author. A journalist usually has one, but not to such a high tolerance as a television writer. The entire television system is geared to hours and half hours. Who ever heard of a television program lasting 47 minutes or 103 minutes? Only one program, "Love American Style," has given writers the freedom to work outside of the confines of exact times.

Production time of a television play is very short, usually no more than eight to ten days from first reading to performance. Thirty and sixty-minute series are usually turned out one a week. Compare this to Broadway, where the players have a month or more with the material. The commercial breaks within a show—twelve to thirteen in a ninety-minute drama—create a segmentation problem. The viewer is consistently taken away from the story

and thrust into someone's kitchen or bathroom or bedroom by the pitchman. The audience must then make its own mental and emotional realignment to "get back" with the story. "That it can do it at all is a tribute to mass intelligence and selectivity," wrote writer Serling. In the past the viewer was hit with four one-minute spots in thirty minutes (three in the program and one on the hour and half hour). But today the trend in advertising has gone to shorter spots, two thirty-second spots (piggybacks, they're called) or three twenty-second spots (triggybacks?). There are even ten-second spots. Les Brown reported one instance in which thirty-seven different advertising messages were broadcast in one seven-minute stretch from the actual end of one program (before the credits and all) to the real beginning of another (after the teaser and such). Writers, producers, and viewers aren't the only ones uptight about this; advertisers are going bananas as well to find their bits of consumer wisdom buried in such a big pile.

Those are the kinds of limitations and pressures that affect what appears on your screen every night. A program has to pass over the hurdles of commercialism, the ratings, government and special interest group pressures, in-house censorship, and, finally, the unique limitations of the medium, before it gets to your house. Is there any wonder that many talented and skilled writers, directors, and producers who started in television have fled to motion pictures where they can not only get bigger salaries but can have more time and face fewer limitations in their work. Some, like Stirling Silliphant, who created "Route 66" and "Naked City" before he escaped to Hollywood and won an academy award for his script of *In the Heat of the Night*, throw up their hands at the prospect of working in the bland and sterile confines of television. "Products are legitimately non-controversial. Art is not. Products can logically command an audience of multimillions. Art cannot," he asserts. Other television producers despair at the multitude of pressures that handcuff the creative talent in the industry. "It's like knowing that a man is sick," said one. "Over a period of years, you notice one symptom, then another, then another. And one day you put them all together . . . and you realize he's got cancer."

We said earlier it would be easier to rap television for what it isn't. But that's not our purpose. The entertainment and enlightenment that television does provide is shaped by the forces outlined above. Perhaps the standard to use in judging the industry is one critics were forced to use in the 1930s in their evaluation of motion pictures. Film studios tightly bound their creative people to small budgets, limited production time, and proven thematic formulas. A film, then, was judged on how well the producer and director and writer moved within the confines of these limits. This same standard could be applied to television. Given the immense pressures of ratings, censorship, and commercialism, we could ask, "Does the production team succeed in providing an enriching experience, an enjoyable hour, or a moving tabloid of our culture?" With such a standard the medium could take on new dimensions. And while we could still mourn what it might be, the new heights to which it may someday rise, we could still discriminate among what exists in a meaningful and satisfying way.

NEWS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Television news and public affairs programming is traditionally the showcase for the industry. To a much lesser extent it too suffers from some of the same programming limitations that we have just discussed with regard to entertainment programming. Commercial pressure does exist. And while it is very rare that a single sponsor can kill a news story or shape a documentary, the ratings of news and public affairs specials affect their broadcast. Although the evening news shows of all networks retain fair to good audience ratings, public affairs specials generally don't do as well. Most viewers apparently feel that the thirty to ninety minutes they spend with the real world during the news is enough for a single evening. Consequently there is little public affairs programming in prime broadcast time, most of it being shunted to Sunday afternoon where traditionally low audiences offer the networks and local stations the chance of losing less while they fulfill their public responsibilities. (In figuring the cost of public affairs programming, the broadcaster not only includes the actual costs but also what he calls *opportunity costs*; that is, what the network or station could have made if it had run "Mannix" rather than a special on flood control. Using this formula, public affairs programming always shows a loss.) The evening hours are set aside for programming that can win the big rating, to keep the advertising rates up. The documentaries that do show up in the evening hours on the commercial networks tend to be "specials," one-shot affairs. In fairness to the networks, it should be noted that each of them at times has offered an hour a week of documentary programming on a regularly scheduled basis. None won high viewer ratings despite critical acclaim.

There have been many assertions that documentary programming today tends to be softer—less controversial—than ten or fifteen years ago. Of course hard-hitting programs like "The Migrant" or "The Selling of the Pentagon" reveal the inaccuracy of such generalizations. Still, the networks tend to prefer the inoffensive science specials or the historical series or the cultural program, and such material predominates. Controversy is difficult to sell to sponsors. One network, ABC, has recently gone so far as to let a potential sponsor pick a topic for a show out of a list it has prepared. This kind of sponsor involvement can lead to unfortunate results, as the network found out when it proposed a program on "Death of the Iron Horse" to an advertiser. The show was designed to demonstrate how economics and business and poor government regulation had killed off the American railroad. But the sponsor didn't like the negative approach, so the network changed the concept of the show and aired it as "The Golden Age of Railroads." Often when the networks do take a hard look at a controversial topic they not only cannot find a sponsor for that show but lose future ad revenue as well. NBC's exposure of the migrant labor camps cost it Coca-Cola advertising. When Bumble Bee Tuna didn't like the CBS news coverage of the Senate hearings on fish inspection legislation, it excluded the network and its O & O stations from future ad campaigns.

Much of the soft documentary programming is worthwhile, entertaining, and valuable to a nation in which most citizens terminate their education

When NBC focused its cameras on the workers in orange groves owned by Minute Maid, company officials tried to throw the cameramen out. The entire scene was filmed and presented as a part of the documentary "The Migrant." While Coca-Cola, the owner of the orange juice company, protested and cancelled a million dollars in advertising on NBC, company officials testified before Congress that the network's white paper had alerted them to poor conditions and they were working to improve conditions in the migrant camps.



NBC Photo

when they leave school. In fact, the singularly most impressive example of documentary programming—the BBC's "Civilisation," shown on the public network—was hardly concerned with a controversial subject. At the same time, however, there are many important social problems in America today that need exploration and explanation. Certainly it must be considered a part of television's responsibility to undertake the education of our citizens on these problems, controversial or not.

Other pressures face the public affairs broadcaster as well. The FCC tends to take a more hands-off posture with regard to news programming, but government strictures have produced limitations in public affairs programming. The prime-time rule has prompted networks—rightly or wrongly—to abandon some public affairs specials. And the fairness doctrine (see chapter nine for a more detailed discussion) which requires a balanced treatment of all public issues, nudges broadcasters even further away from controversial issues that could result in demands from aggrieved viewers who dispute the fairness of the program for free time to present the "other side." News and public affairs programming is not created in a vacuum but is affected by the same blights that have an impact on all other aspects of the industry.

THE SHOWCASE

Public affairs programming and news is probably the brightest spot in broadcasting. It is like the best room in the house, the room you want to show your guests first. And well it should be, because it displays some of television's unique capacities, such as its ability to create a massive awareness in a single instant. The multimillions who watched "Migrant"

were exposed in a moment to the plight of thousands of nomad laborers. It would have taken the print media many months to create the same awareness and even then not with the same intensity of that one-hour program. James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is a far more realistic and meaningful picture of the plight of rural southern farm workers than anything television has produced. But it has been read by only a handful. Such a book is not able to engage the interest of the average American as easily as the television documentary. Michael Harrington's writing on malnutrition and hunger in this country was a profound statement of a social problem. Yet it was CBS's "Hunger in America" that stirred the conscience of the nation, that moved Congress to action, and that touched the soul of the people. The massive exposure often needed to generate national action can only be gained through the tube. Still another example was the infamous "Selling of the Pentagon" presentation. Newsmen, writers, and even some broadcasters had been ranting for decades about the gigantic public relations machine that fills much of the five-sided military outpost in Washington. But because of its concentrated focus on the problem in a single hour and its ability to reach to all corners of the country at the same moment "The Selling of the Pentagon" made the point as it had never been made before, and, despite the hubbub that followed the presentation, changes in Pentagon public relations policies did result.

Public affairs programming can be educational in other areas as well. The "Civilisation" series already noted created an intense curiosity about Western culture in thousands of previously uninterested souls. In 1969 CBS presented an hour documentary on Japan. Author and commentator for the program was former U.S. Ambassador Edwin Reischauer, a man who has spent his lifetime studying the island nation of 100 million. The network rejected the impulse of some to turn the show into an hour-long geisha party and gave Reischauer his head. The result was an Emmy-winning documentary that has been described by critics "as one of the finest bits of educational entertainment about Japan ever offered to the American people . . .". Only time limits us from citing many other examples.

Television's ability to take you where events occur is also one of its unique qualities. The 200 million Americans who had funded Neil Armstrong's long voyage to the moon were able to participate with him as he stepped out on its surface. And resisting the impulse to be selfish, we invited the rest of the world to share that moment with us. Less happy times have also been shared by the nation and the world. We all watched as we buried our slain president, his brother, and humanitarian and civil rights leader Martin Luther King. For the first time since the Civil War, Americans have been privy to the real horrors of war as the television networks have shown us the bloodshed and the sorrow of Vietnam. We were there when the Republicans and Democrats nominated their national candidates. We watched Mark Spitz win seven gold medals in Munich. We also waited outside the Olympic Village as Arab commandos held Israeli Olympic team members hostage. Television gives us a window on the world, and such a window is best used for public affairs and sporting events. In fact, television is probably best when it only watches and doesn't create, when it lets the drama of life

If TV can spread joy, it can also spread spontaneous horror. Tens of millions of Americans were watching the routine transfer of Lee Harvey Oswald from Dallas city jail to the county jail to await trial. In the midst of it all, Jack Ruby lunged from the crowd and shot the accused assassin. And the moment was captured both on TV and in this photo by *Dallas Times-Herald* photographer Bob Jackson.



Compix of United Press International

provide the emotion, when it allows the audience to witness what historians will write about in a hundred years. TV is best as a voyeur.

ALL IS NOT LIGHT

Lest we chap our hands by this sustained applause for television's virtues, let's remember that its news and public affairs segment has its share of warts as well. Some of these stem from the nature of the medium; some are nurtured by its broadcasters.

Television news has an unfortunate dependence on film because it is a picture-oriented medium. Although the visual aspect of TV is perhaps its greatest strength, it is also its greatest weakness. The news events that make the best news films are sometimes not the most important. Conversely, often the most important news of the day does not lend itself to visual explanation. How can you film, for example, the cost of living index spiraling upward each month? But it is big news. How can you film the slow pollution of the Great Lakes by industry and municipalities and agriculture? How can you film a Supreme Court decision? How can you film a cure for polio? You can't really. And while broadcast newsmen do attempt to cover stories beyond those that can be filmed, visual effects dominate their thinking. Robin Day, a newsman with the BBC asserts that television is designed to strike at the viewer's emotions, not at his intellect. The medium concentrates on "action (usually violent and bloody) rather than on thought, on happenings rather than on issues, on shock rather than on

explanations, on personalities rather than ideas," Day wrote recently. He adds, "Television does not always take sufficient trouble to ask 'who is responsible,' 'why is it happening,' or 'what is the alternative.'"

Visual aspects of the medium create other problems as well. News film is expensive to purchase, to shoot, and to process. Although cost is not a major element at the networks, it is at the local level. If the news director sends out a camera team to shoot a news event and it turns out nothing very important happens, chances are the story will be broadcast anyway. There is too much of an investment to abandon the footage. Also, an event that might be described in thirty-five seconds by an announcer is often given sixty to ninety seconds if news film is on hand. This is a waste of time in a news medium that must constantly fight the clock. The fact that television is an electronic medium wedded to TV and film cameras dictates in large measure what it can cover. It takes time to get a film crew out to a breaking story. The newspaper's man with his pad and pencil can make the scene much faster and get the story quicker. Hence television is the sucker for the pre-planned news event, often the pseudo-event. The news conference, the arrival of the diplomat, the public hearings, the parade—all are instances in which the cameras can be set up ahead of time and be ready to roll. In international coverage television has a built-in bias against the free and open society, again because of its excessive baggage. A print media man can slip into most nations, get his story unobtrusively, and leave. But the television man with a crew of four and twenty boxes of equipment is forced to be less nonchalant about the whole thing. He can be more easily stopped at the border of the unfriendly nation that isn't prepared to let the world view its internal problems at that moment. Reporter Day notes that "By reason of its own operational needs, television is incapable of giving fair and balanced reporting of a very large part of the world today." The cameras will go where they're welcome—regardless of where the most important story is.

Recall for a moment our criticism of newspapers: that by representing every news story as the objective truth—"what really happened," and not just one man's view of what really happened—the press was losing credibility. Television has a similar problem, for on the air it tends to represent itself as a medium that presents all the news and shows the viewer what actually happened. Walter Cronkite has admitted many times in print that TV news is a mere sketch of the headlines, a most incomplete picture of the day's news. Yet he still ends his nightly news program with the assurance, "That's the way it is," suggesting to viewers that they have seen the sum total of all that was important that day. The closing, "And that's the news today," is even worse. But it's not as serious a problem as the medium's lack of comprehensiveness in covering a single event. The broadcaster's proud motto, "See it Happen," deceives the audience into believing it is viewing what actually happened, all that happened, what the man or woman at the scene saw. And of course this is nonsense. The viewer sees only what takes place within the range of the camera's eye. Often much more takes place. What is selected to be shown is frequently not the whole picture or even a representative one. Eric Sevareid has compared television coverage of an event to searching a dark room with a flashlight. The light, like the TV camera, most

often picks up what is moving. And when it focuses on one part of the room, it does so to the exclusion of the rest of it.

But sometimes the magic of television presents the viewer with a picture that exceeds the reality of the event being broadcast. Daniel Boorstin relates the story about the Chicago homecoming parade for General Douglas MacArthur after he had been relieved of command by President Harry Truman. (The event became the subject of research by 31 sociologists, headed by Kurt Lang of the University of Chicago.) What the TV viewer saw was a far more dramatic pageant than actually took place, for the television cameras followed the war hero in his triumphant ride from beginning to end, with tension building at each point along the way. Most spectators saw only a segment of the parade. Many could not see at all. Television's electronic ability to sum up and to present the parade as a narrative with a self-fulfilling ending—a glorious welcome at the city center—gave the viewer the impression that the actual incident was far more spectacular than it really was.

THE HIGH COST OF NEWS

Television news is very costly news. NBC in one recent year reportedly had a news and public affairs budget approaching \$42,000,000. Some of this money was used to fund the "Today" program. Film crews (NBC maintained 100 of them in 1972) cost between \$90,000 and \$110,000 per year to man. The network spent \$2.5 million on film alone. Despite the fact that network evening news can be a big source of revenue (minutes were selling for \$22,000 in 1969) it still is a financially losing proposition for the network.

Each of the three networks has more than a thirty-minute evening news show. CBS has an hour in the morning and NBC broadcasts news as a part of "Today"; each has a short segment in midafternoon. But this is not as costly as it looks. In fact it really is a moneymaker for it allows the webs to spread out their newsgathering costs—which remain fairly constant whether or not they produce these extra programs—over more time, time in which to sell more advertising.

Part of the cost of network news—that of the saturation coverage of major news events—is wasted. The webs each lose nearly a million dollars covering a space shot, yet all three cover it. Many people think this is silly and that a rotating coverage with the networks taking turns would be less costly and would allow viewers who aren't interested in the space shot to watch something else. Another waste (and there are broadcasters who would undoubtedly disagree) is the fat salaries paid to many newsmen. Television news has a show business quality about it, and the stations do little to dispel this image. On the local level especially, newsmen are promoted with glamor shots in a fashion more appropriate for a movie star than a newsman. The anchorman builds up a tremendous following and sets the tone of the news. Because of this star aura, salaries for anchormen are star salaries. The anchorman for WCBS in New York is paid \$150,000 a year, which is not too far out of line with salaries paid to other anchormen in that city or other large cities. Newsmen at WCBS are paid on the average far

higher than print media journalists. One report indicated that the twenty reporters at the station received between \$20,000 and \$47,000 each year. The typical journalist, even in New York, makes far less. These comparisons apply nationwide.

If network news occasionally leaves the viewer with profound despair, local television news is generally awful. Except for stations in the large cities, most broadcast operations are poorly equipped to produce much more than a few routine newcasts, an afternoon kiddie cartoon show or movie, and a "talking heads" interview program ferreted away on Sunday morning. Major public affairs production is out of the question. And this is a tragedy, for many local problems could be graphically exposed if television were to take the time. Whereas networks tend to lose money on news, local stations can profit from it. In at least one large metropolitan area it was common for the stations to sell out the commercial time for the evening news. The fourteen commercials in the one-hour news program brought in \$1.5 million, nearly twice the news show budget. The situation in other cities is comparable. But revenue over and above budget costs is rarely put back into news coverage. In fact, as the seventies began, most stations seemed more concerned with news "formats" than with news coverage. The "Eyewitness" concept, a rating winner out of New York, spread across the nation, featuring newsmen who wanted to tell people about the good things that happened. Stations began referring to themselves as "good news" stations and a happiness image was produced: news for people who don't like news. Another format, a kind of newsroom or news service design, popped up as well. The single anchorman was banished in favor of a group of reporters and analysts who shared a circular or U-shaped table. After a news reporter told his story, the whole gang would talk about it, just like real folks. Most Americans who go abroad are amazed to find that the phenomena of format and anchor men are not used in England and Western Europe. News readers are used. No fanfare, no horns. A man or sometimes a woman—you don't even know their names—will stand or sit down and read the news. Film is used, of course, but nothing else. Just an announcer reading a news story. So there is another way to do things.

News and public affairs is a lot of what is best about television. It is really the only place where the medium allows the viewer to confront the real world. Television network officials often justify their bland entertainment fare by arguing that controversy belongs on the news side, not in entertainment programs. But at least one man, writer and producer Gene Roddenberry, points to the weakness in this logic:

People are not affected by expository writing as they are by drama. All over the world we see monuments erected to artists and poets and dramatists. I have yet to see one erected to a crier of news. Drama is more real than reality. It's a distilled version of the essence of reality. The prime hours of comedy and drama are deeply affecting the nation and its attitudes today. And the monstrous danger of this heavily censored drama is that it is injecting a false vision of reality into this nation. It is teaching the American people one lesson over and over again—that life is emptiness, that there is nothing to be concerned with in this world but trivia.

TELEVISION'S EFFECTS

Although the main focus of this chapter is on television programming, we should spend a few minutes looking at its effects. Television affects many parts of our society. Surely it has a profound effect on the people who watch it. Or at least that's what everybody says. You can't listen to a speech about TV these days without hearing that conclusion drawn by either the speaker or someone in the audience. People spend so much time with the tube that it has to affect them in some way. The virtues it extols—spending, conformity, romance, materialism, physical beauty, violent solutions—all these factors must affect the viewer. But surprisingly the hard cold scientific evidence needed to back such gut-level assertions is lacking in most instances. The question of violence is not even settled after a massive government-sponsored study. You can certainly find social scientists who will assert that their research shows beyond the shadow of a doubt that violence on television produces increased aggressiveness in many young viewers. But there are other social scientists who strongly disagree. Why the confusion?

Unless the TV viewer demonstrates a change in his thinking by some overt behavior, researchers are severely handicapped. What goes on in the little black box between our ears remains a mystery most of the time. Does television affect people's reading habits? We can find out about that by looking at people's reading habits. And no, it doesn't seem to have affected these. Does television affect our interests in seeking other entertainment, like movies? Yes, a check of movie attendance reveals that among some subgroups within our culture, movie attendance has dipped sharply, most likely because of television. Young people still go to movies, but it is part of their social life. (It's still not cool for a guy to ask a girl to go to the television with him on Saturday night.) But these are questions we can find out about.

The question about television's effects on some of society's processes and activities can be discussed most graphically by looking at how the medium has transformed one important American process: that of getting elected to public office. Perhaps the most obvious change wrought by the tube is the incredible increase in campaign costs because of television expenses. Abraham Lincoln moved into the White House after spending about \$100,000 on his campaign. John Kennedy spent \$11 million in Democratic funds, plus an undisclosed amount of his own money in 1960. Richard Nixon spent more than \$40 million in 1972. Nelson Rockefeller spent almost \$2 million getting re-elected governor of New York in 1970. Running for major public office is out of the financial reach of most people in this nation today, and despite numerous plans to cut the costs of campaigning, they are going up, not down. Candidates for national, state, and sometimes even important local offices must hire media advisors whose role it is to direct the candidate's media campaign, as well as orchestrating his or her appearances on television. The image of the youngish candidate, coat thrown casually over one shoulder, walking hand-in-hand with youngish wife (with skirt long enough not to offend but short enough to be with it) and children across a field of daisies or clover has almost become stereotypic. Around election time programming is interrupted not with advertisements for motor

oil or candy bars, but promotional spots for this candidate or that candidate. The one-minute or thirty-second spot that we now find so dreadful was initiated as a compromise to viewers who were often alienated by longer pre-emptions of their favorite programs by political speeches.

The trend toward the use of marketing techniques in candidate packaging has been the subject of great despair in recent years. Adlai Stevenson said in 1956 that, "The idea that you can merchandise candidates for high office like breakfast cereal . . . is the ultimate indignity to the democratic process." But can we place the entire blame on the tube? We elected a William Henry Harrison, a Warren G. Harding, and a Calvin Coolidge (just to mention three) before television existed. Clearly, one-minute spots do tend to oversimplify the issues and the candidates' positions about them. But we also had the "New Deal" and the "Square Deal" and "Tippicanoe and Tyler Too" before television appeared in the home. Perhaps what television has done is to magnify some of the existing problems inherent in our democratic election process.

The medium can be used for deception. In *The People Machine*, Robert McNeil relates the instance in which Senator Clair Engle of California appeared in a 42-second film to announce his decision to run for reelection. This film, which had been carefully edited, did not disclose that the Senator was dying of cancer at that moment. The Democratic ad in 1964 that pictured a small girl playing in a field that was then obliterated in a giant mushroom cloud misled viewers about Senator Barry Goldwater's position on the use of nuclear arms.

Despite the heavy reliance on TV advertising during a campaign, there remains some question of whether it does much good. Strategically placed spots, well prepared and well presented, probably leave some residue in the voter's mind—reinforcing his own beliefs, most likely. But the impact of the big barrage is less clear. Lawrence O'Brien complained that if Senator Hubert Humphrey could have raised \$3 million for television in October he would never have lost in 1968. But this argument ignores the fact that Humphrey showed his greatest strength in the voter polls just before the election, in the face of a gigantic Republican television spending spree. In thirty-five gubernatorial races in 1970, the candidate who spent the most money in his race won eighteen times and lost seventeen times—just what you might expect purely on the basis of chance. We don't know now and might never know the impact of political commercials on voters. But most politicians believe they have an impact and have changed the election process accordingly.

THE ALTERNATIVES

While commercial over-the-air programming remains (and will remain) the standard broadcasting fare in America, two important alternatives have emerged with some force in the last decade. The first, a public broadcasting network, has since 1967 provided the national television audiences with a fourth network, a refuge from commercial television, if you will. The other

alternative—the cable television delivery system—has only peripheral programming implications at present, but in the end could be responsible for major changes in the industry.

THE PUBLIC NETWORK

Non-commercial broadcasting is not a new idea in America. First through FM radio and later via educational television, Americans living in large cities or in communities with universities and colleges have had the opportunity to expose themselves to government-supported rather than commercially funded programming. From the end of the television license freeze in the early 1950s until the mid-sixties, non-commercial television stations remained relatively isolated and unjoined outposts scattered throughout the nation. In the early days programming was primarily educational—“talking head” shows, lectures, classes, and interviews. Some of it was piped directly into the classroom. Station licenses were held by, and stations were funded by, school districts, colleges, and universities.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, some stations began to alter their programming away from instructional matter to cultural fare and public affairs broadcasts. Regional and even national production units began to form. National Educational Television emerged as the center of this new production thrust, and the local ed-TV station's total reliance on locally produced matter ended as NET programs were bicycled around to many non-commercial broadcasters. Foundation money, primarily from the Ford Foundation, began to filter into some stations and to NET. With bigger budgets programming ventures expanded.

Then in 1966, after a lengthy if not completely adequate survey of non-commercial television in America, the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television presented the nation with a broad set of recommendations that would ultimately change the face of the educational system. The commission recommended the formation of a “public” television system (and *public* was its word) to augment the instructional system, but one that would be a good deal more as well. “If we were to sum up our proposal with all the brevity at our command,” the commission wrote in *Public Television, A Program for Action*,

we would say that what we recommend is freedom. We seek freedom from the constraints, however necessary in their context, of commercial television. We seek for educational television freedom from the pressures of inadequate funds. We seek for the artist, the technician, the journalist, the scholar, and the public servant freedom to innovate, freedom to be heard in this most far-reaching medium. We seek for the citizen freedom to view, to see programs that the present system, by its incompleteness, denies him.

In 1967, in response to the commission's recommendation, Congress established and began funding the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the superstructure of what has emerged as the public network. The corporation

has since spawned numerous bureaucratic children. The Public Broadcasting System, or PBS, is the name given the network when the 200 or so non-commercial stations were ultimately joined. The Carnegie Commission envisioned various programming units as well, and today several of these are active in TV production. Examples are the Children's Television Workshop, which produces "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company," and The National Public Affairs Broadcast Center, which undertakes various weekly public affairs programming. These are funded by the CPB and various foundations. In addition, there are various regional production units centered and primarily controlled by the few flagships of the public television fleet—WNET in New York (which took over what was left of NET), WETA in Washington, WGBH in Boston, and KQED in San Francisco. There is probably much that should be said about the formation of the CPB. We will make but two observations at this point that will be expanded on later. First, 1967 was a very bad time to start. With the Vietnam War taking a lion's share of the federal tax dollar, financing the new venture was immediately a problem. Second, the Carnegie Commission's recommendation that the new public system be anchored by the existing educational stations was not the best possible solution; there were too many traditions to foul it up.

PUBLIC TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

There is no doubt that the public network has had some outstanding programming successes. "Sesame Street" alone makes the network worthwhile to many viewers. Some of its drama, both imported and home-grown, has been remarkable and has demonstrated the often neglected potential of television. The same can be said for its telecasts of "Civilisation" (which was turned down by all three commercial networks before the BBC offered it to PBS) and much of its public affairs programming. But critics argue (and rightfully so, probably) that most programming since 1967 has been barely adequate. Les Brown summed up the feelings of many when he wrote in *Television, the Business Behind the Box*, "At a close look, the PBS programs on the whole were marked by the intellectual prudence, the social cautions, and the feigned creative vitality that were the hallmarks of commercial television in America. The new network spoke in a somewhat different language but ultimately for the same establishment." Other critics, including Brown, argued that the network was being programmed for an elite minority, for no more than one or two percent of the viewing audience. In what sense is this a *public* network? they ask. *Public*, of course, is just a euphemism for *government-supported*. Conservative and moderate politicians and critics charged that the network had become "welfare of the airwaves" for the liberal and left-wing elites. And in many instances these charges were probably valid. The presentation of conservative William Buckley's "Firing Line" was merely a sop to right-wingers in Congress who had a great deal to say about financing the corporation.

The problems in programming stem from two factors, both of which hold the key to the future success or failure of the public broadcasting system. One is financing; the other is organization, and they are tied closely

together. The issues, long underground, surfaced in the summer of 1972 when President Nixon vetoed a two-year \$155 million appropriation for the CPB. Although he claimed his veto was prompted only because Congress had enlarged his initial request, this was a smokescreen designed to cloud the fact that he had "many fundamental disagreements" about the directions "public broadcasting has taken and should pursue in the future." The president's telecommunications advisor Clay Whitehead had expressed similar reservations earlier. The "liberal" tint of the public network, the development of a news and public affairs unit staffed by high-priced commentators Robert McNeil and Sander Vanocur (neither of whom had been White House favorites in their commercial broadcasting days), and the heavy emphasis the public network was beginning to put into critical documentaries (critical of the government, among other things) had soured many national political leaders, especially Republicans. While the president could not publicly state his disagreements in those terms, he could argue that the bulk of public television funding should go to local public stations rather than to the national corporation. And to many people, especially local broadcasters, that was the right thing to say even if the president was probably saying it for the wrong reasons.

In early 1973 the administration made its next move against the public network. Henry J. Loomis, a man who candidly admitted he seldom watched public television, was named by President Nixon to head the CPB. Loomis shortly thereafter announced that the Corporation would take a firmer control of programming financed by the CPB. The effect of this action was to remove the power to schedule controversial political programming from the PBS. Loomis called for fewer public affairs broadcasts in favor of cultural or entertainment programming that might be rebroadcast over and over, thus providing a more efficient use of public funds. He also called for more balance in the public affairs programming that was produced.

With eighty percent of its funds coming directly from the CPB, the PBS was handicapped in any response to regain programming control, despite strong protests of the administration's actions from many local public stations. But this won't be the last shot fired.

It was noted earlier that the Carnegie Commission chose in its plan to anchor the new public network to the old educational instructional stations. It seemed logical: a ready-made network existed and all that was needed was interconnection. The commission proposal also gave the local stations primacy over the national corporation, much like local commercial stations have primacy over the commercial networks. And this sounds logical as well; the local station knows the needs of its community best. But as Les Brown has written, "In practical terms it is the power of censorship." Given the authority to reject any and all national programming, the local broadcasters have acted as effective censors in their community. While the more notorious examples involve southern stations that refuse to carry programming for blacks or dealing with racial controversy, nearly all stations in the system have exercised censorial power at one time or other. Programs have been rejected because they were critical of commercial institutions.

A program entitled "Banks and the Poor," which laid the roots of many American ghettos at the feet of the nation's banking institutions, was not carried on some stations and was delayed on many others until local banks could prepare a rebuttal broadcast. Other programs were rejected because of the use of coarse language. Programs critical of our foreign policy were not aired in some locales. And the list goes on. (PBS itself is not immune from similar criticism. The network killed a Woody Allen political satire it said might violate the equal opportunity requirements of the Communications Act, delayed a broadcast of a public affairs segment on FBI informers, and apparently watered down criticism of an oil company when the firm came through with a large grant.)

Why this caution? Where is the freedom spoken of so beautifully by the Carnegie Commission? Most of the pressure remains economic. Although the commercial broadcaster cannot afford to offend viewers and advertisers, which in both cases might lead to a loss of commercial support, the public broadcaster cannot afford to alienate the local establishment or his board of directors. He must go to local businesses every year for funds to help support his station. And his board of directors are usually members of the same establishment, subject to and willing to exert pressure to keep things "in hand." For example, in San Francisco in 1970, station KQED lost financial support from an important local school district because of an outspoken news program.

Financing is closely tied to the organization of the public network, for with the money goes the power to determine the direction public television takes. If most funds are distributed at the national level, to the CPB for example, the public network will remain as the heart of the non-commercial broadcasting system. But if, as the Administration has suggested, most of the money is doled out to local stations, the national network would be functionally dead. Public TV would take on more local or regional emphasis in programming, rarely touching on the larger national issues. And this would please the Administration.

But spreading the funds among the various local stations would change the quality of programming as well as the kind of programming. TV production costs are high. Dividing even \$200 million among the more than 200 public stations would give each station only a pittance. Public television could turn into what Douglas Cater calls a village handicraft industry with the bulk of the programming local in origin. In the spring of 1974 the CPB decided to give most of the money to local stations. The local stations, in turn, are to use the money to buy programming from PBS and other sources. The public network will have a small budget to develop new programs. Most observers believed that this plan spelled the end of most of PBS' public affairs programs. Local station managers indicated through surveys that they preferred to spend their money for children's shows and drama rather than for controversial documentaries.

Where the money comes from, however, is just as important as where it goes. With majority financing coming from Congress every two years, supplemented by a few institutional grants, public television has found itself embroiled in a political mess that could cause it to sink. It is unrealistic to



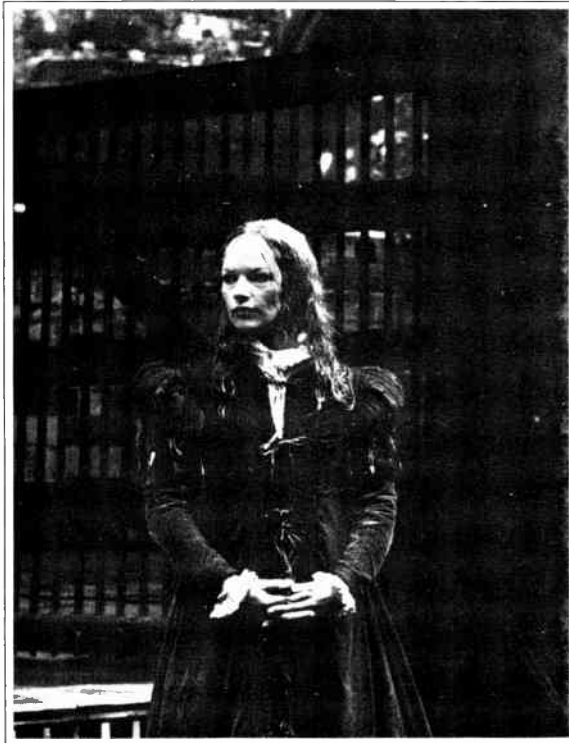
The 26-part "Forsyte Saga" on PBS Masterpiece Theater proved to be one of the public network's strongest entries in the 1971 season. It was a well-produced drama, with the touch of soap opera.

embroiled in a political mess that could cause it to sink. It is unrealistic to suggest that a Congress and administration that provide the level of funding public television wants and needs is not going to have something to say about how the money is used. Other schemes with various strengths and weaknesses have been suggested to fund the system. The value of the present system is that it is painless to viewers and involves a fairly straightforward means of gaining revenue. Its weaknesses are its involvement in the political system and the resulting political pressures. It has been suggested that Congress approve some kind of perpetual appropriation so that yearly political pressure would not be a problem. But would it be responsible for the government to act in such a way? Shouldn't the public have some control over that much tax money?

Taxing the profits of commercial broadcasters to support public broadcasting is another suggestion. In theory the scheme might work, but practically, with the commercial broadcasters maintaining one of the most powerful lobbies in Washington, it is unlikely such a plan could be realized. The commercial broadcaster cheerfully exists with his non-commercial

counterpart for obvious reasons. Without public TV, the commercial station might be called on to undertake more "public" responsibilities—matters currently handled by the public station. Also, were it not for the public station, that frequency might be held by a commercial competitor. But it is hard to imagine that the TV broadcaster would be willing to part with part of his income to fund his non-commercial neighbor. Another scheme is that of taxing the buyers and users of television sets. But a tax on television purchases alone would have to be very high and would come under fire from set manufacturers. And a tax on use, which is the British system, is hard to enforce. The BBC is continually forced to chase down evaders and estimates that it still loses about \$18 million a year. Also, an American public that has been receiving free television for nearly three decades will not look kindly on such a tax, especially since at the most only ten or fifteen percent use the public network the tax would support.

There is no simple answer to this problem or the others. How should the system be organized? Should public television try to appeal to a wider audience and become truly a public system, or should it remain a bastion for elites? Is its role to criticize government—to bite the hand, so to speak? There are obviously more questions than answers. While it sounds trite, only time can provide solutions as public television moves from the problems of adolescence to one kind of maturity or another.



"Elizabeth R," portrayed by award-winning actress Glenda Jackson, was well received by a substantial American audience. The BBC program, shown here on the public network, treated viewers not only to fine drama, but exposed millions to a glimpse of British history as well.

CABLE AND PROGRAMMING

Most discussions of cable television today leave us with visions of a wired city, an electronic environment where shopping is done by scanning a television screen and goods are ordered via coaxial cable; where true participatory democracy exists as all citizens can vote on every issue merely by pushing a button on a television set; where we can play bridge with relatives across town over the television; where children can take music lessons in the home while the teacher watches and listens via television; ad nauseam. But today cable television is a reality in a more limited way for millions of Americans, because that is the way television enters their home each day—through a wire.

Cable began as CATV—community antenna television. Because television signals tend to travel in straight lines (but they will bounce) the folks on the far side of the hill couldn't pick up the local station. Then somebody got the bright idea to put an antenna that would receive the signal on the hill and then pipe the picture into folks' home via a wire. The charge to the viewer was a small fee for installation—\$15 or \$20—and perhaps \$6 a month for the service. Of course the idea has expanded far beyond that. Today, cable television exists in most large cities. In places like New York where tall buildings abound to interfere with TV signals, it is the one sure way to get a clear television picture. In rural areas, which are often underserved by broadcasting, it provides the opportunity for a wider range of television service. And in all areas it permits the importation of distant television signals that local viewers could not normally receive with only an antenna, thus expanding the range of viewing selections.

What does the cable—a piece of hardware, a delivery system—have to do with programming? A lot. Programming restrictions (primarily, the limited number of channels) that currently exist in broadcasting do not exist in cablecasting. While the broadcasting spectrum is limited (there is only so much usable air space) no such limitations exist with the cable, where it is possible to receive twenty or forty different stations on a single set. With more channels and with broadcasting time largely expanded, programming potential is almost unlimited. But unfortunately the best thing about cable TV today is its potential. For although it can do much it has done little. Let us look at even a limited selection of its possibilities.

With twenty or forty channels the viewer can be offered a much wider range of standard broadcast fare. The cable operator can include in his package all the local network and independent channels plus imported independent and network channels. Next, the cable operator can program himself, offering the viewer even more selection. He can show films, syndicated programs, and reruns of past programs. He can broadcast local sporting events, high school football and basketball, and local college and professional sports. He can offer news coverage, coverage of local events like city council meetings, school board sessions, and planning conferences. He can run a continual news wire, continual stock market reports, and other informative services. He can lease some channels for anyone who wants to produce a program, find a sponsor, and present a show. And he

can leave one or two channels open for free public access—a kind of electronic podium for people who want to come forward to speak out on important public issues.

Beyond these programming implications, there are at least two other peripheral advantages. Because cable TV can provide a broad access for local performers, it can furnish a much needed place for young entertainers to “practice.” Jobs in over-the-air television are scarce because there are so few channels. But with the plethora of channels on the cable there can be a place for people to make mistakes. Another advantage is cable television’s ability to repeat programming. Television is a medium of exclusivity. You can read both *Newsweek* and *Playboy*, you can see both new films, but once you select one television program to watch, you deny yourself the opportunity of watching the others on at the same time. Some shows are repeated, but usually many months later, and then only once or twice. But the cable operator could repeat a program a dozen times. Such repeats would allow him to accumulate the audience he needs for advertiser support and would allow viewers who want to watch one show to catch another program when it is repeated—the same night or the same week.

This, then, is a short summary of the programming potential of cable television. But due to a mish-mash of regulations, economics, and natural lethargy, the strongest selling point for most cable systems is not its varied program (which remains “potential”) but better reception or a few extra commercial channels brought in from miles away.

Even though cable TV doesn’t use the airwaves, it is regulated by the FCC. And confusion has been the hallmark of the commission’s cable regulations during the past decade. At first the over-the-air broadcasters loved the cable carriers: it got their signal into homes that could not otherwise receive it. But when the cable operators began adding outside channels to their package, local broadcasters got mad at this new competition. Pressure from broadcasters on the FCC stunted the early growth of cable. In addition to protests from local broadcasters, program producers were incensed with the cable people, who were picking up their shows for nothing. This problem was framed in the morass of copyright law. The 1909 copyright statute states (and is still the governing law) that anyone who performs something written or owned by another person must first obtain permission (and presumably pay a fee). Let’s use an example. MGM makes a movie *The Horn Blows at Midnight*. Television station KOMM buys the movie, paying MGM for rights to broadcast (perform) that film. But the cable operator snatches KOMM’s signal out of the air and shows *The Horn Blows at Midnight* to its subscribers. It doesn’t pay MGM anything. Movie studios and others complained that this was infringement on their copyright. But the Supreme Court said no. The cable operator was merely pushing the signal along, he was not rebroadcasting or performing. This litigation ended in 1968 and signalled to the FCC that the time had come to open up the development of the medium with some reasonable guidelines.

At various times in the last six years the federal agency has handed down rules that closely prescribe matters such as the number of signals that may be imported into a city or that require certain performance standards. Many

cable operators, for example, must provide public access channels. Those with more than 3,500 subscribers must originate programming. But these kinds of rulings meet with great resistance from the industry. Program origination and public access channels, for example, cost money that the cable man is reluctant to spend. He is quite happy to sell his medium on the basis of a few extra channels and a clearer picture. Only in some areas—like in New York City, for example, and in Canada, where nearly twenty percent of all homes are on a cable—has program origination been undertaken on any great scale.

There are other problems, however, that go beyond the cable operator's desires and abilities to undertake these kinds of chores. Who is going to watch these bold new ventures in programming? Most people would like a better picture, and nearly everybody would like eight commercial channels (six locals plus two distant importations) from which to select, but who will watch the rest? Martin Mayer, in his book *About Television*, suggests that that question is rarely asked because "the reformers in government and the foundations and the universities are again in thrall to the false notion that the American public doesn't like what is now being offered on the tube, and will jump for alternatives: 'anything' will be 'better'." It does strain the imagination a bit to envision people who are getting entertainment (admittedly very poor) for nothing to start paying five or six dollars a month so they can watch their local school board in action. In London, Ontario, where more than eighty percent of the people are on the cable and have been for years, a survey recently discovered that out of 374 viewers examined, not one watched anything originated by the cable operator. The system was used exclusively to pick up traditional over-the-air signals. In New York City, where Teleprompter and Sterling have divided up the city, it is not unusual to find one-fifth of the viewers in the city watching a cable-originated telecast—of a professional hockey or basketball game. Local sports do have a big draw, but this is the single kind of programming in which the public has shown much interest.

Also, where do you get the programming to fill up these extra channels? Murray Chercover of Canada's CTV said in the early seventies, "Many influential thinkers suggest—if forty-two channels of capacity can be provided to serve the public, let's have forty-two channels. I must point out that we do an imperfect job of filling the two channels nationally now."

Of course Chercover's second statement applies equally well in this country. By proliferating the number of channels we face the real prospect of more channels of even worse programming. At present in a city with five stations a viewer can select from more than 30,000 hours of programming a year. In *About Television*, Martin Mayer bluntly asserts, "Unless new sources of funds for programs are found to go with the expansion in the number of the channels, the promise of cable is, in a word, a fraud."

The Supreme Court ruling on copyright has worked against the viewer in this respect. If the cable operator were forced to pay for the material he now gets free by pushing along the signal of over-the-air stations, he might be more interested in putting on his own programming, for which he could charge advertisers, thus giving him funds for programming. But the reversal

of that ruling seems unlikely. Only the revision of the copyright law by Congress (and it has been working on revising it since the early 1950s) could resolve this problem.

Pay television has been mentioned as another source of funds for programming by a no less prestigious body than the Sloan Commission, which conducted an investigation of the potential of cable television for the Sloan Foundation. Telecast an opera over the cable, they suggested. Those that want to view it can pay a small fee that would pay the cost of the program and leave a few bucks for the cable operator as well. This scheme has worked on a small scale. But granting the cable operator the right to use pay television (it is now outlawed in most places) opens a Pandora's box. Given this right, why should he pick something as unpopular as an opera to broadcast? Why not football games, which are now telecast free for the fans? Or the World Series? Or movies? As Martin Mayer, in *About Television*, points out in his very perceptive chapter on cable television, "It is only by prohibiting pay-TV entirely that Congress would be able to retain for that very high percentage *not* on the cable [at least forty percent in 1980, even by Sloan's estimates] access to programming that probably means more to poor people than to anyone else."

THE DILEMMA OF TELEVISION

The dilemma of cable television is the dilemma of all television. It promises much more than it delivers. Perhaps its very nature makes it impossible for television to deliver more than it does. But so often after an evening of viewing, one comes away with the feeling that it rarely even tries to be better.

The dilemma of television runs throughout the literature on the subject. For the most part it is a passionate literature: most everyone has strong feelings about the tube. From the outrage of a Jack Gould, the former *New York Times* TV critic—"The thing I object to is that the world of commerce is using the resources of the theatre, of all our culture, for sales purposes. I think they have an obligation . . . to put something back in that culture . . ."—to the understanding of a David Dempsey: "Millions of Americans find prime-time entertainment a nostalgic sanctuary—perhaps the only one left—where few men swear, everyone is politically neutral, the church is never criticized, men and women do not live together out of wedlock, the happy ending is assured, the criminal brought to trial and the little disturbances of life are usually resolved in favor of the status quo." This is surely not the world in which we live, but millions and millions of viewers find it a most inviting place.

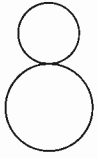
Perhaps the most serious dilemma facing television, the problem that has the most long-range consequences, is that a large number of the people who could do the most to improve the medium and make television a valuable part of both our communications and our cultural system have dropped out. Unable to insist on a medium designed for their individual tastes, they have abandoned the field and quit the game. Not sharing the tastes of the masses, they have been reluctant to attempt to work out some

system by which their minority cultural preferences can be met and satisfied. Educators, critics, clergymen, opinionmakers, and cultural leaders have largely deserted the medium, content that the truths they cling to are the real and eternal truths. But like all machines, television's virtues are the virtues of those who use it. Its weaknesses are human weaknesses. It is best that we learn to live with it, and to use it, because TV is probably here to stay.

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Movies and the Dream Factory

Those great Saturday afternoons. Wow, what a way to grow up. All you needed was fifty cents—your allowance, or maybe you cut the grass on Saturday morning. Then about noon, after a double-thick peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a glass of milk and a Twinkie, you'd head down to the show. You weren't going to the movies, you were going to the show. And you would line up outside (that was one of the best parts because you could mess around in line, push and shove until the usher or even the manager would come out and tell you to knock it off or he wouldn't let you into his "theater"). Doors opened at 12:45; the show started at 1. That would give you enough time to use the quarter you had left after you bought your ticket to get a box of popcorn (ten cents), and a box of JuJuBees or Dots or Good and Plenty or a giant-sized Tootsie Roll and still find your seat in the front three rows. The cartoons came first, six, seven, maybe even eight of them—Tom and Jerry, Bugs Bunny, Looney Tunes (That's All, Folks), Donald Duck, or Mighty Mouse. Then the serials—Chapter Ten of Flash Gordon and the Intruders from Zeon, Tim Tyler and his Jungle Machine, Don Winslow of the Coast Guard, or Ace Drummond. And then the features—cowboy movies with Hoot Gibson, Bob Steele, Ken Maynard, Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, or Roy Rogers. You could yell and holler during the mushy parts, cheer during the chase, throw paper wads and popcorn at the other guys during the parts when there was a lot of talking. At five o'clock you'd leave the show, exhausted, happy, ready to relive most of your Saturday afternoon experiences next week when you played with the guys after school. (Okay, I'm Bob Steele. You can't be Bob Steele, he only wears one gun and you've got two. OK, I'll be Hoppy, you can be Bob Steele.)

When you mention the movies to people over thirty, those are some of the kinds of things they will probably talk about. All week long kids waited for Saturday afternoon and the sanctuary of the darkened theater. Critic Pauline Kael remembers the anonymity and impersonality of just sitting in the darkened movie house, "enjoying ourselves, not having to be responsible, not having to be good." With few exceptions, those days are gone. And the chances are good that most of you who are reading this never experienced the Saturday matinee, which died when the neighborhood theater began to perish in the mid-fifties.

Of all the media we have considered, movies and the movie industry have probably changed the most in the past twenty years. *Newsweek* magazine began a recent cover story on the movies by noting that “The great Hollywood empire that ruled American tastes for more than half a century lies in dust, its tyrannical moguls dead or deposed, its back lots empty, its sound stages still, its ranks diminished and in disarray.”

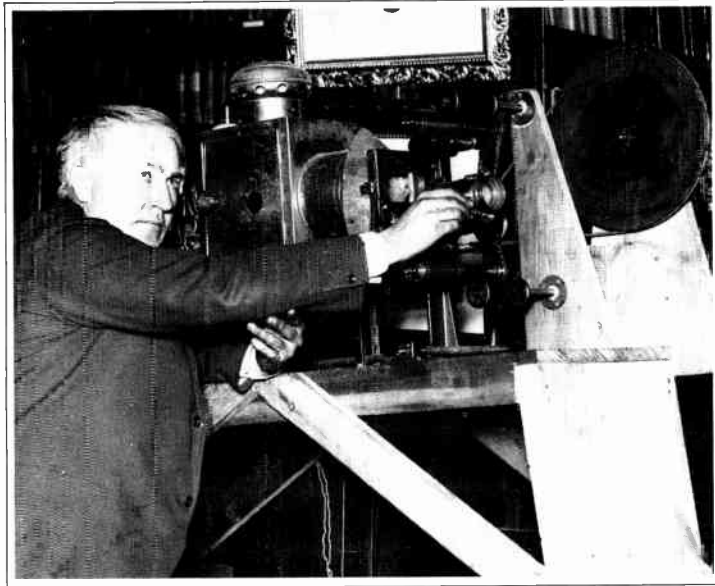
And that was only part of the story. The entire structure of the industry changed—not necessarily for better or worse, just changed. Today the giant Hollywood studios that controlled moviemaking for decades produce hardly more than 100 films each year. And the annual output of all American feature film makers has dropped to about 200 movies. Twenty-five years ago nearly ninety million people went to the movies each week; today there are only about fifteen million paid admissions weekly. In the past many people went to the movies two or three times a week; today even weekly attendance is rare.

With a strong emergence of foreign-made movies in the late 1950s, a dichotomy began to appear between the people who went to the theater to see a film and the people who went to the movies. Film became something to study seriously; it was something that was taught in college classes. Today an entire generation of young people are growing up with 16 mm. cameras in their hands. A new film generation is emerging. What is the difference between movies and film? It’s in a point of view, probably. In America, Bergman, Fellini, and Truffaut are film. Wilder, Hitchcock, and Frankenheimer are movies. Espresso coffee bars are film; popcorn stands are movies. Films have messages; they have something to say. Movies usually try only to entertain, to divert your attention. Films are meaningful experiences, are art. Movies are escapist fare, are vulgar. Or at least those are the major differences that emerge in the literature on the subject.

Well, this chapter is about the movies, what they are, who watches them, the long road they take from script to screen. What we see on the screen today is shaped first by the structure of the movie industry, and the structure of that industry has been shaped by its history, by the law, by economics, and by competing media—by television, for example. We will suggest how each of these has had an impact. Censorship, both inside and outside the industry, also has affected what appears on the screen. We will examine it as well. Finally, audience preference (or the producer’s perception of the audience preference) weighs heavily in the production of any movie. So we will consider who goes to the movies today—and why. But let’s first begin with a man who can take much of the blame, or the credit, for movies: good old Tom Edison.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS AN INCANDESCENT BULB

It has been said that if Thomas Edison hadn’t been born, someone would have had to invent him. It was the curious mind of Thomas Alva Edison that perhaps more than anything else stimulated the development of motion pictures. In the late 1880s Edison was developing the phonograph and thought it would be nice to have a device to do for the eye what a



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Although Thomas Alva Edison was a driving force behind development of the tools needed before a motion picture industry might emerge, for many years he considered movies as only novelties that were not to be taken seriously. Here he is in 1905 with one of his early motion picture machines.

phonograph did for the ear. The concept of moving pictures was an old one, going back to the second century and a Greek astronomer named Ptolemy. It probably comes as no surprise to you that movies don't really move. Ptolemy discovered that the human eye was in some ways inefficient. When it receives an image, it retains the image on the retina for a moment after the image itself changes or disappears. This is called *persistence of vision*. Other men coming later reasoned that if a series of still images, each one slightly different from the preceding one, were quickly flashed before the eye, the persistence of vision would fill in the gaps between one image and the next. Hence the movies.

While Edison was the force behind the development, his right-hand man, William Kennedy Dickson, can be credited for the development of the first crude implements—cameras and projecting devices. By most accounts, the first motion picture Dickson made was fifteen seconds long and depicted one of Edison's mechanics sneezing. *Fred Ott's Sneeze* was our first movie—and although we have progressed a long way since then, some recent attempts at moviemaking probably rank below his sneeze. The development of projecting and viewing equipment moved through the kinescope stage (the kinescope was a four-foot tall box that one person at a time peered into to view the film) to projectors and theaters. Early movies were looked upon as gadgets; people didn't care what they saw as long as it moved. But their first fascination with the device soon wore off and the audiences wanted something more before they would be willing to part with money. The development of the movie could have stopped right there had it not been for men like George Melies in France and Edwin Porter in this country who saw the movie not just as a clever device but as a means to tell a story. Melies' work predates Porter's by a couple of years, but the American

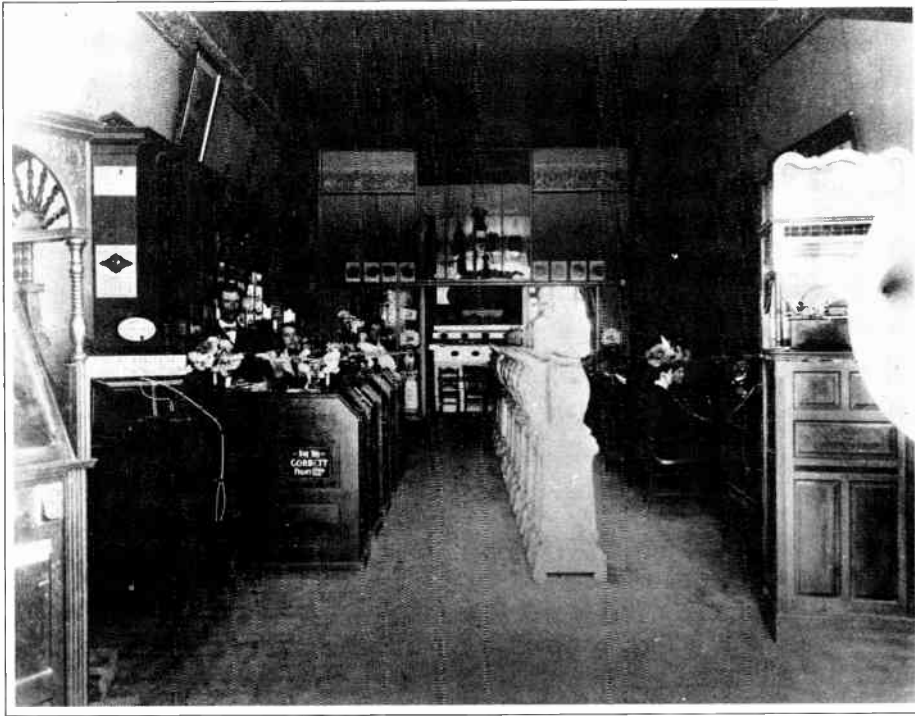


Many people consider this our first movie—William Kennedy Dickson's photographic record of Fred Ott's sneeze.

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had far more influence on the industry in this country. *The Great Train Robbery*—a story filled with gunfights, chases, and action as a band of armed desperadoes hold up the westbound special—set the mark for other American moviemakers. Porter's narrative style, used so effectively in this 1903 adventure, added a sparkling new dimension to the movies, which until that time had been content to photograph vaudeville performers, great moments in history, and Niagara Falls and other picture postcard scenes. With his film Porter set the length for American movies for many years—a single reel, between eight and twelve minutes long. He also set the pattern for Westerns, a Hollywood staple, for years to come. But his most important contribution was the development of the technique of film editing—putting a whole series of pieces of film, all shot separately, together to tell a story. Until that time moviemakers had turned the camera on at the beginning of the action and cranked it until the story ended. The limitations of this technique are obvious.

Theaters were developed to show the new movies. Many people credit John and Harry Davis with establishing one of the first movie houses. They charged a nickel admission and called their 96-seat palace a "nickelodeon."



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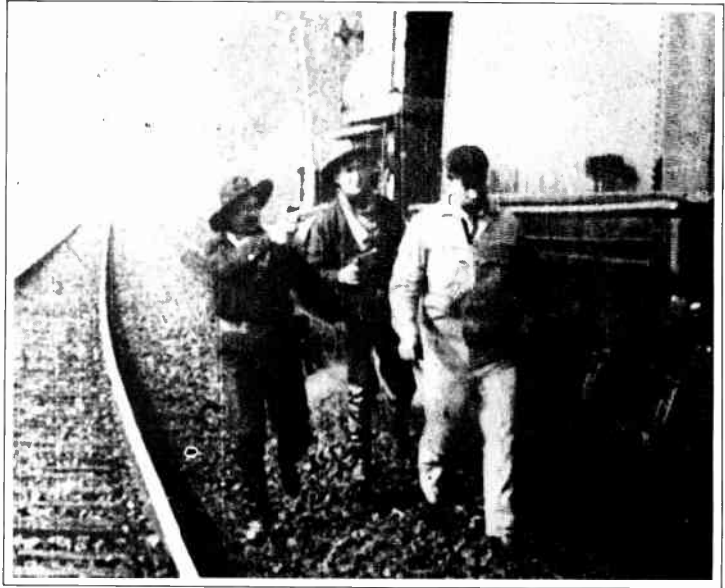
Long before groups of people were watching movies in theaters, they were watching them individually in front of kinetoscopes and vitascopes, peephole novelties in which the viewer would peer as the film was drawn across a light source. This was a typical vitascope and phonograph parlor, photographed in 1896 in Los Angeles.

And people flocked to enjoy the short motion pictures they showed. It wasn't long before the Davis boys were making \$1,000 a week, nickel by nickel.

Many of the people who like to think of film as a high art form often forget that the roots of the medium were in the masses. The cheap admission prices and the photographic nature of the movies dictated that the new medium would take its impetus from the peep shows, the music halls, the comic strips, or the Wild West shows—not from the high culture of Europe or nouveau riche America. Richard Schickel wrote in his book *The Movies*, "In the beginning movies—because of their brevity, their cheapness, and their silence—were truly an art of the masses, and, as experience if not art, truly central to the lives of many people. They imposed no language barrier, no intellectual hurdles not easily surmounted by the illiterate (or merely uncultivated), whether he was child, immigrant, or rube."

By 1908 there were between 8,000 and 10,000 nickelodeons grinding away in America. The movies had established themselves—and were here to stay, for at least a little while.

The first American narrative film, Edwin Porter's *Great Train Robbery*, was based on a popular vaudeville sketch of the era. Porter was really our first film editor, putting pieces of film shot separately together to tell a story. This movie set the pace for Westerns for decades to come.



LIGHTS OUT, PLEASE. ROLL'EM

The shape of American movies and the American movie industry, like all other mass media, has been dictated in great measure by what happened in the past. For example, the development of film distributors—men who would buy movies from their producers and then lease them to theater owners—initially set the commercial standards for film makers. Distributors were only interested in obtaining movies they believed would have strong audience appeal and would be popular. To sell his movies, then, the producer learned early that popular appeal was an important ingredient in any film he made.

As another example we might note that the selection of Hollywood as the “home” of the American movie industry was dictated in large part by the failure of Thomas Edison to secure proper international patents on many of his moviemaking devices. When foreign competitors began to duplicate the Edison equipment, the inventor banded together with the eight other companies to form the Motion Picture Patents Company and attempted to force independent film makers to use only the Patents Company's equipment. But the independent producers continued to use the less expensive contraband equipment to make their films and were soon forced to flee New York and New Jersey, the centers of moviemaking in 1910, to avoid constant legal harassment. The film makers needed some place warm and sunny that was close to an international border so they could escape the Company's process servers if need be. Hollywood, a rural suburb of Los Angeles, was perfect.

A staple of the movie industry for many years was developed about the same time as the independents were moving to the West Coast. Moviemaking was a tenuous business at best in its early days, and often a producer



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Probably no art form has had a single piece of work advance the state of the art so far and so fast as *Birth of a Nation* advanced film making. D. W. Griffith's immense production of a story about a southern family during the Civil War and reconstruction era must truly be seen to be believed. Large scale outdoor scenes, like this one, were all produced without a script.

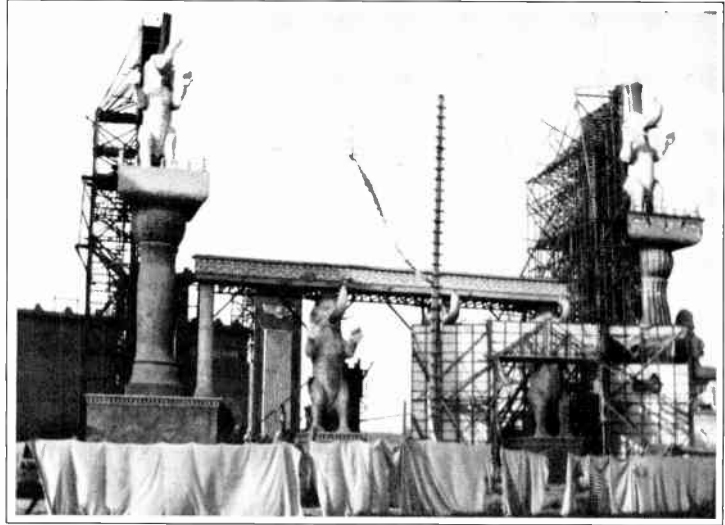
would put every cent he had into making a film. As long as the movie was successful, he would get his money back and could then make another film. But movies often weren't successful, and many film-making careers ended abruptly. Some kind of formula was needed to ensure the success of every movie, and the star system was devised as a solution. The producers sought to develop movie personalities—stars—that the audience would want to see regardless of what the movie was about or whether it was well made or not. So actors and actresses, who until that time had been anonymous players, suddenly found themselves the objects of giant publicity campaigns designed to give them star status. The system worked and remained a staple ingredient of Hollywood movies until the late sixties.

THE FOUNDING FATHERS

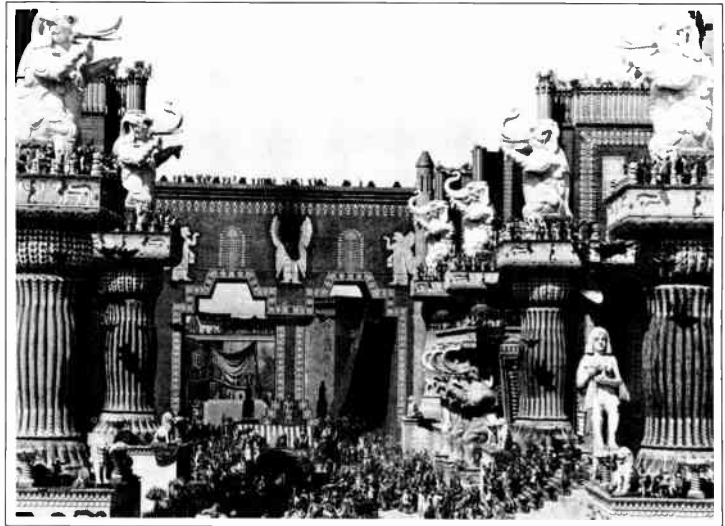
While there were many “greats” in the movie industry in its adolescence, two stand out as being more important than any others in shaping what we now see on the screen: David Wark Griffith and Thomas Ince.

If Griffith is the granddaddy of most modern moviemaking techniques, Ince is probably the sire of mass-produced films. More than Sennett, more than Chaplin, more than other more famous men, he would shape Hollywood, which in turn would shape movies.

Griffith began as an actor working for Edwin Porter. But his acting skills were weak and he ended up as a director instead. Some say if there is an art of film, Griffith conceived it—its language, its syntax. He was equally at home either shooting film or editing it—and he did both with consummate skill. He was the first to use the close-up, much to the disgust of his bosses



Griffith's follow-up to *Birth of a Nation* was *Intolerance*, four separate stories all linked by the theme of intolerance. The movie cost \$2,000,000—one of the most costly films made during the silent era—and while it was technically superior in parts, it was weak in others. And, more important, the film was a commercial failure, a flop. Part of the enormous costs went to construct elaborate sets, like the gates to the fabled city of Babylon. In the first picture the set is under construction. The second is the completed edifice.



who insisted that the public would not pay to see just half an actor. He used different camera angles and learned in editing that the time length of a scene could create a psychological tension in itself—the shorter the cuts, the greater the excitement. In his masterpiece, *Birth of a Nation*, a three-hour film that he shot without a script, he used the first moving camera, placed on a truck. He used split screen, triple split screen, and so forth. When the production was finally released in 1915 with a special score to be performed by a full symphony orchestra, the nation was astounded. "Like writing history in lightning," President Woodrow Wilson said. The

movie remains an epic today—nearly sixty years later—yet it is uncomfortable for the generation of the seventies to view Griffith's stereotypic treatment of blacks in the South or his sympathetic portrayal of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. But the movie is what we might expect from the director, considering his genesis as the son of a Confederate officer in the Civil War.

However, Griffith was never able to match the success of his first major film. Faced with the task of producing something even more impressive than *Birth of a Nation*, his movies became ponderous, preachy, more grandiose. He died in Hollywood in 1948, alone and broke.

Thomas Ince, who has been all but forgotten except by the most interested film historians, was the first creative movie producer. He began making films in 1914 at his studio called Inceville. Until that time, movies were usually made one at a time by a team headed by a producer. But Ince had the ability to act as the head man for several writing, directing, and technical teams at once. He would approve scripts, send them out to be shot, edit the final film, and then release it. Even though Ince's films were handled by different directors, each bore his creative mark, not theirs. And despite this mass-production technique, Ince's films were popular and well done. This style of production set the pace for Hollywood for many years to follow.

TALKIES, OR MAYBE SINGIES

By the 1920s the American film industry was big business. "Made in Hollywood" was the standard of excellence throughout the world. It was in this decade that sound movies were developed and soon the silver screen was filled with voices and music as well as pictures. As was also the case with the neglected development of television in the heyday of radio, sound motion pictures were possible some years before 1928, when the public first heard Al Jolson sing on the screen in *The Jazz Singer*. In 1923 Lee deForrest began showing short films that featured the sound as well as the sight of leading vaudeville acts. But this was a novelty. The big moviemakers were reluctant to upset their silent pictures' appellation and invest in sound. Most producers thought it was a passing fad anyway. It was a small unimportant studio that took the great leap forward. With very little in capital investment to lose, Warner Brothers made a few short subjects in sound. Following on the heels of this (and after Fox had presented its Movietone newsreel of the return of Charles Lindbergh from Paris in sound) Warner Brothers released the Jolson feature film *The Jazz Singer*. It wasn't really a talkie since only the musical numbers were in sound, but it became an immediate hit. More films—from Warners and others—followed. In 1930 the trade paper *Variety* summed up the impact of sound: ". . . it didn't do any more to the industry than turn it upside down, shake the entire bag of tricks from its pocket and advance Warner Brothers from last place to first in the league."

But were the effects all good? Clearly not. Directors tended to use sound not just to their advantage but as an easy way out. Director Lewis Milestone (*A Walk in the Sun*, the 1962 *Mutiny on the Bounty*): "Before sound you racked your brain trying to tell the story through pieces of business and pantomime. Then suddenly you didn't need any of that; you could simply say, 'Go to the door, somebody's there.'"



Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

The first talking feature film (*The Jazz Singer*) was really a “singie,” not a talkie. Only the songs were recorded on the film—the rest of the movie was silent. But the audience loved it, and the film marked the beginning of the end of the silent movie era.

Many important actors and actresses lost their jobs because of sound. The broad-shouldered, masculine romantic lead who led his men in an attack upon the native compound with a shrill soprano “Charge!” found work difficult to get. The baritone female leads had similar problems. Also, the camera, which had so painfully learned to move by the craftsmanship of men like Griffith, became stationary again. The machine had to be esconced in a small soundproof booth to prevent the microphone from picking up the camera’s whirring sounds, and the effect was almost as if the camera’s tripod had been nailed to the ground for good.

To make sound pictures Hollywood had to invest millions of dollars in new equipment and had to locate and develop an entire cadre of writers, directors, technicians, and performers who could cope with the new medium. These investments were costly. A movie industry that had been largely self-financing now found itself going to bankers, insurance companies, and investment firms for the capital to finance the new equipment and new movies. To get the needed cash, the moviemakers had to make some compromises that included opening their studios, offices, and board rooms



Documentary film making grew more slowly than feature film production. The first major documentary—and still one of the greatest films ever made—was Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*. Shot in 1919 and released in 1920, the film told an intimate story of an Eskimo family and its travails in surviving a rugged Arctic year. While theaters are no longer the stage for the documentary film maker—TV has replaced them—*Nanook* was a popular success with audiences in the early theaters.

Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

to their investors—who had an abiding interest in how their money was spent and how much their investments would return. And of course this had an impact on the movies. Creative experiments were discouraged; only sure things, movies that couldn't fail, were produced. For the first time, finishing a picture on time within budget became more important for a director than the quality of the product. The production-line style of film making was encouraged. Economics imposed a tight restriction on the length of the film, its setting, the cost of the talent employed, and the subject of the plot. Richard Schickel again, in *The Movies*: "Thus certain conventions of plot, style of acting and directing, even dialogue were quickly imposed on each film genre (Westerns, crime films, historical romances, musicals, etc.). Audiences came to expect, even to desire, these conventions, and were disappointed when they were not observed."

The films of the period became highly stylized. But surprisingly there were good movies produced, films that took the limitations of the period and still created worthwhile entertainment. Probably the most controversial picture of the thirties was *Citizen Kane*. Orson Welles' first film was believed by many to be the story of William Randolph Hearst, a study of the corruption wrought by power. Many think it was the finest film ever made in Hollywood and the most technically perfect film ever produced. "To view the film for the first time is to learn to see all over again," wrote critic Schickel. But others aren't as positive. Director John Frankenheimer (*The Manchurian Candidate*, *Seven Days in May*, *Grand Prix*) said he found the film photographically perfect. "The only trouble with it is you really don't care about anybody in it," he adds. "And I suppose that really violates the whole concept of drama, which is that you have to have somebody you can really care about." Nearly thirty-five years later the jury is still out.

MOVIES ARE BETTER THAN EVER

In the 1930s and 40s moviegoing became more than just an entertainment for many people. It became a way of life. People didn't go to see a particular movie, they went to the movies. (Much as people today don't watch a television program, they watch television.) To satisfy the voracious appetites of the movie audience, the film factories of Hollywood began mass-producing movies. It was in this era that studio domination of the movie industry peaked. The cultural fountain for much of America sprang from the corporate offices of studios like MGM, Paramount, Republic, 20th-Century Fox, and RKO. The domination of the movie industry by the "majors" was nearly complete.

If you wanted to make movies, write movies, direct movies, act in movies, or do anything else remotely associated with movies you generally worked for a studio. All the key personnel were under contract to the studio. A story, which might be a script, a novel, a short story, or just an idea, was purchased by the studio. An executive producer would build a team, from personnel under contract, of a director, actors and actresses, writers, cameramen, and so forth. The studios built up impressive companies of players, stables of craftsmen and creative talent. They owned huge back

Using many of the members of the Mercury Theatre troupe that helped him create his "War of the Worlds" broadcast in 1938, Orson Welles produced *Citizen Kane* for RKO in 1941. The picture remains one of the most controversial ever made. Welles' new camera and story techniques dazzled some critics, bored others. Director Francois Truffaut has asserted that *Citizen Kane* was the film that started the largest number of young film makers on their careers.



lots, hundreds of acres of property where exotic fantasies were played out daily in cardboard buildings and balsawood towns. Gigantic sound stages were built and used daily to keep productions grinding out. Men like Louis B. Mayer at MGM, Harry Cohn at Columbia, and Jack Warner at Warner Brothers—the moguls—ruled the Dream Factory. But if the homes in which the stars resided and the private clubs where they played resembled a kind of glamorous fairyland to a visitor to Southern California, the places where they worked, the studios, were more reminiscent of automobile factories in Detroit or steel mills in Pittsburgh—all business.

Because the movies were products of a studio system, they took on a kind of personality. All the films from a single studio tended to look alike because the same men at each of the majors picked the material and hired the writers and directors. The same stars acted in all the pictures from a single studio; even film processing was handled by a different lab for each studio. There was a studio style.

But the huge investments in personnel, equipment, buildings, and property had drawbacks—chiefly that unless everybody and everything was being used most of the time, the studio would have a fantastic overhead drain on its financial status. To compensate for this, the Dream Factories moved in many directions. First, grades of movies were produced. The top pictures, the best scripts, were given to the best directors, who could use the best people and could operate with the biggest budgets. But the studios also produced a second line of movies called “B pictures.” These films were low-budget, short-schedule, crank’em-out specials. They kept second-line technicians, actors and actresses, directors and writers busy. They weren’t very good but they weren’t supposed to be. They were designed to make use of the overhead and keep the movies coming out, and as a kind of a minor league to test both players and creative personnel. They served all these functions well.

The studios also got into the distribution business, eliminating the middleman. As distributors for their own products they instituted a plan called *block booking*. It was simple enough. If an exhibitor wanted the studio’s good films, he had to take the bad ones as well. With every A picture came one or two B pictures. Theater owners protested this plan, but were almost powerless. If they wanted the big ones, they took the little ones as well—they liked it or lumped it. Block booking, a practice which began in the twenties, flowered in the thirties, and would last until the late forties, provided a guarantee that any film that Hollywood produced would get a showing in most cities.

But the industry padded its hand another way as well. Not only did the major studios control distribution by the 1930s, but each of the studios owned a vast chain of theaters that were used as outlets for their movies. In some towns the majors owned so many theaters (often a single studio would own two or three movie houses in a single town) that it was impossible for an independent exhibitor to procure anything worth showing. The majors had things tightly locked up. They were on top of the world. In 1947, eighty-seven million people were going to the movies every week. (That’s as many as go every six weeks now.) Forty percent of the population of the

nation went to the movies once or more a week, and another twenty-five percent went at least once a month. The double bill at movie theaters, which had sprouted up in neighborhoods throughout a city, changed twice a week. The industry was putting out 500 to 600 movies a year. And people were crying for more. Everything appeared to be going great. And then, from their towers high atop the entertainment industry, the studio bosses began to see wire contraptions appearing on the rooftops of homes across America. And while they tried to figure out what this was all about, federal government attorneys began to dismantle their heretofore unscalable towers—from the bottom up. There was hard travellin' ahead.

THE G-MEN MOVE IN

Independent theater owners had gone to court often in the thirties in their attempt to force the majors to stop their block-booking practices. They were unsuccessful, but their actions had not gone unnoticed by the federal government. And in the late 1930s the Attorney General moved in not only to stop block booking but also to force the studios to divest themselves of their theater chains. The industry won successive extensions of divestiture through the war years. In 1947 a court ruled that the studios could keep their theaters—for the time being—but forbade the majors to have fixed admission prices or continue block booking films. No exhibitor could be forced to take unwanted features in order to get the first-rate movies. Although the matter appeared settled, it wasn't, as an aggressive new attorney general—Tom Clark, who was the father of Ramsey Clark, and who would later be appointed to the Supreme Court—instituted new action to wrest control of the theater chains away from the majors. In 1948 the Supreme Court rejected an industry-sponsored compromise and told the theaters they must sell their movie palaces.

From the standpoint of traditional anti-monopoly law, the Supreme Court action appeared warranted—in fact, badly needed. The Hollywood studios, established when young moviemakers fled New York to escape the Edison trust, had built up a trust of their own, one that amounted to a stranglehold on the industry. The court action broke it.

But making movies is a little different from making canned soup or razor blades. When the traditional antitrust solution was applied it did correct the fundamental economic inequities, but it had other consequences. In his book, *Hollywood at Sunset*, which could hardly be called sympathetic to the studios, Charles Higham nevertheless notes that the government action had disastrous effects on the film industry and the very character of film entertainment: "For confidence in a product, the feeling that it could flow out along guaranteed lines of distribution, was what gave many Hollywood films before 1948 their superb attack and vigor. Also, the block-booking custom, evil though it may have been, ensured that many obscure, personal, and fascinating movies could be made and released, featherbedded by the system and underwritten by more conventional ventures."

The end of block booking and the theater chains also killed the B picture production lines. And while these second-line features were hardly artisti-



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As grand in its scale as *Birth of a Nation*, MGM's *Gone With the Wind* for years ranked as Hollywood's leading money-maker. Only recently has GWTW's financial success been surpassed, first by *The Sound of Music* and later by *The Godfather*. This picture shows the off-camera preparation for one of the film's most moving moments, a depiction of hundreds of wounded and dying confederate soldiers as they await medical treatment at a railroad station.

cally important, their production was a valuable training ground for young people interested in moviemaking. We have lost several generations of competent young talent, the type with professional competence that is the basis of a viable film industry.

While the government was dismantling the underpinnings of the nation's moviemaking industry, the studio bosses found out that those strange wire gadgets on the tops of homes were television antennas. And it didn't take long for the Hollywood brass to realize that this new device—which some poor souls thought would go away soon—would have an impact on their empires as well. In the early fifties people began staying home, popping their own corn, and watching the tube. In an era when Milton Berle was everybody's Uncle Miltie, they stopped queuing up at movie theaters. Attendance started a slide downward that wouldn't stop for many years.

THE DREAM FACTORY RETOOLS

As the industry pondered how it should respond to the action by the government (divestiture took place in 1950 after final industry appeals ended) and the new medium of television, the first casualties occurred. Weak studios, some of which might have died anyway, collapsed. Republic, Allied Artists, and Monogram were the first to go. Others would follow. Studios first cut back production, hoping to cut overhead. With no market for B pictures, hundreds of people who formerly worked on them were not needed. But this did little to stem the tide.

With fewer movies produced, the possibility of success or failure loomed



It was lavish sets like these, plus fat salaries for its leading players, that pushed the cost of *Cleopatra* over \$10 million. While Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton cavorted on the Nile, Twentieth-Century Fox nearly went down the tubes. In addition, the 1963 movie was neither the box office nor the critical success that its producers had hoped for.

greater with each production. Each was a greater gamble. To attain a greater measure of "success insurance" for its films, the industry explored two schemes. The first was to produce a product that couldn't be duplicated on television. Although the small screen could copy the light comedies, the Westerns, or personal drama, it couldn't reproduce the spectacular. The \$70 million dollars that *Gone With the Wind* had earned was evidence that the movie audience appreciated films on a grand scale. So big movies, propped up with gigantic budgets, filled the screen. Some, like *Ben Hur*, made it. But others bombed and almost took the studios with them as they foundered. MGM lost its shirt on the remake of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and Fox almost went under during the filming of *Cleopatra*.

To make the big movies really different, Hollywood sought new filming processes. After an abortive attempt with three-dimensional movies (with the red and blue cardboard-framed glasses) the dream factory tied its wagon to the Cinemascope process. The wide screen debuted in 1953 in Fox's *The Robe*, a biblical spectacular. The new processes were initially crude—faces

were blurred in center screen close-ups—but they improved. And by 1962 when director David Lean showed in *Lawrence of Arabia* that the wide screen could add an artistic dimension to some stories, the new technical schemes (Todd A-O and Cinerama were late starters and less useful) were accepted and appreciated by the audiences.

But the spectacular was only one route Hollywood could take. Another was to attempt to lure “quality” audiences into the theater with small, well-made, black-and-white movies. There were some successes, as with *Gentlemen’s Agreement* and *Call Northside 777*, but for every box office success like *Marty*, there was always a bomb like *Bachelor Party*.

It soon became clear that there were no formulas that would insure success. The audience, which was still shrinking, seemed to be taking each picture—big or small, good or bad—on its own merits. Unable to recoup its losses in this fashion and resigned that television would probably stay with us for a while, the studios sought other means to survive.

A big contributor of red ink on the profit and loss statement was the tremendous cost of material overhead—studios, equipment, back lots, and so forth—that was not being used. So slowly the industry began to rent space and equipment to the television industry, which needed production facilities. They also began to sell their movie libraries to the networks, which in the long run was not a smart move, even though it beefed up cash flow when money was needed. When the studios finally did get into television program production, they found they were competing with themselves—that is, their old movies were often programmed at the same time, or instead of, their new programs. Warner Brothers first broke the ice on entering television production in the late fifties with a series of programs—“Cheyenne,” “77 Sunset Strip,” “Hawaiian Eye,” and so forth. Today, of course, nearly all television production is done in the studios of the Dream Factory. Some programs are produced by the studios, some are produced in facilities rented from the moviemakers, and some are produced by companies like Desilu Productions that have purchased old movie studios outright. The moviemakers also tried to diversify by investing in records and Broadway shows. As their financial plight deepened over the years and one by one the old studio bosses died, the stumbling movie companies were fair game in the growing conglomeratization of American business and industry. RKO was the first to fall when it became RKO-General, a subsidiary of the General Tire and Rubber Company. Paramount Pictures is now owned by Gulf and Western, and Transamerica picked up United Artists.

Finally, the studios that still had money tied up in contract players, sound stages, and back lots, began the big sell-off. The huge ranches that were used to shoot Westerns were sold and often subdivided. The back lots themselves became suburban neighborhoods or (in at least one case) oil fields. In the spring of 1970 MGM auctioned off its gigantic collection of props and memorabilia—Gable’s trenchcoat, Ben Hur’s chariot, even Judy Garland’s red shoes from *The Wizard of Oz* (which brought \$15,000). Twentieth-Century Fox held a similar auction in 1971.

But as the auctioneer’s gavel banged in the great sound stages, most people in the industry were aware that it was more than just the sale of

No star shone brighter or briefer during the fifties than James Dean, the sullen and moody hero of *Rebel Without a Cause*. While he made only three motion pictures before his untimely death, Dean was a major cult hero of the era, and became the first of a long line of misunderstood adolescents pictured on the screen. Sal Mineo and Natalie Wood co-starred in *Rebel*.



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props and costumes. It was the final dismantling of an industry. The many patrons of Hollywood and its legendary days of powerful studios, glamorous movie stars, and big box offices, were scrambling through the junk heap, rescuing what little of its lore remained. But while it was the end of an industrial structure, it was not the end of an industry—moviemaking went on. A lot of changes had taken place, but a lot was left the same as well.

CONTEMPORARY MOVIE MAKING

The Hollywood that remained after the bloodlettings of the fifties and sixties was a new Hollywood. There were new movie audiences, there was a new economic structure, there were new movies. In the case of structure and economics, with few exceptions, the change was complete. But while there were new audiences and new movies, motion pictures reminiscent of yesterday were still being produced. And when they were well done, the old audiences returned.

Today's film audience is young. And although estimates vary, most authorities suggest that seventy percent of the audience is under thirty. The movies have always appealed to young people, and young people have been appealed to by Hollywood. Moviegoing is a social function for young people—it is a basic part of dating behavior, and in a large measure this accounts for some of the younger generation's interest in motion pictures. At the same time, film themes today are especially appealing to young people. The use of rock music as sound tracks in many films has also bound the young and the moviemaker even closer together.

The audience today is also more affluent—it has to be, at the prices charged for theater admission. The cost of moviegoining has risen more than any aspect of the mass media. The audience also tends to be better educated. And that the audience is smaller goes without saying. It is a selective audience, one interested in seeing a particular movie.

The movies produced for this new audience come from a system that has been drastically revised. As you recall, in the thirties, forties and early fifties, most American movies were made in Hollywood by major film studios that had both the creative and technical talent under contract. Such is not the case today. Few films are made on Hollywood sound stages; most are made on location, often abroad. Fifteen years ago when hard times hit Hollywood, the craft unions raised wages and other demands to the point that it was cheaper for a movie to be made overseas. For a time, at least, some movie stars liked this as well, for it sheltered their multimillion dollar wages from the American tax collectors. Some producers, like Sam Spiegel (*Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Suddenly Last Summer*), announced they were leaving Hollywood for good—and have made good their threats.

Studios are no longer of prime importance in the production of films. The independent producer is the key today, and for the most part the studios have chosen to be distribution and financing agencies. The idea of independent production is not new. After all, that's the way moviemaking started in Hollywood. We have always had successful independents. But it has been only recently that the independents have begun to dominate. United Artists was the first major studio to see the advantages of limiting its role to finance and distribution. In 1951 Arthur Krim sold the UA shop, abandoned the contract personnel, and began working with independent producers. The system as it now works is quite simple, but varies significantly from the traditional studio setup.

A movie today begins with a package. Someone, usually the producer (but it could be the director or even a performer) gathers a creative and production team around a story. This team contains the key men to turn the story into a movie. Although the producer obviously has great discretion in choosing his team, even at this early stage in the game the system can impose limitations. Talent agencies, for example, which represent the creative people of the industry, can force a "package" on a producer. Let's say you want to make a movie with John Neat in a leading role. When you talk to Neat's agent, MCA, they agree to your contract—but only if you use Mona Nice as a co-star and Frank Lens as director. The agency also represents these folks and frankly they need work. If you want Neat bad enough, you'll take Nice and Lens as well.

Once constructed, the package is then presented to a financing agency, often a studio—MGM, Twentieth-Century Fox, UA, and so forth. The studio has the ability to get financing and the means to distribute the movie when it is completed. If the studio likes the package and agrees to finance it or find financing for it and to distribute the movie, it gets in return a percentage of the gross revenues the movie brings in. In other words, the studio takes its money off the top; it gets its money first.

The studio often has to go to outside backers to find the money to finance

the film—especially a movie with a big budget. So it must be convinced the idea is a good one. What does the studio look for? Primarily, potential box office success. And this can be assured (or at least appear assured) in many ways. A bankable literary property—a best-selling novel or hit Broadway musical—usually insures at least break-even money. Sometimes such properties fail, but not often. Proven star attraction used to be an important factor but is not as much any more. Julie Andrews, fresh from successes on Broadway and in *Mary Poppins*, died in a bad movie entitled *Star*. On the other hand, the unknowns in the cast of *Goodbye, Columbus* proved to be winners. And all the studios turned down *The Graduate* because they felt it lacked star attraction. The cost of a movie is another factor. The same package that might find support at \$2 million might not get \$4 million. Some producers and directors have great difficulty finding support for a movie they want to make. Often they are young, inexperienced, or have a poor track record. Others are actually sought out by studios and financiers. These are what producer Ingo Preminger (*M*A*S*H*) calls “the bankable moviemakers, men you can borrow money on.” He said in *Esquire*, “They, more than anyone else, with their almost uncontrolled power and influence, bear the responsibility for the shape of films to come. . . . They have the means to realize their creative dreams without the need for compromise in order to pacify some banker’s objections.”

Obviously, the method used for financing films exerts a great deal of pressure on moviemakers. The entire system is geared toward making safe movies, ones that will show a return or at least earn costs. The film maker who approaches the studio with a daring and controversial idea rarely gets financing, or enough financing, to make the kind of picture he wants. The studio, the bank, and everyone involved at the financial end are reluctant to risk money on a motion picture that, although critically important, is a box-office failure. The importance of *The Graduate* was not its critical acclaim but its financial success. It proved that it was possible to make a movie that takes a fairly strong social position—and still make money. Indirectly, at least, it made films like *M*A*S*H*, *Midnight Cowboy*, and others possible. Still, there is tremendous pressure in Hollywood to make safe movies—and this pressure does influence content. Some directors are bitter about it. Robert Aldrich (*Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *The Killing of Sister George*) recently wrote in *The Celluloid Muse* that “What has happened is that this industry has gone into the money business and not into the film business, and, since they are in the money business, they tend to look for guarantees and protections and things like that before anything else.”

Although his description of the system is accurate, Aldrich is wrong when he asserts this is a new phenomenon: the industry was always that way. And while it is fun to sit back and crucify the movie moguls as the ones responsible for “the system,” the blame is not confined to the paneled offices. The creators themselves—directors and writers—are also interested in making profitable films and are frequently willing to set aside a principle here and there to turn a profit. It is one of the great deceptions of our times that many people think the modern generation of film makers puts social

comment and ideas above making money, that movies like *M*A*S*H* and *Easy Rider* are made in spite of the system. Most young moviemakers are just keen students of the new film audience, and, realizing that it is young, educated, and involved, set out to make movies that appeal to this group, films that say the right things. There is little courage involved in the realization that you aren't going to make much money today shooting *Captains Courageous* or *The Halls of Montezuma*. Typical of the new "young" film makers is 26-year-old Dennis Friedland, who produced *Joe*. Although *Joe* carried a message, it also grossed many times its \$300,000 cost. Friedland is not the kind who undertakes movies without some understanding of the economics involved. For example, he says, "Before we make a motorcycle film, we want to know the most money one has ever made and the least and the average. Then we figure a budget that will pretty well guarantee a return on our investment."

In late 1972 three of the "new generation" Hollywood directors banded together into a Directors Company—not for creative reasons, but for financial security. William Friedkan (*The French Connection*), Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*), and Peter Bogdanovich (*The Last Picture Show*, *What's Up Doc?*) formed the moviemaking company in a partnership with



While Marlon Brando's *The Wild Ones* was probably the first true "bike" movie, *Easy Rider* took the honors as the most popular movie in that genre during the sixties and seventies. This movie more than any other exploited the new symbols of the "get it together" generation—bikes, pot, and the false freedom of the road and non-involvement.

Brando won and refused to accept the Oscar for his performance in *The Godfather*. The film, one of a dozen to reveal the inner workings of the Syndicate or the Family, had a strong cast and solid direction from Francis Ford Coppola and brought large audiences to the movie houses. This made *The Godfather* the biggest money-maker of all time.



Paramount Pictures. The directors put up their talent and Paramount put up 31.5 million dollars for a guarantee against twelve pictures. Other directors joined the company as well. Bogdanovich explained recently in *Newsweek*, "The advantage is that we each share in the others' successes and we don't lose in the others' failures, and we'll all be stockholders in a major company."

Where is it written that creativity and successful moviemaking can't go hand in hand? Nowhere. And, in fact, the two often do. Still, when they conflict, no matter how creativity is defined, the survival of the system dictates that economic considerations will be given first priority in nearly every instance. Hollywood has come a long way from its inception, from the early days of *ad hoc* independent production, through the days of tight studio control, back to a more free-wheeling production system. But the economics of film making—the pressure put on the creator to produce a product that will sell and turn a profit—hasn't changed much in the past sixty years. The medium still must be responsive to what the public will buy.

MOVIES AND THE LAW

Making safe movies implies a great deal more than merely making profitable ones. Until very recently it meant making sterile movies as well, ones that would not offend the moral, political, or religious standards of the audience. For decades movies were the most censored medium of all. They remain so to the extent that film is the only medium that our courts have permitted legal authorities to pre-censor with impunity.

The law does to some extent shape what is seen on the screen. So do

various industry codes, which are schemes for self-censorship. Religious groups still influence film content to a limited extent, as do political and ethnic groups. Pressure is applied at various points, and although today the moviemaker has relative freedom to do his thing, he is constantly aware that if he does not bend to some of these pressures the chances of his films succeeding are limited.

The government censor has played a role almost from the beginning of the history of commercial moviemaking. In 1915 the first censorship case found its way into the chambers of the Supreme Court where Justice Joseph McKenna and a majority of this high tribunal ruled that the activities of the Ohio film censorship board did not violate the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Movies are business, McKenna wrote, not part of the press of the nation nor organs of public opinion. Exhibition of films is originated and conducted for profit. And, he wrote, the First Amendment was never designed to protect such enterprises.

This tacit approval of prior censorship by the Supreme Court gave the green light to local censors throughout the nation who cranked up their mighty engines of suppression. For nearly forty years the city and state censorship boards—often made up of police sergeants, PTA presidents, and other “artistic critics”—had their own way. It wasn't until 1952 when the state of New York denied a license to the film *The Miracle*, a simple religious story the regents of the state believed was sacrilegious, that the Supreme Court reversed its stand of 1915 and ruled that motion pictures were indeed within the range of speech protected by the First Amendment. “It cannot be doubted that motion pictures are a significant medium for a communication of ideas,” wrote Justice Tom Clark in *Burstyn v. Wilson*. Seven years later the Supreme Court affirmed its stand when it again turned the tables on New York regents who had refused to license a film that “portrayed acts of sexual immorality as desirable.” Justice Potter Stewart wrote

What New York has done . . . is to prevent the exhibition of a motion picture because that picture advocates an idea—that adultery under [certain] circumstances may be proper behavior. Yet the First Amendment's basic guarantee is of freedom to advocate ideas.

With two victories under their belt, film distributors and exhibitors thought the time was ripe to attack the doctrine of prior censorship head on. Why should a city or state have the right to preview every film before it is shown and demand changes or ban it from exhibition? A case was brought in 1961 in which this practice was directly challenged. But in a split decision the court rejected the argument that the First Amendment precluded prior censorship of movies. Justice Clark, this time coming down on the other side of the fence, ruled that there is no complete and absolute freedom to exhibit, even once, any and every kind of motion picture.

The law remains this way today. Film censorship boards are constitutional, and cities or states can ask to see movies first, before they are shown to the people. But the fact is that in most communities such boards have given way to the changing moral climate and the Supreme Court's liberal definitions of obscenity. Only the “grossest of the gross” films face the censor's scissors,

despite recent modifications by the Supreme Court on the legal definition of obscenity. Censors are far more concerned today with live sexual demonstrations on stage than what is portrayed on the silver screen.

OTHER CENSORS

Censorship would be neither created nor sustained without pressure groups, wrote Murray Schumach, author of *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor*. And as we saw with television, pressure groups—private censors, perhaps—have always been active in attacking the film industry. As early as 1907 they began pushing owners of nickelodeons to clean up their fare. But it wasn't until the 1920s, when the film industry sought to capitalize on the changing American morals and cinematic sex and sin became big business, that such pressure groups had an important impact. By the end of 1921 strict censorship laws had been proposed in 36 states. To thwart this legal censorship the industry formed the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association of America to act as an in-house censor for the Dream Factory. Will Hays, a former Presbyterian elder and postmaster in the Harding administration, was named to head the association.

The informal censorship of the MPPDAA was not sufficient to stop the criticism of the industry, so in 1930 the moviemakers adopted the Motion Picture Production Code, which outlawed most of the kinds of hanky-panky that had been portrayed by Hollywood for nearly twenty-five years. Drafted by a Catholic publisher and a Jesuit priest, the code was a most Puritan document designed to safeguard American sexual and religious morals as well as our national image.

Before a film could be released for public showing it was previewed by industry censors and given a seal—if it met the production code standards. This scheme worked until the mid-fifties when two films, *The Man With the Golden Arm*, which depicted drug addiction, and *The Moon is Blue*, an innocent sex comedy of the Doris Day genre, were released without the seal and won widespread public acceptance. This broke the back of the code.

Today the industry has retreated to a labeling rather than censoring approach. Accompanied by much fanfare, a rating system was devised. Now the industry itself identifies films that are unsuitable for children and those that might even be too strong for some adults, and labels them. An X rating identifies the most sordid category of film and has proved to be a great advertising gimmick to get an audience into the theater to see an otherwise worthless film.

The rating system could hardly be called an answer to the problems, if indeed problems exist. Not long after it was instituted, leading Catholic and Protestant organizations, which had backed the system early in the game, withdrew support on the grounds that films were being incorrectly rated and that there was too much sex and sin in movies that were not restricted. Producers, who felt the theme of a movie was more important than any single segment of it, were often dismayed when the rating people would restrict a film—thus sharply limiting its potential audience—because of a brief nude sequence or something equally innocuous. Stanley Kubrick cut less than a minute from *Clockwork Orange* after its first tour as an X movie



Many persons suggested that the self-censorship of the industry should be aimed less at sexual matters and more at the violence in movies like *Bonnie and Clyde*. The Depression-era drama, which was a box office success as well as a winner of some critical acclaim, was an early product of the “violence-in-slow-motion-can-be-neat” school of moviemaking.

so the under-eighteen audience might be permitted to see the film the second time around. Finally, many people complained that the ratings were concerned only with sexual content and not with more “dangerous” or “offensive” kinds of material—notably violence.

WOULD-BE CENSORS

As the original Motion Picture Producers’ code was first applied in the 1930s, clever minds in the Dream Factory devised ways to evade it. This prompted a committee of Catholic bishops who were dissatisfied with the efforts of the industry to police itself to announce in 1934 that a Legion of Decency would be formed. The Catholic organization received support from both Protestant and Jewish groups and was successful for nearly twenty years in applying pressure in Hollywood. The Legion rated all movies on a six-step scale from *morally unobjectionable for all persons* to *condemned*. Church members were prohibited from seeing films that did not win the agency’s approval. The pressure group was successful in winning changes in many films, such as *Lolita* and the *Chapman Report*. Some scenes in *Elmer Gantry* were changed to avoid a rating of *not suitable for children*, and much violence and homosexuality was cut from *Spartacus*. The Legion and Hollywood got along fine until the early fifties when more and more movies began to appear that dealt with violence, sex, and moral degeneracy. There had been a change in public morals in post-war America, and the movie industry wanted to win back television viewers by giving them material TV would not present. Foreign films, produced without the sanctions of the Legion, became more popular and many U. S. movies were made overseas,

away from domination of the censors. The threat of economic boycott, the weapon of the Legion for twenty-five years, proved to be a paper tiger. Low ratings often increased rather than damaged, the popularity of a movie. Slowly the Legion of Decency ratings fell into disuse.

Religious groups were not the only ones that attempted to shape the fare for the screen. The NAACP worked long—and rightfully so—for more black participation in Hollywood, where scripts on racial topics and integration were ignored for decades, and where the craft unions were nearly devoid of minority workers. After the threat of a massive black boycott in 1963, the industry cautiously responded with minority hiring and began to use blacks in various roles. But years would pass before the industry squarely confronted the race issue. The black pressure groups, however, did not confine their efforts to these problems, but sought to censor films like *Gone With the Wind* and Walt Disney's *Song of the South* to their own liking.

Jewish groups took similar stands with more success. They succeeded, for example, in limiting in the U.S. the exhibition of the British film *Oliver Twist* with Dickens' portrayal of the Jew Fagin who taught children to steal for him. They were also successful in editing from the script of *Freud* an anti-Semitic remark uttered by a psychotic. They had less success in restricting the exhibition of *The Desert Fox*, which pictured German general Erwin Rommel in a humane manner. They failed to stop Dore Schary (himself a Jew) from filming *Crossfire*, a motion picture about anti-Semitism. Jews said they feared the movie would have a reverse effect and provoke anti-Semitism.

Italians were critical of Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* because the gangsters were Italian. Mexican-Americans have attacked other films. Women's lib groups have sought boycotts of "sexist" movies. And the list goes on, and on, and on. One Hollywood producer remarked, "the perfect villain should be unemployed, white, American, without religious, professional, labor union, or other affiliations."

UNCLE SAM, THE CENSOR

One of our leading censors is the U. S. government, which exerts tremendous pressure on film makers who wish to use government facilities or personnel for a movie. Murray Schumach, in *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor*: "It is virtually impossible for anyone in Hollywood to make a movie about the armed forces, the Department of State, American diplomacy, bureaus dealing with narcotics, immigration, crime, counterfeiting—and many other subjects—without running into federal censorship."

Any request for government assistance is met with a demand for approval of script. If you want to film aboard a warship the Navy feels it has the right to censor the entire script, arguing that it doesn't want the Navy to be presented in a ridiculous or bad light. This kind of censorship has led to many problems. Producers of the *Caine Mutiny* had nightmares with the Department of the Navy, which insisted there had never been a mutiny in the U. S. Navy. In *The Young Lions* the Army insisted the anti-Semitism of one of the characters be diluted. In the book *From Here to Eternity* a sadistic

officer was promoted. In the movie the Army insisted that he be cashiered out of the service. The State Department was highly uncooperative in the filming of *The Ugly American* and dropped strong hints to the studio—Universal—that if it insisted on continuing with the project the government might make it difficult for the motion picture company to collect its box office receipts taken in abroad.

Political censorship assumed perhaps its ugliest form in the late forties and early fifties when Congress and several right-wing hate groups conducted a witch hunt in Hollywood for left wingers and communists. The roots of the trouble were buried with the roots of the industry. The men who led Hollywood in the thirties were self-made and poorly educated, men who distrusted intellectuals and anyone who leaned politically to the left. The politics of the film colony were neo-Fascist and this led many more moderate members of the industry to form anti-Nazi leagues before World War II. After the war it was easy to describe the anti-Nazis as communists, and that's what two congressional investigating committees—first the Dies Committee and later the Thomas Committee—succeeded in doing. During World War II Hollywood produced several “propaganda” movies that were highly sympathetic to the (then) U. S. ally, the Soviet Union. But after the war the Russians were no longer allies and the men who worked on these movies were called to task. Writers and directors of films like *Mission to Moscow*, *North Star* and *Song of Russia* became the first targets. The studio bosses, in a panic, realized they had to escape any charge of sympathy for the Reds. They feared a massive public revulsion, so one by one, the leaders of the Dream Factory denounced their (former) employees. They pretended to have fired these men earlier and asserted that they (the bosses) had attempted to alter and change scripts critical of America. Blacklists developed and those whose names appeared on them were stopped from working in the industry. John Howard Lawson, for example, a left-wing author who had scripted a movie called *Action in the North Atlantic*, a tribute to the American merchant marine that idealized the communal life aboard ships as the men sought to bring supplies to Russia, was labeled as a leading Red sympathizer. He was but one of many.

Hollywood sent its best to testify against the leftists, some of whom had joined the Communist party in the thirties. Adolph Menjou, Robert Montgomery, Ronald Reagan, Gary Cooper, Walt Disney, and others told the committee that a communist invasion of this country was imminent and that the plotters within the industry would aid the Russians in their takeover. The name of anyone mentioned in such hearings would generally end up on a blacklist, a highly effective means of extra-legal punishment. In 1960, when Frank Sinatra was at the peak of his career, he found he did not have the power to employ blacklisted writer Albert Maltz to do a screenplay of William Bradford Huie's *The Execution of Private Slovik*. The mere thought of employing a leftist to write the script of this admittedly sensitive story about the only American soldier to be shot for desertion since the Civil War raised the hackles of the Hearst Press, the American Legion, and the conservatives of Hollywood. Pressure was brought to bear on radio stations to stop playing Sinatra's records and the singer's patriotism was challenged. (At that time Sinatra was a friend of John Kennedy.) When his close



United Press International Photo

The scene as the House Un-American Activities Committee opened its investigation into alleged communist activities in the movie industry. Jack Warner, left, of Warner Brothers, was an early witness. The committee was headed by J. Parnell Thomas, a New Jersey Republican, who ended up in prison two years later when he was convicted of stealing money from the government. The committee member second from the right in this picture is Republican Congressman Richard Milhous Nixon, an aggressive Red hunter in 1947.

associates remained silent, unwilling to come to his aid, Sinatra finally capitulated, fired Maltz, and sold the movie rights to the book.

Ten writers and directors who refused to cooperate with the investigating committee in 1948 were jailed for contempt of Congress. All served short terms in federal prisons in various parts of the nation. They later brought legal actions against the major studios for contractual violations and won more than \$100,000 in out-of-court settlements. None of the ten was in the higher echelons of Hollywood, but today some have attained various levels of fame. Ring Lardner, Jr., recently wrote the screenplay for *M*A*S*H*, Albert Maltz wrote the scripts for *Two Mules for Sister Sarah* and *The Beguiled*, and Dalton Trumbo wrote the scripts for *Exodus* and *Spartacus*. Trumbo was the first of the ten to emerge from limbo when he wrote the screenplay for *The Brave Bull* under a pseudonym and embarrassed Hollywood by winning an Academy Award for his work. But to this day most Academy records indicate that "authorship of the script is in doubt."

In the strange world of Hollywood today the blacklist still exists to a



United Press International Photo

The Hollywood Ten, ultimately the focus of the HUAC hearings. Testifying against these writers and directors were people like Ayn Rand, and actors Adolphe Menjou, Robert Taylor, Gary Cooper, and Ronald Reagan. Dalton Trumbo, the first member of the Ten to emerge from obscurity, is the man with a hat on the left side of the middle row.

limited extent. To circumvent it, Hollywood has fostered a system by which blacklisted writers prepare scripts under assumed names or under the names of established non-blacklisted writers. Movies such as *Bridge on the River Kwai*, *The Robe*, *Roman Holiday*, *Cowboy*, *The Defiant Ones*, and *Inherit the Wind* were written by blacklisted writers. Hollywood pays for such scripts through a front, knowing full well who really wrote the material but still not putting his name on the credits for fear of some public boycott. And this is the same strange world that after blacklisting hundreds for alleged left-wing sympathies, fawned and doted over a visiting Nikita Khrushchev, at that time the leader of the communist world.

Strangely, the blacklist had probably a reverse effect from what was expected in Hollywood. Instead of capturing the audience with its hard line against left wingers, the Dream Factory lost a major portion of its audience when it could least afford to. Many were appalled by the way the industry abandoned its employees in their hour of need. Author Charles Higham wrote in *Hollywood at Sunset*: "They (the bosses) turned on their employees and colleagues, wrecking at a blow Hollywood's prestige in Europe, the confidence of the Hollywood intelligensia, and all the chance the industry might have had to keep up with the revolution in mass education that followed World War II." As one other observer noted, the industry bosses were pounding nails into their own coffins.

As long as there are people there will be people who don't like what they see on the screen and want to change it. Most censors, whether they are policemen or judges or racial, religious, or nationalistic groups, have one thing in common: they strongly believe that film makers should be uninhibited in making statements they agree with but refuse to allow the

moviemaker to say things they disagree with. And of course many of these censors work at cross purposes. Many who favor new sexual freedom for movies reject the right of the producer to make movies of a racial or ethnic nature. Some who attempt to stop comments about their religion think nothing about unfavorable comments on another faith. Some of those who enjoy the frank approach with regard to violence reject the same approach to sex. And vice versa. There will always be someone unhappy, and as long as there is someone who is unhappy, pressure will be exerted. Whether this pressure has an impact is pretty much in the hands of the moviemaker and his backers. More often than not these men respond by compromise—cutting some, but not all, of the objectionable material. Moviemakers want audience reaction, and if it is negative, they will cut. But compromises rarely solve problems. And the movies will never become the art many people claim they are until the creative people in the field stop compromising.

THE “NEW MOVIES” AND THE “NEW AUDIENCE”

Movies enjoy a distinct advantage over television, newspapers, and, to some extent, radio. To be successful a movie does not have to appeal to a majority of the moviegoing audience, or even a third or fourth of it. Television seeks the largest number of viewers possible. The newspaper seeks to reach all readers in a community; AM radio has the same tendency. But a moviemaker can pick out a small portion of the audience and make a picture that will appeal to these people. And he will probably still show a profit, provided he hasn't tried to recreate the Civil War, Cleopatra's Egypt, or Ben Hur's Rome.

Human nature being what it is, moviemakers have rarely used this strategy, at least not until quite recently. In the past pictures were produced that movie studios thought would have an appeal to nearly everyone, young and old, rich and poor, the educated and the semi-literate. The audience was conceived of as the mass and the movies were made to suit the tastes of the mass. But as the seventies opened it was clear that many movie producers were rejecting this notion in favor of making movies aimed at specific subgroups within the mass.

In theory this development was hopeful. One could envision various producers, each selecting a small sub-audience and making films to appeal to it. In theory each film could be tailored to its audience and could be more expressive and meaningful since the need for mass approval was gone. The moviemaker could use his medium to make a statement and to express an idea.

But of course this isn't what happened. Instead the various movie producers have selected two or three audiences and they are *all* aiming at these smaller groups. In general these moviegoers are younger, better educated, and more affluent than most of the people in America. In terms of traditional socioeconomic criteria, they are an elite. This “new” audience for the “new movies” today includes knowledgeable “film goers,” people who seriously study the medium; it includes “the young,” whatever their age; and it includes a large number of what critic Pauline Kael calls “half-baked

intellectuals," many of whom are refugees from the foreign film fadism of the fifties and sixties.

This new audience likes its movies outspoken, realistic, sexually frank, fast-moving, technically innovative, and "with it." Moviemakers have found that by appealing to these and only these groups, they can make a nice profit. Which is good for them. But what about the rest of America, which still likes its movies non-controversial, fantasy-filled, sexually-understated, fast-moving, non-violent, straightforward, and square? These people fear that they are being abandoned by the movie industry. This general audience, which too many producers wrongly believe is glued to the boob tube, cares enough to plead with increasing frequency for more "family" pictures. In reality what they seek are movies they can relate to, which have a meaning in their lives. The average man, at one time a voracious movie consumer, has very little in common with *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* or *M*A*S*H* or *Alice's Restaurant* or *Easy Rider* or *Woodstock* or *Klute*. He articulates a need for movies that have a meaning for him as a "family film." The result of his dissatisfaction is that he has stopped going to the movies



A technical masterpiece, Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, is still a subject of controversy among many filmgoers and science fiction fans who believe the message of the film has great significance. The controversy comes from disagreement over what the message is and what the film says. Most people who saw the movie made no attempt to understand the story, but liked the adventure and special effects.

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because he can find little that is very interesting to him. But since Hollywood can make it without him, the industry is not very concerned whether he goes to the movies or not.

THE YOUNG AND THE MOVIES

Of all the elements of the “new audience” today, producers find the young moviegoers the most attractive group to seek to please. Young people alone can sustain a movie, even a big budget one. Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* was a gourmet delight for science fiction fans and young people. The movie, which got split reviews from the critics, had little appeal among the older generation. Yet what is it that makes film attractive to the young? Stanley Kauffman, a noted film critic, suggests in *A World on Film* that film is also young and has few traditions to break down. But television is even younger, but isn’t especially attractive to youth. And film does have traditions, as we have seen. Film is also attractive because it is the medium that treats many pressing problems and questions of our time, Kauffman asserts. True to a limited extent, but so do newspapers and magazines—neither of which are especially popular among young people. Dustin Hoffman thinks the young use the movies just to explore the problems of the black, the alienated, and the down and out without committing themselves to action. “All they’re (the young audience) getting at the movies is entertainment that alleviates their guilt,” he says. “It’s an easy way out for them without having to work in a ghetto or fight for what they believe.”

Perhaps Kauffman’s best point is that the *medium* of film itself is what attracts the young. In an age imbued with technological interest, the film art flowers out of technology. In fact the medium has become the most important aspect of the movies in many instances. It is not uncommon with the pressures that exist in movie production that a producer will be forced to shift from one script to another in trying to make a successful film, or that a movie will be cut in such a way that key sequences in the story are left out. But the audience doesn’t seem to mind. In other instances at small foreign film theaters, reels have been mixed up and shown out of order—and most of the audience hasn’t noticed. Such films are compendiums of techniques and not much else. Or a story is just filler between technological jolts—as in *Bullitt* where most people can’t remember the plot but can’t forget the automobile chase, or in *Grand Prix* where the story is usually totally forgotten but the split-screen racing scenes are still vivid in memory. This is a distinct change in moviemaking. A movie used to have to tell a story to be popular. The new audience no longer demands this. Most moviegoers’ narrative sense—numbed by the millions of interruptions of television commercials in TV stories—seems significantly lessened.

The technology of movies is also interesting to young people because it is something they can do and be successful at. Many young people are cutting

their teeth on 16 mm. cameras today. And many young moviemakers like Dennis Hopper and Jeff Young and George Lucas have been relatively successful in the major leagues—Hollywood.

The young are also attracted to film because the new movies have done a lot to debunk many of the old myths of our society that strained the credibility of our parents and grandparents, but not to the breaking point. Traditional western morality was questioned in *Little Big Man*. Blissful domesticity was shattered in the *Diary of a Mad Housewife*. *Catch-22* and *Patton* cast doubt on the glorious nature of war.

At the same time, however, as Paul Zimmerman, movie critic of *Newsweek* notes, the movies are creating new myths: freedom from all authority is always good, mobility as a life style is the best way to exist, the older generation is corrupt, and cool is the only legitimate emotional response. Zimmerman complains that many of the new movies are “patronizing the young, reducing them to their accouterments—bikes, grass, and music.” The ultimate in irony is that many of the so-called anti-establishment movies that tickle the fancy of the slightly out-of-joint young are financed and owned by some of the largest companies in America such as Transamerica and Gulf and Western, the most established of the establishment.

Although the films of the seventies have a different appeal and a different look, they aren't as revolutionary either in what they say or how they say it as might first appear. In other words, there's a lot of the old movies in the new movies. Camera techniques haven't gone much beyond the level of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*. The gimmicks of today—the split screen for example—were first used decades ago. Even the notion of using a ballad as a kind of running theme for a movie dates back to the mid-forties and Lewis Milestone's outstanding war drama *A Walk in the Sun*. Young American directors today who attempt to mimic their European counterparts probably don't realize that many of the popular French film makers, for example, came to this country to learn from the most humdrum of American technicians. In the sixties it was not uncommon, as Pauline Kael notes, for the “young Frenchmen to plunge their savings into Greyhound bus treks across America, arriving to sit at the feet of bewildered idols like Leo McCarey, a commonplace director of comedies and soap operas, or gruff old veterans used to shooting off the cuff like Howard Hawks and John Ford.” Many other young American film makers have skipped the middle man and are directly studying the techniques of the studio moviemakers of the thirties and the forties.

The one puzzling question in any discussion of the new movies and the new audience is how do you explain the sweeping success of a *Sound of Music* or a *Love Story*? Old-style movies still occasionally enjoy spectacular successes. It's true that for every success there are two or three failures, that for every *Mary Poppins* there is a *Dr. Doolittle*, a *Star*, or a *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. But still, what happens to our thesis of the new audience and new movies? There are a couple of plausible explanations. One is that an audience for a good general movie still exists—which suggests that Hollywood is foolish to abandon this large, heterogeneous group of potential moviegoers. Another explanation is that our new elite audience isn't really

The market for the family film apparently still exists—to wit, the success of *The Sound of Music*, which was enjoying a second go-around at theaters recently.

The problem is that it is an “iffy” market—there are no sure formulas for success as there appear to be in other categories of motion pictures today. For every *Sound of Music*, there are a dozen bombs.



as hep as it likes to think it is. That despite the appearance of being swingers, secretly the new film audience has the same basic tastes as the audience of twenty or thirty years ago. There is undoubtedly truth to both of these assertions, but even at that, the puzzle is not completely solved.

THE END

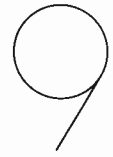
The last sixty years have been traumatic for Hollywood and the film industry. The Dream Factory has been literally wrenched from its very foundations at times and violently shaken by forces both outside and inside the movie colony. No other mass medium has undergone as many major changes in so short a period of time. Yet a good deal about the industry remains the same. The same pressure that was applied to the early moviemaker—the requirement that he succeed in winning audience approval to ensure production of his next film—remains the key to moviemaking today. Economics is still at the heart of the industry. Making money remains the only consistent yardstick of success. The big studios are dead; the independent is king—but that’s the way it all began. The audience is smaller, more elite. But some “old” movies are still as popular as ever.

It is difficult to find agreement on the state of the art in Hollywood, beyond the fact that it is alive, well, and generally showing a profit. “The initiative has passed from the business people to the creative people,” writes one wag. “I don’t see any room for creativity in contemporary Hollywood,” writes another. The best assessment of the situation is probably the one that recognizes a change but doesn’t see much difference. As Stanley Kauffman wrote, “In the long run, the history of the film will be the same as that of all arts: a few peaks, some plateaus, many charms.”

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Mass Media and Government

Justice William O. Douglas once wrote that freedom of speech and freedom of the press, not space ships and automobiles, are the important symbols of western civilization. In making this comment the aging jurist was pointing to the unique relationship that exists between the press or the mass media and the government in Western Europe, England, and especially the United States. It is a relationship that has developed over centuries, not from any grand plan or great scheme, but from trial and error, from stopping and beginning again. The press in America enjoys a high position. Under our system of government its title of Fourth Estate or fourth branch of government is accurate, if not always justly deserved.

The relationship between the media and the government in this nation tends to be antagonistic; the two are most often adversaries. The government frequently acts as though it resents interference from the press, that if left alone it could operate more efficiently, more economically, and more swiftly in serving the needs of the people. The press, on the other hand, is committed to maintain an open government—one in which at least the reporters know what is going on. It resents being told what to do by either the government or its readers.

In the last analysis these adversaries, while striving for two different goals, must depend on each other. In our system the government could not function without the support of the media. A democracy is government by publicity. A president or Congress would be hard pressed to act without the backing of the people, and popular support normally depends on public knowledge of both problems and proposed solutions. At the same time, the press that bitterly complains about government interference from time to time owes its freedom to the government—more specifically, to the courts. If our legal system did not protect the press, did not provide an avenue for the redress of citizen grievances against the press, and did not stand behind the First Amendment's command of a free press, newspapers and broadcasting stations would be soon consumed in a fury of public hostility. It is ironic that in recent years when radicals on both the left and right have attacked the court system as being corrupt and a tool of oppression that it was this court system that protected their right to make these charges and

guaranteed their safety afterwards. The courts, of course, get their support from the people, who indirectly fall in behind both government and the press. In the final analysis, the people hold the power in our democracy.

The relationship between the media and the government is intricate, complex, and very large. In this chapter we can only hope to outline in the roughest terms some interconnections between the two. We begin the chapter with several goals in mind. First, we need a theoretical base to build our more detailed evaluation on. From this we will move to an outline of the powers that government can use to limit what the mass media print or broadcast. Broadcasting will be considered separately, for it is a subject alien to traditional press regulation in this nation. We will look at some instances in which the government becomes a partner in the communication process: for example, presidential relations with the media. Finally, we will outline the dimensions of the changing contemporary relationship between the press and the government, a relationship that depends on manipulation rather than regulation.

SOME PRESS THEORIES

Many years ago three scholars, Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, published a book entitled *Four Theories of the Press*. The title was really a misnomer. There were indeed theories in the book, but what the authors called theories were really four descriptions of how press-government relations might be structured. In the book the four are closely tied to nations and to historical periods. Fundamental to the Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm propositions is the notion that a nation's press will take on the coloration of the social and political structure within which it operates. Yet stripped of both nationalistic and historical settings, the four theories are still useful conceptual tools for building a foundation of a study of press-government relationships. So let's look briefly at each of these theories, how they work, and the assumptions they are based on.

If one conceives of an authoritarian system of government, a state in which power moves from the top down, one could also conceive of a tightly regulated press system—a mass medium that operates at the behest and with the permission of the government. Samuel Johnson wrote many centuries ago that "Every society has a right to preserve public peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have a dangerous tendency." This is the essence of the authoritarian press system—print nothing that will rock the boat.

Rulers who believe in authoritarianism have a very low opinion of the average man: they do not believe that he can function without some sort of guidance or direction. Hence the state must be strong and must closely regulate human conduct. Criticism of the state cannot be tolerated. The government knows what is best, and grumbling by the press can only bring about dissatisfaction and alienation, which is not good for the people or for the government.

Under this system the press is privately owned but operates with government permission. Rulers use various devices to keep the medium in

check. They censor all material before publication or broadcast. They license the press and when transgressions occur, revoke the licenses. They grant friendly units of the press special monopolies that allow them exclusive rights for one kind of printing or another. Or if criticism occurs they bring the critics to trial, with swift convictions and strong punishments acting as important deterrents against future misconduct by other media units. The press gives the people what the rulers want the people to have—no more, no less. Publishing or broadcasting is a kind of agreement between the media man and the government. The state grants permission to publish only as long as the press supports the government.

This kind of system is representative of press-government relations in England from the late fifteenth century to well into the eighteenth century. It can still be found today in parts of Africa, Latin America, and Asia. South Vietnam also maintained a strong authoritarian control over the press as the war wound down.

The communists have added enough new wrinkles to the authoritarian press-government relationship that their system qualifies as a separate theory. The most obvious, but not necessarily the most important, difference is that the media in the communist system are state and party owned and controlled. In the Soviet press system, the media are given more than a list of "don'ts." They are also given a list of "do's." That is, the media must perform various tasks within society and within the party to retain support from the top leaders in the government, which are the top leaders in the party. The media are considered instruments to work for the development and the good of the state.

Specific functions of the press include working for revolutionary change and explaining and interpreting all events and occurrences in terms of the party dogma. In a capitalistic system a publisher is rewarded through increased advertising revenues if his publication is successful in selling goods and services. In the communist system a publisher is rewarded by increased party support (often monetary) if his publication is effective in the propagation of party ideas and dogma. Generally the press in such a system speaks with a single voice: that is, all organs say the same thing. There are no censors; nothing is cut or excluded. There is no need. The press and radio and television stations are run by good loyal party members who truly believe in what they do and who truly believe that what the party does is correct. *Pravda* and *Isvestia* do criticize the government, but it is criticism of inefficiency in coping with problems within the spirit of the party philosophy. The communist press is truly an educational arm and a positive agent for the party.

Libertarianism arose in response to authoritarianism. The assumptions on which it rests take their roots in the natural rights theory developed in the eighteenth century. The libertarian assumes that man is a rational being, that the individual is supreme, and that government exists to serve him. He assumes that the individual can fulfill himself best if he is unencumbered by government or society. The libertarian believes that truth can only be discovered in a free and open encounter of ideas: give the individual an opportunity to hear all sides of an issue and then let him select what is true

and reject what is false. The authoritarian would say man is incapable of such selection. The communist would say it is not up to the individual to decide, that society (i.e., the party) must decide. Because the libertarian believes man operates best in an environment free from government restriction, he has a distinct and often healthy suspicion of government. He believes that government is trying to take away his freedom.

The press system implied in such a philosophy is a free-wheeling setup founded upon the free enterprise system with few, if any, government controls. The libertarian believes that the truth will be told if the government will only keep its hands off. The citizen should be allowed to select from a marketplace of ideas to pick those he likes and reject those he dislikes. If the government restricts some ideas first, it infringes upon the rights of the citizen. The libertarian believes in tolerance of all points of view—who knows, the other fellow, the man in the minority, might be right. A great American jurist, Judge Learned Hand, once wrote to an equally great colleague, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Opinions are never absolutes. If someone disagrees with you kill him for the love of Christ and in the name of God, but always realize that he may be the saint, and you the devil."

Because the libertarian is suspicious of government, he believes it is the duty of the press to watch the actions of government closely and to point out wrongdoing and irregularities quickly. The government, in turn, must keep its hands off the press; it can best serve the public (and that is its role) by allowing the media to operate unimpeded. The public will decide if this newspaper or that broadcaster is a wrongdoer, and the public will take care of things, because in the *laissez faire* economic system the people decide which economic units will survive.

The libertarian ideas were natural for the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The rough-and-tumble of politics and business and everyday life fit into the pattern of the free-wheeling libertarian. This was a land of opportunity where the strong would survive and the newspaper that printed the truth would keep its subscribers while the others would fail.

But times change, economic times especially. And by the middle of this century, the libertarian ideas about the press began to pale somewhat in the face of reality. A look at most American cities saw but one daily newspaper and a couple of radio stations, one of which was probably owned by the publisher of the newspaper. Not much of a marketplace for ideas. Also, the libertarian's notion that man had a right to say anything he wanted, true or false, seemed less attractive in an era when instantaneous communication to 150 million people was possible. The immense size of media units and combinations, the speed with which they could disseminate both the truth and lies, the dwindling number of voices in the marketplace—all these factors suggested that libertarianism was a bit outmoded in a modern post-war America.

In 1947 a small group of scholars and philosophers collectively called the Commission on Freedom of the Press took note of these changes in America and brought forth a body of new ideas gathered under the label *the social*

responsibility theory of the press. This body was constituted to study liberty of the press in the mid-twentieth century, and what the scholars found was not encouraging. The press was relatively free from government intrusions, the commission declared. But the freedom of the press that all citizens enjoyed was being smothered under an increasingly large corporate or economic structure in the mass media. Also, these big and powerful media units were using freedom as license to do what they wanted. At the same time, the press was not using its freedom to do what it must if democracy is to survive—to inform the citizenry properly. Freedom carries obligations, the commission concluded, and the press that enjoys a privileged position under our government is obligated to be responsive to society's needs.

Since this report was issued in 1947 the social responsibility theory has developed into one of the most controversial notions surrounding the liberty of expression in this country. For example, the SR theorist insists on what he calls positive liberty for the press, freedom *for* something as opposed to the libertarian notion of freedom *from* something. The libertarian says this is a good idea—but what agency or what person will see to it that the mass media carry out their responsibilities? “The government,” is the answer the SR theorist gives, a response that makes most libertarians, who find SR theory interesting in other respects, a bit restless. “Government remains the residuary legatee of responsibility for an adequate press performance,” wrote philosopher William Hocking an architect of the SR theory in *Freedom of the Press: A Framework of Principle*. The government should help society get what it needs from the media. Social responsibility theorists have never defined very well how this might be accomplished without censorship or regulation. The commission suggested that laws be used to force the press to straighten up and fly right; it also suggested that the government enter the communications field itself and provide a media system for the nation. But the club given to the government to promote liberty can be used as well to stifle liberty. And although SR theorists seem aware of this dilemma, they have never really attempted to come to grips with it.

The SR theorist does not share the high regard for the individual that the libertarian has—he is a bit more pessimistic, keeping in mind man's often irrational behavior. Government is not bad, according to the SR theory; in fact, it can be made to serve man.

The SR theorist also has a very pragmatic view of truth: “How does the libertarian know truth when he has found it? Truth is relative; what is true today may be false tomorrow.” The value in discussion, says the SR man, is not the discovery of truth but the development of a harmonious, fruitful society.

Perhaps the most important assertion contained in the theory of social responsibility was its suggestion that freedom of expression belonged to readers and listeners and viewers; that the citizen's right of access to information was more important than the right of the publisher to print such information. For years, most libertarians had argued that the unfettered press was the key to freedom of expression. Now the SR theorist argues that it was the citizen's unfettered access to the news and other materials vital to

survival in a participatory democracy that was the fundamental aspect of liberty of speech and press. The bottom line of this reasoning is this: that the press itself cannot interfere in the widest possible dissemination of data through one-sided news coverage or by refusing to carry important information or by economic concentration that limits the number of voices in the marketplace. This idea will be the central theme of our next chapter, *Mass Media and Economics*. We will only note at this point that the notion was given important life in several Supreme Court decisions in the late sixties and early seventies, and that many thought a major revision in the definition of freedom of the press was underway.

Which, then, of the four models of press-government relations does the U.S. system fit? Most would agree that our system fits none of them. Some say we are libertarian with a little social responsibility thrown in. Others argue we are social responsibility with a little libertarian left over. There are those who suggest we are somewhere between the two with a little authoritarianism added here and there. After reading the rest of this chapter, perhaps you will have your own ideas about the question.

GOVERNMENT LIMITS ON THE MEDIA

Despite the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech, our governments, federal, state, and local, restrict and limit the media in a great many ways. In some cases the government merely provides its courts as a forum for the settlement of private disputes, such as defamation or invasion of privacy suits. At other times the government acts as the censor or policeman itself in clamping down on the privately controlled mass media. (Criminal obscenity statutes are such a case.) Finally, there are instances when the government is at the very heart of the existence of the medium as when it licenses the communicator. Such is the case in broadcasting. Let's look first at minimal government participation in civil law suits.

LIBEL AND INVASION OF PRIVACY

Long ago, shortly after man had begun to walk upright and had left the cave, the brighter individuals in society decided that it was rather foolish to allow private citizens to fight it out in the streets when they had serious disputes. Often entire families would become involved in blood feuds. Fighting and killing and maiming, when it involved that many people, was surely counter-productive. So the government (or what we would have called the government) decided to offer a systematized means of settling these problems. Institutions resembling what we now call courts developed in which an elder of the tribe or a leader of the community would hear both sides of the dispute and declare one of the two participants right and the other wrong. The winner of such disputes was then awarded some kind of compensation for his hardships. If the loser didn't pay up, the court would punish him—lock him up or pillory him or whip him—until he was willing to compensate the injured man.

In a very crude way, this is the way a civil law suit operates. It is a legal

action between two private parties in which the state offers its good offices to settle the dispute. By providing a forum for a settlement, by setting up the rules for settlement, and by enforcing the judgment of the court, the state becomes deeply involved in the matter. Many kinds of civil suits affect the press and in a limited fashion restrict what may be published or broadcast. The two most common concern defamation of character and invasion of privacy.

The law regarding defamation of character, commonly called libel, is designed to protect the reputation of an individual. As Shakespeare wrote in *Othello*, "he who steals my purse steals trash, but he who robs me of my good name makes me poor indeed." So the law is set up to discourage the theft of good names. Generally, the law says it is wrong to stain a man's reputation, to hold him up to contempt, ridicule, scorn, or hatred. Obviously, there are scores of ways this can be done. If you call a man a thief it certainly lowers his reputation. If you charge him with incompetence, this will damage his standing among his peers. If you say he carries a loathsome disease, that he beats his wife, that he is sexually abnormal, that he fails to pay his taxes, that he is a member of a noxious group, or if you make numerous other charges, you have libelled him and will likely face a court suit. This clearly imposes a restriction upon the press.

But the law recognizes that there are times when it is important for society to hear charges like those above when they are made against someone. If they are true, for example, and uttered in good faith, then the people should be told that Jack Smith was convicted of bank robbery or is an incompetent doctor. So defenses against libel suits have been erected. Truth is one. If the comments are made about the public performance of an entertainer or a politician, they are considered fair comments and are immune from suit. Or if the statements are made in a fair and true report of an official meeting of a governmental body, like the senate or the city council, such comments are considered privileged and are protected from successful legal action.

The most important defense against a libel suit emerged in the last decade from a libel action brought against the *New York Times* for publishing an advertisement that contained some untruthful and unflattering comments about the Montgomery, Alabama, police department, the governor of Alabama, and other local officials. The remarks were clearly false, and normally the court would have ruled in favor of the plaintiff (the injured party) in the case, the Montgomery police commissioner. But the Supreme Court reversed the judgment of the Alabama courts and ruled that the remarks were protected by the First Amendment. Justice William Brennan wrote in the unanimous opinion that the First Amendment was designed to promote robust debate that in the end would benefit all of society. In a robust and active debate misstatements were inevitable. But to punish these errors, especially when they were made during a discussion of operation of a segment of our democratic government, would tend to stifle this important debate in the future. Awarding Commissioner L.B. Sullivan the \$500,000 he asked for as compensation for the damage to his reputation would certainly punish the *Times* and would have the effect of stilling such

public discussion in the future. So the Court ruled that in cases involving public officials, unless the erroneous remarks were made with malice—that is, with the speaker's knowledge that they were false (I know it's a lie, but I'm going to publish it anyway), or with reckless disregard or whether it was false or not (I don't know if this is true, but I am going to publish it anyway)—the libel suit could not succeed.

Subsequent court decisions have made this *New York Times* rule applicable not only to cases involving public officials but to suits involving people who place themselves in the public eye, so-called public figures—people who were once in the public spotlight or people who are involved in situations or events that are of great public interest. In all these cases, the damaged party will have to prove that the defamatory statements were made with knowledge that they were false, that the newspaper published a knowing lie, or that the publisher or broadcaster didn't follow normal precautions in checking out the accusations to see if they were true or not. This ruling has dulled the threat of libel for the press in many cases; not, of course, in those cases involving private people in private instances. And although many feel that the individual who takes part in public activities is now defenseless against the libelous remarks, the courts apparently believe that the social good that will result from unfettered debate will serve us all best in the long run.

Invasion of privacy is not as common an action against the press as libel—in fact, a few states don't even provide a legal remedy for such an intrusion. It was less than 100 years ago that two young lawyers, one of whom was Louis D. Brandeis who would later be appointed to the Supreme Court, became dismayed at what they believed was the snooping of the Boston press. So they suggested in the *Harvard Law Review* that a citizen should have a legal remedy to fend off the prying newsmen, a legal means to protect his right of privacy.

A lot of grist has gone through the mill since 1890, and today in more than three-fifths of our states the right of privacy is protected. Not perhaps in the way Mr. Brandeis and his associate would have liked, but nevertheless protected. The press gets involved in this matter in at least three ways, two of which don't really sound like invasions of privacy at all. But you can take our word for it, they are considered invasions of privacy by the courts. It is considered an invasion of privacy for the press to publish private information about someone. The law will make exceptions to this rule if that person happens to be a public figure, or if the information happens to be of great interest to the public, or if the offensive material was obtained from an official government record open to public inspection. You will probably agree that these sweeping exceptions tend to make the law less than useful—and you are about right. Once in a while, a judge will decide that the newspaper reported details that were a bit too personal and that added little to the discussion of an important public question, and rule against the publication. But not often.

It is also considered an invasion of privacy to use an individual's name or picture in a commercial advertisement without his or her permission. Now this doesn't sound like an invasion of privacy, but it is. It all goes back to the

long and relatively uninteresting history of the law, which will not be recounted here. What the law does is compensate the injured party for someone else making money off his likeness or name. If a newspaper wants to run a picture of a local beauty queen in an ad for suntan oil, it had better get her written permission first. If she is on the ball she'll ask for a few bucks compensation, and then everyone will be happy. If permission is not sought and the young lass sues, well, it is fairly predictable that the newspaper will lose the suit.

Finally, the publication of false but not libelous information about someone is considered an invasion of privacy. Again, it doesn't sound like an invasion of privacy, but rest assured it is. It frequently doesn't matter if it is good information or bad. There have been cases in which the press or radio or television have dramatized the achievements of a private citizen in such a way as to make him appear to be a hero when he really wasn't. This is embarrassing to some people and the law will provide compensation. This happened to a family in Pennsylvania whose home was invaded by three escaped convicts. The three felons treated the James Hill family with courtesy and the family treated their uninvited guests the same way. But in a magazine story that was published some years later, it was made to appear that the family was heroic in efforts to fight off the "nasty, rude, and misbehaving intruders." The Hills sued and would have collected had not the Supreme Court applied the *New York Times* libel rule to this area of privacy law. The court said that since it must be proved that false statements were made maliciously in a libel suit, then the same rule should apply in a privacy suit brought because of the publication of non-libelous falsehoods. Because the family chose to drop the matter at that point, there was no way to know if the Hills could have proven that *Life* magazine knew its story was false when it was printed or if the magazine staff was careless in preparation of the article. Again, the court raised an impediment to successful law suits in the hopes of maintaining a legal atmosphere hospitable to vigorous and robust discussion.

In both of these areas you can see that the courts have become increasingly sensitive to the information needs that must be fulfilled if our democratic society is to flourish and prosper. A little social responsibility theory pops up here and there. Libel and invasion of privacy both restrict to a certain extent what the reporter can write, what the broadcaster can say, and ultimately what the audience will receive. But less so today than perhaps at any time in the past 200 years.

DIRECT RESTRICTIONS ON THE PRESS

The government is involved peripherally in civil suits that limit the media, but the state takes a more direct hand in other areas in which the behavior of the media has consequences to society as a whole and must be met with a social response. There are four areas that stand out—seditious libel, the law regulating obscenity, the judicial contempt power of restraining the press, and the regulation of advertising. Each regulation has its own peculiarities, but the same result—a restriction on the press.

We initially discussed sedition in chapter three when we talked about the history of freedom of the press. Sedition, you will recall, can be most simply defined as statements that are critical of the government. In some cases such comments need only be mild criticisms of governmental policies. In other cases the law requires that the comments actually urge violent action to overthrow the government. We have had both situations in America in the past 200 years.

The passage of the First Amendment in 1791 did not stop the government from prosecuting people for sedition, although there are those who think that is what the founding fathers had in mind when the guarantee of liberty of expression was drafted. It wasn't long after 1791—in 1798 to be exact—that the Federalist political party won congressional approval of strong sedition measures that were aimed at curbing the criticisms of President John Adams by the followers of Thomas Jefferson, his chief political rival. Ostensibly the Alien and Sedition laws were prompted by the threat of war with France. Adams argued that the nation must present a strong, unified posture to ward off the possibility of hostilities, a theme often used by national leaders in times of real or imagined crisis. Many Jeffersonian newspaper editors, at least one anti-Federalist congressman, and other assorted governmental critics were tried under the laws, which made it a crime to criticize the government, the president, or any of his ministers. While many went to jail, the laws so angered the people that John Adams was voted out of office in 1800. The Supreme Court was never asked to decide whether the laws violated the First Amendment or not, but at least two Supreme Court justices who presided at sedition trials did not seem troubled by the constitutional question. The laws expired in 1800.

We didn't have another peacetime sedition law in this country until just before World War II. But between 1800 and 1940 there were several instances during wartime when the press was badly manhandled. During the Civil War no sedition laws were passed,¹ but because the conflict was on our home soil, the military had a strong hand in dealing with newspapers and periodicals. Some newspapers were closed by the military and President Lincoln for printing false information. Censorship of war news was fairly efficient because the government controlled all the means of communication. That is, the correspondents at the front were forced to transmit stories to their newspapers via the telegraph, which was under the thumb of the army. The reporter who chose to ride the train back with this story also encountered military interference. Even all the existing horses had been commandeered by the army.

Perhaps the worse episode of censorship in our history took place during World War I. It wasn't just the war that brought on the insanity of the period. The nation was rife with suspicion and fear as radical new socialistic and anarchistic sects appeared to challenge both the democratic system and the cherished theories of free enterprise. It just so happened that those who protested most loudly against our involvement in the European war (and it wasn't a very popular war) were the same people who were complaining about democracy and capitalism. Two sets of laws were passed by Congress. The first, known as the Espionage Act, was aimed at limiting the effects of

the protests against the military. Americans were prohibited from saying and writing things that might stir up discontent among the troops and that might hurt morale. Publications that interfered with recruiting and enlistment were also banned. In 1918, a year after the Espionage Act was approved, it was amended with the Sedition Act. This was even broader and was aimed at cutting off all criticism of the government, our conduct in the war, and our economic system. Thousands were arrested under both these measures; nearly 900 were convicted and paid fines, served jail sentences, or both. In the media, the small radical newspaper publishers and the publishers of the foreign language newspapers were the chief targets of the censors. During that period, it was considered a crime to say we were in the wrong war or were in the war for the wrong reasons. It was illegal to charge that the munitions makers and the Wall Street bankers were the only ones profiting from the fighting. You couldn't criticize the government or the Constitution or the flag or the purchase of war bonds. Insanity ruled: it was a kind of nightmare that kept right on happening even when the nation awoke. And the courts, the guardians of civil liberties, were of little help during the period. Sensing the public mood of jingoism, judges fell into line behind the outrageous restrictions. It was a dark period indeed. The Sedition Law expired as the 1920s dawned, but the Espionage Act remains on the law books.

In 1940 Congress passed the Smith Act, which remains today as a potential threat to anyone—the press included—who chooses to advocate violent action against the government. The law was passed as the nation moved into yet another period of hysteria. Hitler had just conquered France and the Japanese were threatening increased military action in the Pacific. We were scared. So we passed a law that made it a crime to advocate violent overthrow of the government, to organize a group that advocated such action, or to be a member of such a group. The law wasn't used until after the war when the Justice Department arrested scores of communist leaders for plotting the destruction of the United States by force. Whether these men in fact did advocate such destruction was really not the question; they were prosecuted because they were communists and the Cold War was on. Among those arrested were editors and writers of radical publications. Many were prosecuted on the basis of what they had written before World War II. Many were jailed before 1957 when the Supreme Court ruled that in order to convict under the Smith Act, the government would have to prove that the defendants had advocated specific acts of violence against the United States. Proof that the communist leaders discussed the overthrow of the government in abstract terms in newspapers, magazines, books, and at meetings was not sufficient to warrant conviction. Government attorneys were unable to meet this high standard of proof and so the prosecutions under the law were dropped. The Smith Act hasn't been used since.

Today, such laws are a bit passé. The federal government especially has taken new tacks in its approach to the press. We will look at those later. Now let's talk about a direct restriction that is real and used often—the government attacks on pornography.

Most everybody tries to blame the poor old Puritans for our laws against

the mailing and sale of obscene materials. Actually they had little to do with it. There were no such laws when the Puritans were in a political position to pass them during the colonial era. In fact, there were no laws against obscenity when our constitution was drafted. Now that's not because there weren't any bawdy books or poems around. Some of the best "classic pornography" comes from that era. One of America's most artistic pornographers was Benjamin Franklin. And nobody seemed to mind. It was the reformers in the 1820s and 1830s who first put the government in the business of outlawing sinful books and pictures. One reform-minded psychopath, Anthony Comstock, lobbied long and hard for congressional action until 1873 when our first comprehensive federal regulation was passed. That law made it illegal to mail anything that was obscene.

Well, outlawing or banning obscenity is fairly easy. Most people today probably support such laws. The tough part of the situation, though, is defining what is obscene. For many years obscenity was described as anything that had the tendency to deprave or corrupt the mind of anybody who happened to see it—a five-year old girl, the village idiot, and so forth. If one page of a 300-page book had such a tendency, the whole book was obscene and banned. While there were breakthroughs along the way as courts attempted to refine this description of pornography, it wasn't until 1957 that a broadbased revision of this definition was shaped. In *Roth v. United States* the Supreme Court was asked for the first time if obscenity were protected by the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech and press. The court said no. All right, then what is obscenity? Justice William Brennan gave us this definition: Something is obscene if to the average person, applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interests. The difference between the Roth definition and the earlier one is striking. In Roth the material must affect the average person, not anyone who happens to see it. The 1957 definition also insisted that the entire book or play or magazine or film be considered. Finally, the Roth test noted that standards change from time to time, even from community to community. Obscenity must be measured in light of the contemporary community standards.

But the Roth decision didn't answer all the questions. If anything, it succeeded in raising new confusion. And in later years the court found itself adding elements to the Roth test to try to clarify its original pronouncement. The court ruled in a 1962 decision that the material must be patently offensive: it must on its face be an affront to community sensibilities. The court added in 1966 that the material must lack any redeeming social value—be utterly worthless—before it can be declared legally obscene.

In the late 1960s the Supreme Court began to make what many thought was a fundamental change in direction on the obscenity question. Rather than concentrating solely on the character of the material in question (is the book dirty?), in a series of decisions the justices began to consider the conduct of the seller or distributor as well. As the decade closed the new court rulings left us with a dual standard. If something were utterly without redeeming social value and if it were patently offensive, then it was considered hardcore pornography and could be banned. But the court also

said that other sexually-oriented materials could be banned as well, if the seller's conduct were improper. For example, if he sold his dirty books to juveniles, or if he foisted his material on an unwilling audience (sent it unsolicited through the mail), or if he pandered his goods (advertised them as being erotic to titillate potential customers). Finally, the court in one final decision in the sixties seemed to say that an individual could possess any kind of obscene material he wanted in his own home: hardcore, softcore, applecore, whatever.

Well, everything was going along fine until some resourceful entrepreneurs began making use of some of the logical loopholes in these definitions. If a man can possess any kind of material he wants, in his home, then he must be able to buy any kind of material he wants—where else could he get it? And if he can buy it, it must be okay for somebody to sell it or import it or distribute it. Logical, the court said, but not legal. In a series of decisions in the early seventies, the court seemed to backtrack, plugging up the loopholes by ruling that Roth was still the law, that obscenity was not protected by the First Amendment, and everybody better look out. Finally in 1973, a majority of the Supreme Court agreed on a new definition of obscenity for the first time since 1957. There were two significant changes outlined in the decision. One was the elimination of the requirement that the state must prove a work lacks any redeeming social value; now it is necessary for the movie producer or book distributor to prove that the work has important literary, political, artistic, or scientific value. And the court ruled as well that local standards rather than some imagined national ones are to be applied in measuring whether a book or film or photo is patently offensive. Most observers saw this as a tightening of the restriction on pornography.

Well, if you are confused, welcome to the club. The court rulings have befuddled a nation of lawyers, judges, policemen, and pornography dealers. The entire body of law on the subject makes very little sense. For that reason, states and cities have had some success in ignoring the liberal obscenity standards outlined by the Supreme Court by pleading ignorance of the high court's guidelines. That's why you can buy books in New York that can't be sold in Grand Rapids. And you can see movies in San Francisco that can't be shown in Santa Fe. Cities and towns have pretty much administered the law as they saw fit, applying the standards they believed the local community wanted.

Perhaps the most frustrating thing of all is that a tempest of this size has been created in such a tiny teapot—the regulation of obscenity, hardly one of the major problems that faces the world. Merchants, for the most part, have concentrated on making as much erotic material available to adults as the law will allow but restricting what they sell to children—unless they have a note from their parents. The Post Office has won new regulations from Congress that permit postal patrons to declare themselves uninterested in receiving unsolicited advertisements for pornographic books or pictures; these regulations provide a stiff penalty for the advertiser who ignores the declarations. Use of such schemes has received widespread support from the public. Probably as long as there are two men alive to disagree on things we will have some kind of obscenity regulation, and the Supreme Court will

continue in the role predicted 30 years ago by Justice Robert Jackson, as the high court of obscenity.

THE PRESS AND THE COURTS

Another area where the government and the press often collide is in the courtroom. Well, not actually in the courtroom but around it. Whenever the press undertakes to report the judicial process, there is the possibility that in some way or another it will pollute the alleged sterility of our legal system. For example, a criminal defendant is guaranteed a trial by an impartial jury. But can a jury be impartial if, in the weeks before the trial, the press publishes long and biased articles about the man who is to stand trial? Probably not. Or at least that's what many lawyers and judges would argue. When the press interferes in this way, the court is empowered to move swiftly and surely in punishing this "contemptuous" behavior. Over the years the courts have used this power to punish contempt rather sparingly for a number of reasons. First, a judge who is going to stand for re-election one day doesn't help his campaign a whole lot by throwing the local editor in jail for contempt of court. And most judges in this country are elected. Also, the nation's highest court has frowned on the capricious use of the awesome contempt power that gives an angered judge the power to make the accusation against the newsman, prosecute the case against him, judge the case against him, and finally, pass sentence on him. This kind of power goes against the grain of good old American democracy, due process of law, and all that. So the Supreme Court has insisted that the offensive conduct of the press constitutes a substantial threat to the administration of justice before it will allow the contempt power to be used. (It should be noted that the courts have been more aggressive in the use of the contempt power against reporters who have refused to reveal the sources of stories they have written or broadcast. We will discuss this topic in depth later in the chapter.)

But when the press muffs one, a lot of people get hurt, especially the poor guy on trial. So newspapers, broadcasting stations, judges, lawyers and so forth, have been attempting to work together in recent years to develop guidelines for the press so that costly error won't occur. By looking at the specific problem of newspaper publicity about a trial—one of the most important aspects of bench-bar-press relations—we can better understand the problem and the proposed solutions.

Going back to our earlier example of pretrial publicity, the kind of information that can hurt a defendant is stories about his past criminal record, or material that connects him with known hoodlums, or information about scientific tests (like lie detector tests) that isn't admissible as evidence in court. This kind of data is usually excluded from the trial—the jury won't consider it in determining the man's guilt or innocence. Yet it might be difficult for jury members not to use it in their deliberations if it has been plastered all over the front page of the *Daily Blat* the week before the trial. Jurors—before they were selected as jurors—would have undoubtedly been exposed to such inadmissible material. Those who have might be spotted during the interview before they are selected to serve on the jury. If so, they will be excluded. Or they might be spotted after the trial, which could make

a retrial necessary. Or they might never be spotted. The whole thing would be a lot easier if such reports never appeared in the press in the first place. Years ago in the heyday of police reporting and crime news in the American press people didn't worry too much about this. When the concern did begin to mount, the courts began using their contempt power to keep the newspapers in line—don't do it or else. But this isn't very satisfactory either. Some things should be printed. And what gives the judge, one fallible human being, the right to decide what a community will or will not read or watch on television? Such concern led the American Bar Association to develop a set of guidelines. The Reardon Report, as it was called, suggested standards that were strict and tough on the press—too tough, according to many journalists. Another proposal came from the U. S. Attorney General, Nicholas Katzenbach, who told the policemen and prosecutors who worked for him (FBI, Justice Department, U.S. attorneys, and so forth) not to give out such information in the first place. What the press doesn't know, it can't print. The Katzenbach guidelines, as they became known, were a reasonable response to the problem, making important information available to the press but limiting the material so as not to prejudice the defendant's chance for a fair trial. Unfortunately these rules only applied to the federal government. Perhaps the most hopeful proposals were the numerous state guidelines worked out by the representatives of the bench, bar, and press in more than twenty states. These were benchmarks—standards of conduct—worked out in advance of potential problems. They were unenforceable, except for that undefinable sanction of scorn that a journalist or attorney or judge might have for a colleague who acted irresponsibly. But the guidelines worked in most instances.

Technically, the press is giving up a bit of its freedom in these cases. The public is being denied the access to some information. But the press does so in hopes of maintaining a balance between the right of free expression and the equally important right of a fair trial. There have been times—the big cases: Sirhan Sirhan, Richard Speck, Charles Manson, Lee Harvey Oswald—when the guidelines have failed. The press coverage of these incidents has resembled a carnival, not a news story. But these are the rare exceptions. On the day-to-day basis, ninety-nine percent of the time, the voluntary system does work.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ADMAN

Although advertisements that appear in magazines, newspapers, and on radio and television face all the legal hazards that any other published or broadcast material faces (that is, libel, invasion of privacy, and the obscenity law), advertisements are also limited by additional restrictions laid down by the federal and many state governments. Basically, these restrictions prohibit ads that are untrue, deceptive, or misleading. And while this may sound like a simple standard to meet, in many instances it is not. As the manufacturer or pharmaceutical firm gropes for means of making his pills or mouthwash or peanut butter appear different from his competitors', exaggeration is common and delusion is possible. It is especially true in patent medicine advertising where the consumer is expected to undertake a little

self-diagnosis of his ailment. Geritol, for example, the well-known iron tonic, has had continual problems with the Federal Trade Commission, the federal agency charged with keeping the advertiser in line. An iron tonic will only be helpful to an individual if he or she suffers from certain blood deficiencies or ailments. But the average consumer lacks the medical skill needed to determine whether his symptom (that tired, listless feeling) is a result of a lack of iron or something more serious. Consequently when the advertisement proclaims that "if you are tired, take Geritol, which helps your iron deficiency" it is misleading. Most people who are tired won't be helped by Geritol; iron deficiency is not their problem. What the government would like the Geritol people to say, probably, is that if you're tired, go see your doctor and find out what is wrong. (And chances are if you do have an iron deficiency he won't prescribe a patent-medicine iron tonic.) In an unusual move by the government, Geritol was recently fined more than \$800,000 for failing to comply with FTC orders.

Although it sounds facetious, the requirement that an ad be truthful and not misleading is a real headache to many advertisers: Those products in which there is the least difference between brands tend to advertise the most. And there are only so many things you can say about this brand of cereal or this kind of beer or this formula of analgesic to make it appear superior before you step off into the twilight zone of deception.

The Federal Trade Commission has had the major role in the regulation of advertising since 1914. Its power was legally limited to only those advertising deceptions that tended to interfere with fair competition until the late 1930s. But Congress then gave the FTC, whose members are appointed by the president and approved by the Senate, broad jurisdiction to attack all deceptive advertising that moved in interstate commerce. But the power was rarely used. Giving David the slingshot is one thing; having him use it is another matter. Many reasons that explain this apparent malaise stand out. The agency was and is badly understaffed and underfinanced. Bufferin or Anacin or Bayer Aspirin spend more in three months for television commercials than the FTC has for its yearly budget to police all advertising. As is the case with many of the administrative agencies in Washington, the regulated had great influence with the regulators. The agency attempted to maintain a friendly atmosphere with business, largely as a result of the large business lobby in the nation's capital. Finally, and perhaps most important, the entire means of sanctioning the deceptive advertiser lacked any punch. While the FTC had many levels of control and once in a while used its big guns, in most cases the advertiser was allowed to stop his deceptive practice without penalty. The life of the average ad campaign is about six months. It usually took just about that long for the FTC to go through all its bureaucratic maneuvers and finally catch the advertiser. Given the option of dropping the ad voluntarily without penalty or prejudice, or fighting it out in court, well, the choice for the advertiser was simple. Drop the ad; the campaign would have ended in two weeks anyway.

Then in the late 1960s someone and something lit a fire under the FTC. Things began to shake. The agency had two new "activist" directors in a short span of time. The first, former California State Finance Director Casper Weinberger, began to turn the little old lady of Pennsylvania Avenue into a

Is this the right way to sell?

Kodak happens to make slide projectors. We like to think that we give you the best value in a slide projector.

But other companies also make slide projectors. They feel the same way about theirs. Looks as though the decision will be yours if, perchance, you are planning to buy one. You will become a target for persuasive endeavors, including ours.

The Council of Better Business Bureaus has published a guide to slide projectors. It calls attention to features you can have if you want to pay for them. It raises a lot of questions that people often wish they had thought of asking before laying out the money for a slide projector.

Of course, each competitor can still make every effort to persuade you of the importance of those questions with which the particular manufacturer feels most comfortable.

Stop in at your nearest Better Business Bureau for the pamphlet "Tips on Slide Projectors." If that's not convenient, write to the manufacturer of your choice for a copy. Our own address for this: Dept. 55G, Kodak, Rochester, N.Y. 14650.



Slide projectors used to be called magic lanterns.

A little frankness, because there is too much to lose when people come to distrust advertising:

The Kodak pocket Instamatic® camera was announced on March 16, 1972. *The little camera for big pictures.* The roof blew off. We had counted on success but not that much clamor, particularly for the more expensive models.

Experience had taught that people prepared to make only a minimal investment in a camera largely want pictures to pass around when occasion demands, or to put up somewhere. Such folks have been less likely to go for the more vivid visual impression that calls for projector and screen.

So it was in ads for the more versatile models that slides—and the new size of slides—were featured. There we told of the pocket Carousel projectors for the new size.

Shoppers differ. Some shop where salespeople can afford to take the time to explain things in detail. Others would rather have a

price advantage than personal counseling. We believe in the public's right to choose, even though we have not enjoyed letters that tell of disappointment when a vacation trip without the burden of a camera has yielded lots of beautiful slides in mounts different from the slides of bygone years. (Shoppers sometimes forget exactly what the advertising said. Often they don't even look at ads or instruction booklets.)

Now, if you so specify, Kodak and some independent photofinishers will deliver the new-size transparencies in the familiar 2" x 2" mounts for your good old 35mm slide projector. Set 'er up right here as always. Screen always goes right there. Will somebody please turn off that light?

Yipe! The pictures on the screen are small! *The little camera for big pictures?*

To restore the image size for the same projector and distance at a slight reduction in

brightness, use a lens of half the focal length. We had hesitated to trumpet that. We were afraid the sharpness would suffer. The pocket Carousel projector that we advertise for slides from pocket cameras comes with a lens of more complex design than needed for the larger format. It has a more difficult optical job to do because of more magnification from film to screen.

But the new small film is easier to keep flat during projection. This helps over-all sharpness.

Let's say you already have a 2" x 2" slide projector you like. A 2½" lens for it will cost you a lot less than our recommended pocket Carousel projector with its 2½" lens. If we are to stand a chance of selling you on the larger purchase by a side-by-side comparison of projectors with a pair of identical 110 slides, they had better be extraordinarily sharp slides!



Better to tell too much than too little

Fraudulent advertising hurts the credibility of all advertisers, the overwhelming majority of whom are honest. In this ad Kodak, whose advertising has long set high standards of excellence, honesty, and integrity, attempts to regain the trust of readers who have become skeptical in the face of recent revelations about other, dishonest advertising claims. The mantle of suspicion has fallen upon the honest advertiser like Kodak, as well as the unscrupulous businessman.

growling watchdog. Weinberger was soon elevated in the Nixon administration and was replaced by Miles Kirkpatrick, the author of an American Bar Association report that was highly critical of the FTC. These two men, the various private consumer groups (Nader's Raiders), and a growing public interest in consumerism spurred the FTC into action never before seen.

While the new activities taken by the agency sounded reasonable and proper to consumers, they fell like bombs on American industry and business. One of the first things the "new" commission did was to insist that manufacturers begin supplying documented evidence to back up their advertising claims. If Ford claimed that its LTD was 60 percent quieter than a higher-priced luxury car, the FTC wanted proof. If Remington claimed its electric razor shaved closer than a blade, the FTC wanted evidence. If a company refused to document its claims it could be sued by the government. Industry was aghast.

New sanctions were proposed by the agency and finally put to use. Some advertisers were no longer given the option of dropping a campaign. Instead, if the FTC found that a residue of deception would remain in the reader's or viewer's mind even after the misleading ads were stopped, it would order the advertiser to correct these wrong impressions in one-fourth of this advertising during the next year. That is, the advertiser had to tell consumers that what it had said in the past wasn't necessarily true. ITT Continental Baking Company, makers of Profile bread, was the first company nailed as the FTC insisted the firm correct the misconception its advertising had left when it told television viewers that eating two slices of Profile bread before meals would result in a loss of weight. (The bread company never pointed out in its original ads that the individual had to eat less at his meals if the plan was to work.) The FTC also told the company to reveal that the only reason a slice of Profile bread contained fewer calories than other bread was because it was sliced thinner. The Coca-Cola Company, DuPont, Standard Oil of California, Ocean Spray, and Firestone were other companies the FTC attacked.

In connection with the FCC, which we will talk about in a moment, the agency discussed "counter-advertising" proposals for television. Such schemes would force television stations to provide free time for public interest groups to respond to the claims in advertisements. Now such time is only given if the advertisement deals with a controversial subject. But under the counter-advertising plan, for example, nutritionists would be given time to explain to parents that most breakfast cereals aren't really very good for children; or air pollution specialists might urge motorists that rather than buy more gasoline they should drive less or invest in electric-powered vehicles to cut air pollution. Most observers gave such schemes little chance of approval. But the idea sent chills down the spine of many advertisers and television station managers.

While consumer protection is something few people disagree with, the FTC regulations constitute important restrictions on the press and television. There are some who think that the consumer should be able to take care of himself. If we allow a free marketplace of commercial ideas, the consumers themselves will sort out what is true and what is false. And the advocates of less regulation also pointed out that the accusations made by

the FTC against advertisers were only accusations—often government action was later dropped when the advertiser proved that what he said was true. But the public often reads an accusation as a proven charge. The Sunbeam Corporation, for example, lamented that FTC claims against its electric shavers—later refuted by the company—had hurt its public image. Critics of the new activism of the FTC found things to smile about as 1973 dawned, however, for the agency took on a distinctly softer image as Miles Kirkpatrick stepped down as head of the commission. A new philosophy of assisting business to meet consumer needs was articulated. Whether this would take the newly-found punch out of the agency remained to be seen.

Direct government restrictions, then, play an important role in limiting the kinds of material the media can communicate. And as you can see, most of the instances in which government control exists are not clear-cut, right-and-wrong kinds of problems. It might be too bad that the government has gotten itself involved in the regulation of obscenity, but what value does such material have to society? Certainly the press should be free to report on judicial proceedings and the legal process. But who will protect the rights of the defendant to a fair trial? Consumer protection in advertising is important. But is it wise to give any single governmental agency such great power to censor communications? The questions readily come to mind; the answers come more slowly.

GOVERNMENT AND THE BROADCASTER

We move from government restrictions on private media units to an even more explicit kind of control, the government's licensing of the more than 8,000 broadcasting stations. As noted in chapter four, physical limitations of the broadcast spectrum required some kind of heavy-handed control both to insure that the technical ground rules were observed (that is, that everybody stayed on his own frequency) and that the interests of *all* listeners and viewers were considered by the limited number of license holders. The latter reason—insuring a broad range of public service—is by far the most compelling consideration in broadcasting regulation today. It is also the most controversial.

To do its bidding in broadcast regulation, Congress established a seven-man agency called the Federal Communications Commission. The FCC sits in Washington, attempting to keep its finger on the pulse of the nation's broadcasters, an often difficult job. To enforce the Federal Communications Act and its own administrative rulings (which are today perhaps more important than many aspects of the law) the FCC was given several sanctions to use against the errant broadcaster. Fines and penalties of all sorts are provided for, but the most important sanction is the agency's power to strip a broadcaster of his license either at renewal time or in the midst of the three-year license period. The broadcaster has a tremendous investment in his station, its facilities and equipment, and the thought of losing a license—which would render his hardware useless—is a chilling one. What grounds can be used to justify denial of a license renewal or loss of license mid-stream? Many, but they all come down to the fairly vague offense—a failure to serve the public interest.

The American system of broadcast licensing is not known for its efficiency in providing high-quality broadcast services. The broadcaster feels that the licensing system is an imposition on his time and energy that he could better use in serving the public in other ways. There is no question that station owners are required to prepare stacks and stacks of fairly meaningless forms every three years when renewal time comes up. Most critics of the system—including non-broadcasters—argue that these forms, which deal largely with the technical aspects of broadcasting, rarely reveal the character of the station's public service commitment. Two former FCC Commissioners, Nicholas Johnson and Kenneth Cox, argue that the renewal process has become a ritual without meaning, "a sham." Infrequently, if ever, is the broadcaster questioned about the important aspects of public service.

There are other reasons the system of public licensing of privately owned broadcasting units hasn't really lived up to the hopes and dreams of its framers some fifty years ago. No one has ever bothered to define public service for the broadcaster in any comprehensive way. The FCC has said do this and that and some of this and a little more of that, and don't do this and don't do that. And the broadcaster is led to believe that by meeting all these requests he is serving the public. Rarely is that the case.

During the greatest portion of his time, when he isn't doing this and that, the broadcaster is hot in pursuit of the dollar. Broadcasting is a business, as we have explained earlier, and a very profitable one most of the time. Success in the industry is rarely defined in terms of serving the public interest; more often it is determined by the amount of income earned each year. The broadcaster who has shown a high profit during the last three years is naturally taken aback by the FCC charge that he hasn't been successful and will lose his license.

In addition, the limited success of the licensing system can be explained by the inadequate staffing of the FCC and the procedures it has developed for license renewal. The seven FCC commissioners are assisted by a staff of no more than fifty lawyers, broadcast analysts, engineers, accountants, and clerks in their endeavor to examine as many as 300 applications for license renewal every sixty days. The commission's location in Washington tends to bind the regulatory process geographically to the nation's capital. How can seven men in Washington know and understand what the public interest is in San Diego or Fort Lauderdale or Bismarck? The FCC regional offices scattered about the nation rarely consider programming practices but deal with the physical or technical aspects of broadcasting.

The renewal procedures themselves are not very good, but only a few years ago they were even worse. Until 1966 the entire renewal process was largely conducted by two parties—the FCC and the broadcaster. Citizen participation—you know, the listeners and the viewers—was practically excluded. If a citizen had written a complaint about a station to the FCC, that letter became a part of the renewal records. But citizen testimony and citizen evidence of improper service was not permitted because the viewers and listeners had no legal standing and no vested interest (that is, monetary interest) in the renewal proceeding. The broadcaster gathered information about the feelings of the people in the community through letters solicited from clergymen and public officials, from simple surveys, and from lunch-

eons and other conferences with community leaders. The FCC would then compare these "findings" about community needs and interests with what the station was broadcasting. But rarely were viewers and listeners, the average people, allowed to speak out.

In 1964 a group of black citizens of Jackson, Mississippi, were refused permission to participate in the renewal hearing of station WLBT-TV. They charged that the station had failed to serve the black viewers in the community (about fifty percent of the audience), had promoted segregationist viewpoints, and had not presented the entire racial struggle in the South in a fair and objective way. Although they were turned down by the FCC, the black citizens of Jackson were not dazzled by the legal hocus-pocus of the commission. They appealed the ruling to the U.S. Circuit Court and in 1966 won a reversal of the FCC policy. Judge Warren Burger ruled that the exclusion of citizens in renewal hearings on the theory that the FCC can always represent the public viewpoint was no longer a valid assumption. The listeners and viewers were directly concerned and intimately affected by the performance of the broadcaster. They deserve a hearing in these matters, Burger ruled.

Until the time of this ruling, the FCC had denied the renewal of only forty-three licenses in the preceding thirty-five years (out of an estimated 50,000 renewal applications submitted). The denial rate has increased some since the citizen participation began. But more important, broadcasters in some communities are showing an increasing responsiveness to citizen requests. However, more drastic changes are needed—such as systematic ways of discovering community interests and more comprehensive analyses of broadcast service—before the system even approaches efficiency.

GOOD BROADCASTING IS BEING FAIR

The Federal Communications Act of 1934 and the hundreds of FCC rulings since that time provide a wide jurisdiction for the policeman of American broadcasting. The law tells a station what frequency it will broadcast on, where its antenna will be built, which way its power should be directed, what hours it can broadcast, what its call letters will be, when to give a station break, and hundreds of other little mundane things. And the FCC is charged with the responsibility of making certain the broadcaster follows these rules. But these aren't the troublesome items as far as the broadcaster is concerned. It is when the commission delves into programming matters that station managers—and others as well—get a bit restless.

While the Communications Act specifically forbids FCC censorship of programming, this provision is generally read to mean that the commission cannot tell a station what particular program it may present and what program it may not present. But it does not preclude the FCC from using programming as a measure of public service and insisting that the broadcast of one kind of a program is a public service and the broadcast of another kind is not. In addition, the direct prohibition against censorship does not stop the government from exercising direct power in banning specific kinds of programming from the airwaves.

In demanding certain programming standards, the FCC has adopted several policies, none of which is more controversial than the fairness doctrine. Since everybody is for fairness, some people can't understand why the doctrine has caused problems. But being in favor of fairness is not the problem. It's how fairness is attained that causes the troubles. What specifically is the fairness doctrine? Well, a lot of broadcasters don't even know. Many think it is merely providing an opportunity for all sides of a controversial issue to be discussed or aired. But that's only part of it. Actually, the fairness doctrine says that the broadcaster must make an affirmative effort to see that all sides of controversial public issues are aired. If a spokesman for stamping out ladybugs appears on the station, it is not sufficient for the broadcaster to offer time to pro-ladybug spokesmen. The license holder must go out and find a spokesman for the other side or give the other side himself. It is true that at many stations the rule is observed more in the breach than any other way, but nevertheless, that's what the law says.

You won't find the fairness doctrine anywhere in the Communications Act. It is a creature of various FCC rulings over the past four decades that have resulted in the proposition that adequate public service includes broadcasting all sides of controversial issues. Broadcasters dislike the law immensely. They believe that as journalists and honorable men they can present the key points of the issues fairly. If one side isn't represented in their presentation, it is because it does not constitute an important or meaningful argument. More important, many argue that it is a violation of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of the press. First, the government tells the broadcaster that he must air certain things—"you must offer a rebuttal to this position." And second, it limits the broadcaster from carrying legal programming. Listen to the TV man's argument: "I want to carry a speaker who advocates littering. But I can't afford to give free time to carry a speaker who is opposed to littering. Therefore, because the fairness doctrine forces me to carry all sides of controversial issues, I can't carry the speaker who advocates littering. My rights of freedom of expression have been restricted." This argument was at the heart of the broadcasters' legal challenge to the fairness doctrine carried out several years ago. But the Supreme Court made short work of this logic when it ruled in the famous *Red Lion* case that the doctrine had no constitutional impairment. "It is the right of the public to receive suitable access to social, political, esthetic, moral, and other ideas and experiences which is crucial here. That right may not constitutionally be abridged either by the Congress or by the FCC." Or by the broadcaster, Justice Byron White added later in the decision.

The fairness doctrine is not only controversial, it is wide-ranging as well. There is hardly an aspect of programming that it doesn't touch. Clearly, all documentaries and other public affairs programming fall within its purview. In this arena, the same broadcasters who scorn the doctrine often use it as an excuse for the presentation of very little or very bland documentary programming. For example, NBC was once preparing a program on gun control. After researching and filming the program, the producers believed the arguments for stronger gun control legislation were more compelling

than those against. So this point of view was stressed in the conclusion. But network lawyers—who as all lawyers, frequently measure fairness quantitatively, by the number of words or minutes—felt the program was biased and insisted on more material against such legislation. The resulting program was bland and confusing and probably obscured both the intensity and the real strength of the public support for stronger legislation.

The fairness doctrine also enters into TV advertising. It was only a decade ago when a young attorney, John Banzhaf III, argued that because cigarette smoking was a subject about which there was a medical dispute, commercials urging viewers to buy cigarettes constituted one side of a controversial issue. The FCC agreed after a fashion, and broadcasters were forced to air anti-smoking spots at no charge for years, until the smoking ads were removed completely. After the smoking decision, other groups, such as anti-war groups and environmentalists, argued that recruiting advertisements, gasoline, and detergent ads also constituted single sides of controversial issues. But the FCC rejected this argument, stating that the cigarette commercials were a unique instance. The commercial issue seemed dead until recently when the commission ruled that two Standard Oil commercials extolling the virtues of the controversial trans-Alaskan pipeline were subject to the fairness doctrine. And even more recently a federal court ruled that a Washington television station could not refuse to sell—not give—time to groups wishing to speak out on politics and the war. If the station sold time for commercial messages, the court said, it could not refuse to sell time for editorial advertising as well, even if it disagreed with the editorial message.

But the U.S. Supreme Court overruled this decision in the summer of 1973. In a seven to two vote, the court said that radio and television stations have an absolute right to refuse to sell time for advertising dealing with political campaigns or public issues. Chief Justice Warren Burger said in the court's opinion that giving the FCC regulatory power in such a situation would run the risk of enlarging government control over the content of broadcast discussion of public issues. This decision has raised several as yet unanswered questions about the future of the government's role in balancing advertising messages.

All signs point to continued use of the fairness doctrine as tool in broadcast regulation. Viewers should consider this a mixed blessing. Some broadcasters will continue to use the doctrine as an excuse to crib on the coverage of controversial issues. In other instances, when the viewer is seeking some kind of editorial guidance from the broadcaster, when he desperately seeks an informed point of view, he will instead be treated to two or three or four conflicting points of view, and confusion will reign. For with all its virtues, the fairness doctrine still requires the broadcaster to balance off the comments of a wise man with a fool.

Finally, is it healthy to give the government this much power over so influential a medium? At present the FCC seems harmless enough. But, as we will note in greater detail in the last section of this chapter, in recent months we have seen broadcasters under an increasing attack from the government for broadcasting this program or for not broadcasting that one.

The ex-vice president has ranted and raved about the television networks. Mysterious White House spokesmen have falsely charged that the CBS has doctored its news reports. The same network was hauled before Congress for its expose of Pentagon public relations practices. Is this the kind of government we want to arm to take stronger action against the broadcasters? Economist Herbert Schiller has written in *Mass Communications and the American Empire* that in America "government control of the communications media could produce a more sophisticated expertise in audience control than the commercial sublimators ever have managed to construct."

THE BROADCASTER AND THE CANDIDATE

Another FCC regulation—this one is part of the Communications Act—that is also disliked by broadcasters and hence is also quite controversial is what is often called the *equal time rule*. The regulation applies only to political candidates and is more accurately described by its real name, the *equal opportunity doctrine*. When regulation of broadcasting was first proposed, Congress was concerned with the tremendous advantage one political candidate might have over his opponent if he could "capture" the airwaves; that is, if he could make political radio broadcasts while keeping his opponents off the air. The legislators included in the old Radio Act of 1927 and carried word-for-word into the 1934 law a provision that makes certain all candidates for public office have an equal opportunity to use broadcasting facilities. It also prohibits the station from censoring candidates' remarks in any way. The law does not require the broadcaster to allow any candidate to use his station; the station owner can decide to exclude all candidates. But if the license holder permits one man to make a broadcast, he must allow all candidates for that same office the same opportunity.

"The same opportunity" implies many things. It means that all candidates can buy the same amount of time at the same cost. If the first candidate received free air time, other candidates must get free air time. The "other" candidate's broadcast should be in approximately the same time period. A broadcaster can't give his favorite candidate a half hour at 8 P.M. and then shunt the opposing politicians off to Sunday at 6 A.M. Whatever broadcasting facilities the first candidate was allowed to use must be available to his opponents.

The reason broadcasters don't like the law is because it covers all legally qualified candidates for office, not just major party candidates. For example, many stations said they would have liked to give free time to both Nixon and McGovern in 1972, but if they did, they would have to give the same amount of free time to the many splinter party candidates as well. The result is no free time for any candidate. And in this way, they argue, the public loses. It is a good point, if you concede that the station could not afford free time for all candidates. (This is a questionable concession, however.) Also, one of the primary differences between a major party candidate and a splinter party candidate is that the former is much better known to the public. Yet how does the splinter party candidate have a chance to become known if television exposure is denied?

The law is enforced and limited in many strange ways. First, it applies to any appearance made by a candidate, except those on a bona fide newscast, news interview ("Meet the Press," "Face the Nation"), news documentary (providing the appearance of the candidate is incidental to the subject of the program), and news event. This has two results. First, non-political appearances on entertainment programs are included. Hence in spring 1972 one of the networks had to postpone broadcast of a Walt Disney movie that featured Pat Paulsen in the cast because the comedian had announced he was running for president. Also, after Johnny Carson unwittingly during an election campaign invited the mayor of Burbank, California, onto his show as a gag because of the running jokes about the town on NBC's "Laugh-In," the network had to find time for nearly a dozen other Burbank politicians who were running against the mayor. In addition to these problems, candidates go out of their way to hoke up news events so they can win television coverage without forcing the station to provide time for rival office seekers.

Another limitation concerns primary elections when the law is applied only within parties and not between parties. Therefore if the station allows a Republican candidate for Congress to appear during a primary, only the other Republicans—not the Democrats, who are having their own primary battle—are given the equal opportunity. Finally, the law applies only to appearances by the candidates themselves, not to presentations by their family, campaign staff, or friends.

SUMMARY

The government plays its most direct and active role in regulation of communication when it deals with broadcasting. And there are suggestions today that such a role is ill-fated, that the dangers of such close regulation outweigh its benefits. Few persons beyond the broadcasters themselves would argue for no regulation. Both history and the contemporary operation of broadcasting on a business basis strongly suggest that without some kind of outside control the public interest would soon be forgotten or ignored. For a nation that depends on broadcasting as a vital element in the communications process, such a result could be disastrous. At the same time, however, must we be locked into the kind of regulatory system that now exists, a sort of *ad hoc*, unplanned, unrehearsed scheme that is probably more sensitive to the federal administration and the broadcasters than to the needs of the people? It is situations like the following that raise these questions.

The FCC has moved actively into the regulation of cable television, despite the lack of a strong philosophical rationale or base for such a stand. (As we have seen, regulation of broadcasting tends to be justified on the grounds that since the spectrum is limited and because it is a natural resource belonging to the public, there must be some assurance that all the public needs will be met. Cable, on the other hand, has no limited spectrum, uses wires, and rarely even crosses state lines.) The commission's jurisdiction in cable was challenged after it told all cable operators serving

more than 3,500 subscribers to begin originating as well as relaying programming. The Supreme Court threw out the challenge on the grounds that FCC regulation of cable was ancillary to the commission's task of regulating traditional over-the-air broadcasting. Yet the commission's regulation of cable has been marked by an insensitivity to anything but technical and economic kinds of problems, with little consideration given to creative or artistic matters. Where, for example, are these cable operators supposed to get the programming they originate? Or does that really matter?

The FCC tends to be political, with four of its seven members usually of the same party as the president. The White House has a lever and in recent years the commission has tended to mirror President Nixon's bias against the networks in favor of the local stations. The prime-time rule, which considerably reduced the level of American viewing fare while fattening the purses of the local stations, is one example. The commission's jurisdiction in such matters—such as determining that the public interest can be served better by thirty minutes of local programming rather than network programming—was based on a very tenuous foundation. More recently, when President Nixon made it known that he favored a Hollywood craft union proposal to limit the number of reruns the network might broadcast, FCC Chairman Dean Burch let it quickly be known that the commission had the power to take such action, based on its jurisdiction in the prime time case. But using this as a basis for jurisdiction would mean the commission has virtual unchecked autonomy in control of all television programming, something which wasn't intended by the framers of either the Radio Act or the Communications Act.

In fact the FCC is ill-equipped to regulate 8,000 broadcasters. Actions are taken most often against the networks because they tend to be more visible, more centrally located, and better targets. All the while the local broadcasters, who politically tend to be more sympathetic with the Republican administration, go blithely on their way. What is desperately needed in broadcast regulation is comprehensive planning to restructure the regulation system to meet national communications needs. Until then the patchwork regulations of the past will continue to predominate. And in this case, something might not be better than nothing at all.

GOVERNMENT AND THE NEWS

The government and the press deal with each other in ways that go beyond the traditional censor-publisher roles. The government, of course, is the source of much of the news carried each day in our newspapers and broadcast on radio and television. Some of this information is given to the press for no other reason than in the hope that it will be used as publicity about government or politicians. Other times the press must ferret out information that might be negative or put the government or politician in a bad light. So again in this relationship, the adversary postures remain. The press seeks to avoid being used as a public relations arm of government, while at the same time trying to get ALL the news. The government attempts to use the press when it can and yet keep the press in the dark when it feels it might be embarrassed by the release of the material.

This kind of relationship exists at all levels of government. The weekly newspaper editor in Prairie Gap has the same kind of problems with his county supervisor that the large newspapers, wire services, and television networks have with the president and his aides. However, in our short discussion here we will focus on problems in Washington, rather than Prairie Gap, because they have more meaning to all of us, and because things have been pretty quiet in Prairie Gap lately.

The press and the government have never been great buddies. There are periods in our history when relations between the two have been fairly close—during World War II, for example, when there was a general feeling that we should all pull together. But the mass media and the government work at cross purposes most of the time, which precludes harmony. Press revelations about what the government is doing can sometimes upset delicate planning and cause delays or even the destruction of a program, a treaty, or some other kind of negotiation. But at the same time the government tends to use this as an excuse to keep the press out of its hair and to keep journalists from reporting matters of legitimate public concern. To the politician who wants to be reelected, the reporter represents both a channel for getting positive news to the people and a snoop who by publishing the wrong things could make reelection impossible. The reporter, on the other hand, feels he has a responsibility to print all the news he believes would interest his readers (or his colleagues and editors). He sees the government official as an impediment to him in this task. But the same official is also a news source who, if he decided not to talk, could dry up a large supply of the reporter's natural resource—news. So the press cannot anger the public official to the extent that he will not cooperate. The relationship is delicately balanced. And what appears to be the right answer from one side of the desk often appears to be the wrong answer when seated on the other side. Thomas Jefferson, long heralded as a spokesman for press freedom and widespread access to government information, wrote most of his ringing defenses of liberty of expression while he was out of office. Far fewer remember that when Jefferson ascended to the presidency and was angered at the press criticism of his regime, he wrote to a friend that a "little suppression of a few key newspapers might be in order."

THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRESS

The U. S. presidential press conference is a unique institution. Although the British prime minister and his ministers visit Parliament regularly for questioning, the United States is the only country where the national leader is expected to appear regularly before the press to answer questions.

The whole notion of the press conference is a rather recent one; Woodrow Wilson originated the regular sessions. Of all the presidents since Wilson, probably only Franklin D. Roosevelt and John Kennedy had any real flair for dealing with the press. Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover all found it a real chore to meet the press on a regular basis. Truman, Eisenhower, and Johnson were equally ill at ease when answering questions in an auditorium crowded with aggressive reporters.

Roosevelt's success with the press can probably be attributed to his

understanding of the importance of the president's relationship with newsmen. FDR had a great affinity for newsmen, and showed it. They, in turn, thought fondly of him as well. With rare exception he met the press twice a week in his office. He also talked with reporters informally, sometimes on Sunday evenings when he and Eleanor would invite a few newsmen for Sunday supper at the White House.

But Roosevelt could also scold the press. He once forced two reporters to stand in the corner with dunce caps during a news conference after they had made what the president considered an error in their stories. Another time he awarded a reporter an Iron Cross, a high Nazi military honor, for publishing a story he thought would be helpful to the German war effort. But FDR recognized the role of the press in a democracy and because of that he understood reporters.

While John Kennedy was at ease with the press and was liked by reporters, he clearly did not share Roosevelt's understanding of the role of the press in a democracy. At press conferences he was charming and witty and seemed to enjoy sparring with reporters, but he wanted the newsmen to be cheerleaders, not watchdogs, and was often swift and sharp in his reactions to fault-finding by the press. He would publicly criticize reporters or call their editors. Aides would often reprimand newsmen. Kennedy once cancelled twenty-two subscriptions to a New York newspaper that had angered him with a story. And when *New York Times* reporter David Halberstam began writing stories about the Vietnam conflict that disturbed the president (the *Times* reporter was one of the first American reporters to see the true nature of the war, the folly of U.S. intervention), Kennedy asked the *Times* to have the newsman brought home, but the newspaper refused.

The relationship between Richard Nixon's administration and the press has been stormy. The president has followed the lead of predecessors in de-emphasizing the news conference and holds formal meetings with the press only about every ninety days.

In recent months the press has complained bitterly that the president has been inaccessible. Even his top-level aides have avoided contact with newsmen. But avoiding the press seems to be but a single aspect of a wider, more far-reaching strategy that the chief executive and his associates have developed for dealing with the media. Nixon is not the first president to have a press strategy. Using many devices favored by some of his recent predecessors in the White House and adding several of his own, the president has undertaken to manipulate the press and public opinion. The current government strategy, which is being copied by other public officials at lower levels, makes the traditional concepts of censorship obsolete when discussing government-press relations. In the past, press freedom could be evaluated almost solely in terms of official government restrictions—the kinds of laws we talked about earlier in this chapter. Under this standard or definition, American freedom is flourishing in the 1970s. But legal censorship is only one means of control used by the government today. The current administration has developed other schemes that accomplish many of the same results but are neatly disguised. Nixon didn't originate the goals he has set; other presidents have used similar devices to attain similar

ends—but never in the well-orchestrated fashion undertaken by the current chief executive.

The Nixon press strategy centers around several complementary ploys. The administration takes great pains, for example, to keep “bad news” from falling into the hands of the press—to cut the newsmen off at the pass, so to speak. What journalists don’t know, they can’t write about. Therefore, the government need not face the hassles involved in legal censorship. But obviously with as many reporters as there are in the U.S., some bad news is bound to leak out. To counter it, the administration has undertaken two programs. First, the president and his aides have attacked the credibility of the media that carry the bad news. These tend to be the television networks, the larger Eastern newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and the news magazines. Second, the administration has made certain that the friendly press in the hinterlands has both support from the administration and a steady flow of news “unfiltered” by the knowledgeable and often skeptical Washington press corps.

The administration has been aided in its press strategy by many peripheral factors. The size of government has increased so rapidly in recent times that the press, often unwilling to pay the economic price required to increase the size of news staffs, has instead paid a far greater price by letting government supply much of the news the media need. A government that is called upon to supply can also hide. Like all press agents, the thousands of public information officers at all levels of government are highly qualified experts at emphasizing positive achievements while covering up more embarrassing information.

The growth of the executive branch has also tended to make news-gathering more difficult. When the legislature and executive were co-equals, Congress was an ally of the press in seeking to dig out information from the administration. But Congress has moved to the background in recent years and seems more interested in maintaining some of its archaic traditions (such as the seniority system, the committee system, and so forth) than in cutting back executive power. The result, seen most clearly in the legislative body’s difficulty in forcing the president to spend money it has appropriated for various public programs, has also limited the usefulness of Congress as an information agent for the people.

The Cold War atmosphere of the past thirty years or so has provided the best possible excuse for the cover-up: revealing the information could endanger national security. This is a cozy sanctuary in which public officials can hide. Is there anyone who wants to endanger the national security? But of course we don’t know if security would be endangered unless the material or news story is released and evaluated—so we must take the word of the public official in charge.

Finally, the economic climate, in which the growing mass media have tended to thrive in the past two decades, is one that has been aided in great measure by the administration. The chief executive’s support of the Newspaper Preservation Bill, which permits monopolies to exist in the newspaper industry (we will outline this measure in the next chapter), is one example. The president has also taken sides in many disputes that have

economic consequences between the television networks and the local stations. The webs and their affiliates are competitors in the search for advertising dollars. The administration support of the plea for fewer network reruns, which would likely force the networks to boost their already high advertising rates or cut back on programming, could mean new revenues for local stations. Also, the director of White House telecommunications policy, a young economist named Clay Whitehead, has proposed legislation that would give the broadcaster a five-year license that could not be challenged on renewal unless the FCC first decided the broadcaster had failed to serve the public interest. In return, the local broadcaster would be called on to exercise a higher degree of responsibility over the network programming—primarily news programming—that he broadcast. Actions like these leave important segments of the communications industry “beholden” to the White House. Let’s look briefly at a catalog of tools used by this administration and others as the most recent phase of government-press relations unfolds.

Nixon’s disregard and disuse of the presidential news conference as an information tool is an indication of his distaste for the institution and for the press. This chief executive dislikes journalists perhaps more than any president in recent memory. He has argued, perhaps with justification, that the press has never really understood Richard Nixon. Often months pass between press conferences. The many weeks between conferences, during which much of importance happens, changes the character of those conferences that are held. Reporters, anxious to get their crack at the president, are reluctant to ask the nit-picking specific questions that often reveal most about what is going on in the administration. Instead, they feel compelled to ask the cosmic questions—is revolution imminent? Has the war been worthwhile? Tell us about the isolation of the presidency. Any good politician can make short work of such general, soft questions and Nixon is a master. The press must share the blame for this problem. It rarely does its homework for such conferences; many reporters use only the time it takes to get from the office to the news conference to come up with their queries. Most presidents have held their news conferences during the working day. Mr. Nixon holds many of his meetings with the press at night, televised to a prime-time audience over all three networks. Many speculate that in this way he can be assured of a large viewing audience and make certain that the people will hear what he says. The “unfriendly” Washington press corps won’t be able to “change” his words or his meaning. Max Frankel, Sunday editor of the *New York Times*, notes that a nationally televised news conference forces the reporters to be on their best behavior. Sometimes a reporter has to get downright nasty when a politician continually evades his question with glittering generalities. But when 100 million people are watching, most reporters don’t have the inclination to act that way. They may not get their question answered, but at least they are polite.

The Nixon administration has developed an alternate strategy in holding press conferences. These are the regional press briefings that Nixon’s communications advisors arrange in various parts of the nation. Generally the president or some of his top aides will hold an after-

noon briefing in a city like New Orleans, San Francisco, Chicago, or Boston. Regional newspapers and broadcasting stations are invited to send representatives, which most often turn out to be management-level people. The administration argues that through these meetings the president is taking the government to the people. But critics of the policy argue that it is just a ploy to allow the White House to circumvent the unfriendly Washington press corps when making an important announcement. Critics also argue that such regional meetings have additional advantages for the president. The management people who usually represent the press have been out of the newsgathering business for many years, or in some cases have never been in it. Their questions at the briefings are rarely sharp. Also these men really don't know what is going on in Washington. With a federal government as large as ours, a reporter has to stay on a small beat day after day to keep up with things. But the Washington press corps does know what is going on in the capital, and it is difficult, for example, for the president to fudge in his answer about the success of a new program in Health, Education and Welfare during a Washington news conference because there are too many reporters present who cover that beat. Yet he can easily get away with this in Des Moines where no one knows what HEW is doing. Also the regional conference lets the president shape his remarks for his audience, critics assert. He can be fairly strong against bussing in New Orleans, yet be softer in Chicago. And who knows the difference? Rarely are the same members of the press present in both places.

There are those in both the press and government who believe that the day is past when the presidential news conference is a meaningful way to get news from the president. The meetings are not held often enough, the press doesn't do its homework well enough, newsmen tend to ask the wrong kinds of questions and rarely follow up on each other's questions—well, the list of reasons is quite long. Under Roosevelt the news conference was useful to both the president and the press. Such is not the case today.

“IT IS I, EFREM ZIMBALIST”

While the president's relationship with the press via the news conference tends to be out in the open, other aspects of this relationship remain hidden, except to insiders. Some chief executives have gone to incredible lengths behind the scenes to manipulate the news. John Kennedy, for example, used the federal police—the FBI and the Secret Service—to investigate news leaks, which often meant interrogating reporters, sometimes in the middle of the night. When two reporters revealed some unpleasant facts about the steel price controversy during the JFK administration, the president sent G-men to their hotel at 2 A.M. to roust them out of bed and find out where they got their story. The next time such information presented itself to those reporters, they might have had second thoughts about using it. Other reporters have been followed by government agents. The Nixon administration undertook a security investigation of CBS reporter Dan Schorr, ostensibly because he was being considered for a federal job.

Schorr, who said he had never sought or been offered federal employment, had been a sore point with the administration with some of his revelations about shenanigans in HEW.

In a related way, the federal government and some state governments have been conducting similar kinds of harrassments against reporters by having them subpoenaed to appear before grand juries and testify about the activities of their news sources, who are often political radicals. Or the government has asked to see the reporter's notes or the unused news film shot by the TV station or all the pictures of an event (like the Weathermen demonstrations in Chicago) taken by newspaper and magazine photographers. This kind of action is very serious and can best be illustrated by the case of Earl Caldwell, a reporter for the *New York Times* whose specialty was covering black extremist groups like the Black Panthers. A federal grand jury investigating extremist activities in the Bay Area subpoenaed Caldwell as a witness. The young reporter refused to appear, arguing that if he did testify or even appeared before the secret sessions, his credibility with his news sources—the Panthers, for example—would be destroyed. Fearing he would tell the government all he heard and saw, the Panthers would shut him out and refuse to communicate with him. And this information, much of it important, would then be denied to the millions of newspaper readers in the country. The government disagreed, and argued that every citizen has a duty to testify before a grand jury that is investigating possible criminal activities. Caldwell refused anyway and the matter went to court, along with similar cases from Massachusetts and Kentucky. In July of 1972 the Supreme Court ruled that Caldwell and his fellow reporters had a responsibility to testify, that the argument that freedom of the press would be endangered if the reporter failed to shield his news sources was hardly a compelling one, and that neither the First Amendment nor any other constitutional guarantee gave the reporter the right to refuse to reveal to a grand jury information about matters of potential public concern.

Also coming to light recently were instances in which security agents from the Army, the FBI, and local police forces have posed as reporters to gain access to closed meetings of various political groups. The government has paid bona fide reporters to obtain material from political dissenters. The Army Security Agency painted a van with the name of a nonexistent television company and filmed demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. In July of 1970 a female intelligence agent for the District of Columbia police posed as a reporter to gain access to a welfare rights meeting. Army intelligence agents got press credentials in New York from the police department to cover the actions of black activists in 1967. A Detroit policeman posed as a news photographer to observe demonstrators at a General Motors stockholder meeting in 1970. And the list goes on. So what, you might say. What effect does this have on the press? A press that loses its credibility with its news sources, one that is locked out of meetings or rallies or discussions because the people in charge fear the reporters are really government agents, has little value. In an era of political and social turbulence when all citizens need more, not less, information about what is going on in the "underground," actions like these by the government can

CBS Reports' "The Selling of the Pentagon" was one of the few contemporary documentaries that recalled the days of aggressive broadcast journalism of Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly. Despite the outcry by the Pentagon, the Department of Defense later admitted the program prompted positive changes in its public relations policies.



CBS Photo

have dangerous results. When these revelations were made public in the early seventies, many police agencies announced they would no longer undertake such schemes. But . . .

Finally, the harassment of the press took on national proportions when Congress attempted to find the executives of CBS in contempt for failing to cooperate in the House investigation of the network's documentary, "The Selling of the Pentagon." The program, which attacked the public relations apparatus of the military bureaucracy, was criticized by many for being slanted and biased against the armed forces. After the program was broadcast it was revealed that CBS had carried out some sloppy editing practices that had fundamentally changed the meaning of comments two Pentagon spokesmen had made. Other critics asserted the network had obtained some of its film under false pretenses. Despite these errors and criticisms, no one stood to challenge the basic argument of the documentary—that Pentagon public relations were running wild. In 1971 the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce began an investigation—not of the Pentagon, but of CBS—and demanded that the then network president Frank Stanton appear and submit all film, workprints, outtakes (film shot but not used), sound-tape recordings, written scripts, and transcripts used in connection with the documentary. Stanton appeared, but refused to bring the materials. He said, "If newsmen are told that their notes, films, and tapes will be subject to compulsory process so that the government can determine whether the news has been satisfactorily edited, the scope, nature and vigor of their news gathering and reporting will inevitably be curtailed." Stanton said the committee's request constituted an official evaluation of journalistic judgments made by CBS,



CBS News

Long a fighter for both broadcast independence and broadcast excellence, Dr. Frank Stanton presented a vigorous defense of his network's policies and practices in "The Selling of the Pentagon" case. But as a result of the controversy, CBS instituted strict, and probably healthy, new rules regarding film editing practices.

and he would not comply. This position resulted in a committee vote that he and the network be cited for contempt of Congress. But in a rare move, the full House failed to support such an action and the contempt citation was voted down.

Press credibility was also attacked when the ex-vice president leveled several fusillades at the media a short time ago. His first blast, carried live by all three television networks, came in November of 1969. While many factors undoubtedly prompted the speech, the trigger was the network's "instant analysis" of President Nixon's November 3 Vietnam policy speech, when most national correspondents concluded that Mr. Nixon had said nothing new. Apparently outraged by this dismissal of the president's statement, Agnew vented the wrath of the administration on selected segments of the news media—the national television networks and those large Eastern urban newspapers that disagreed with the government's Vietnam stand. Broadcast from a rigged environment—a GOP party conference in Des Moines—which provided much applause and laughter at the right moments, the ex-vice president leveled vitriolic and vituperative charges at the network broadcasters. Ironically, many of Mr. Agnew's comments raised valid questions about the way news is selected for presentation. But the veep wasn't concerned with raising important questions. He set out instead to label the unfriendly news media as "untrustworthy." Coverage of the war and the president's speech was biased,

he argued. News on networks was selected by small groups of men, Eastern effete snobs, who told nothing but the bad things about America. There was too much power in a few hands—hands of men who don't even have to stand for election every four years. Coverage of demonstrations and riots was one-sided. The high comedy of the event was that many local stations—which are well regarded by the administration and which later sided with Agnew in the ensuing dispute over his charges—didn't even carry the speech live. Some were in a rating week and were fearful of losing some good old rating points. Others didn't want to lose the money from a third rerun of "Leave It To Beaver." So these stations broadcast Agnew's message after 11:30 P.M. or saved him for the Sunday public affairs ghetto.

In later speeches Mr. Agnew attacked the news monopolies of some newspapers like the *Washington Post*, which also owns WTOP-TV in the nation's capital and *Newsweek*. But he only pointed out those combinations that were critical of the administration, not chains like the *Chicago Tribune–New York Daily News* lash-up, which supports the president. A year later he argued that all the national news broadcasters and newspaper columnists should undergo examination by the government to determine their political biases. To which Eric Sevareid in a CBS news commentary responded in a frustrated manner, "If, after some thirty years and thousands of broadcasts, hundreds of articles and lectures and a few books, one's general cast of mind . . . remains a mystery, then we're licked . . ."

It is difficult to evaluate the direct result of Mr. Agnew's invectives and epithets. One network, CBS, ended the practice of evaluating the president's remarks immediately following his press conference or speech. Many NBC and ABC affiliates began cutting off the network commentary and analysis at the end of a presidential speech or news conference. But Agnew's real message was not contained in the strong language of his speeches. It lay underneath. It told the American people "Don't believe what you read in your paper or what you see on television. These news media are untrustworthy."

Other administration attacks on the credibility of the press have been less successful. The attempt by the Nixon administration to discredit CBS by making charges that the network had faked a news story that pictured a young South Vietnamese soldier shooting an enemy captive in cold blood failed when the network documented its story. The administration, more particularly former White House aide Clark Mollenhoff, said the film had been taken in a training area, not even in the war zone, that it had been faked by the network, and that in any case no Americans were present when the incident took place. The charges reached such a level of credibility that national newspaper columnists like Richard Wilson of the *Des Moines Register* and Jack Anderson wrote at length about them. Several months later CBS felt compelled to bring its case to the people and in an unusual report documented the original story. Close-ups of helicopters were used to prove that Americans were on the scene when the shooting took place. By showing other excerpts from the same piece of film, CBS demonstrated the event had occurred in a war zone; and as a clincher, the network produced the young South Vietnamese sergeant who had pulled the trigger, who was extremely proud of his deed, and was happy to tell this to the

WATERGATE



As the "Watergate Affair" was dismissed as a political scandal, the public was told that the disclosure of the affair was a mere technicality. But the public was told that the disclosure of the affair was a mere technicality. But the public was told that the disclosure of the affair was a mere technicality.

It is also noted that the affair was a mere technicality. It is also noted that the affair was a mere technicality. It is also noted that the affair was a mere technicality.



RESIGNED CABINET TO JOHN CRY

JOHN D. EHRLICHMAN Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	H. R. 'BOB' HALDEMAN Nixon's chief of staff, resigned in August 1972.	DWIGHT L. CHAPIN Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	JOHN W. DEAN III Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.
CHARLES W. COLSON Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	JEB STUART MAGRUDER Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	HERBERT W. KALMACH Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	GORDON C. STRACHAN Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.
E. HOWARD HUNT, JR. Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	G. GORDON LIDDY Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	DONALD SEGRESTI Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	EGIL KROGH, JR. Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

HUGH W. SLOAN JR.
Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

ROBERT C. ODLE
Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

KENNETH W. PARKINSON
Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

FREDERICK LOHME
Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

ELLSBERG RAID
The raid on Ellsberg's office in July 1972.

JAMES W. MCCORD, JR.
Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

EUGENIO MARTINEZ Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	BERNARD L. BARKER Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.
VIRGILIO GONZALEZ Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.	FRANK A. STUBBS Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

WATERGATE CONSPIRACY

- Watergate raid planning under way by early 1972.
- \$114,000 from GOP passed to Barker April 18.
- McCord issues Howard Johnson motel room address about from Watergate on incoming push, May 4.
- Attempt to buy McGovern headquarters fails, May 27.
- Initial burglary and burglary card to news documents at Democrat's Watergate office, May 30.
- Barker and several burglars visit at Watergate June 17. McCord, Barker, Sturges, Gonzalez, Martinez arranged for McGovern's office at 2300 con. Front. Liddy nearby, but escape; arrested weeks later.
- Democrats file civil damages suit, June 26.

RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

STANS AND MITCHELL INDICTED
The Stans and Mitchell were indicted for their role in the Watergate scandal.

COMMITTEE FINED
The committee was fined for its role in the Watergate scandal.

THE MEXICAN CONNECTION
The Mexican connection in the Watergate scandal.

SEGRESTI INDICTED
Segresti was indicted for his role in the Watergate scandal.

RESIGNATIONS
Several officials resigned in the wake of the Watergate scandal.

ERVIN COMMITTEE

The Ervin Committee was established to investigate the Watergate scandal.

CIVIL SUITS

Several civil suits were filed in connection with the Watergate scandal.

WATERGATE SEVEN INDICTED SEPT. 15, 1972

The Watergate Seven: Hunt, Liddy, McCord, Barker, Sturges, Gonzalez, and Martinez.

NIXON RE-ELECTED NOV. 7, 1972

TRIAL OF WATERGATE SEVEN JAN. 6-30, 1973

Hunt, Barker, Sturges, Gonzalez, Martinez pleaded guilty. Liddy, McCord pleaded innocent, stood trial. Facing guilty, Liddy sentenced to maximum 20 years in prison. Hunt 30-day. Others received probational sentences.

JOHN J. SIBICA
Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

EARL J. SILBERT
Nixon's top aide, resigned in August 1972.

Provisional sentences: Hunt: Four, maximum 20 years in prison, such; Hunt, maximum 20 years in prison. McCord's sentence and trial sentences for Hunt: Four and Hunt postponed until June.

WATERGATE GRAND JURY CONTINUES TO HEAR WITNESSES.

OTHER SABOTAGE
Other acts of sabotage in the Watergate scandal.



Courtesy of The National Observer

From the very beginning, the Watergate controversy proved to be a challenge to the press: first in uncovering the details of the massive conspiracy and then in keeping track of the vast cast of characters. *The National Observer*, rarely bound by tradition, provided its readers with this helpful chart to keep track of the players in the governmental drama.

American people. Again the real message from the administration was not about a single film clip, it was about network news coverage—"the television correspondent's lie."

These kinds of activities, as well as many blunders by the press itself, have succeeded in lowering the credibility of the American press among the people of the nation. Quite honestly, people find it easy to dismiss press reports of bad news, especially if they come from distant places. People who watched television coverage of reporters being beaten at the Democratic convention in Chicago still didn't believe it happened when stories appeared about the riots in the newspapers. And this disbelieving attitude has little to do with political philosophy. The fuzzy-headed radicals on the left think the media have sold out to the government. They would rather believe communist propaganda about what went on in Vietnam than the nation's press. Right wingers think the press is run by the fuzzy-headed left-wing radicals. When in the midst of the 1972 campaign it was widely reported that the GOP had been involved in the bugging of Democratic Watergate headquarters in Washington, it was shocking to find the number of people who didn't believe the story. The press is just untrustworthy, they would say. Even as press reports continued, as newspapers and television networks covered the many court and Senate hearings on the campaign scandal, some readers and viewers still thought that the media was out to get the president, and such reports couldn't be true. The fact that two *Washington Post* reporters won the Pulitzer Prize for their dogged efforts in opening up the story, that White House aides resigned by the handful, that high administration officials were indicted because of the scandal, and that White House press aides apologized to the press for past harsh criticism—all of these elements and many more still failed to convince some people that the press wasn't out to get Nixon.

OTHER MEANS—SAME RESULTS

There are many other schemes used by this administration and others to manipulate the news. The president himself can lay the prestige of his office on the line and complain about news stories either to the reporter or to the reporter's boss. Kennedy did this and had his aides do it as well. Bill Moyers did it for Lyndon Johnson; Herb Klein did it for President Nixon. A variation on this theme is to banish the reporter who writes unpleasantries; that is, fail to alert him for news conferences, reject his requests for interviews, or exclude him from closed events. This reminds the reporter of the value of his news source and the importance of keeping the news source happy or at least not displeased.

Centralization of information is another means of manipulating the news. And President Nixon has succeeded with this scheme more than any previous president. The White House controls the flow of information within the executive branch to the extent that even some cabinet members are instructed what to say. The president demands that his appointees stay in line and not speak out of turn. And when they do talk to the press, he expects them to reflect administration ideas, not their own. Administrators

like Interior Secretary Walter Hickel and U. S. Education Commissioner James E. Allen, Jr., found that violation of this rule leads to quick unemployment. The president succeeded in controlling news about the Vietnam War to the extent that at the height of the conflict more information about the war was released in Washington than in Saigon.

The government is often in the unique position of forcing reporters to take its word for something, since it has the power to keep reporters away from some important news events. During the Cuban missile crisis, the press was denied an opportunity to "see for itself" the movement of Russian missiles into Cuba. More recently, in Vietnam, when South Vietnamese troops invaded Laos briefly, no American transportation was provided for the press, which was left with government handouts on the battles being fought. Finally South Vietnam agreed to transport groups of reporters into Laos to view the action, but the newsmen became reluctant to accept the ride after an ARVN helicopter with American press on board was shot down over enemy territory. The press began to doubt the competency of its South Vietnamese chauffeurs when it was discovered that the pilot of the downed chopper thought he was some fifteen miles from his actual position and believed he was over friendly territory.

In the same vein the Pentagon has built a vast public relations apparatus to steer reporters away from the news makers. And for a time any Pentagon employee, military or civilian, who talked to a reporter was required to have a third person present or file a lengthy report on the substance of the conversation and the identity of the interviewer. This is a part of the "Poppa knows best" approach, which is most widely used as a means of keeping secret anything the government wishes to hide from the press. It is this kind of philosophy that has turned a legitimate function of the classification of military and diplomatic documents into a huge morass of confidential, secret, and top secret material. Wild stories about government classification have made the rounds and most are true. For example, there is the sad tale of the veteran employee of HEW who, after taking an annual physical exam, was told she was being dismissed for medical reasons. When she asked what medical reasons, she was informed that all medical records were classified confidential—and she couldn't even see her own. It is a fairly routine practice for newspaper stories about military hardware, for example, to be clipped out of the newspaper at the Pentagon—and then classified "secret."

The military bureaucracy tends to breed classification. At the Pentagon, for example, the junior officers charged with classification can make two basic errors. The first is that of failing to classify an obviously secret paper. The second is that of classifying something that should not be classified. Which is the safest kind of error? Is it any wonder, then, that there are hundreds of boxes of material from World War II that remain classified today?

The entire classification question came into focus during the Pentagon Papers case. The lengthy study and related documents had been prepared by the Department of Defense as kind of history of government actions relating to the war in Southeast Asia. When the *New York Times* came into

'All the News That's Fit to Print'

The New York Times

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By JAMES H. ROBERTS WASHINGTON, June 30—The United States today halted aid to the Palestine Liberation Organization...

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The historic decision by the Supreme Court freeing the so-called Pentagon Papers was misinterpreted by many observers as a great victory for the press. Actually, a careful reading of the decision—especially the dissents—is enough to send chills down the spine of supporters of freedom of the press.

possession of the many volumes, it began to publish a summary. The *Washington Post* joined the *Times* later with its own summary of the classified material. After a request by the Justice Department to cease publication was rejected, the federal government brought suit to force the newspapers to stop publishing the materials. The administration succeeded for fourteen days, but finally, the Supreme Court, in a closely split decision, ruled that the government had failed to show why the press shouldn't publish the material, and that without compelling reasons the censorship would be an unreasonable infringement of the freedom of the press.

The case was not important legally—it did nothing to change the law. But it did bring to public attention various questionable government practices. The newspapers, for example, demonstrated that the administration routinely declassified reports that might be helpful to them in making a point, or winning a vote in Congress, or supporting an administration position. Also, the extent of military classification was revealed when it became obvious that most of the material in the Pentagon Papers had been carried previously in newspapers and magazines in a different form. Yet when the government lumped it all together it became a top secret document. It was Justice Potter Stewart who pointed out the wisdom in avoiding secrecy for its own sake. "For when everything is classified," he wrote in his concurring opinion in the Pentagon Papers case, "nothing is classified, and the system becomes one to be disregarded by the cynical and the careless and to be manipulated by those intent on self-protection or self-promotion."

Although there are legitimate uses for the secret stamp, it is too often used today to hide public officials' ineptness or the cost-overrides in defense spending. It is very easy to wrap the flag around the huge over-expenditures of a C-5A transport or an F-111 fighter bomber or a new submarine torpedo system. By the time the public is informed it is usually too late: to abandon the project would be more expensive than to finish it, even at its increased cost.

The infamous U-2 affair points up the last means we would like to mention that the administration can use to manipulate the news—and that is by deliberately lying to the press and the people. President Dwight Eisenhower did this when the U-2 was shot down, claiming it was a weather plane of some sort. And then a smiling rotund Nikita Khrushchev showed the press the "weather equipment" recovered from the spy plane and Ike was left with egg on his face. Lying has probably gone on in government since government began. But it has been only recently that it has taken on the status of a legitimate policy. Arthur Sylvester, a former newsman who was appointed as assistant secretary of defense for public affairs by President Johnson told the Associated Press that "news generated by the action of a government as to content and timing are part of the weaponry that a president has." This incredible statement from a public servant still in office prompted the national journalism society, Sigma Delta Chi, to ask Mr. Sylvester to elaborate at one of its chapter meetings in New York. The assistant secretary didn't let the SDX'ers down when he told them, "It is the government's inherent right to lie if necessary to save itself when faced with a potential problem involving national security." News should be used, he

continued, to further national policy. This attitude was most recently reiterated by a member of President Nixon's communications staff. In the spring of 1973 Bruce Herschensohn was quoted in the *New York Times* as telling a gathering of journalism students that there are crisis situations when it is advisable for the government to give "not completely accurate information to the American people."

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

We have talked a lot about censorship in this book. And in every instance we have opposed it—whether it is a religious group censoring a movie it doesn't like, or an ethnic group censoring a commercial, or the PTA censoring violence in children's shows, or a professional group censoring a television program. All of it is bad business, even if the movie or program is in bad taste. Censorship of even noxious ideas rarely moves us even one inch closer to the truth we all proclaim to seek. But the worst censorship of all is that done by a government. When a government lies to the people, it is lying to itself—the people are the government. When an administration attempts to censor the news, it is depriving the citizen of something as fundamental to democracy as ballot boxes and town meetings. And when a president or a congressman or a mayor attempt to manipulate news to maintain power, he is not cheating the press so much as he is cheating the people.

Such actions clearly transcend political lines and party alignments. President Nixon appeared as the chief villain in this discussion. Johnson would have been in that role if this were written several years earlier. The next occupant of the White House will probably be cast in the same part one day in the future. It almost seems as if such behavior is a function of the office rather than a function of the man who holds it.

When recounted in the pages of a book, much of what goes on in Washington between the press and the government sounds like a game. If so, it is a most dangerous one. And its stakes are no less than the freedom of us all. Justice George Sutherland of the Supreme Court once gave this sage advice in his decision in *Grosjean v. the American Press Company*: "A free press stands as one of the great interpreters between the government and the people. To allow it to be fettered is to fetter ourselves."

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Mass Media and Economics,

or the Changing Definition
of Freedom of the Press

At the end of chapter nine, we recalled the words of Justice George Sutherland: "A free press stands as one of the great interpreters between the government and the people. To allow it to be fettered is to fetter ourselves." In this country, a "fettered" press is normally considered in the context of press-government relations. Freedom of the press has come to mean freedom from government control or government interference. Indeed, the First Amendment says *Congress* shall make no law abridging freedom of speech or of the press. And although the First Amendment has been interpreted to prohibit press interference by all levels and categories of government, it has rarely been considered a guarantee of freedom from censorship by non-government organizations or individuals.

In recent years, however, many persons have suggested that the greatest threat to freedom of expression in the nation is not the government, as potent as it might be. Nor is it the mob, which successfully silenced those with whom it disagreed before our Revolution, during the early days of the abolitionist movement in America, or between 1916 and 1918 as Americans fought the Hun in Europe and scores of "isms" (communism, anarchism, socialism, syndicalism) at home. In the eyes of many observers today, the mass media pose the greatest threat to liberty of expression. In 1947 the Commission on Freedom of the Press perceptively noted:

The right of free public expression has therefore lost its earlier reality. Protection against government is now not enough to guarantee that a man who has something to say shall have a chance to say it. The owners and managers of the press determine which persons, which facts, which versions of the facts, and which ideas shall reach the people.

American courts have also shown an awareness of this problem. As early as 1945 the Supreme Court noted, in a decision that forbade the members of the Associated Press from excluding competing newspapers from membership in the news gathering cooperative, that "Freedom of the press from

governmental interference under the First Amendment does not sanction suppression of that freedom by private interests," in this case the press itself. The high court expressed this idea even more forcefully in 1969 when it affirmed the constitutionality of broadcasting's fairness doctrine in the famous "Red Lion" case. "It is the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which the truth will ultimately prevail, rather than to countenance monopolization of that market, whether it be by the government itself, or a private licensee."

The limitations on freedom of expression that involve the media usually also involve economic considerations. The traditional concept of freedom of the press asserts that anyone who wants to can publish his own newspaper, build his own soap box, or speak out on any street corner without interference from the state. But although it is still possible to find a vacant street corner here and there and most of us can still afford the cost of building a soap box, the number of men in most states who can afford to start their own competitive daily newspaper wouldn't fill the \$12 box seats at the local ball park. In addition, it is becoming more and more common to see notices that large metropolitan daily newspapers—the *Boston Herald-Traveler* and the *Washington Daily News* are but two recent examples—are locking their doors for good, their presses falling silent. At the same time we see other newspapers and broadcasting stations being welded together into chains or groups, as the owners like to call them. In addition, we find huge companies—without the remotest interest or skill in communications—buying mass media as part of their conglomerate growth.

The fact of the matter is that fewer and fewer people own more and more and more of our channels of communication. That is one of the things we are going to talk about in this chapter. We are also going to talk about some of the problems this massive concentration has caused and why we as readers and viewers should be concerned about it. Finally, we are going to mention some of the ways that have been suggested to cope with this growing problem.

CONCENTRATION—DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

The concentration of the ownership and control of American mass media into the hands of fewer and fewer men and companies is one of the most striking characteristics of masscomm today. The dimensions of this economic concentration have reached such serious proportions that a single newspaper group owns 57 newspapers; that nearly 10 percent of the millions of newspapers delivered each Sunday are published by a single chain; that in 73 communities with newspapers and radio and television stations, one company controls all the publishing and broadcasting outlets; that only 2.5 percent of the cities in America with daily newspapers have competing daily papers; that media chains control 74 percent of all commercial television stations, and so forth. America is fast approaching a crisis state in which a relative handful of companies will control the on-off switch in the mainstream of American mass media.

These new owners of our masscomm empire, the media barons, appear in various shades of corporate coloring. Large industrial conglomerates,

corporations with a broad diversity of holdings, have entered the media market with much gusto in recent years. Some of these are companies that have always had an interest in communications like RCA, which cut its corporate teeth in mass media. Other conglomerates, like Transamerica, developed first in other areas: in insurance, commercial credit, or space hardware. All three commercial television networks in this country are conglomerates in their own right or are owned by conglomerates.

The Columbia Broadcasting System, which owns the CBS television network, also owns television and radio stations, a direct marketing service, Columbia Records, an educational film company, a musical instrument firm that makes Fender guitars among other things, a toy manufacturer named Creative Playthings, several publishing firms including Holt, Rinehart and Winston, CBS Labs, which are into space and defense contract work and only recently sold the New York Yankees baseball team. This is only a partial list.

The Radio Corporation of America owns NBC and many other broadcast holdings, a consumer credit corporation, Hertz Rent-a-Car, Banquet frozen foods, Coronet Industries, which sells carpets, furniture, and so forth, and Random House, a publishing company that before being bought by RCA had also subsumed Alfred A. Knopf and Pantheon Books. RCA also has heavy holdings in defense and space contracts, a drug company, RCA Victor records, and Arnold Palmer Enterprises.

ABC, the other network, although not as well diversified, has similar vast holdings. It owns 399 movie theaters, several broadcasting properties, ABC Films (making the network the world's largest distributor of theater films), a record company with several labels, and three farm newspapers. A few years ago the network attempted to merge with International Telephone and Telegraph, one of the nation's largest conglomerates with interests ranging from rental cars (Avis) to baked goods (ITT Continental Baking Company—Wonder bread) to insurance (Fireman's Fund). The FCC approved the merger in 1967 (the agency got involved because of the transfer of the network's seventeen television and radio stations) but not without protests from Nicholas Johnson. The former commissioner pointed out that ITT had deep financial involvement in areas that ABC news would someday have to report. The communications company controlled telephone systems in many foreign nations, systems that one day might be nationalized by the foreign governments. ABC news and public affairs personnel would have to comment on these affairs at length. (Johnson's concerns were realized in the winter of 1972 when the press was called upon to report charges by Chile that ITT was attempting to sabotage its Marxist government.) Also, Johnson argued that a foreign government might gain leverage on ABC through threats against ITT's international holdings. Other critics noted that forty percent of ITT's domestic revenues came from space and defense contracts. The former FCC commissioner asked in a public hearing: "Are we to expect that although ITT may continue to exert pressure as an advertiser on the programming of CBS and NBC, it will exert none as an owner on the programming of ABC?"

ITT protested that these were irrelevant issues but tended to damage its own case by pressuring both the AP and UPI, as well as the *New York Times*, in an effort to get more favorable press treatment for the proposed merger.

ABC in the meantime asked its affiliates to put pressure on local congressmen to support the merger. The FCC approval of the merger was challenged by the Justice Department and the bizarre circumstance resulted in one U.S. agency suing another. The merger plans folded shortly thereafter.

Newspapers are tied to conglomerates as well. The Times-Mirror Company, which owns the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsday* in Long Island, *The Dallas Times-Herald*, and the *Orange Coast Daily Pilot*, also publishes or manufactures Bibles, dictionaries, medical books, encyclopedias, law books, telephone directories, road maps, flight manuals, slide rules, scientific instruments, filing systems, plywood, and holds investments in cable television and real estate. And if we were to look into the corporate holdings of companies such as Kinney Services, Inc., Transamerica Corporation, National General, Norton Simon, and many others, we would find film companies, magazine publishers, record producers, television stations, book publishers, and theater chains as well as car rental agencies, savings and loan companies, and liquor importers.

Serious problems that go beyond the general negative effects of concentrated ownership result from conglomerate ownership of media units. When publishing or broadcasting or film production is such a small part of the entire financial pie, what assurance is there that this noble cause will be pursued with just vigor? People in communications tend to believe that their vocation has a higher purpose than renting cars or selling real estate. Certainly, information processing is more vital to everyday life than most other manufacturing or service industries. Yet, as Ben Bagdikian points out, when the nation's three largest television networks make three dollars in non-broadcasting businesses for every one they make in broadcasting activities, one might wonder if the true corporate interests might in fact lie elsewhere—for example, in seeking the maintenance of a high level of defense or space spending, or in which books get good reviews, or in promoting rock and roll music styles that use electrical instruments, or in publicizing sports like baseball and golf, and so forth.

And then of course there is always the potential of conflict of interest. How many millions of people know what they know about the ABM controversy from watching NBC news—without realizing that RCA, which owns NBC, holds huge defense contracts and is hardly a disinterested spectator? When certain models of General Tires failed government safety tests and the corporation paid unprecedented penalties of \$50,000 in lieu of a civil suit, it was a major news story involving hundreds of thousands of motorists. Authors Morton Mintz and Jerry Cohen asked in their book *America, Inc.*: "We do not pretend to know how the nineteen RKO General stations (owned by the tire company) handled this news, but that is not, we believe, the essential point. A larger question is whether it is prudent to entrust decisions over news that can be so deeply involved with human life to the very corporation responsible for the hazard?" Whether in fact a news selection would be dictated by the parent company in such cases is not nearly so important as the fact that public suspicion will always exist—further diluting the credibility of the medium.

OTHER MEDIA CONCENTRATIONS

Some corporations diversify only to the extent of mixing media, not mixing media with other things. Consequently they don't qualify as conglomerates in the true sense of the word. Dow-Jones, for example, which publishes the *Wall Street Journal* and the *National Observer*, also owns the AP-Dow-Jones Economic Report, the AP-Dow-Jones Financial Wire, Dow-Jones Irwin Books, and fifty percent of Ottaway Newspaper-Radio, Inc., which also holds an electronics firm that is developing new news delivery systems, and the West Tacoma Newsprint Co.

Another large media concentration is the Hearst Corporation. In addition to owning eight newspapers with a total circulation of nearly two million, the company owns fourteen television and radio stations, fourteen magazines including *Good Housekeeping*, *Sports Afield* and *Harper's Bazaar*, Avon Books, King Features, and half of Metronome News. Hearst also owns more than half a million acres of timber land in Mexico and once attempted to start a war between Mexico and the U.S. to foil an effort by the Mexican government to take over some of his holdings.

The *New York Times* company owns a news service, a magazine publishing company, Arno Press, *Golf Digest*, broadcasting interests, and holds stock in several paper companies.

Time, Inc., in addition to publishing *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Money*, *Fortune*, and several other periodicals, also has broadcasting holdings, owns a book publishing company, a record company, a cable television firm, timberland, and a wood pulp products firm.

The *Chicago Tribune*, which publishes *Chicago's American* as well, also owns the nation's largest newspaper, the *New York Daily News*, broadcasting stations in seven states, and substantial cable television holdings. The Tribune Company publishes one out of every ten Sunday newspapers sold in America.

OTHER COMBINATIONS

Although conglomerates and media groups tend to have a major impact on the press at national levels, most of us are more in touch with our local newspaper or television station. And the most common forms of concentration at this level are the local and regional monopolies and media chains and groups. We find media mixes here as well, with broadcasters owning newspapers and vice versa.

Newspaper chains come in all shapes and sizes, and there are more of them today than ever before—155 at last count. These chains control more than half of the newspapers published in this country. Nearly 65 percent of all daily and Sunday papers printed are published by chains. The largest group is the Gannett chain, which publishes 57 daily newspapers. Gannett is followed closely by Roy Thomson, who owns newspapers in Canada, Great Britain (the *London Times*) and 43 dailies in the United States. The Scripps League is next with 31 papers, followed by Donrey with 25 and Newhouse

and Freedom Newspapers with 22 each. Perhaps the most influential chain, the one with the largest number of prestigious holdings, is the Knight chain, which owns the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Akron Beacon-Journal*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia News*, the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Miami Herald*, and the *Miami News*. Knight also owns other newspapers and some broadcasting properties as well. But his *Detroit Free Press* and *Miami Herald* are consistent prize winners for journalistic excellence.

Competition between daily newspapers is a thing of the past in all but a handful of communities. The most recent scorecard of newspaper ownership reveals the following: There are about 1,750 daily newspapers in approximately 1,500 American cities. Thirteen hundred, or 86 percent of these cities, have but one daily newspaper. In 141 other cities there are two newspapers but they are owned by the same company. And in 21 other cities that have two newspapers there exists a joint printing agreement between the publishers, which eliminates competition in all areas but news gathering. (We will talk more about these agreements later in this chapter.)

In only 37 large American cities is there direct, honest competition. And in only 12 of these towns is there true face-to-face competition, with two separately owned newspapers being published at the same time, morning or afternoon. And finally, New York is the only American city that has more than two competing large daily newspapers.

In broadcasting, chain ownership is controlled by the Federal Communications Commission. It is not possible for a single man or company to own more than seven television stations, seven AM, and seven FM radio stations. Still, more than 30 percent of all radio stations are chain-owned. Of course the most important chain owners in broadcasting are the networks, which have the maximum holdings, usually situated in large urban centers. Major programming syndicates like Westinghouse and Metromedia also own important broadcast chains, as do groups like the Storer Stations and Capital Cities Broadcasting.

There is a good deal of mixed-media ownership as well in these groups. We noted earlier that there are 73 communities in which a single owner controls all publishing and broadcasting properties in town. In fact, newspapers own 27 percent of all television stations and 249 AM radio stations, nearly all in the giant urban areas where most of the nation's population is located.

What this all means is that in our larger cities, in those areas that normally support three or four television stations, several radio stations, and a couple of newspapers, chances are good that many of these media units are owned by the same men or the same companies. And in our smaller cities, this means that it is not unusual for just one company to own most of the local mainstream media. Of all the media combinations, none are more potentially dangerous than those in which the various media holdings are concentrated in a single region or a single state. In Michigan, for example, the Booth family owns a large chain of newspapers that blanket most of the larger cities in the state. The family also owns an important interest in the *Detroit News*, the state's largest newspaper. The *News*, on the other hand, owns WWJ television and AM and FM radio stations in Detroit. Another

branch of the same Booth family has holdings in radio and CATV in the state.

Donrey Media Group virtually controls media operations in parts of Oklahoma and Arkansas. In Fort Smith, Arkansas, alone, the chain owns two newspapers and one television station. It also owns ten newspapers in Oklahoma. Bonneville International is another media group that has a strangle hold on parts of the Southwest. The company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Deseret Management Corporation, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Mormon Church. As well as having vast interests in trucking, farming, hotels, securities management, real estate, life insurance, and pineapples, Bonneville owns one of the two daily newspapers in Salt Lake City plus a small piece of the *Los Angeles Times*. Also in Salt Lake, it owns KSL-TV/AM-FM. The television station reaches 26 of Utah's 39 counties. The Mormon Church operates Brigham Young University, which holds an FM and an educational TV license. It has other broadcasting holdings, including part of a TV/FM-AM group in Boise, Idaho. The remainder of the church's holdings are tied with other media groups such as the Kearns-Tribune Corporation, which owns the other Salt Lake City daily in a joint operating agreement with Bonneville, and the Glassman-Hatch interests, which own the daily paper in Ogden, Utah (the state's second largest city) and seven additional TV and radio stations in Utah. To put it mildly, Utah is under the control of a communications cartel with external resources and holdings elsewhere in the United States, according to the state's attorney general, Phil L. Hansen.

What we have revealed here is just the top of the iceberg—some of the more glaring examples, surely. But in most any town or region you can find similar situations. One of your local television stations might be owned by a flour mill, another by a newspaper or a regional monopoly. Or one of the two newspapers might be owned by a large chain, the other by a smaller one. While such ownership patterns are fairly common knowledge in the business community, they are not widely known by readers and viewers. There is probably not anything seriously wrong with this, except it might be nice if the audience had a idea of who was paying the bills, so it could better evaluate the medium's editorial stands, news coverage or lack of it, and its treatment of controversial issues.

THE WHYS OF CONCENTRATION

We can point to many factors that can help explain the recent increase in the concentration of media ownership. But most of these can be reduced to two basic elements—money and power. Bigger media operations tend to be more profitable in the long run. And of course any man or company that controls a chain of newspapers or broadcasting stations is a power to be reckoned with.

Libertarian philosophers have always argued that it is better for a community to have a great number of diverse voices to provide information for the citizenry. But although such a situation might be healthy for the readers and viewers, it is not as healthy for advertisers, who are, of course, the real constituency for the newspaper and the television station. Adver-

tisers prefer a single, one-factory producer. Diversity is not a benefit to the supermarket or the department store that hopes to reach most of the city's householders each week with an advertising message. The massive economies of scale (the more you make of something, the less each individual unit costs to make) that a large newspaper enjoys permit it to set its advertising rates (cost per 1,000 readers) lower than a smaller paper can. So the supermarket and department store quite logically would rather see a community have one large newspaper, not lots of little ones.

Factors like this have really spelled the end of multiple daily newspapers, even in some of our larger cities. Economists have for some years noted that there is a natural tendency for monopolies to spring up in the mass media. Pressures in the industry push successful publishers and broadcasters first toward larger and larger newspapers and radio and television stations and then to chains and mixed media holdings.

When a newspaper has gained control of its local market—when it becomes the only paper in town, when it circulates to ninety-five percent of the homes in the area—a lid is effectively placed on its growth. At the same time, its profits will be taxed heavily if they are distributed to stockholders. So a large pool of retained earnings builds up that can only escape the tax collector by being invested. The newspaper man could invest in a shoe factory, but he doesn't know much about shoes. And shoes aren't very profitable anyway. (As we have noted earlier, owning a newspaper can be almost twice as profitable as owning almost any other kind of business. It also creates a larger pool of retained earnings than is found in most industries.) So the pressure exists to buy another newspaper or two or three or four of them. But let's not paint a picture of some publisher cowering in the corner of his office to the huge and beastly pressure called "economics." In fact, a man gets a good deal richer by owning five profitable newspapers than he does of owning one. And he gets even richer by owning ten or fifteen of them. So the desire for corporate affluence, plus the quirks in our tax laws, both figure into the reasons monopolies occur.

There are other reasons as well. The ownership of a chain of newspapers or broadcasting stations can centralize the corporate functions of his various stations or newspapers and save money. High-priced managerial talent that no single media unit could afford can be hired. There would also be some savings in establishing a commonly shared news bureau and in centralizing the national advertising sales force. Also—and this is important—in order to get money, one needs to have money. And economic assets do confer an added ability to get or borrow money. All things being equal the chain owner can borrow more money, pay less for it, and re-finance a loan more easily than a single media unit owner can.

There are the economic facts of life that lead economists to predict for many years that big will continue to chase out small in the mass media and that new entries into the field will remain impossible without significant changes in technology. And these facts of life also seem to dictate that the trend toward more and more monopoly will not be reversed merely by letting nature take its course or waiting for the market to readjust to a new economic climate.

IS BIG ALWAYS BETTER?

There is little doubt that the recent trends toward chain ownership, local concentration, monopolization, and conglomerization of the mass media have reaped rich rewards for media owners. But what have these new ownership patterns done for readers and viewers? And more important, what have they done to the mass media themselves?

We must concede at the beginning that some small benefits have been accrued for society. Without the growth of chains, we might have even fewer newspapers than we do at present. The sale of a newspaper to an economically healthy chain has occasionally saved the paper from the financial junkpile. The economic strength represented by the chain or group has also allowed newspapers and broadcasting stations to hire better talent in both management and the creative end of the business. In fact, the very profitability brought on by the trend toward economic concentration greatly increases the chances for journalistic or broadcast excellence. For example, a newspaper that is on sound financial footing can more easily resist both government and advertiser pressure. Wealthier media units can better accept the risks of lawsuits inherent in fighting or crusading, and can also maintain larger and more highly trained staffs of investigative reporters. The media can use its increased profits and comfortable financial picture to enhance its performance for readers and viewers. (And newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have done just that.)

But such behavior does not tend to be the rule. The economic incentives to remain mediocre normally win out over the public service incentives to seek excellence. The two kinds of men who seem most attracted to large media holdings today are the messiahs like William Randolph Hearst who are bent on spreading their version of the truth and businessmen like Gannett and Newhouse who see journalism as a business first and as a service to society second.

Rarely is a community with a monopoly newspaper or chain-owned television station rewarded because of the attractive economic position of the media owner. With group ownership, for example, the money that is made in one town is most often invested in another when the chain adds a new link. The special subcommittee of the Canadian Senate concluded:

The general pattern, we regret to say, is of newspapers and broadcasting stations that are pulling the maximum out of their communities and giving back the minimum in return. This is what, in contemporary parlance, is called a rip-off.

Such placing of profits ahead of excellence has had an insidious impact on the employees of the mass media as well. Reporters, for example, soon learn that there are only a few newspapers that encourage excellence. If a reporter is lucky or clever or maybe just restless he will probably gravitate to those few newspapers. If not, however, he will probably stay where he is, growing cynical about his work and learning to live with a kind of sour professional despair. As one writer in the Canadian Senate report noted, "Often you can see it in their faces. Most city rooms are boneyards of broken dreams. The economics of the industry and the placing of profits

ahead of product have made them so. That is the tragedy of practicing journalism in a commercial culture. Unless you are very strong, or very lucky, or very good, it will murder your dreams.”

This kind of situation does not bode well for the reader or viewer. While no one truly envisions a situation *a la* Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs with everyone whistling while he works, employees who are unhappy with their jobs rarely do their best work. And again the community profits very little.

In reality, the newspaper reader or television viewer has very little to gain from group ownership or monopolization of his local media. At the same time he is likely to lose a great deal.

Two hundred years ago if a reader complained about a newspaper, the publisher could honestly look him straight in the eye and tell him that if he didn't like the paper he could start his own or buy one of his competitor's journals. Likewise, if a man had something he wanted to tell the community, he could seek a platform in any one of often a half-dozen publications. Of course this is not as possible today—and we are lesser for it. There are fewer and fewer voices that reach the masses in most communities.

So America finds itself in the paradoxical situation in which its people are better educated than ever before and probably could contribute a great deal to the public debate about our many problems—and yet there are fewer places for them to speak out and expect to be heard. Despite the interesting character of some of the smaller underground weekly newspapers that seem to be proliferating, their voices are hardly audible in a conversation dominated by metropolitan daily papers, network television, and large AM stations.

For example, if there are two newspapers, three AM radio stations, and two television stations in a town, all independently owned, the citizen with something on his mind has seven chances to get a hearing through the media. But if both newspapers are owned by one man who also owns a TV-radio combination, and a second man owns another TV-radio combination (a “typical” situation today), there are but three separate voices in the community, three chances for the citizen to get a hearing.

In addition, with three voices rather than seven, chances are the community will be exposed to only three editorial points of view, three mirrors of the community image, and three sources of information on many controversial or inflammatory public issues. And the community is distinctly lesser for it. In one study, for example, it was shown that when a monopoly newspaper was challenged by a local competitor, it significantly increased its coverage of local news. A community garners numerous advantages from many rather than few voices.

Media concentration has results beyond that of reducing the number of independently owned newspapers or broadcasting stations. The gigantic size of the media combinations has made them more like big businesses than anything else. They are economic ventures—investments and corporations. When the Canadian Senate was investigating ownership of the mass media in that country, Osgoode Hall law professor Desmond Morton put the problem this way in testimony before it in 1971:

It doesn't matter whether the *North Bay Nugget* (a Canadian newspaper) belongs to Roy Thomson, Max Bell, or a local drygoods merchant. They are all, without a single exception, in the same kind of hands. They all belong to the Canadian business community and they all do what that community wants. And if Canadian business men assume an automatic, infallible identity between their views and those of every right-thinking Canadian, they are hardly unique among the oligarchs of history.

The situation is the same in the United States—perhaps worse. Media combinations, chains, and conglomerates must be operated with acumen in business skills. The values of the publisher tend to be the values of the businessman. The owners of the press, like the owners of other big businesses, are bank directors, bank borrowers, and heavy taxpayers in the upper brackets. They are white and middle-aged, or older. The voices of the mass media are overwhelmingly voices of the non-black (or other minority), non-young, and non-poor. Today the mass media are a game the traditional boat-rockers of society can't afford to play. Media barons—most of whose names you wouldn't recognize—control much of the media. And while you and I haven't heard of these men, as Nicholas Johnson wrote, "I imagine elected officials of their states return their phone calls promptly." The diversity of ideas, points of views, perspectives, backgrounds, and political ideologies that is essential in a democratic society is largely lacking in the ownership of major mass media units in America today. The nation might survive with a concentration of manufacturing assets in the hands of a few huge corporations, but it is doubtful that it can withstand a similar concentration in the communications media where ideas are the primary product.

It is in the spirit of human kindness always to think best of our fellow men, and so we should assume that the incredible power that has accrued to the media barons will never be used for the wrong purposes. But it is also in the spirit of human nature to be a bit cautious. We might look to experience to find out which virtue should prevail. The telephone company provides a good object lesson.

American Telephone and Telegraph owns outright sixteen telephone companies and is part owner of eight others. The Bell System, as it is called, handles eighty-five percent of the nation's telephone service. For many years Ma Bell owned the only communications wire that reached the home—the telephone line. But with the advent of cable, another wire was poked in between the boards or the bricks, and this began to disturb the people at AT&T. As one author (Ralph Lee Smith) said, "Like other fearless champions of free enterprise, the phone company prefers life without competitors."

The phone company is prohibited by law from conducting any kind of business other than its common carrier operations—in other words, it can't conduct television operations. But the law has never prohibited Ma Bell from building cable systems and leasing them to someone else, with the hope that the law might change and allow the phone company full operation of such systems. Most astute cable operators want to build and own their

own systems, although operating a cable system is not especially lucrative today; it is the long-term potential that is attractive. But the phone company had a big lever to move things their way—they owned the poles and conduits that carried their phone lines. The cable operator could deal with Ma Bell to use her poles or conduits to string his wire or build his own, a costly venture. The phone company also held the easements for apartment buildings, and this was another lever. When the cable operator tried to deal with Bell for the use of the poles and so forth, long delays would result or Bell would quote him an extremely high price. While the cable owner was fuming and moaning over this predicament, Ma Bell would move in and offer to build the system for him and then lease it to him. If the cable operator finally said yes—well, you can't imagine how fast all the obstacles disappeared to stringing the wire and laying the cable.

The cable operators were furious and went to the government. After a long period of hassling, the phone company “graciously” changed its policy. In 1970 AT&T agreed henceforth to cooperate with cable operators and only build and lease if the cable man truly wanted it. Pressure would cease, the communications company promised.

There are other examples that might be cited (not as blatant as this one perhaps) in which giant media-oriented corporations have used their power for purely personal gain, regardless of the public interest involved. It is often difficult to remove the temptation for self-serving action that vast amounts of power carry with them. It is more prudent to reduce the chances that such power can be attained in the first place.

The giant corporatism that has affected (or infected) the mass media has had another serious consequence as well. The media are beginning to turn people off. People across America are beginning to distrust all large impersonal institutions. Most of the conflicts of the past two decades—the demonstrations, the riots, the sit-ins, the hassles that generated the bulk of the social anguish in the sixties and the seventies—have had a single thing in common: they were concerned with people versus institutions. This theme is constant across the board. And one might speculate that the press is losing friends for the same reason that government and courts and corporations and schools and churches are losing them. It's because the media are institutions as well. They are involved in the conflict of people versus institutions as participants. One of the truly depressing and frightening aspects of the media today is the view of so many media owners that they are mere spectators. As one observer noted, “They're not spectators. They control the presentation of the news, and therefore have a vast and perhaps disproportionate say in how society defines itself.” The built-in institutional bias of the media, which tends to favor corporate control of the news, to favor other corporations over people, and to rely on revenue that stems from a consumption-oriented corporate society, is one of the chief reasons for the current public disenchantment with the media.

Concentration, monopolization, conglomerization, corporatism—all are words that were really quite foreign to masscomm even a hundred years ago. But today they describe the structure of the mass media to a large extent. One does not have to be an alarmist to suggest that we face a crisis

of serious proportions in this country unless we can reverse the economic trend that has a tight hold on American masscomm. At this point we see a situation in which there are fewer and fewer companies controlling the mainstream mass media in America. We find an economic environment that is not only hospitable to this trend but actually encourages it. We find that these communications companies are getting bigger and bigger and bringing with them all the problems inherent when a single man or organization has vast power. And we find that the results of these trends pose serious problems for our society, which depends so heavily on information to function daily and to govern itself. There are fewer places to speak, there are fewer different things to hear—and people, both employees and audience, are beginning to turn off to the media. The question we must soon find an answer to is: what do we do about it?

“WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO?”

If someone were able to come up with a comprehensive solution to the economic problems that have attacked our information system in this country he or she would most assuredly be a candidate for the Arlo B. Beerbottom International Widget Award. But the fact is no such plan or solution exists. In honesty, we are just getting around to defining the problems. It has been only since the Hutchins Commission Report in the late 1940s that more than a handful of people even recognized there were any. Some persons today still don't think much is wrong. Ask your newspaper publisher about the economics affecting the industry today and he will talk about high taxes, increasing salaries, newsprint costs, and the high price of new equipment. In all likelihood he will not even acknowledge the kinds of problems we have been discussing.

There probably isn't one single grand scheme to help us come to grips with some of these problems. Instead, there will undoubtedly be lots of little parts that when put together will give us some relief. And all of this will probably take time—lots of it. Oh, there are some things that can be done right now and are being done. Anti-trust action, for example, is being carried out at this very minute in some states against media combinations the government believes to be in restraint of trade. But if the past is any indication (and we'll talk more about this in a moment), anti-trust laws are not a solution. In fact the single striking result of recent anti-trust actions has been the death rather than the survival of certain newspapers.

One positive step that could be taken immediately would be for the mass media to disclose pertinent economic information publicly. Ownership, for example. Is it too much to ask that the people of the community be told—loudly and often—who owns the local newspaper or broadcasting operation? Sure, interested citizens can find out if they try hard enough. But why isn't this information published or broadcast like the baseball scores? How about profit and loss statements and other economic data about the fiscal success or failure of the publishing or broadcasting enterprises? Such data would let readers and viewers and listeners decide whether the publisher or broadcaster was using or misusing community resources,

whether he could expand news coverage, for example, or whether he is covering all the news he can. The publishers will quickly point out that the owner of the hardware store is not expected to show his financial records or that the baker doesn't have to publish profit and loss statements. But in a town with even two newspapers, the press takes on a far closer resemblance to a government agency (which must open its records) than to a hardware store or a bakeshop. The media man is given a highly privileged position in the order of things in this country, and little is asked in return for it. Perhaps it is time to ask a bit more of our friends in mass communications.

Another thing that needs to be done is for newspaper readers to start picking up a bigger portion of the tab for the cost of their newspapers. Right now the advertiser pays about seventy percent of the bill. Is it any wonder then that the publisher is a bit more concerned about keeping his advertisers happy than pacifying his readers? If readers expect to demand more from the publisher, it is time they begin paying more. Even at twenty cents per copy, or \$1.50 a week, the daily newspaper is a remarkably good buy. If Americans want the whole news they are going to have to start paying for the whole newspaper—not just for one-third of it.

These two minor adjustments alone would begin to have a salutatory affect upon the media situation. The first would make people aware of the crisis that exists, and hopefully they would begin to demand some action. The latter would tend to redefine the market for the newspaper (unfortunately such a scheme is impractical in broadcasting) and make it more responsive to its readers. But for the big problem we need bigger solutions.

CHANGING THE RULES

If we look at the economic environment of the media in the abstract for a moment, it might suggest several ideas that could reshape the economic structure of the mass media in this country. At present, the marketplace encourages concentration and monopolization by the independent economic units. With the exception of the physical limitations in broadcasting, we have a fairly free marketplace at present. Solving some of our problems might be accomplished by either changing the rules in the marketplace or changing the character of its units. In other words, altering the existing economic relationships. One way to change the operation of the marketplace would be to penalize certain kinds of behavior, such as excessive concentration. This is done through anti-trust laws. Or we might use some kinds of positive support to give smaller units a better chance of surviving—subsidies to smaller newspapers, for example. But in either case the largely free marketplace would become considerably less free; we would have imposed artificial rules.

Or we could leave the marketplace alone and let the chips fall where they may, but change the character of the units in it from independent entities that can do what they like to semi-independent units that can do what they like but must do other things as well. For example, rather than trying to maintain three newspaper voices in a community, we could become resolved that the market will support only one. But we could make that



1. ED REIMERS: Allstate believes air bags will save lives. So they bought 200 special fleet cars



2. with air bags. They're for Allstate people to drive and test.



3. This is one of the cars.



4. The air bag is designed to inflate, prevent injury, and deflate in half a second...



5. but only in a serious frontal crash, not a little bump. Look... at five miles per hour



6. the air bag doesn't inflate. The brain of the system is a sensing device that uses technology from the space program.



7. Now... a similarly equipped car heads into the wall



8. at seventeen miles an hour.



9. A speed which could cause injury.



10. Allstate's air bag-equipped cars will help demonstrate the reliability of this remarkable system.



11. Allstate says, let's use space-age technology to reduce auto injuries...



12. and saves lives. (MAN WALKS AWAY UNHURT.)

Do air bags really work? Ask the man who hit the wall in this TV commercial.

If you crashed into a wall like the man in this TV commercial, you'd believe in air bags, too.

Along with lap belts, we'd like to see air bags installed for front-seat occupants on all cars. The sooner, the better.

What's in it for us? Well, fewer highway deaths and injuries make a lot of sense to an insurance company.

But there's a lot in it for you, too. An air bag can protect you from serious injury in a crash. Maybe save your life some day.

And air bags in cars are expected to help hold down the cost of your auto insurance.

For a 30-minute film about air bags for your club or organization, write the Safety Director, Allstate Insurance Company, Northbrook, Illinois 60062.

Allstate
Let's make driving a good thing.

When Allstate was unable to get its airbag ads on TV—the networks feared a fairness doctrine controversy—the company used magazines to lobby for a requirement that this safety device be standard equipment in automobiles sold in this country. If print media had turned down the ads, the company would have been blocked in its attempt to publicize what it thought was a good idea.

single survivor act in a way responsive to the diverse needs of various groups in the community. Like, force the paper to allow anyone to use its news columns or its advertising columns. Make it a kind of common carrier. We wouldn't gain any more newspapers in this way—but those we had would be more conducive to public debate.

There is one additional solution that involves neither artificially changing the rules of the marketplace nor changing the character of its units. It involves developing new technology that will force a traumatic but natural change in the market. For example, we could develop a means for people to enter the newspaper business competitively without first having to amass a fortune. This might break the natural tendency toward monopoly.

Each one of these schemes is intriguing enough to invite a deeper analysis. So let's begin by looking at government attempts to change the basically free nature of the media marketplace.

THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

The one government agency that at present has the most power and can most easily change the rules of the marketplace is the FCC, which must approve all new broadcast licenses and renew each license every three years. In the past thirty-five years the commission has developed various rules that tend to alter the natural configuration of the broadcast market. No single individual or corporation is allowed to own more than seven television, seven AM, and seven FM stations. For many years the agency has also forbidden duopoly situations in broadcast markets—that is, ownership of two AM stations or two TV stations by the same man or company in a single market area. In 1970 the FCC took an even larger step forward when it announced its one-to-a-customer rule that would prohibit the single ownership of a TV/AM-FM combination in any market. The same individual might still own an AM-FM radio combination, but he would have to choose between a radio or a television operation—he couldn't have them both.

No doubt the FCC is moving toward at least an attempted diversification of ownership, albeit slowly. Former commissioner Nicholas Johnson argued that he could see little difference between the single ownership of two AM stations in one market, which is prohibited, and the single ownership of an AM-FM combination in the same city, which is allowed. Others have criticized the rule for not going far enough in that it applied only to future license transfers. The FCC should move to break up those existing TV/AM-FM combinations, critics have charged. Although there is unlikely to be a major movement toward such diversification, it is conceivable that the FCC could, on a case-by-case basis when licenses are renewed, break up such combinations, provided suitable new owners sought either the radio or television licenses at renewal times.

While the FCC has not taken an aggressive stand on this problem, the Justice Department showed some teeth on the matter when it announced in the late 1960s that it might contest the award of a broadcast license to a newspaper on the grounds that it was not in the public interest. In 1968 the Attorney General substituted action for words by filing suit against an earlier

newspaper-broadcast merger in Rockford, Illinois. As a result of the action the newspaper chain was forced to sell the broadcast operation—netting a three-million-dollar profit in the deal. The Justice Department has taken no similar action since 1969.

ANTI-TRUST ACTION—THE BIG STICK

Anti-trust laws have been around for nearly 100 years and are used by the government to control concentration and monopolies in all American industries, not just in the communications industry. The roots of the government's power are to be found in the Sherman Act of 1890, which outlawed combinations in restraint of trade, and the Clayton Act of 1914, which prohibited business practices that lessened competition or created monopolies. Section 7 of that act, enacted in 1950 as an amendment to the measure, forbids corporations from acquiring stock or assets of a competing corporation where the effect might be to lessen competition substantially.

The first important anti-trust suit the government won against the press was in 1945 when the Supreme Court ruled that the Associated Press membership rules tended to act as a restraint of trade. If you recall from chapter four, at one time an AP member in Chicago, for example, could stop any other newspaper or broadcasting station from using the wire service in that city. Justice Hugo Black's memorable opinion, which rejected the AP's argument that application of the anti-trust laws to the press violated the First Amendment, has become a rallying point for those who seek more diversity today. In that decision, Black wrote:

Surely a command that the government itself shall not impede the free flow of ideas (the First Amendment) does not afford non-governmental combinations a refuge if they impose restraints on that constitutionally guaranteed freedom. Freedom to publish means freedom for all and not for some. Freedom to publish is guaranteed by the Constitution, but freedom to combine to keep others from publishing is not. Freedom of the press from governmental interference under the First Amendment does not sanction repression of that freedom by private interests.

Other anti-trust actions have been taken by the government since 1945. In 1951 in the *Lorain Journal* case the courts ruled that discrimination in the sale of advertising was a restraint of trade. The case developed after the Lorain Journal Company, which had enjoyed a virtual communications monopoly in that small Ohio community, was challenged by a new radio station. In an effort to snuff out competition, the newspaper refused to sell advertising to any merchant who also bought ads on the radio station. The Justice Department said this amounted to a restraint of trade, and the Supreme Court agreed.

In the early 1950s the Justice Department brought suit against the Kansas City Star Company, which owned not only the *Kansas City Star* (an afternoon paper) but also the *Kansas City Times* (a morning paper), and WDAF-TV-AM. If a reader wanted to subscribe to the *Star* he would also have to subscribe to the *Times* and the Sunday *Star* too. Advertisers were required to buy

space in all three papers if they wanted to buy an ad in one. The company delivered its papers to ninety-six percent of the homes in the community and accounted for nearly eighty-five percent of mass media income in the area in 1952. The government moved in swiftly and in the settlement that followed, which cost the Star Company hundreds of thousands of dollars, the firm agreed to sell its radio and television holdings and to allow readers to buy or advertise in only one or another of the newspapers.

The most recent major action brought by the Justice Department in some ways accomplished the least. The Los Angeles Times-Mirror Company in 1964 bought the *San Bernardino Times and Telegram* for \$15 million. The newspapers were profitable dailies located some forty miles from Los Angeles. The acquisition was challenged by the government, which asserted that the publisher of California's largest daily (the *Times*) now controlled the largest independent daily in Southern California (the *Sun*), and that it would have the effect of substantially reducing competition.

A federal court ruled that the purchase violated the anti-merger provisions of the Clayton Act and forced the Times-Mirror Company to divest itself of the newspapers—which were then bought by the Gannett chain. The result of the case is less than satisfying for two reasons. With the Times-Mirror Company as owner, the people in San Bernardino had an absentee owner who lived only forty miles away. Headquarters for the Gannett chain was in New York, 2,000 miles away. More important, yet more elusive as well, were the qualitative differences in the two different owners. The *Times-Mirror* is one of the half-dozen best newspapers in America. Otis Chandler has moved the paper from the depths of mediocrity to near greatness. It was likely that some of this quality would have rubbed off on the *Sun and Telegram*, giving the people of that Southern California town newspapers of which they could be proud. The Gannett chain, on the other hand, is notable only for its mediocrity. There are some better than average newspapers in the group, but quality is not a hallmark of America's largest newspaper chain. So the readers in San Bernardino will suffer. Sale of the *Sun and Telegram* to an independent owner would probably have been more desirable than merging it with either chain. But the resulting sale to Gannett is hard to explain—or justify.

GAMES PUBLISHERS PLAY

In the late 1960s the Justice Department moved into Tucson, Arizona, in an attack on one of the nation's twenty-two joint newspaper operating agreements, something we mentioned briefly earlier. The joint operating agreement scheme had been around for many years and had left nearly two dozen cities in America with two newspapers where otherwise only one might have flourished. The Tucson situation was typical, and by explaining it we can see how these arrangements usually work.

There were two newspapers in Tucson, the *Daily Citizen*, which was the only evening paper, and the *Daily Star*, which was published mornings and Sunday. Each was separately owned. But there was another corporation as

well—Tucson Newspapers, Inc., which acted as an agent for both newspapers for advertising, printing, and circulation. Tucson Newspapers, Inc., was owned jointly by the *Citizen* and the *Star*. In other words, the two independent papers really amounted only to two editorial staffs—people who gathered and wrote the news and other editorial matter. Advertising was sold and prepared by Tucson Newspapers for both papers. Printing and circulation were handled for both newspapers by Tucson Newspapers as well. This kind of agreement in Tucson and twenty-one other cities did guarantee the people of the community would have two different newspapers whose editorial content was prepared by different and independent staffs. But because of the tremendous costs savings in having joint advertising, printing, and circulation departments, the chance for a third paper to compete effectively in the community was virtually zero. The Justice Department thought this was a restraint of trade, prosecuted, and won the case. But it wasn't the end of things.

Two days after the Supreme Court decision that outlawed the joint printing arrangements, several bills were introduced in Congress to exempt the twenty-two existing joint operating agreements from the anti-trust prosecutions—in other words, to make them legal. One measure, called the "Failing Newspaper Act," began its trek through Congress to emerge in 1970 as the "Newspaper Preservation Act." Long hearings were held on the measure. Two days before it came to a vote in Congress, publishers and their legal counsels descended on Washington. Lobbying for the measure became intense. Some legislators were told to support the measure or face editorial opposition when re-election time came. The Justice Department strongly opposed the measure. President Nixon was also apparently against the measure until he received a visit from Richard Berlin, president of the Hearst Corporation. After the meeting with Mr. Berlin, Nixon endorsed the bill, repudiating the stand taken by his own Justice Department.

Authors Morton Mintz and Jerry Cohen wrote in *America, Inc.*: "The bill tends to subvert the First Amendment by making it legal for established publishers to engage in monopolistic practices against which weekly newspapers and other potential rivals cannot compete." Reinforcing this argument was a statement from Bruce Brugman, publisher of the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, who charged that as a result of the act his efforts to compete with the morning *San Francisco Chronicle* and the evening *Examiner* (which have a joint operating agreement) had been crippled. The reason: the two papers set advertising rates in a way to force merchants to advertise in both the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner*. As a result, these merchants could not afford to advertise in other smaller newspapers.

The *New Yorker* magazine was even less kind in its evaluation of the Act. In 1970 its editors wrote that the measure

. . . is most probably not a newspaper preservation bill as much as a publisher preservation bill. Any newspaper that has to be preserved this way might as well be preserved in formaldehyde . . . The public is better served by a dead paper than by one mortally sick and given a semblance of health . . . by the government about which it is bound to speak the truth.

The government's use of the anti-trust laws to break up competition and increase diversity has not been a notable success. Despite the charge from publishers that they are under siege by anti-trust lawyers from the Justice Department, the fact is that the government is more hesitant to apply anti-trust restraints against the corporate concentration of the press than against most other segments of the American economy. When the government does move it is generally only to attack the most outrageous circumstances. And then the results—as in San Bernardino—might be worse than the original problem. The entire legal process takes an incredibly long period of time—it is too long and too slow to make much of a dent in dealing with concentration. In fact, in the time it usually takes the government to prosecute and win its case a half-dozen new monopolies have been formed in other parts of the nation.

Less tangible but equally troubling to those concerned with diversity has been the tendency of the Justice Department to define anti-trust problems solely in terms of economics, trade, and commerce. That is, prosecutions are often begun because of the problems faced by the advertiser or a potential commercial rival. Rarely is consideration given to a concentration or monopoly of ideas. For example, anti-trust action might be contemplated against the owner of a newspaper-broadcasting combination if the company forced advertisers to use both media or required subscribers to buy both the morning and afternoon newspapers. But if the company kept its hands clean on these issues it would be safe. The Justice Department would not move in and claim that this ownership constituted a restraint of ideas or an inhibition to diversity of editorial voices.

Another problem that is difficult for the anti-trust laws to cope with is that of qualitative considerations. Let's say there are two chain newspapers in one town and only one in another. If the single newspaper were of high quality, cast in the mold of a *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, readers in the one-newspaper city might be better off than those in the two-chain operated newspaper town. Diversity is an important consideration, but we gain diversity in many ways. Good newspapers like the *New York Times* tend to open their columns up to many voices. The breadth of ideas you will find in a *Washington Post* or a *New York Times* is far greater than that you would find in two or even three average journals, which each tend to reflect a single, but similar, point of view. Anti-trust laws are not equipped to deal with such qualitative problems. Blind justice could hardly realize when she forced the Times-Mirror Company to divest itself of the *San Bernardino Sun and Telegram* that the newspaper readers of that community would probably end up with much less newspaper with Gannett in control. The same blind justice could not know that when it forced the movie studios to divest themselves of their theater chains that it was killing a sure market for experimental, high-quality movies that the studios would continue to produce only while they owned theaters in which such films were certain to be played. The law cannot grasp the real qualitative differences that are so often important when dealing with the media, which are far less important when discussing shoe manufacturing or the production of canned soup. Because of this, anti-trust prosecutions have not been the most useful tools in solving the economic dilemmas in the media.

THE POSITIVE SIDE

Both FCC regulations and the anti-trust laws are designed to affect the market in negative ways. They rest on the assumption that by applying sanctions against the big media units and stopping the natural progression of the free marketplace, little units might be able to find a toe-hold to cling to and have a chance to succeed, thus insuring some kind of diversity. But there is another approach that could be used. Rather than attack the big fellow the government could indirectly help the little guy, could give direct support to the smaller competitor, the marginal newspaper, or the financially weak broadcasting station. These positive kinds of solutions have been suggested by scholars and some media people both here and in Canada.

Probably the most extreme measure would be direct, no-strings-attached government subsidies to small media units that are attempting to compete in monopoly-like markets. They could be flat grants, tax credits, or low-interest loans. Such subsidies might provide just the margin of difference needed to insure the survival of the small newspaper or broadcasting station. Or subsidies could come in the form of government advertising for savings bonds or printing legal notices. In such cases, the government would be giving money for services rendered, but it would still take the form of a subsidy to only those papers that needed it.

Other indirect schemes have also been suggested. In this country since the last part of the nineteenth century the press has been allowed to mail its newspapers and magazines at a subsidized second-class rate. This has been justified on the grounds that it is in the public interest to have the widest possible dissemination of news and information. Today there are many critics who argue that because the press is largely an entertainment-oriented medium, the subsidy should be dropped. From the standpoint of our economic travails, it might make sense to drop the subsidy for the big, profitable, lucrative newspapers, but maintain it for those who would have trouble paying the increased first-class mail costs. This would amount to a substantial indirect subsidy to smaller media units.

Another step the government could take would be to regularize the availability of newsprint, a costly item for newspapers. Some corporations that produce newspapers own wood pulp mills that allow them to get newsprint at a fairly low cost. Even those large papers that don't own pulp mills can buy the paper at a significantly lower rate per ton than their smaller competitors since they can buy more newsprint at one time. It has been suggested that the government take control of the flow of newsprint and make certain that it is evenly distributed to all newspapers at the same price. Such an action would significantly help the smaller newspaper.

Another solution would involve redefining what are known as "territorial exclusivity" rights for syndicated material. Smaller papers are at a distinct disadvantage in getting things like comic strips, editorial columns, Dear Abby, and so forth. The syndicates that sell this material will sell it to only a single buyer in any circulation area. It is advantageous to the syndicate—because it can charge higher rates—to sell it to the big paper. And because syndicated matter is fairly cheap, it is possible for the larger paper to buy up all the good syndicated material even if it doesn't plan to use it, just to

keep it out of its rivals' hands. The lack of popular syndicated features can affect the popularity of the smaller newspaper. It has been suggested that syndicated material be offered for general sale at reasonable prices so that any newspaper can buy it. As a sanction, it has also been suggested that copyright protection not be granted to any material not offered to all buyers. (This, of course, would make it possible for anyone to use such material free.)

We must face the fact that these positive solutions and others like them are not highly thought of by most media owners and large newspaper publishers. "It's just not American," they argue, "for the government to get involved in business. What about free enterprise?" The fact that free enterprise with regard to publishing and broadcasting is functionally dead anyway in most cities doesn't seem to bother them. Yet positive solutions like this are gaining a wider acceptance. The special subcommittee of the Canadian Senate suggested flatly that direct subsidies were needed to save the last vestiges of competition in the Canadian mass media. Similar voices are beginning to be heard in this country. We shouldn't be surprised to see active support for these measures in the future.

But at the same time, let's not be naive about these matters. Any government that is asked to give some money to the press is likely to ask for something in return. It is important that any subsidy plan that might be enacted be constructed in such a way as not to compromise the political independence of the American press. The system must provide that no government agency would have discretion in deciding who got the aid, how large the subsidy would be, and so forth. The second-class postal rate subsidy operates this way now, and most government attempts to demand something in return for this financial break have been beaten back by the federal courts. But if it came to a choice between a government subsidy with strings attached and no government subsidy, then clearly the latter would be preferable—or else the financial aid that might at first seem like a dream come true to the struggling newspaper owner could easily turn into a nightmare.

ACCESS—CHANGE THE MEDIA

There is a fairly new school of thought in the nation that tends to focus on forced changes in the media rather than changes in the economic system as the means to salvation. The key word in these proposals is *access*, and the logic behind the scheme goes something like this. Due to the high level of media concentration today, it is extremely difficult for those people with something to say to get a hearing. Also, concentration has resulted in a situation in which only a few points of view—heavily business-oriented—receive exposure in each community. Since it is impossible for the people with another point of view to start their own newspaper or get their own broadcasting station, the established mass media should be forced to open their doors and give these people access to the newspaper's readers or the television station's viewers. The chief guru of this argument is law professor Jerome Barron, who has devoted many pages to outlines of this argument

that the First Amendment really means that all should have an opportunity to be heard, not just the media owners. "It is time," he wrote recently in an article in the *Harvard Law Review*, "to focus our attention not only on the protection of ideas already published but on making sure the divergent opinions are actually able to secure expression in the first place."

Barron's proposals retain that eloquent vagueness common to most legal theory, and the practical application of his idea that the "press has an obligation to provide space on a non-discriminatory basis for representative groups in the community" leaves many critics as well as interested observers wondering. What are representative groups? Where do we get the space? How much space and how often should it be allotted? Lest we become too involved in the mechanics of the problem, it is simpler to look at situations in which such a scheme has worked and might work.

Something similar to forced access already exists in broadcasting, in which the station is required to offer a balanced presentation of controversial topics under the fairness doctrine. But, as we have seen, it does not guarantee access to the station's viewers for several reasons. The broadcaster can express the various divergent viewpoints himself if he chooses. And he has the option of excluding all points of view if he chooses not to discuss controversial questions. The fairness doctrine doesn't say he must air controversial issues—only that he air all sides if he airs one side.

In newspapers, no such rules apply—yet. The access problem has been most successfully met at the local level by a handful of press councils, groups of media people, and lay citizens who gather periodically to discuss press performance. The councils have been used as a wedge by the "outs" in communities like Bend, Oregon, and Redwood City, California, to gain more representative news coverage of the various points of view in the communities. In Seattle, after racial troubles in 1967, a sort of press council was formed in an attempt to improve the mass media responsiveness to black community needs. The group was fairly successful while it lasted.

A kind of national press council was proposed by the Twentieth Century Fund in 1972 to monitor the national news media and investigate complaints by the public. Both journalists and the public are represented on the council, which has no power except that of publicity. The national organization has received a cold reception from most of the media. Members of the American Society of Newspapers Editors voted three to one against the establishment of such a body, and executives of both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* indicated that they were opposed to the plan. While the national council will certainly have a minimum impact because it must work from such a broad base, it might prompt the formation of more such groups regionally and locally. The press councils guarantee access to no one; they merely provide a forum that citizens might use to ask for access to the publication. Success in gaining the use of the medium still depends on the good will of the publisher.

Inherent in Barron's proposals for access is a legal sanction to force the newspaper to open up its news columns. But such a law or regulation at this point, at least, would likely run afoul of the First Amendment. No court has ever held that a newspaper had to accept any paid advertisement, let alone a

piece of news copy or editorial column. Some court decisions have made noises in this direction—that the right of freedom of expression belongs to the people, that the press cannot impede the exposition of ideas in a community, and so forth. But the bench appears reluctant to move from the fine legal theory espoused in such decisions to the hard world of practicality—forcing a newspaper to publish an idea or a point of view or even an advertisement. Some people argue that in those cities with legally sanctioned monopolies (the joint operating agreement), press refusal to print something constitutes a government-approved restriction of liberty of expression, a violation of the First Amendment. And some persons have gone to court to prove their point (with little success up to now). Yet the climate in the land, which tends to be growing more and more hostile both to big business and to the mass media (both of which the press are), might provoke something like a fairness doctrine for newspapers—especially if the press doesn't take action itself to stem the tide of criticism of its narrow editorial policies.

Some publishers and broadcasters have attempted to do this. There is an ombudsman on some newspapers to speak out for community interests when complaints arise. Other papers are devoting far more space to letters to the editor than ever before. The *New York Times*, for example, devotes nearly a full page daily to opinion articles written by people outside the *Times* who wish to speak on an issue. Still other papers are turning over a small section of their Sunday edition to various community groups to publish what they want, so long as it isn't libelous or in bad taste. The TV networks are using guest editorialists who espouse a wide range of viewpoints. Some magazines, like *Newsweek*, have done the same thing. And some local television stations allow community spokesmen to appear periodically. But most of the media have done nothing.

A broader right of access will neither break down the commercial bonds that tie the media to a business viewpoint nor reduce the power of the media corporations. It will do little to relieve the frustrations of reporters who find themselves trapped in a commercially oriented industry. But it will provide a great number of voices in the community. It can provide a meaningful soapbox for those citizens who have something important to say to us all. It would be a healthy solution, especially if it were undertaken by the press without threat of punishment or legal sanction.

WHAT TECHNOLOGY CAN DO

In nearly all the journal articles and reports prepared by economists on the state of competition in the mass media, the conclusion that concentration is natural and will continue is based on the assumption that technology remains stable. But of course there have been important technological breakthroughs that have affected media diversity. Offset printing, which is relatively cheaper and more efficient than the traditional letterpress printing, is primarily responsible for the tremendous proliferation of small weekly opinion journals and underground newspapers in America today. It used to be that if you wanted to publish a newspaper, you were forced to

invest in costly printing and typesetting equipment. Now all you need is an office, a fancy typewriter to set your type, an artist to lay out your pages and to prepare your headlines, and so forth. You can pay someone else with an offset press to print your paper. Other processes used in book publishing, for example, make it cheaper and easier to publish paperback books—and we don't need to dwell on the explosion in this field. It is one of the true paradoxes of our times that we talk on the one hand of the tremendous concentration of the media, yet the diversity that exists in books, magazines, and small newspapers has never been greater.

Cable television and FM radio offer similar—if lesser—possibilities. We will use few new opportunities for ownership in these media, since the number of FM channels and the number of cable TV franchises will tend to remain constant—but both these media offer possibilities to people who want to speak to the community on a variety of issues.

Even with the new printing and broadcasting opportunities, the question remains, will these new breakthroughs have much real impact in the diversification of points of view received from society at large? Although there is much discussion and controversy on this question the most likely answer is no, there doesn't appear to be much impact now, and there probably won't be much more in the future. Why? The fact is that most people get most of their information from their daily newspaper, the commercial television channels, and AM radio. We are creatures of habit and one of our habits is that we don't like to look for things; we will take what is at hand, what we are used to instead. While all these new newspapers and journals and periodicals and FM stations and public access channels are becoming more and more common, they are really not available. You can't get most printed forms in your supermarket or drug store, where most people get their magazines. There are no home deliveries for the underground newspapers. Most people aren't on the cable yet. And the experimental FM radio is still not the regular part of most listeners' radio diet. There exists, side by side with the established, monopolistic, non-diversified media systems, a fantastic range of smaller, more diverse media. But most people don't know they are there, don't care, or won't use them. If there are to be any broadening of perspectives, any meaningful results to access, any increase in the number of voices—and if there is to be any meaningful impact from these changes, they will necessarily have to be undertaken by the mainstream media.

SUMMARY

In the long run, the threat posed to the people by government attacks on our media system will probably be less than the threat posed by increased concentration, monopolization, and conglomerization. This might indeed be our Waterloo in the decades just ahead. In a summary of the findings of the Hutchins Commission, a Senate staff report in the late sixties noted:

The American people do not realize what has happened to them. They are not aware that a communications revolution has occurred. They do not appreciate the tremendous power which the new instruments

and new organization of the press place in the hands of a few men. They have not yet understood how far the performance of the press falls short of the requirements of a free society in the world today.

Ignorance of these factors is serious. And the institution that could clear away some of this ignorance—the mass media—isn't likely to do that. For if they were effective in transmitting this message they would be putting the nails into their own coffin.

The knowledgeable portions of society must strive for reform—reform premised on its capacity to be carried out by what Nicholas Johnson calls, "self-serving men of average intelligence." The former FCC commissioner wrote in his *How to Talk Back to Your Television Set*: "To dream schemes of institutions that will function only when men are angels is futile. This is not to say that the world is not populated with a significant number of very decent persons who are willing to risk future and fortune to do 'the right thing'; the point is that you cannot count on having one of them in all the right places at all the necessary times."

We are still seeking the means to undertake that vital but practical reform of which Johnson speaks. The need is great, the time is now. The hopes, however, remain dim.

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Mass Media and the Fragmentation of Society

It was probably quite baffling to most consumers of American mass media when the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, and *Life*—in the months before their ultimate collapse when they were in serious financial difficulty—attempted to cut their subscription lists, purposefully trimming hundreds of thousands of loyal readers from the ranks of their subscribers. Normally when you aren't making enough money, you want to sell more, not less, of whatever it is you are making. But not the *Post*, *Look*, and *Life*—they sought to cut magazine subscriptions.

Although it appeared baffling, the whole scheme made good sense, as we will see shortly. It was all part of a general trend in many of our media to reach fewer—not more—readers, viewers, listeners, and so forth. This scheme is being developed in response to what is perhaps a little known but highly significant fact of media life: the mass audience is beginning to disintegrate, fall apart, and crumble. The readers of our newspapers, books, and magazines, television and movie viewers, and radio listeners exist today in a state of disarray that could not be found just thirty years ago. No more is the audience being perceived as one big lumpenproletariat. The mass is beginning to fragment into hundreds of smaller parts. And this fragmentation is being reflected in media tastes and preferences as well as in consumer goods and services.

In the 1930s, as far as American media merchants were concerned, the audience for newspapers, radio, movies, magazines, and other media was perceived as a single mass. Oh, yes, it was recognized there were tiny groups at either end of this mass that displayed some extreme characteristics. The poor and uneducated were at one end; the very wealthy, highly educated elite were at the other. But the primary audience was in the middle. And we created a media culture or milieu to suit the needs of these folks. Advertisers aimed their messages at these consumers, the average Americans. There was evidence to suggest that it was the correct perception of the audience. Mass attendance at the movies was very high. Giant urban daily newspapers maintained circulations above or approaching the mil-

lions. Network radio reached tens of millions of listeners each night. Brand-name products attained sales never before dreamed of. Truly, these were *mass media*, reaching a mass society with a mass culture.

Now whether this kind of society actually existed or not is fairly unimportant. Advertisers believed it, so publishers and broadcasters acted as though it were the case. This philosophy became the operational basis for the mass media. Reaching as many people as possible became equated with success and made possible the premium advertising rates the media charged. This was the period when the ratings first began. How many are listening or reading or watching? The number—not who they were—was the key.

Sometime between the end of World War II and now things began to change, slowly at first, more drastically later. And today the inherent goodness of the mass is no longer taken for granted. Today there are those who question whether the mass audience really exists—or ever existed. Today the key to success is not the number of people who are listening or watching or reading—but in getting the right people to listen or read or watch. The mass has begun to fall apart.

WHY?

The mass audience is disintegrating for numerous reasons, some of which only remotely concern the mass media. America in the seventies is a nation in which a majority of the population has more money to spend than ever before and a great deal more leisure time in which to spend it. Gone are the ten- or twelve-hour, six-day work weeks. Seven hours a day, five days a week is more common today. And three-day weekends abound. To do those jobs around the house we have assembled an arsenal of gadgets and tools to make the work simple and less time-consuming. We are better educated today; our horizons on life and its many diversions have been significantly broadened.

Americans like to do things with other people today; in a sense we have become a nation of "joiners." Many of us are no longer satisfied to identify ourselves either as individuals (which was a common American trait for the better part of our history) or as part of the entire society. We seek to be something more than a single person but clearly less than the common mass. We are young, middle-aged, or old. Many of us find an attachment to a racial or ethnic minority more important than a status as an American. We are Easterners or Southerners or Westerners or Texans or Californians—and proud of it. We are environmentalists, women's libbers, a part of the counter culture, Jesus freaks, skiers, sports car enthusiasts, concerned parents, swinging singles; we collect stamps and coins and beer cans and model trains and antique cars and nostalgia items; we ski, surf, hike, climb mountains, scuba dive, sail, camp, fish, hunt, bowl, golf, ice skate, and swim.

American industry—including the mass media—has responded to these changes in our society. Leisure activities have grown rapidly in the past decade with hundreds of new golf courses, bowling alleys, pool parlors, tennis clubs, and boating and yachting clubs sprouting up in all parts of the

nation. Scores of what were once strictly luxury items have become required hardware in most middle-class homes. From the vast array of electric grooming gimmicks and kitchen gadgets to more expensive power tools, stereos, cameras, and creative playthings, Americans are buying and buying and buying.

The leisure time and consumer interests of the American people have provided a fertile field for the mass media in this country. There are a great many more things for the media to talk about today and a great many more personal interests to appeal to. And there are a great many more products to advertise. But the significant fact in all this is that while these new interests and new products appeal to a great many people, they are not appealing to the mass. Lots of people are interested in golf, but not everybody or even the majority. So a large-scale proliferation of the media has occurred to take advantage of these minority interests.

All this happened at about the same time advertisers were beginning to grouse about the high cost of advertising—especially since many of their product messages were being seen by people who weren't likely to buy these products. Many advertisers tried to isolate these minority groups through specialized media and reduce their costs at the same time. For example, an airline that sought to sell the advantages of flying to Hawaii for the holidays could put an ad in *Readers Digest* and reach many potential customers among the thirty million or so readers of the magazine. But for less than one-quarter of the cost the same ad could appear in *Holiday* magazine and reach nearly four million people, most of whom by virtue of their purchase of the magazine have a strong interest in traveling. An advertisement for an expensive after-shave lotion might reach twenty million men if it were carried in *TV Guide*. But for far less money, the advertiser could place his ad in *Playboy*, and while he might not reach as many men, the millions of readers of that expensive and pseudo-sophisticated magazine would be far better prospects for the purchase of costly toiletry items than the general audience of *TV Guide*.

With some products it makes little difference who is in the audience; everybody buys aspirin and toothpaste. But it is foolish to advertise sailing equipment to a general audience when you are after sailors or at least people who live near the water. Why attempt to sell hearing aids to a mass audience? Your real target is the elderly. How many members of the general audience are in the market for a Jaguar or Lincoln Continental—both \$10,000 automobiles? You want to aim at an affluent market.

The trend in marketing toward smaller, "better" audiences for many advertising messages has made the proliferation in the media possible. Alternatively, the proliferation of media has made the narrow, specialized advertising messages possible.

But this change in philosophy has not only spawned new media, it has forced older established media to specialize and develop a new image—or else. The seven million or so readers of *Look* magazine appeared quite happy with the product being published by the Cowles Communication Company. It was the advertisers who no longer wanted to shell out the big bucks necessary to get a message in the mass circulation magazine. When

the advertising support died so did the magazine. The same was true with *Colliers*, the *Post*, and most recently, *Life*. The demise of many large urban daily newspapers can also be tied at least partially to the advertisers' desire for smaller suburban papers to carry their message at lower costs to the new affluents in the suburbs.

The lords of network television, the editors of the few remaining metropolitan daily papers, and the publishers of a dwindling handful of general interest magazines are the only people in recent years who have operated their media as if a mass audience existed. Everyone else has become more and more content with getting to fewer people with something they know will interest them. The result is a wider selection of alternative media than has ever before existed in this country.

Magazines have been the medium hardest hit by the fragmentation of the mass audience. But by the same token, the periodicals have responded most vigorously to the changing audience. Blacks have consistently used alternative masscomm systems for nearly 150 years, and today the black media cover the entire spectrum of media forms. And the media of the counter culture have probably had the most impact on the traditional masscomm forms. The underground press and film communities have not only provided an alternative media system for members of this amorphous subculture but have been influential in changing the same characteristics of established newspapers, magazines, films, and broadcast media.

We will look at all three of these areas—the magazines, the blacks, and the underground—as well as discuss briefly what the “mass” media are doing in an attempt to respond to the changing audience patterns. With the exception of network television, the day of reaching the “mostest” with your medium are fast dying. “Audience involvement” are now the key buzz words. Produce a product that people need. And this is easiest by appealing strongly to what interests them most.

THE DEATH OF *COLLIERS*, *POST*, *LOOK* . . . AND *LIFE*

The power of *Look* is that it spans the whole universe of interests. It is a platform for all Americans to turn to, to learn about the basic issues, the real gut issues of the day . . . It is information and entertainment for the whole family.

Those words were uttered in 1970 by Thomas R. Shepard, Jr., the publisher of *Look* magazine in a speech to magazine editors and publishers. In little more than a year the magazine was dead, gone, defunct. It was all over. Despite predictions of impending death of the publication, its sudden demise still took many by surprise. What happened? Were readers no longer interested in a platform they could turn to for the real issues of the day? Or didn't the magazine provide this platform? Didn't the audience seek an informative and entertaining magazine for the entire family? There is no evidence to suggest that any of these factors had much to do with the death of *Look*. It appears, at least, that most of its millions of readers (circulation rested at about seven million when it died) were pleased with the magazine.

Why did it die then? Basically because advertisers weren't too happy with

the product. And of course this is the primary constituency for magazines today. It's the advertiser who pays the bulk of the cost of the magazine.

Look was not the first mass magazine to die during this century. The dirge of the doomed that came before the sprightly picture magazine included *Colliers*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Coronet*, *American*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and others. And, of course, since the demise of *Look*, *Life* has faded away as well—a victim of the same advertising-oriented illness. In managing editor Ralph Grave's editorial, he wrote that *Life* was a magazine that had attempted to talk to readers across special interests. "We don't want to reach you as skiers, or teenagers, or car owners, or TV-watchers, or single women, or suburbanites, or inhabitants of New York City, or blacks, or whites. Instead," he wrote, "we wanted to talk to you as people, who share a common experience of humanity." But it was not to be. Today we are left with but two truly general audience national publications—*Readers Digest* and *TV Guide*, both of which seem extremely healthy at the present.

Two Sunday supplement magazines aimed at the general audience have died in the past fifteen years as well—*This Week* and the *American Weekly*. Two mass audience supplements remain—*Parade* and *The Family Weekly*—in a once crowded market. In addition, the black-oriented supplement *Tuesday* is being distributed with many Sunday papers.

The demise of the mass magazines is not a simple thing to explain. It involves at the very least the content of the magazine, the audience, and perceptions of advertisers. At one time the mass mags had a good thing going for them. Thirty years ago if a person wanted a graphic and visual depiction of an important happening or event, he went to a magazine to find it. For example, in the forties, the nation saw the first pictures of its war dead when *Life* magazine published a full page black and white photo of American G.I.'s lying crumpled on the beach of some far-off Pacific island. And if you wanted in-depth and personal reportage, again it was the mass magazine you looked toward.

Short stories and the serialization of novels were another staple of the mass mags in their heyday. Much of the nation's important literature first saw the light of day in publications like the *Post* or *Colliers*.

But today television has taken over the role of presenting the nation with a visual report of what is happening here and abroad. And to most people moving pictures that talk as well have more impact than still photos. In-depth reporting is also no longer found exclusively in the magazines. Both newspapers and television have begun to use this technique as well. And first radio, and then television, usurped the magazine's role as the primary source of fiction for the masses. What happened to the mass magazines, then, was that they lost a good deal of their reason for being. Many editors denied this. As late as 1970 *Look's* Shepard argued: "The entire demographic thrust of our nation is in the direction of a merger of interest, of the elimination of extremes at both ends and a massive gathering together toward the middle . . . I see an especially bright future for the publications that bring various groups of Americans together in a climate of mutual interests and shared concerns."

At the same time the *Look* publisher was saying this, advertising men were arguing that the better educated people become, and the more leisure time and money people have, the more discriminating they become in their media usage habits. A shot-gun editorial approach just isn't worth that much to them.

The financial data seemed to support the adman. In the *Columbia Journalism Review* (August 1971), former *Life* editor Chris Welles noted: "The most financially successful magazines of the past ten years have been designed to appeal to highly particularized intellectual, vocational, and avocational interests and are run by editors who know exactly what they are saying, and to whom they are saying it." The examples cited by Welles were numerous, but included the "Cosmopolitan Girl," New York's urban dwellers, the popular science fans of *Psychology Today*, *Playboy's* so-called sophisticated males, and so forth. Madison Avenue believes rightly or wrongly that a magazine lacking a specific, well-defined purpose is not really "needed" by its readers. And a publication that is not needed is a poor advertising vehicle. Media specialists pointed out, for example, that the newsstand sales of *Life* dropped from 2.5 million copies in 1947 to little more than 200,000 in 1971. This was an important statistic to the adman, who interpreted newsstand sales as a deliberate and conscious effort by the reader to buy the magazine at the premium newsstand price.

But the "need" factor was not the only problem that faced the magazine. Another thing mass magazines had been able to do well for many years was to present a graphic and colorful advertisement to a great many people at one time. While many advertisers were interested in the special audience, some were still concerned with selling to the masses—something magazines could do. But television began chipping away at this stronghold as well. It could reach more people and present a more graphic advertisement for many products. Magazines responded by trying to increase their circulation to compete in the numbers game with TV. When the *Post* died, *Life* bought its subscribers, pushing its circulation to 8.5 million, which is a readership of more than 30 million since it is established that three persons read each magazine. But to sell the magazine to this many people the price of a full-page ad went up to more than \$64,000, which was more costly than a minute on prime-time television. The result: *Life* sold 13 percent fewer pages of advertising in the year after the circulation hike. In addition to a higher cost per advertising message, magazines lost in the cost per thousand race as well. It cost an advertiser about \$7.75 to reach 1,000 advertisers via *Life*. A seller could reach a thousand television viewers for only \$3.60, about half as much.

To boost their advertising, *Life*, *Look*, and *Readers Digest* went to General Foods in 1969 and suggested that the giant brand-name manufacturer conduct a study of the value of magazine advertising. The three mass circulation magazines even agreed to help finance the project. The results of the study showed that magazines could be effective advertising and selling vehicles and stimulated some advertising money. But in 1970 when Proctor and Gamble, General Foods, Bristol-Myers and Colgate-Palmolive—the big four brand names—spent \$434 million in TV advertising, they spent only about one-tenth that much in all magazines.

The mass mags tried other ploys in an effort to salvage part of the market. If bigger circulation wasn't the answer because it sent costs up, why not intentionally cut circulation, which would in turn cut costs? This would permit a reduction in per page advertising rates. Many magazines did this, aiming to trim those subscribers on the bottom end of the economic scale. This was not a particularly easy task, and precision was often lacking. Before its death, the *Post* cut none other than Winthrop Rockefeller, former governor of Arkansas, from its list of subscribers.

Another device used by some magazines to trim costs was to cut the size of the magazine—not the number of pages, but their size. *Esquire* did this successfully in the early part of this decade, trimming many thousands of dollars from its production and mailing costs while maintaining the same subscription and advertising rates.

But with all the devices, the evidence has been clear for some time that the future of mass magazines is not too bright. Even the magazines themselves had admitted it in a backhanded way by allowing advertisers to buy space in less than the entire circulation of the magazine. This is done in several ways. Most mass circulation magazines, both the general interest and the specialized ones, publish regional editions. The editorial content is generally the same but there are pages devoted to regional advertisers at rates far below the price of an ad that is carried in all editions. For example, before it died, *Life* charged \$64,200 for a four-color full-page ad. But a Minnesota company interested in reaching only people in that state could have run a four-color full-page ad in the 150,000 copies circulated in Minnesota for only about \$2,500. In 1969 *Life* was publishing 133 regional editions and *Look* 75. This device vastly increases the number of advertisers who can use the magazine. Many companies don't want to advertise nationally because they don't distribute nationally. The cost reduction also makes it possible for those national firms that seek to advertise in several but not all regions to be selective and place their ads at a much lower rate.

Another means the mass mags have of using audience fragmentation to their advantage is through what are called "demographic breakouts"; that is, allowing an advertiser to aim an ad at a specific subgroup or fragment in the mass audience. For example, before it died *Look* had one breakout called Top Spot—1.2 million readers with an average annual income approaching \$24,000. An advertiser who was selling a luxury item—expensive cars or stereo equipment, for example—could have run his ad only in this breakout where it would be seen by consumers most able to buy his product. His cost was significantly reduced and he got more for his money. Again, the lower costs allowed smaller advertisers who couldn't pay the \$60,000 per page price to use the magazine. However, the breakouts are not 100 percent accurate. They are based on Zip codes and census data. In a given town, for example, certain areas house people with higher incomes than other areas. These can be identified by the Zip codes. The Top Spot edition went to these areas. The breakouts are also used to pick out younger or older consumers or suburbanites as opposed to urban dwellers.

Finally, some magazines even fragment their content—not necessarily in each edition, but over time. For many years, *Saturday Review* contained a special section each week on either education, science, communications, or

If you're going to buy a jet, **BUY A JET!**

Stripping away all the superlatives, the Gates Learjet offers you *156 more hours of productive and/or leisure time every year*, versus flying in the only other American-built business jet available for under \$1 million.

It's a simple matter of speed — we call it *true jet performance*. The Learjet cruises well over *100 miles per hour faster*. Compound this over 233,000 miles of annual travel (based on actual experience of more than 850 Learjets now flying), and you and your associates are in the air four work weeks less each and every year!

You don't fly 400 miles per hour on the

airlines any more. Why settle for anything short of 500 mile-per-hour speed in your own business jet?

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Most Americans can't afford to own their own jet planes. But many large companies can, and do. It would have made little sense for the Gates Learjet people to put this ad in *TV Guide* or *Reader's Digest*. But by placing it in *Fortune*, a magazine with high readership in the management circles of business, the company reached a large potential audience at a relatively low cost.

music. Although all subscribers received the magazine weekly, readers with special interests in one of the four areas would get a specialized magazine once a month. The magazine changed owners in the early seventies, and readers were given the option of buying just the single special interest edition each month, or buying the weekly package. The success of the concept cannot be tested, however, since the *Review* folded in May 1973.

There has been talk—in many shops, but most loudly in the halls of the Time-Life Building—of segmenting content in the same edition of the magazine. For example, sixty percent of the content of *Time* magazine might be the same for every reader. But the remaining forty percent might be devoted to diverse subjects such as business, travel, music, science, or the arts. The subscriber would buy the magazine with the special content of most interest to him. He would still have a mass magazine, but part of it would be tailored to meet the needs of his special interests. As of the early 1970s no such project had been carried out. In fact, Time-Life had gone in a different direction with the creation of at least one new special interest magazine, *Money*, aimed at the burgeoning interest in consumerism.

Segmentation of any kind—but especially in content—is both difficult and risky. Any publication that goes to press weekly has enough problems getting a single edition to the presses, let alone various ones. And the more segmentation a magazine does, the more chance it takes of losing the few truly national advertisers it does have. The only real positive sign for the mass mags is that advertisers are becoming more and more disenchanted with the clutter of television advertising. Some advertising people are beginning to worry about it, and a few are even looking to mass magazines again.

THE MAGAZINE REVOLUTION OF THE SIXTIES

Despite the emphasis on the negative impact the fragmentation of society has made on the magazine industry, its positive effects have been really far more important. For although we did lose a few familiar faces in the industry, many new ones have popped up. Magazines of all shapes and sizes have been founded in the last two decades in an effort to cope with the expanding interests of the reading public. It is difficult even to enumerate the categories of these new magazines. Think of something that might be interesting to several thousand Americans and you can be fairly certain of finding one or more magazines on that topic.

Consumerism, the province of the highly regarded *Consumer Reports* for decades, has fostered the birth of several consumer-oriented publications, the slickest of which is the aforementioned *Money* from Time-Life. Leisure activities have spurred scores of publications on golf, sailing and boating, climbing and hiking. *Psychology Today*, using a kind of “social sciences for the masses” approach, was successful enough to spawn a handful of imitators as well as to give its publishers the capital to buy *Saturday Review*. Even such esoteric subjects as the occult, which has gained a new promi-

nence, have created a market for magazines about witchcraft and black magic.

Perhaps the most spectacular successes in the past ten years have been the regional magazines, more specifically the city magazines. Regional magazines have always existed, many as supplements to Sunday newspapers, a few on their own. *Sunset*, on the West Coast, is a good example of a magazine that has based its appeal on catering to the life styles of the American West. Its monthly sections on food, gardening, and culture are avidly consumed by thousands of readers in California, Oregon, and Washington.

But the city mags are something different. They have been around for a long time, since the late part of the last century. It has been only recently that they have begun to take on any kind of life-like posture. The *New Yorker*, a sophisticated literary-style magazine for Gotham residents, was really the only successful city magazine for decades. And although it sparked many imitators, none shared its success. Most of the city magazines lacked quality; they had no clearly defined editorial format. Many tried to copy the *New Yorker* with its sophisticated style and content, despite the fact they were circulating in smaller, less wordly cities in the East and Midwest. They ignored the milieu of their own towns in an attempt to be a New York magazine. None was large enough or had the prestige to attract national advertisers. So most were impoverished from the beginning. Finally, too many of them acted more like publicity releases for the local chamber of commerce than anything else.

Around 1967 a kind of turn-around took place. New magazines began, and many that already existed took on the posture of "civic gadflies." They provided an outlet for tough and perceptive in-depth reports about their towns and cities. A kind of sophisticated muckraking became their standard fare. As one editor put it, "Our job is to plug the city—and to attack the city and its problems." By 1968 there were at least sixty such magazines in the country. Some, like *Detroit* and *West*, were part of large metropolitan newspapers like the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Others like *Atlanta* and *Philadelphia* were not associated with newspapers but were successfully published on their own.

Because they are well done (for the most part) and well read, such magazines get more support than they have in the past. Some, like *Seattle*, still can't hack it, and fail. But most hold on, giving readers a kind of journalism on the local level that they have come to expect only from national media. They are able to give the kind of depth reports to problems that too many newspapers are reluctant to spend time on. Since style is traditionally important to magazines, their stories are brighter and better written than those in newspapers. And they offer readers colorful artwork and photography about their own home towns—something appealing to many people. Writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Kemmis Hendrick has noted: "Handsomely put together, they keep talking about local concerns. In this day of vastly increased regionalism and great world concerns . . . this may prove tremendously important." "The motto of this new type of local magazine journalism is know thyself, and forget other

people's cities," also noted Bob Abel in a recent (1973) *Columbia Journalism Review*.

The city magazines and the tremendous explosion of small special interest magazines are the hope of the future for the magazine industry. The day of the mass-circulation general-interest magazine is coming to an end. Unable to find a true function or to define its role in a rapidly fragmenting society, its value for most readers is limited. Instead, we see emerging leaders in broad special interest fields—men's magazines, women's magazines, shelter magazines, news magazines, sports magazines, and business magazines. And behind them we are seeing hundreds of little magazines to fill those special needs that every reader has these days.

BLACKS AND THE MASS MEDIA

In 1968, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders reported something that most thoughtful people connected with masscomm had known for a great many years. The American mass media, nearly all white-owned and operated, were doing a terrible job of reporting on the racial problems and existence of minority people in the United States. "Along with the country as a whole," the commission concluded, "the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white man's eyes and a white perspective. That is no longer good enough." In the more than five years since the report was issued, things have changed—but very little in most instances. Pick up a daily newspaper. How many black girls do you see on the women's pages announcing a marriage or engagement. And how many black businessmen make the business page? More than before, perhaps, but still not very many. Generally, for the black man or woman to make the papers he or she must emerge from the black community to do something in the white community. Editors justify this attitude by pointing out the small circulation most daily newspapers have in black areas. But the black community asks, why should we subscribe to a newspaper that excludes us from its coverage?

Television is the medium that has probably shown the most improvement in involving blacks in its regular fare. But that is only because TV was probably the worst to begin with. In 1963, a civil rights organization in Harlem offered local children a silver dollar for each black face they could spot on TV. (Athletes were excluded.) Over a period of six Saturdays the organization paid out exactly fifteen dollars. In 1965 all three networks were monitored for five prime-time hours. Only three blacks appeared on the screen.

Beginning at the end of the sixties, however, things began to change for lots of reasons. A great deal of social pressure was put on the national networks, who were nightly exposing racial injustice on their evening news, to "put their money where their mouths were." The success of NBC's "I Spy," which co-starred Bill Cosby, seemed to dash the myth widely held by the networks that the general audience couldn't identify with a black hero. "I Spy" proved at least that a black man playing a white role could be popular. And when advertisers suddenly realized that black people eat and



A younger Bill Cosby proved to television executives that a massive white audience could identify with and follow a black hero. Of course, in "I Spy," Cosby played a white man for all practical purposes. Nevertheless, the success of the show broke the ice for other black performers.

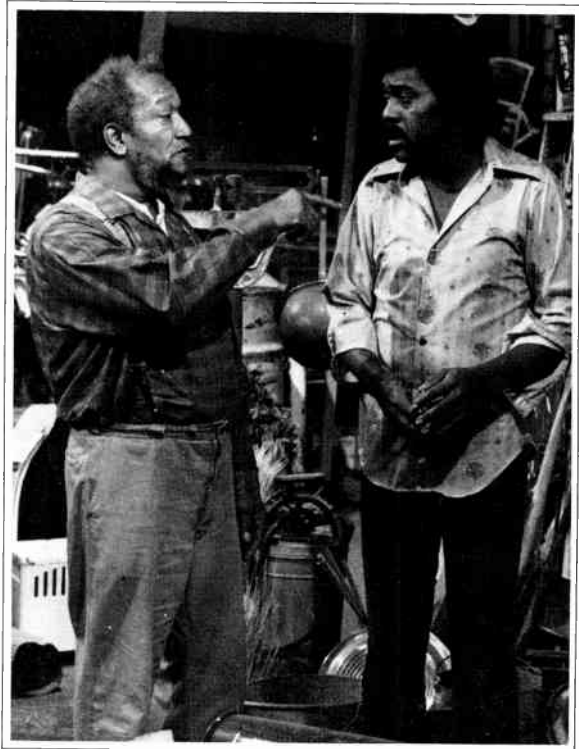
NBC Photo

brush their teeth and get headaches and buy beer just like everyone else, and began using black actors and actresses in commercials, it made the move toward including blacks in television series even more acceptable. The industry seemed to be willing to further the cause of social justice as long as it was in vogue and didn't cost money.

"I Spy" was followed by a series of programs in which blacks either co-starred or played some kind of second banana role—Hari Rhodes in "Daktari," Don Mitchell in "Ironside," Greg Morris in "Mission: Impossible," Ivan Dixon in "Hogan's Heroes." By 1968-69 blacks starred or co-starred in fourteen prime-time series. Black stars included Diahann Carroll in "Julia" and Bill Cosby in "The Bill Cosby Show." Twenty-one of fifty-six dramatic shows featured at least one black performer. But for the most part these were blacks playing roles that might have been played by whites. There was no attempt to develop novel and original material for blacks that would somehow reflect the black culture and uniqueness. "Sanford and Son" came along in the early 1970s as a kind of attempt, but even that program didn't answer the criticism that blacks on television did not portray what black life was really like. The networks, which could hardly respond with the truth (that television doesn't realistically portray white life either) were hard pressed for an honest answer. The fact is, because

commercial television is a truly mass media, and because blacks make up less than fifteen percent of that mass, and because programming strategies generally dictate that networks seek the largest possible portion of the mass, the likelihood of seeing material aimed at blacks, reflecting black values and the black way of life was, and is, remote. Public television has done some programming in this area with "Soul" and "Black Journal," and local public television has originated some black-oriented programs. But unfortunately, blacks tend to watch the public stations about as much as whites—which is not very much. The answer in television seemingly lies in CATV, which is designed to appeal to subgroups of the audience. In some cities there already is cable programming aimed exclusively at blacks. But cable television is a costly item, especially to people in low-income brackets. The \$60 to \$70 per year it costs is money that could be used in other ways. Also, cable companies have demonstrated some reluctance to service black areas, believing that the number of people who would use the cable would be low and hence it would be unprofitable.

As of 1973 there was not a single television station in the nation owned by blacks, and there were few black-owned cable franchises. The prospect is not good for an increase in either category in the future. FCC regulations that make financial resources an important aspect in gaining a television license tend to work against black ownership of the medium. The first black



Redd Foxx and Demond Wilson come as close to portraying black life as TV will probably allow at present. If it is still not a true picture, "Sanford and Son" comes closer than its predecessors. The show is less governed by the fact that TV cannot realistically portray black life than the fact that it cannot realistically portray life in general.

NBC Photo



Of all the networks, the public network has devoted the most time to exploring the world of the black American. Through regular series like "Soul" and "Black Journal," the hopes and fears, frustrations and joys of minority America are examined. This picture is from a recent segment of "Black Journal" that examined the Nation of Islam. Here a cameraman and producer prepare to film a Muslim-owned and operated supermarket in Chicago.

was appointed to the commission in 1972 by President Nixon, but there was little hope that the agency would make an affirmative effort to initiate black ownership of the broadcast media. The prospects are indeed dim in this area—both for more meaningful black participation in white-owned television and in black ownership of the medium.

BLACKS AND RADIO

With the exception of small magazines and newspapers, radio can appeal to the smallest audience subgroup and still survive. Therefore it should come as no surprise that many radio stations across the nation do appeal to blacks. But apparently not enough, since researchers found that blacks own a higher portion of phonographs and phonograph records than their white counterparts at every economic level. This is one means of getting the music that they cannot find elsewhere. Nevertheless, more than 300 of the 7,000 or so radio stations in the country program at least partially for blacks. The annual advertising billing at black-oriented radio stations was estimated in 1970 at \$35 million.

Do black owners and managers get this money? Not very often. Only about eighteen of the more than 300 stations are black-owned. Rock star James Brown owns a chain of three stations in Baltimore, Maryland; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Augusta, Georgia. The remaining handful of stations are independently owned. There are few blacks in management positions at the black-oriented white-owned stations. *Newsweek* observed recently that at most stations geared to a black audience, "only the disk jockeys and the janitors" are black. The so-called soul stations primarily use white press services (AP, UPI) for their news broadcasts. This is true despite the fact that there are national black press agencies, including the black-

owned National Black network, which feeds five-minute newscasts throughout the day to cities across America.

What do black listeners get in return for their patronage of black-oriented stations? Not much more than any other radio listener. Most of the stations have formats geared to the top forty with an emphasis on rhythm and blues and soul. There is rarely any special emphasis given to black performers in other musical modes, such as in jazz or folk music. William Wright, the director of United House in Washington, D.C. recently asked, "Do we need 24 hours of James Brown?" He answered his own question this way: "No, we don't. If we're going to talk about freedom and self-determination, we need to hear our black heroes performing in other art forms. We need to talk about drug addiction, about slum lords, about jobs, about education. But the white man gives us 24 hours of 'soul' because it pads his already stuffed pockets and keeps black people ignorant."

Few black or white commercial radio stations really meet the criteria Mr. Wright lays down. It doesn't seem to be in the nature of the medium to take on an information role. Music is the key whether it is for whites or blacks.

Ownership prospects in radio are far more hopeful than in television. It costs far less to get into the radio business, and it has been shown that a radio station can be successful by appealing to blacks or any large subgroup. Consequently, one might predict increases in black ownership of radio stations in the future. Only if this occurs will the medium truly be an alternative for the black subculture, which is currently seeking information and entertainment to meet its unique needs.

THE BLACK PRESS

The situation that exists in the print media is far different from that in the electronic media. In fact it can truly be said that a real alternative media system does exist for blacks in newspapers and magazines. The black press has a long and proud history, and although there are few dailies that can compete with the white-owned metropolitan press, many black weeklies are among the nation's largest. In fact, it might be accurately said that there is a national black newspaper press whereas a national white one doesn't really exist.

Although it is often overlooked, the history of the black press dates to 1827, more than three decades before the Civil War. John B. Russwurm and the Rev. Samuel Cornish founded *Freedom's Journal* in New York City, the first of more than forty newspapers that were published before 1860. In those days the black press was one with a cause. Most journals carried the banner of abolition and were directed at an audience of black and white intellectuals. The black press, along with the white abolitionist press, helped spread the word about the serious problems that stemmed from slavery. It also served as a means of communication between black leaders and gave its black readers somewhat of a sense of identity.

After the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, the need for the militant papers appeared over and the number of black journals dropped to ten or less by 1870. But following the general expansive trend of the American

Chicago ready for black mayor?

(See story below)



Chicago Defender

CHICAGO'S DAILY PICTURE NEWSPAPER



A SENGSTACKE NEWSPAPER

VOL. CXXIX—No. 5

SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1973

Price: 10¢

Panthers, cops in standoff

Rush attacks search 'stunt'



No search warrant...

Top: Youth Activists, 10 Chicago policemen, vigilante by Anthony Young, 10 Chicago Panther leader Bobby Black, and a constable of St. Williams, 10th, back to officers by...

Police searched the building without a search warrant. Youth photos on page 2 (Daily Defender photo by John R. Hayes)

Chicago ready? Black mayor here?

...and on the issue of Dr. Bradley's...
...the black mayor of Los Angeles...
...the question centered on the results of...
...the "Can Chicago elect a black mayor?"

The Los Angeles Black population is...
...one of the most concentrated in...
...the United States. In 1970, the...
...black population of Los Angeles...
...was 1,000,000. In Chicago, the...
...black population is 1,500,000.



Hospitalized...

...Mrs. Angela Young, 40, was...
...hospitalized in a Los Angeles...
...hospital after being...
...attacked by a group of...
...white men on Thursday...

...The Los Angeles Black population is...
...one of the most concentrated in...
...the United States. In 1970, the...
...black population of Los Angeles...
...was 1,000,000. In Chicago, the...
...black population is 1,500,000.



Child, 2, killed on his birthday

...The victim, Anthony Louis Lane, of...
...444 E. 17th, was slain by a South...
...side man on the night of the...
...slaying on Thursday...

Police from Chicago's 34th district...
...searched for headquarters...
...of the local Black Panther Party...
...without a search warrant...
...The search was conducted...
...by 10 Chicago policemen...
...and a constable of St. Williams...

The reason that I followed him...
...was because he was...
...the only man who was...
...in the building...

'Lucas not murdered'

Family outraged by jail death verdict

By STEVEN McCANN...
...A special coroner's jury returned...
...its verdict on the death of...
...James Earl Ray, Jr., on...
...Thursday...

Mass meet on violence

A mass meeting to discuss...
...the causes of violence...
...will be held at the...
...Chicago Convention Center...
...on Saturday...



Testifies...

...James Earl Ray, Jr. testified...
...that he was...
...in the room...
...when James Earl Ray, Jr. was...
...shot...

Rep. Metcalfe...

Probes charge against ex-POW

U.S. Representative...
...Robert Metcalfe...
...has announced...
...that he will...
...investigate...
...charges...
...against...
...an ex-POW...



Laud Walker on tax deal

Chicago...
...Laud Walker...
...has announced...
...that he will...
...investigate...
...charges...
...against...
...an ex-POW...

One of two successful black daily newspapers, the *Chicago Defender* presents news for and of the black community. While most black newspapers are weekly, the success of the *Defender* suggests that the Afro-American community in many large cities could support a daily press.

press, the total rose to 150 by 1890, and, more importantly, the black journals began to take on a new appearance. The newspaper that changed the image of the black press was the *Chicago Defender*. Editor and owner Robert S. Abbott began to build a newspaper in the Windy City aimed at attracting a mass readership—not the intelligentsia that had been the focus of the earlier Negro journals. Abbott began printing sensational news stories to attract readers' attention as well as reporting about the black community. Success came quickly to the paper, and by 1922 the *Defender* was circulating more than 100,000 copies weekly. Today the Chicago newspaper is one of only two black daily newspapers in America and has a daily circulation of nearly 30,000.

With increased urbanization during the twenties and thirties, the number and circulation of black newspapers grew rapidly. By 1943, for example, there were more than 150 active newspapers that had a combined weekly circulation of 1.6 million copies. The *Pittsburg Courier* alone had a weekly circulation of 270,000. Unlike their white-owned counterparts, the black papers like the *Courier* circulated regionally and even nationally. The *Baltimore Afro-American* distributed 137,000 copies a week in 1943; the *Chicago Defender* circulated 202,000 weekly.

Today the black press is even stronger. One can count nearly 170 black-owned newspapers with a circulation of more than 3.5 million. The heart and soul of the black press are the community papers, which provide the routine coverage of the black community—marriages, deaths, church and school news, club and fraternal material—stories the white press tends to ignore. The black press also presents the problems, the conflicts, and the militancy within the black community from a black perspective. A typical twenty-page black newspaper might contain two full pages of business news from the community, a full page of church notes, another page devoted to entertainment and social notes, and a generous number of pictures. To most black editors, the old maxim that "names make news" is an important guide. The black press is one way members of the community who will likely never see their names in the metropolitan daily can gain some sort of recognition.

A black newspaper has the same staff problems that exist at most small daily and weekly newspapers. The salaries are not high enough to attract the top people, who tend to go to the big metropolitan papers. Black reporters who do work on black papers are often hired away by the white metros after they gain experience and polish. The inexperience of the staff is reflected in the product, which is sometimes crude.

Just as there are white media barons, their black counterparts exist as well. John H. Sengstacke—the nephew of the founder of the *Chicago Defender*—owns, in addition to that daily, weekly newspapers in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and Ohio. Again, like their counterparts in the white press, the black publishers tend to be conservative. John Murphy, publisher of the *Baltimore Afro-American*, was quoted in a recent article by L. F. Palmer, Jr. in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (Spring 1970) as saying "Newspapers are small businesses and publishers are businessmen. Surely you'd have to describe black publishers as conserva-

tives, I suppose. In earlier years, black newspapers were spearheads of protest. Today we're more informational."

Partially, as a reaction to this tendency, a new militant black press has developed in recent years. And today, two militant newspapers, the Black Muslim's *Muhammed Speaks* and the Black Panther paper stand as circulation leaders among the black press with weekly distributions of 700,000 and 110,000 respectively. The Muslim paper is printed in Chicago in a modern \$1.5 million printing facility. News is gathered through Black Muslim mosques throughout the nation. The top editors are trained journalists, many from leading Ivy League schools. The paper depends on its local organizations for most of its news, although it does buy the UPI news wire. The Panther paper, on the other hand, is produced primarily by volunteers and depends heavily on the reports from the numerous ministers of information in the various Panther chapters.

Both papers are militant and tend to be primarily propaganda organs for the agencies that publish them. They carry little advertising, and depend on circulation revenues from enthusiastic salesmen who hawk the weekly editions on street corners. The high circulation figures of both papers tend to suggest that there is a market for the anti-establishment militant black newspapers. And this is true, for both *Muhammed Speaks* and the Panther papers have scores of smaller imitators in larger cities throughout the nation. Because these journals rarely depend on advertising, the editors can afford to be militant without fear of offending local businessmen and merchants who might otherwise partially support the paper. The militant papers and the community papers appear to serve two different functions and probably do not threaten each other.

In addition to newspapers, there are several black magazines that have made an appearance in recent years, even specialized ones such as *Negro Heritage*, *Black Theatre*, *Urban West*, and *Soul Illustrated*. The Sunday supplement *Tuesday* is perhaps the most successful and widely read, with a circulation approaching 2,000,000. The Johnson Publishing Company prints and distributes four black periodicals including *Ebony*, a *Life*-like journal with a circulation over 1,000,000. Its other publications are *Jet*, *Tan*, and *Negro Digest*. Good Publishing of Fort Worth, Texas, also issues a quartet of periodicals—*Sepia*, the primary competition to *Ebony*, *Jive*, *Hep*, and *Bronze Thrills*. Roland Wolseley, in a piece in *Quill* in 1969, predicted that if the move toward black separatism continued, the black magazines would thrive as the most effective medium to satisfy the blacks' ongoing interest in their history and their culture.

BLACK FILM—EXCITEMENT OR EXPLOITATION

Perhaps the most recent and in some ways the most astonishing element in the development of alternative media for blacks was the explosion in 1972 in black cinema. No one really knows what prompted the sudden surge of black-oriented movies, but the Hollywood barons' realization that a large percentage of the film audience in urban theaters was black might have had something to do with it. In any case, beginning in 1972 the silver screen was

Muhammad



Speaks

Dedicated to Freedom
Justice and Equality for
the so-called Negro
The Earth Belongs to
Allah

Vol. 12 No. 37 2-Sections 48 pages

MAY 25, 1973

29¢—OUTSIDE ILLINOIS—25¢

MUHAMMAD ON RADIO IN CHICAGO EVERY SUNDAY, WREB, 1570, 10:00 A.M. AND WJOB 1230 R.C. 5:30 P.M.



BATTLE IN THE SKY!

See Pages 16 & 17

INDEX

Rap Brown sentenced



In a New York court
to 5 to 15 years after
conviction for
attempted robbery,
assault and murder.
Story on page 4

Stevie Wonder...



At funeral of 10-year-old
NY boy slain by police last
week. See page 4

Airport for the Blackman!!



See pages 5-8, 5-9

Farm Workers Union angry



Over alleged pay offs from big produce
growers in California, to the oft accused
Teamsters Union, to disrupt meaningful
organizations among the migrant farm hands.
See page 21

One of the nation's largest weekly newspapers, *Muhammad Speaks* is the newspaper of the Nation of Islam. Professionally written and edited by trained journalists, the paper interprets the news from the philosophical position of the Black Muslims. Although it is supported largely by subscribers and the movement, the paper carries substantial amounts of advertising, much of it from other Muslim business ventures.

filled with a series of manly black heroes with names like John Shaft, Trouble Man, Superfly, and Sweetback. The stars of the movies, ex-footballers like Jim Brown and Fred Williamson, Ron O'Neal, Robert Hooks, and Richard Roundtree, as well as directors like Gordon Parks, Melvin Van Peebles, and Hugh Robertson took on hero status in black communities where for decades no such images existed.

Most of the movies had several things in common. They were financially successful, with *Shaft* and *Sweet Sweetback's Baadass Song* grossing \$12 million and \$11 million respectively. *Buck and the Preacher* with Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte brought in \$9 million, *The Legend of Nigger Charley* \$5 million, and so on. In most of the pictures the black heroes triumphed easily over the white establishment—the Man—by the end of the last reel. In doing so the audience was usually treated to violence, what *Newsweek* described in an article in as “sardonic black dialogue hot off the streets—funky, profane, frankly shocking to many middle-class whites . . .,” and large quantities of explicit sex. Also, most of the movies, although written, directed, and acted by blacks, were nevertheless owned and distributed by the good old establishment firms like American-International, Twentieth-Century Fox, and Warner Brothers. Finally, most of the films generated as much controversy as box office demand.

Some of the controversy came from other blacks, who argued that the black films prostituted black people for the profit of whites. The white film companies, it was said, had found a successful formula and would exploit it in every way possible. Ivan Dixon was quoted in *Newsweek* as complaining about the excessive amount of sex written into the script of *Trouble Man*,



Superfly Ron O'Neal set the pace in clothing styles as well as life styles after this so-called “blaxploitation” film was released. A sequel followed on the heels of this popular movie. Black cinema remains controversial and successful.

which he was hired to direct for Twentieth-Century Fox. The NAACP finally had to be called in to negotiate changes in the script. Director Hugh Robertson noted the same problem with *Melinda*. "I had to fight and fight for any human elements in the story," he told *Newsweek* (October 23, 1972).

But even more controversial than the potential exploitative nature of the films was the subject matter. Many black civil rights leaders attacked the movies for their portrayal of dope sellers and violent killers as heroes. Junius Griffin of the Beverly Hills-Hollywood Branch of the NAACP was quoted as saying, "We must insist that our children are not constantly exposed to a steady diet of so-called black movies that glorify black males as pimps, dope pushers, gangsters, and super males with vast physical prowess but no cognitive skills." Tony Brown, head of Howard University's School of Communications and producer of "Black Journal" joined the chorus of critics with his comments on the film *Superfly* in which the hero plays a successful cocaine dealer. "The black exploitation films are a phenomenon of self-hate. Look at the image of *Superfly*. Going to see yourself as a drug dealer when you're oppressed is sick. Not only are blacks identifying with him, they're paying for the identification. It's sort of like a Jew paying to get into Auschwitz." He called the blacks associated with the films guilty of nothing less than "treason."

The black film makers disagreed, arguing first that black youngsters were able to distinguish between fantasy in film and the truth in real life. Gordon Parks argued that the films serve a therapeutic function, channeling the black frustrations with "the Man" in a harmless manner. Others asserted that the films accurately reflected life in the inner city. "Film critics want to support the myth that crime doesn't pay," said *Superfly's* Ron O'Neal. "But we all know that crime is paying off for some people every day." Finally, the argument was raised that whites had similar heroes—a James Bond who has a license to kill, a violent Western cult born of the spaghetti Westerns of Italy. "If they are going to put the damper on John Shaft," wrote actor James Earl Jones, "let them put it on John Wayne too and they'll find that there are a lot of people who need those fantasies."

The staying power of the black-oriented movies is perhaps the most interesting question. Unless the predominately black audiences that fill the theaters to watch these films are different from other movie audiences, the same plot is going to run thin in a short time. At that time the few black production and distributing companies and their white counterparts involved in this new wave of black movies can cut and run or begin using the massive numbers of talented blacks exposed in these films in other creative ways. There is a whole milieu of black culture that is not pictured in the current crop of black movies—an entire history of people to be dramatically told for the first time by the race that lived it. Black audiences, black directors and writers, and black performers could be equally fascinated by films that directed themselves at these areas. And we might truly find a broad-based black artistic expression in a mass medium for the first time in American history.

CHICANO JOURNALISM

From World War II until recently, the black press was really the only major racial or ethnic press system in the nation. Decades ago, before World War II, most large cities had foreign-language newspapers which were widely used by immigrants. These were excellent socialization tools. But as immigration dwindled, so did the ethnic foreign-language press.

Since the early sixties, however, one other ethnic press has begun to take on life—the chicano press. Today there are as many as fifty chicano newspapers scattered throughout the nation, most published near the West Coast. These papers differ from the traditional Spanish-language newspapers that merely printed national and local news in Spanish. Most of the chicano papers are bilingual. Some publish the same article in both English and Spanish; some have two editions. They tend to be militant and cause-oriented rather than being tied to a news format. Their growth in the sixties and seventies is linked closely to the growing chicano movement. Many of them were born in farmworkers' strikes and then continued after a labor accord was reached. With the availability of cheap offset printing and a growing mistrust of the "Anglo" press, the chicano papers have grown rapidly, if not thrived, with readers. None of them are moneymaking propositions, but they aren't designed for that, writes Joe Razo of the East Los Angeles *La Raza*: "This paper is not a business venture. It is an organizational tool. Our aim is not to make money, but to organize our people. We want to make them aware and sensitive to what goes on both within the community and the establishment outside."

Without advertising, the chicano papers remain fiercely independent. Funding for the journals comes from sympathetic supporters and from circulation revenues. The editors of these newspapers dismiss traditional journalism. To them objectivity is irrelevant; they are out to help the community, nothing more, nothing less. Dr. Rudy Acuna, former chairman of chicano studies at a California state college, was quoted recently by *Los Angeles Times* reporter Frank del Olmo as saying: "Before any real chicano leaders can emerge we will need ideas, and this is a function the chicano papers are serving now."

The militancy of some chicano papers alienates some readers, just as the militant black press alienates many blacks. But as the staffs on these papers become more experienced, the papers look more professional and become more popular among nearly all readers. Some of them have magazine formats and look more like underground newspapers than anything else. Others resemble traditional newspapers. Some are bi-monthly; some are monthly; some are weekly. Whether they are urban- or rural-based, all the chicano papers share some traits. Most belong to the Chicano Press Association, which provides for sharing material among many papers and thus improves the quality of many of the smaller journals. The papers are not usually organs of specific organizations; they tend to work with all organizations within a community. And, as noted before, they are cause-oriented. In one of the first pieces written about chicano journalism, Frank

del Olmo quotes one editor as saying, "Sometimes every story we run is an editorial."

As long as there is a chicano movement, there will undoubtedly be a militant chicano press, an alternative for those dissatisfied with the establishment media. With colorful names like *El Grito del Norte*, *La Verdad*, and *El Gallo*, these papers will continue to serve an important function within their communities—a function left undone by the white establishment press.

THE SUBTERRANEAN MINE SHAFT BENEATH THE SOD PRESS

The most broadly based alternative media system in America is categorized under the general rubric "the underground press." But this is a misnomer. The underground press is hardly underground in the true sense of the word. Although some of the publications might have offices in a basement apartment here and there, the paper is freely produced, printed, and sold in broad daylight, in front of God and everyone. This press might more accurately be described as counter-culture journalism, the media of America's newest sub-society. One of the best of the underground sheets, the *Los Angeles Free Press* (The Freep), has published as many as seventy-two pages in a single weekly edition, has a paid Audit Bureau circulation of 90,000, and has a staff of forty that occupies an entire two-story building. Hardly underground. Nor are most others.

Irregular might be a better word—irregular in most everything they do, including for many the frequency of publication. It is hard to even agree on how many such newspapers exist today. In 1970, the man who probably knows more about the underground press than anyone else, Robert J. Glessing, estimated in his book *The Underground Press* there were 400 different journals. But shortly before that *Newsweek* had estimated there were about 150 and the *Wall Street Journal* had speculated there were probably only about fifty. Glessing is probably closest to the truth.

As we will see shortly, there are lots of different kinds of underground publications. Most, however, tend to be militant about whatever they write. Some tend to be primarily political, keying most of their material to analysis and criticism of establishment politics. In 1970 when representatives of many such publications gathered at Goddard College in Vermont for a four-day conference on alternative media, the "Media Project" issued this statement: "We are participants in the conference who are part of the media of the political left. We feel that for media to be a true alternative, they must be tools to build and struggle toward an alternative society. The struggle is for a society in which power is in the hands of the people. Media which create that society must also be in the hands of the people."

This is a philosophy shared by a large segment of the politically-oriented counter-culture journalism. But the differences between the underground journalists and their counterparts in the established media transcend politics. They live divergent life styles, and these papers could probably flourish regardless of the political situation. Thomas Pepper, a straight

journalist, wrote in the *Nation* recently that “in a real sense, the underground papers have brought home to everyone the fact that the regular metropolitan dailies do not communicate with subcultures—those small, identified groups who remain interested in affairs too local even for a city paper.”

Another “straight” observer, David Sanford, made these observations in the *New Republic* about what he called “spontaneous freak-out journalism: “The underground press is a photographic negative of the bourgeois newspapers and magazines; it registers many of the same images but all the colors are reversed. Anyone who sat down a few years ago and asked himself what isn’t being reported, what causes are without champions, what words can’t be printed, then decided to put out a newspaper that did everything differently would have invented the underground.”

Art Kunkin, one of the editors of “The Freep” in “What the Underground Press is Trying to Tell Us” (*The Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors*) describes the underground paper as “people’s newspapers.” “They [the people] needed information and communication but the empty weekly neighborhood advertising shopper and the metropolitan daily with its ad pages surrounded by wire releases, high society sections and already established business and political entanglements would not and probably could never satisfy this journalistic vacuum.”

The technology that has made the tremendous number of suburban newspapers and the expanding black and chicano presses possible has also made the underground press possible. There is real doubt that counter-culture journalism could have taken roots had the cultural cleavage between the straight and underground occurred forty years ago rather than in the fifties and sixties, for it is the product of a marriage of ideas and engineering. Printing processes have become relatively cheap, as we have discussed earlier. Observer David Sanford argues that the underground press shares other attributes of the suburban press in addition to printing processes. “Suburban and underground editors give virtually the same justification for [their] one-sided, sometimes polemical journalism,” Sanford writes, “that the overwhelming influence of big-city dailies must be countered and can be countered only if other voices are heard alone crying in the wilderness with all their piety.” He argues that both kinds of papers carry the same kind of content, except that in the underground paper the calendar of events talks of love-ins, not Little League. “Underground papers, like their suburban cousins,” writes the critic, “give readers what they want to read; they are a great news business, and far from representing a fundamental critique of American society, are actually full-fledged participants in it.”

Perhaps it might be helpful to talk briefly about the history of this kind of journalism, which will point out some of its basic characteristics and philosophies as well. Most observers trace its origins to 1955 and the founding of the *Village Voice* in New York’s Greenwich Village by Norman Mailer, Dan Wolf, and Ed Fancher. The paper was decidedly a community venture, embroiled in local problems involving schools, zoning, and politics. But its style was different, unusual. Jacob Brackman wrote in *Playboy* in 1967: “*Voice* reporters live their beats; covering civil rights, off-Broadway,

the pop scene or a neighborhood campaign, they wrote, essentially, about themselves and about their friends. When they broadened their sights, they tended . . . to be in touch with with was happening."

The *Voice* paved the way for other papers, but perhaps its most notable successor was Paul Krassner's *The Realist*, which one New York writer described as "the *Village Voice* with its fly open." The description of the paper on its masthead kept changing, but included such stated semi-journalistic purposes as the "Magazine of Irreverence, Applied Paranoia, Rural Naïveté, Neuter Gender, Criminal Negligence and Egghead Junkies." Its news was hardly reliable, but it was always entertaining. Michael Johnson, in his book *The New Journalism*, described *The Realist* as devoting itself to being a parody of the popular press rather than improving on it.

"The movement" in the sixties, a weird mixture of politics, social concern, rock, drugs, sex, and anything else, was the spawning ground for most of the more recent underground papers. There was a tremendous new audience that wanted to read about the things they were interested in. There were scores of talented young writers who were becoming more and more involved with social, political, and environmental problems, and less and less enchanted with the establishment press. The Supreme Court had ruled in 1964 that before stories or graphic material could be banned as obscenity, it must be demonstrated that they had no redeeming social value. These factors, in addition to the founding in 1966 of the Underground Press Syndicate, which made possible a kind of national sharing of underground press material, moved the counter-culture press from the periphery of American journalism to a solid position somewhat left of center.

In a brochure published by the UPS, which was established by five successful underground papers in New York, California, and Michigan, the philosophy of the syndicate members was spelled out: "The Underground Press Syndicate . . . papers are a primary reaction to the plastic computerized society . . . America has been following ancient myths, the establishment press has propagated them. The sterile old mythology is no longer relevant. The Underground Press is creating a new mythology, more immediate, more relevant. It . . . reaches out to a new consciousness."

The UPS, which recently changed its name to the Alternated Media Network and now boasts 225 newspaper subscribers, added a dimension to the subterranean press that it previously lacked. High-quality material reflecting the values and ideas of the subculture became available to many smaller papers and provided a kind of built-in stability that saved many such journals. Later, the Liberation News Service joined the UPS as a kind of chain connecting the scattered journals. Raymond Mungo, its founder, has written a book called *Famous Long Ago* about the underground news agency in which he talks at one point about the journalistic philosophy which prevailed the LNS. "We were not sticklers for accuracy," he said, "neither is the underground press in general, so be advised—but our factual errors were not the product of any conspiracy to mislead the young, but of our own lack of organization, shorthandedness, and impatience with grueling research efforts."

LNS now serves some five million readers throughout various outlets.

Finally, some advertisers, with wares to sell to the youths of the counter culture found the little newspapers an ideal and cheap means of getting their message across. Record companies and record stores used the underground press to peddle rock, especially the kind of rock that wasn't being exposed on AM radio. Merchants with stores in university districts or hippie colonies—health food stores, used book stores, head shops, or used clothing stores—would advertise as well. Trade-out ads were common with FM radio stations—we plug your station in an ad in our paper, you plug the paper on the radio. A kind of community consciousness sometimes developed—"Let's help the merchants that help the paper. We owe it to them to buy from them; they are the good guys." All of these elements led to the success of the underground press, a success some writers now say has made the subterranean newspapers as established as the establishment.

TODAY IN THE UNDERGROUND

There is even specialization within the subcultures, and today the underground press has many different shapes and sizes. There is still a significant new left press consisting of "movement" or politically-oriented newspapers such as *The Movement*, *SDS New Left Notes*, and others. There are special interest papers like *Earth Times* and *Green Revolution* for environmentally concerned undergrounders, and *Rolling Stone* and *Crawdaddy* for rock fans. And there are many more besides, including a GI underground press, underground "comix" and high school underground newspapers.

There is controversy today in some quarters over the underground press—whether it is what it once was, whether it has sold out, whether it is meaningful any longer. In small doses these newspapers have an appeal to a great many people, who often use words like "exciting," "irreverent," "audacious," "lively," and "refreshing" to describe them. But these same people will readily admit that in large doses, the rhetoric takes on a sameness, the undisciplined nature of the writing becomes disconcerting, and these journals become "very, very, boring." Jesse Kornbluth, formerly with the Liberation News Service and editor of an anthology entitled *Notes from the New Underground*, believes things aren't what they used to be. He wrote in 1969 in "The Underground Press and How It Went" (*The Antioch Review*, 1969) that he thought the underground press was dead. "The underground press was at best a reflection of the lives of its creators; now that those lives have been maimed by the experience of the last two years, the papers are cynical, exclusive, and cater to an increasingly ingrown audience," Kornbluth said.

Other critics feel that although the underground press has awakened many people to the problem in American journalism, it has done little to reform the established press, because it isn't really much different from the establishment journals it attacks. Others decry its continual outrage at everything and everyone with whom it disagrees. Noting that because of the mess created by the Vietnam War it has been easy to condemn the establishment, David Sanford suggests, "if things are less simple from now on—with equally moral politicians disagreeing over policies and judgments

and hunches—the underground press may find that a tone of outrage, supplemented by ads for beads and uninhibited roommates, will not hold its profitable audience together.”

IMPACTS ABOVE GROUND

The underground press has had an impact on American journalism that transcends the bounds of the subculture it serves. Its irreverent, suspicious nature has created a climate in the nation favorable to the kind of muckraking so popular around the turn of the century. It has prodded some of the established press to dig a little deeper to discover some of the crud that exists just below the surface in this country. It has also produced writers like Seymour Hersch (*My Lai*) and Michael Harrington (*Hunger in America*) who have achieved a long list of news breaks outside the underground press in national magazines or through books. This has been a notable achievement, and although establishment journalists frequently look down their noses at the poorly prepared little street-corner sheets, they can't help but admire the spirit, the crusading zeal, and the untrusting minds that have frequently first suggested what later turned out to be an important news story.

The underground press has also been given credit for another achievement in contemporary journalism: spreading its new non-traditional style into some parts of the mainstream media. What we are talking about here, of course, is the “new journalism” of the sixties. The underground press is frequently given the credit because Norman Mailer, one of the best new journalists, founded the *Village Voice*, and because many of the traditional rules of journalism the new journalist rejects are also rejected by the underground press. But the connection is a tenuous one at best, if you look at the real story.

Much like the underground press, new journalism is misnamed. It's really old journalism. Tom Paine, Voltaire, Daniel DeFoe, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, and Karl Marx were all using new journalism hundreds of years before most of the new journalists emerged from the warmth of the womb. What we are undergoing is a kind of renaissance of stylized non-fiction writing, something we haven't had much of for decades—partly because we lacked the talent needed to write it, partly because the rigid rules of mass journalism tended to stifle even the best of talent, partly because we lacked the journals to publish it. Jack Newell, the associate editor of the *Village Voice*, is probably correct when he asserts that new journalism doesn't exist. “There is only good writing and bad writing, smart ideas and dumb ideas, hard work and laziness.”

But there are still some differences between the rigid professional rules of traditional journalism and the kind of laissez-faire attitudes of the new journalists. The chief one is involvement. The traditional journalist found on most newspapers believes he should stay outside the story and tell it as an observer. The new journalist, as Michael Johnson has written in *The New Journalism*, disagrees; he attempts to be “personalistic, involved and creative in relation to the events he reports and comments upon. His

journalism, in general, has no pretense of being 'objective' and it bears the clear stamp of his commitment and personality."

We have had good, stylized non-fiction writers in this country for years before this most recent explosion of new journalism. James Agee wrote moving non-fiction prose in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, as did John Hersey in his description of the Japanese city that was destroyed by the first atomic bomb, *Hiroshima*.

Today a whole flock of exciting stylists and styles have hit at one time, usually published in the slick-paper magazines like *Esquire*, *Harpers*, and *Atlantic*, or frequently in paperback form. Truman Capote used a "non-fiction novel" style in *In Cold Blood*. It was a marked departure from tradition but has been highly successful for him and other writers. The prose of Gay Talese, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, and Norman Mailer has also been refreshing in its perception and honesty. A kind of new journalistic style has emerged in the works of Bill Moyer, Studs Terkel, and Robert Coles, who let people record history themselves, in their own words. Terkel's *Hard Times*, the recollections of common people of the American depression, and Moyer's moving picture of our nation, *Listening to America*, are unique in literary history.

New journalism has by no means been accepted by the more traditional American press. It reigns in but few journalistic bastions, rejected by most newspaper editors who are worried that it is not objective, that it too often mixes fact with fiction. New journalists and others who believe that this style of writing has distinct meaning in our confusing world reply that the traditional editor too often confuses fact with truth. Truth—perhaps only as he or she sees it—is what the new journalist is attempting to reveal. Again, Jack Newell in the *Village Voice* says, "The goal for all journalists should be to come as close to the truth as possible. But the truth does not always reside exactly in the middle. Truth is not the square root of two balanced quotes. . . . Certain facts are not morally neutral."

The one thing the underground press can take credit for with regard to new journalism is that it has provided a legitimate training ground for young journalists who are trying to experiment with style and attempting to write without the revealed truths of *Newswriting 101*. Slowly these writers are infiltrating the mainstream press and their ideas and talent will probably ultimately be used. They could some day leave an important mark on American mainstream journalism.

FRAGMENTATION AND TOMORROW

The fragmentation of American society shows no signs of slowing down, and this fact alone portends great problems for the mass media in America. Biggest will soon no longer be best. The mass audiences of yesterday will no longer exist for most media. The institutions of the media have already begun to respond to this change in the nature of society. Radio is fragmenting with the audience: it has different formats for different kinds of people. Magazines are proliferating as well to reach the varied interests of readers. Movies are selecting smaller audiences and playing to them,

successfully. Newspapers too are being initiated to satisfy the interests of small groups of readers. So the institutions of the media will surely survive.

But units within the media that rely on mass appeal might not. Over-the-air television faces the greatest challenge. Large metropolitan daily newspapers face similar problems. Their response to the growing fragmentation and specialization will make up the story of the mass media in the years to come. Some day, it is conceivable that all information, all entertainment programming and features—everything we now get from the media—will be stored in a single computer. And each of us will individually be able to select just the package we want. On that day, *mass media* might no longer exist. But wait, that's the next chapter.

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12

The Future

DOWN A LONG, LONG ROAD

"We've come a fur piece," the trapper might have said, from the first chapter in this book to the beginning of the last. But no book on masscomm would be complete without at least a few words at the end on tomorrow. "My interest is in the future," American auto manufacturer Charles F. Kettering once wrote, "because I am going to spend the rest of my life there." We all share Kettering's lifetime confinement to the future, like it or not, and so it is of more than passing interest to peer down the long, long misty road ahead to find out what lies just beyond today.

Somewhere it must be written that anyone who deigns to discuss the future of the mass media is required to present one of those "this is what it is going to be like in fifty years, isn't it exciting" descriptions. They are fairly simple to prepare—just take the next couple of generations of communications hardware, add some imagination and "gee whizzes," and put it all in the confines of the good old family home some thirty or forty or fifty years hence. It usually goes like this:

The home will become the entertainment, work, and educational center of the future. That bitty little TV set you now have in your house will be replaced by a gigantic (gee whiz) wall screen, which fills the space once occupied by that awful print your Aunt Martha gave you. The pictures that appear on the screen will not waft in through your antenna on the way to your set—they will come in through a wire. And you won't just have six or eight channels; in the wired city you will have forty or sixty or eighty. Most of them won't be broadcast channels, for that electronic gadget that once just gave you Walter Cronkite and Johnny Carson will do everything but tuck you in bed in the years ahead.

When it comes to TV viewing you won't be confined to what is broadcast by your local stations—you will have a videotape cassette player hooked up to your wall screen. At the tape rental service center you can pick up a videotape of the 1989 Super Bowl game in which Great Falls, Montana, walloped Eugene, Oregon, (the NFL had gone through several expansions by 1989) and replay it until your heart's content. Or maybe you would like to

watch *Love Story* again. Not only will you be able to get entertainment and sports programming on cassette, but you will find instructional materials, how-to-do-it guides, and scores of other tapes available. Or rather than renting a tape you could hook your screen into the local videotape library and tell the computer that you would like to view tape #14596 as listed in your library catalog. This would save money and give you a much wider range of material to choose from.

You will have to find something else to wrap the garbage in by 2025 because you won't have a newspaper plucked down on your doorstep every evening or morning. Your paper will be delivered through that wire as well, and page by page it will flash on your wall screen when you want to see it. If you decide that certain pages contain articles you would like to read or keep, you will merely activate the facsimile printer attached to your screen and the pages you want will be printed for you to peruse in your leisure. Magazines and books will come the same way.

You want to tour the local art museum or visit the new science exhibit at the civic center? You will be able to do that by television as well, as cameras placed in those buildings have recorded it all on videotape for your pleasure.

But your use of the screen for these purposes isn't even the half of it, for in the future your TV will be a two-way communications center—that is, you will be able to use it to send messages as well as receive them. Through something like an alphanumeric computer terminal in the home (which will look a lot like a typewriter) you will be able to talk to a computer at communications central. What would you have to say to a computer? Let's say your son or daughter asks a question you can't answer. Today you would look in the encyclopedia. Tomorrow you will ask the computer. What time is the ball game on Sunday? Will it rain on Saturday? When does daylight savings time start? Ask the computer. Or maybe you need a new watch or need some groceries or are interested in shopping for some dishes. You will shop via the computer, which will act as your catalog of goods available at various retail outlets. Place your order, and in the cashless society of the future, the cost will be automatically deducted from your general account. Before you can say coaxial cable, the items you ordered will be on the way to your home. Through the wire? Well, probably not right away.

Your home terminal will be plugged into governmental services and administrations. True democracy will be possible as we will all be able to vote on every governmental issue. (Should we reinstitute diplomatic relations with Red China? Punch button A for *yes*, B for *no*, and C for *I don't know*.) At the same time, public and private utility companies will be able to read your water and light meters without coming to your home. Heat sensors throughout the house will be attached to the terminal and the local fire department will be alerted when the temperature in your house gets too high. Burglar alarms will also be attached to the machine to alert police that an intruder has entered the house.

Mail will be delivered through the wire. You will write your letter as you do now, if you want to be personal about things. Your facsimile scanner will turn it into electronic impulses that will travel through the wire to your

cousin in Peoria, where it will be printed out on her facsimile machine just as you wrote it. When you don't write your mother, you won't be able to blame the post office for losing the letter.

Much business that is now conducted at the office will be conducted at home through the screen. Business conferences will be held via television, with each participant being televised by the small camera in the home. The kids will conduct much of their education in the same way, in small classes via closed circuit television. When it comes to college, the televised lecture will replace the classroom. You will be able to play bridge by television with your former neighbors who have moved across the state, or play chess with a master in New York through the screen. Attach some sensors to your body, ring up your doctor, and he will be able to diagnose what is causing that pain in your shoulder or prescribe something to take for those sniffles.

Will this portrait of the future become reality? Or maybe the question should be does this have to happen? The answer to both—as far as our lifetimes are concerned—is *no*. Those prophets who have seriously made such predictions have fallen into the trap of believing that technology dictates the course of action in the future. It doesn't. Technology merely gives us the boundaries of action and tells us what is possible. But man—his social institutions, his economic values, his basic wants and needs—sets the course of action within the boundaries laid down by technology. And with rare exceptions, man's actions have fallen far short of his technological limits. In communications especially, the literature is littered with predictions that have failed to materialize.

Much of the technology that was described in our futuristic picture of tomorrow exists today. We have had the means for the electronic delivery of mail since the end of World War II but the mailman still walks his lonely beat. Cassette videotape recorders were the wave of the future ten years ago. Now, several leading developers and manufacturers (such as CBS) have dropped out of the development race primarily because it was impractical (due to costs) to envision the large-scale home use of such devices. Even large corporations that have invested heavily in the use of cassette videotape players for employee training programs have become discouraged because of equipment failures. One major company cancelled a large order for equipment after most of the units in the first shipment failed to work properly. As to the vaunted fragmentation of the audience with the coming of cable television—more channels, more diverse interest can be met, and so forth. Martin Mayer in *About Television*, reminds us that better than 60 percent of the people in the country already can get more than six channels on their television set—but the three national networks still command 90 percent of the prime-time audience. And many in the remaining ten percent are watching reruns of old network shows on the other channels. Brenda Maddox wrote in her recent book *Beyond Babel*, "Technical change is swift; social change is slow." And change involving the use of the mass media is primarily social change.

The limits of change are too many to discuss fully here. Economics is an important one, however. The inherent conservatism in the change in mass media results partly from the enormous investment in existing systems and

When you put up a wall, who are you really shutting out?

A barrier makes prisoners of the people on both sides of it.

If it keeps someone else out, it also keeps you in.

And some of the most impenetrable walls in existence are built out of the most insubstantial things: words.

Words become rules and regulations, procedures and attitudes. And because words come easy, walls spring up far faster than they can be torn down.

A simple statement like "We don't want those people competing in our area" is the bricks and mortar of a wall.

This barrier can exist between two people or two departments or two nations. The result is always the same. It stops the flow of communications and ideas.

This is something we are very concerned about, because 3M

is closely identified with innovation, and much of that innovation stems from the creativity that is possible when individuals are not hampered by artificial barriers.

Free interchange between different 3M people, 3M departments and among branches of 3M in different parts of the world is responsible for much of our success.

The temptation to erect a wall is always strong. In the beginning, the idea behind it is that it will protect somebody from something and make him strong.

But in the end, it only makes him weak by making him dependent upon the wall.

Because a wall cannot prevent someone on the other side from having a good idea. And it will not protect an inferior product from a good one.

But the worst thing about a wall is that it takes away the incentive to work constructively with your neighbors. And this ultimately prevents you from getting the best possible products or services.

We believe in people.

And we believe the more they can work together, the better things will work for all of us.

3M
COMPANY

People still count here.



3M Co., 3M Center, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Technology, always considered man's third arm in the past, is no longer deified without question in the seventies. And the corporations that depend so heavily on technology to make great quantities of consumer goods available cheaply have run up against a resistance to their size and operation from the younger generation. Ad campaigns like this by 3M are aimed at pointing to the very human aspects of big business.

also because an interruption in service would not be tolerated. The adoption of new equipment is most often contingent upon its compatibility with existing equipment that is often twenty to thirty years old. This is why the development of color television (the development of an inferior system, remember) took so long. And a newspaper publisher will think twice about replacing usable equipment with radically new equipment when the disposal of his old equipment might result in a financial loss.

Audience habit is another impediment to change. People watch network television not because it is the best there is, the most entertaining, the most challenging, the most stimulating—but because it is what they are used to doing. Whatever else you might say about network TV, it is generally well produced and slickly prepared. It has set high production standards for independent and public broadcasters to meet. Viewing the network shows becomes a habit the audience is reluctant to break.

We are not going to try to predict the future in this chapter. Josh Billings once said, "Don't never prophesy, for if you prophesy wrong, nobody will forget it, and if you prophesy right, nobody will remember it." What we would like to do is discuss briefly some of the serious kinds of problems that masscomm faces in the future. The solutions to these institutional kinds of problems will probably determine the shape of the media to a larger extent than technology, although technology might be a part of the solution to many of the problems we raise.

MASSCOMM—A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

If there is a single problem perhaps greater than any other that masscomm must confront soon on its journey into tomorrow, it is the desperate need for a plan of media development in this country. American media, like Topsy, have just grown, with little or no thought to where they were going or how they were going to get there. The media tend to operate in the same way, in a kind of *ad hoc* fashion. In chapter two we discussed the importance of a communications system within a nation. One would think that with a task as important as that assigned to masscomm, there might be some kind of a plan for what is going to happen in the future. But there isn't any. Even without the various media there is little planning. In broadcasting, for example, the military, the commercial broadcaster, the space communications people, researchers, airlines, the telephone company—none of these people knows what the other is doing today, let alone what is planned for tomorrow. The FCC is somehow supposed to coordinate the activities of all these interests, each pushing and shoving to get a bit more of the spectrum or the right to charge higher rates or the right to expand into a frequency. There is no national communications policy; there is no plan for the future. To get a plan, someone or some agency is going to have to take the lead. And of course the various media are reluctant to permit this.

It is unfortunate, but few people consider the mass media in this country as a communications system. Television is something on which to watch the football game. We read about the city council in the newspapers, and we listen to the radio on the way to work. Before we are going to get some kind

of planning, communications is going to have to be elevated in the eyes of both the people and many of our institutions to the status of a social need, like housing or education. Because the media are funded through private enterprise it is often difficult to consider them as something other than a diversion, an entertainment, or a kind of social luxury. The media themselves tend to reinforce this image by often acting exactly in that way—as a diversion or a social luxury, not as a part of the vital communications system they actually represent.

The benefits of comprehensive planning are obvious and many. Even if you are taking only a short trip, it's nice to know where you are going. If you know where you are going, you have a much better idea about how to behave while getting there, what to take along, what to leave behind, and how much of your resources you will need to pay for the trip.

In broadcasting, for example, military and space interests are now putting pressure on the FCC to move all television broadcasting to the UHF frequencies, so the lower VHF frequencies could be used by the armed forces and the space program. If we had a plan that outlined the projected development of cable television, with a goal of all homes on the cable by 1995, the matter of spectrum allocation could be postponed until this natural solution was available. In the print media, new generations of printing equipment are being developed and heavily advertised. It would be foolish for a publisher to invest millions in new printing equipment if in twenty years newspapers will be coming into the home via the cable and printing on home facsimile copiers. But will we be using facsimile copying in twenty years? Communications planning could provide some help in answering this question.

Even today, planning and policy making could simplify things such as the ill-starred development of videotape cassette systems. Although several companies have spent millions on research and manufacturing of home and business cassette systems, the system each has developed is so different that it is not interchangeable with the others. In some instances even the videotapes are not interchangeable because they are a different size or have a different spooling system. A little planning would have helped avoid this.

Planning would also, hopefully, put man in command of the communications system, and not vice versa. When reading the masscomm literature one is struck by the number of actors in our communications panorama—writers, broadcasters, directors, editors, film makers—who despair how much their actions, their goals, and their efforts are controlled by the "system." You can't broadcast cultural fare regularly on commercial television because of the rating system. You never know how much news space you are going to have because of the system that says advertising dictates the size of the paper. You can't expose local musical talent on radio because of the programming format system. And it goes on. As Brenda Maddox wrote in *Beyond Babel*, "communications is a liberating technology in need of liberation." Author Les Brown seconded the notion: "Whatever their capabilities, however forceful they may be as leaders, the men in television are lashed to the system."

Usually it is the economic system we speak of when we talk about

masscomm being bound to a system. But the media literally reek with systems—from traditional ways of doing things to the manner in which they hire talent to formularization, or finding out what people like and then burying them in it. Masscomm tends to look to the past rather than the future for its direction. That is because it has no coherent future. Unless changes are made, the media will develop in the next half century much as they have in the last one—stumbling, bumbling, and jerking along, with ill-defined audience desires and corporate profits as the only guideposts. The only real difference will be that things are going to happen a lot faster from now on.

STARVATION IN THE LAND OF PLENTY

The voices one hears when listening to those with thoughts about masscomm tend to be loud, opinionated, and of one of two minds—either things are great, or they are awful. There are a few who see both the good and bad in perspective, and we have hopefully listened more to those in preparing this book. But it is easy to understand the extreme positions taken by so many writers. America is the land of plenty when we consider masscomm. Yet we are starving at the same time, for so many communication needs seem to go unfulfilled. Nearly fifteen years ago Dan Lacy wrote *Freedom and Communications*, which remains one of the most compelling volumes on masscomm. In the beginning of his chapter on the future of communications Lacy delineated our abundance and our needs. We have more television sets and newspaper than the rest of the world combined. We have more magazines, better libraries, and the highest per capita production (not consumption) of books. “The daily flow of communication to its citizens is certainly the largest in history. And it is a free flow, not under governmental control and probably less restricted by censorship than anywhere else in the world,” he wrote. But then he added, “and yet there is deep dissatisfaction with the state of the communication system.” Lacy pointed to the banality and emptiness of most TV programming and films, the slickness of magazines, the bias of newspapers, the cultural and political conformity within the major media, and the sex and violence in books, films, and broadcasts.

The problems Lacy pointed out were serious in 1961 and remain so today. We have more communications than ever before—yet is it being used to prepare people to exist on a day-to-day basis even now? Or are we a nation peopled by functional illiterates? In *About Television*, Martin Mayer argues that the media bring knowledge to many more people than ever before, but not wisdom. “For the consciousness of ignorance is the beginning of wisdom,” he writes, “and the media mask the consciousness of ignorance.” Maybe yes, maybe no. But there is no question that conscientious planning about what role or function each of the media will undertake in society would at least offer the chance of using communications to help develop society to a fuller potential.

Some kind of a coherent communications plan for the next century is of the highest priority if we are to get the most from the marvels that technology has so kindly dropped on our doorsteps. The RAND Corpora-

tion concluded after its exhaustive study of present and future information machines:

Unless the weaknesses and dangers of the present media are clear, the emergence of new technological systems will bring no miraculous improvement in how men use their information machines. Nor will complex machines change the human impulses of those who understand and exploit them.

It is far simpler to invent new technology that can make masscomm more meaningful in our lives than to have men use such technology for meaningful purposes. Planning is no panacea to current problems—but hopefully we can learn from the past. Communications can be used to improve our society in the future. But only men can make that happen.

WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE

There are other needs besides planning. An important one has to do with learning more about the media we have now—who uses them, why, and what do they do to them? For example, we don't know very much about what people think of masscomm and how they use it. Although people read newspapers, watch television, listen to the radio, and so forth, one gets the impression that they aren't necessarily happy with what they read, see, or hear. A Canadian study, for example, revealed that fifty percent of those interviewed said they thought the media should be censored by the government. Two-thirds of those interviewed said they thought that big business dominated the press too much. Half of the respondents said the press was influenced by criminal elements. It would be a serious mistake, perhaps fatal, if the men who control the mass media in this country confused high viewership and readership with approval of what they were doing.

The media must devise some means of getting better feedback from their audiences. If we have a two-way communications capability built into the cable system we discussed earlier, it would be possible, for example, for the newspaper editor to find out which parts of the newspaper are being read and which aren't. But we really can't wait that long. The questions the editor or broadcaster has the most difficult time answering are: is anybody really reading my paper, and what are they reading? (subscribers aren't necessarily readers); is anybody really watching my television programs, and what programs are they watching? (sets in use do not necessarily represent people watching). Only when these questions are answered can we begin to answer others and start to draw a picture of audience communications needs.

What prompts concern is that by all odds, we are going to be exposed to even more masscomm in the future. There are several dimensions to this problem. Today, for example, we are exposed each day to thousands of messages—many via masscomm. How do we cope with them? The brain is a sophisticated computer-like organ, but even so, it can only process so much data. Consequently we have begun to erect shields or barriers around us to

stop many of the incoming messages and reject those that aren't wanted. Many psychologists believe that it is a remarkable achievement that man has learned to perform this screening skill so rapidly and efficiently. But it has direct implications for the media. It means that people are going to absorb only so much television, so much newspaper, and so much magazine. We are perhaps reaching the saturation point already. (Like football from Saturday morning to Monday night).

More important, the media are supported by people trying to sell us things. If it is true that we can and do reject most of the messages we do not want to receive—well, there goes \$2 million in advertising for widgets. And this is not far-fetched. People are becoming less and less responsive to advertising; we are developing what Stan Freberg calls "cauliflower receptivity"—from being beaten about the eyes and ears with too many commercial punches—and we are beginning to turn off and tune out. Each year the major manufacturers spend more and more to sell about the same amount of their products when measured on a per capita basis. It is difficult to find studies today that demonstrate the power of advertising, which was once so apparent when television, for example, could take an unknown hair spray and conditioner like Alberto VO-5 and push it to the top of the heap. And the admen are still scratching their heads trying to explain the increase in cigarette sales after cigarette advertising was forced off television. Media saturation is a serious concern—and we don't know very much about it, despite the fact that the very survival of the mass media as presently constituted depends on how much masscomm people can ultimately tolerate.

Media saturation has caused other concerns as well. Many contend that the mass media are a cultural flatiron that has created a standardization and regimentation even exceeding that found in the most totalitarian societies. Archibald MacLeish wrote years ago in *Poetry and Experience* about the lack of feeling in our society, brought on, he believed, at least partially by the mass media: "There was never, perhaps, a civilization in which that crime, the crime of torpor, of lethargy, of apathy, the snakelike sin of coldness-at-the-heart, was commoner than in our technological civilization in which the emotionless emotions of adolescent boys are mass produced on television screens to do our feelings for us, and a woman's longing for a new detergent, family size, which will keep her hands as innocent as though she had never lived."

But should the media take the entire rap for the malaise MacLeish observed? Or should mass society? We don't know. But we should know before we create the masscomm world of the future. We are only now beginning to look at questions about media portrayal of violence and sexuality. We have only recently begun to ask whether the drug culture of the seventies was in some way spawned by the drug advertising of the sixties. There are so many questions to which the answers remain unclear or unknown. We have studied our other institutions, often at great length. We know about education and the impact various kinds of schooling can have on a child. But researchers tell us that the child will spend more time with the one-eyed monster than the teacher. And we know very little—for

A rational alternative to rationing gas.

What's right with this picture? Well if it were true, we'd be saving 28 billion, 560 million gallons of gas every year.

How did we arrive at that figure? Since we're a nation of national averages, we know the average car uses about 735 gallons of gas a year. The Beetle, 399*. Turn the eighty-five million average cars on the road right now into Beetles, and it works out to a saving of 28,560,000,000 (give or take a few gallons).

Now we haven't figured out all the water and antifreeze that would be saved with the Beetle's air-cooled engine.

Nor can we compute the extra parking space that would be around.

Not to mention all the money people would be able to save in a world of Volkswagens.

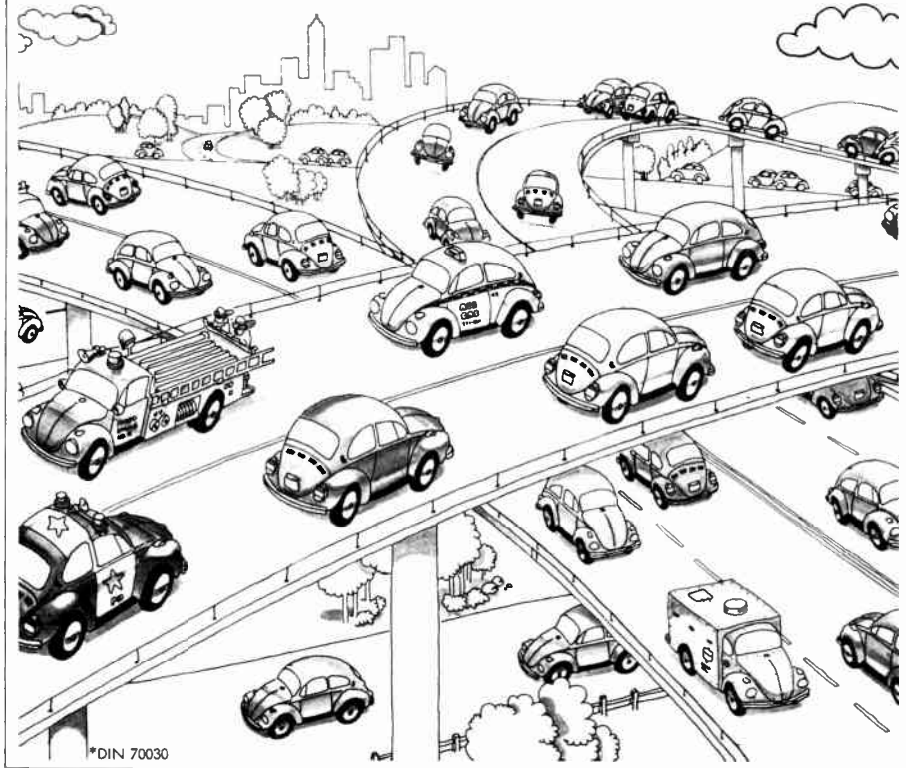
But we know for sure that this is no pipe dream. There already are police car Beetles up in Ossining. And a custom built,

chauffeur-driven Bug in L. A. And Volkswagen taxis all over Honduras. And a Beetle that herds cattle in Missouri.

So with gas prices going up and rationing becoming a reality, the Beetle never looked so good. In fact, you might almost call it beautiful.



Few things in life work as well as a Volkswagen.



Mass media do not exist in a vacuum. Neither does advertising. Here Volkswagen takes one of the nation's leading problems of the seventies and shows how consumers who buy a beetle can help the environment as well.

sure—about what television does. Masscomm could be shaped by the answers to these kinds of questions. Knowledge is an important need of the future.

ECONOMICS AND THE GOVERNMENT

There remain two other serious concerns for the future that masscomm must face, concerns that we have discussed to some extent as contemporary problems in other parts of this book. The first has to do with economics and the increasing economic concentration in the mass media. As we have said, fewer and fewer control more and more of the mass media. And in a society in which our institutions and processes like education and government are built on a foundation of broad-based control and participation, it is unhealthy for one institution, like the mass media, to become concentrated in so few hands. Many people believe that access to the media is the most severe economic or legal problem facing society in the future. But access really isn't a problem. For example, the tremendous fragmentation of print media makes access to a mass medium today more possible than it was 30 years ago. (Note that this is access to a medium, not access to an audience, which is something else altogether.) Access to a medium will become even easier in the future.

A more perplexing and severe problem is what to do about the emerging ownership patterns in the mainstream mass media and the growing concentration and conglomerization. Clearly such trends cannot be long tolerated. Sooner or later the government or some other kind of public agency is going to institute a breakup of these communications cartels—and what is left might be better or it might be worse. It makes far greater sense to develop a workable scheme to retain the good kinds of things bigness brings us (for example, the enormous resources of a CBS or NBC provide the funds for the extensive news coverage we need), but toss out the undesired by-products that result from chains or conglomerization. Current government schemes such as anti-trust laws have been found wanting time and again. The time to be creative about such things is now, before the crisis point.

Coping with economic bigness in the media is a problem society must solve. Coping with bigness in the government is a problem the media must solve. As soon as government gets bigger and continues to play an increasingly large role in our lives, it will naturally attempt to make more and more invasions into what was formerly ground fenced off by the First Amendment. Consider the change in the public philosophy toward advertising. Seventy-five years ago consumers expected little help from the government in dealing with commerce. Today, with the movement toward consumerism, it is considered not only the right of the government but its duty to guard the consumer against deceptive advertising. With barely an outcry of censorship, the government has instituted a stricter policing of the media. And look at violence. No one suggested in the twenties that the government should take a hand in policing violence in books or films. Today the mood has changed, and the government is being asked to play this role.

Again, another intrusion has been made on what was once considered the freedom of the press.

In these two instances perhaps the intrusions are worthwhile to society, since they serve important functions. But that is not the point. A society that becomes conditioned to seeing or expecting the government to control the media when problems arise will likely be insensitive to unwarranted intrusions on the press. Note the relative public silence (although the media made a stink) when the government attempted to stop publication of the Pentagon Papers, or the lack of public sympathy as reporters were tossed in jail for contempt of court when they refused to testify before grand juries and other inquisitions. The media face a serious problem in regaining public confidence so such attacks upon the press will not be so widely tolerated.

Also, the government has expanded its relationship with the press in other ways. Since image has become such an important part of government and politics, the use of the media to create images has become common as well. The press and individual reporters more and more risk the danger of being used by government or government officials. Some newsmen are willing to be used in exchange for favors; others attempt to resist but cannot. The pressures of competition, time, and news budgets work against the reporter who seeks to do more than take the public official's word for things.

Finally, coping with the government includes coping with its size while attempting to tell readers and viewers what is going on. It is becoming more and more difficult to cover the federal government as well as many state and city governments because of their incredible size. There are not enough hours in the day or personnel on the staff or space in the paper or time on the air to possibly tell all the important things that are going on. More and more slips by untold. The shocking fact that the Army issued a press release describing the My Lai tragedy months before the incident finally hit the newspapers is a sad commentary on a press either too busy to follow up on such reports or too cynical to believe them important.

Coping with government in the half century ahead will require larger news staffs and a stronger commitment to broader coverage of the news. It will also involve new schemes and strategies to relate the important government activities that now go unreported in favor of the more visible ones. It will require a new definition of news that permits readers and viewers to have access to many of the important but currently unreported aspects of government.

Coping with government will also require a new commitment to independence. We as a nation are reaching the point that we can't tolerate a television network owned by a defense contractor or publishers who seek governmental favor (anti-trust protection) in exchange for support. An independent press is one that will not be used and will not become a partner of the government it attempts to cover.

Finally, coping with government requires a press that steadfastly maintains its freedom when it should but does not hesitate to admit its responsibilities when it must. The people are the best guarantee of a free press in America, and the people must be made to understand that press

freedom is something of value to them, not just to the press. A responsible press is one that carries this message, and one that the people will fight to defend.

NEWSPAPERS AND THE FUTURE

We have talked about problems all media will face in the future. But individual mediums face individual problems as well and we should like to mention some of these briefly before closing.

In chapter five we explored many problems of the daily press. There will be new challenges tomorrow. It would be hard to pick one that is perhaps more significant than any other. It wouldn't be that often-raised prediction that print media will soon be no more. Newspapers or some kind of news-assembling institution will always be around. The delivery system might change, the paper boy might be phased out after all these years, we might get our papers through television screens and facsimile copiers—but the newspaper will remain. There will still be the need for someone to gather the news and select which items to send along and which to kill. The movement and organization of news and information through electronic transmission and composition will break the tyranny of the teletype machine and allow the editor to view and process millions, not just thousands, of words each day. With this vastly increased body of material to work with, the gatekeeper's role will become even more important.

Perhaps the most important problem facing the newspaper press is this: the daily newspaper in America must make up its mind what it is going to be and what role it will play in society. It can no longer play the role of being all things to all people. It cannot continue to compete with television as an entertainment medium. Nor can it compete with the electronic media in the instant presentation of news. What it is going to be? In chapter five we presented one model of it as an information- rather than news-oriented publication. But that is only one model. The newspaper might decide it is more plausible to truly become what its name implies—a NEWSpaper. And the major portion of its space and time and money might be directed toward this goal. Whatever it decides to do, it should begin to concentrate on doing one thing well.

If facsimile transmission becomes a reality, and if the predictions about electronic composition and so forth come true, it will become possible for the daily press to fragment itself within its chosen role. That is, each daily newspaper could prepare various editions designed for various people. Geographic fragmentation might be one distinction—editions could be prepared for the city dweller as opposed to editions for the suburbanite. ("Zone editions" that do this on a limited scale have been a reality for years. One section of eight or twelve pages is usually prepared for a specific suburban audience.) But it would also be possible for the press to prepare an edition for businessmen, an edition for housewives, one for students, another for teachers, one for farmers . . . well, use your imagination. Each of these fragmentations, however should come within the press' chosen role—that of information provider, news provider, or whatever.

The automated processes of the future will make this kind of fragmentation possible for a number of reasons. Delivery through the wire will cut printing and handling costs. While now only about ten percent of the newspaper's budget goes to editorial functions, it is estimated that in the future it will be possible to devote as much as sixty percent to them. Also the electronic information processing systems and electronic composition will permit the handling of much more news and information—hence the shaping of specialized papers will be possible.

The question is will the press respond to the opportunity? Will it begin to define its role in a singular way? Will it use technology to undertake the communications challenge outlined? The measure of its future success could lie in how it answers these questions.

RADIO AND THE FUTURE

If there was ever a medium suited for the future, it is radio. Radio has the portability that television dreams about. (However, by putting radio and television on the cable, we will lose their portability to a large extent: both will be tied to a wall socket.) Its many channels in urban areas permit the fragmentation that cable television enthusiasts envision. And yet what has happened? We find a medium that revolves for the most part around the phonograph record (no pun intended) and whose sole aim seems to be increasing the size of its audience for commercial purposes. The challenge of radio in the future, then, is to become something more than it is today—something worthwhile.

While radio might seem comfortable now, it doesn't take much of a soothsayer to see trouble just ahead. Transmission of music by radio is convenient but hardly efficient. Music enthusiasts can tell you in terms of decibels and the like but for our purposes let's just say it doesn't sound as good when it comes through the radio as it does when we play it at home. (And then there are those annoying commercials.) When recording equipment was fairly unsophisticated and costly and big and clunky, it was about as convenient to listen to the radio to hear your favorite records and songs. But today sound recording has been improved, and there is a significant difference in what you hear coming through your radio—especially in AM broadcasts—and what you can hear on the multitrack tape and stereo systems many people own. Even the portability problem has been solved to a large extent with tape decks finding their way into automobiles and other places. Recording equipment is accessible to most of us today and has made us less and less dependent on the local radio station to hear the music we like. And while it poses no immediate threat to radio, increased competition with home entertainment systems will ultimately occur. If music is the battleground, chances are that radio won't be the victor.

The challenge, then, is for radio to undertake programming that can't be matched at home. Some FM stations have begun this with various programming schemes, most of which are based on broadcasting some kind of information. The community bulletin board idea in which members of the audience use the radio system to pass along notices about meetings, goods

they want to sell or buy, or other functional information, offers potential. Specialized programming to a specific audience is another idea worth exploring. It might be done on a subscription basis or perhaps sponsored by merchants anxious to talk to those specific members of the audience—it doesn't matter. To go beyond this one needs only his imagination.

We are not suggesting that such specialized programming must last twenty-four hours each day. But radio desperately needs to begin to innovate in programming schemes that can't be duplicated efficiently at home. Radio will probably always remain as our constant companion. But in the future, unless some changes are made, it will become a silent one.

TELEVISION AND THE FUTURE

There is no question that a book could be written about TV and the future; it would take a book just to write about all the hopes and dreams of those cable enthusiasts who see the television audiences of tomorrow dividing by the thousands into small pockets of viewers interested in the scores of different kinds of programs offered on the forty or so channels. As you could tell from the chapter on television, this author is not among the ranks of those enthusiasts. Cable or not, for reasons stated elsewhere in the book, it is difficult to see a major fragmentation of the entertainment-oriented television audience, which is ninety percent of the people.

Nor is there much prospect of a widespread use of the cassette home video centers to play our favorite movies or ballgames or reruns of the "Dick Van Dyke Show." Sol Taishoff, the founder of *Broadcasting Magazine*, once said, "Radio and television are the only things the American people get for nothing." Although economists might argue about the costs added to products because of television advertising, most people see the tube as a freebee. They are going to be reluctant to invest in videotape recorders and other costly equipment and then rent programming. Many people are reluctant even now to pay to be on the cable when they currently have a perfectly good television picture. (Most cable sales up until now have been to people who had problems getting an acceptable TV picture over the air or to people with special interests in seeing local sports that are transmitted only on the cable.) More likely, the future of cassette recorders in our lifetime will be in libraries that can stock many tapes and charge customers for viewing their material. (In fact, such facilities already exist.)

Television broadcasting in the year 2000 will probably look a lot like it does now, with entertainment as its primary component and the networks or some other large production facility as the major source of prime-time programming. Based on this assumption, the major problem facing television remains that of how to program for the mass audience, since success of over-the-air TV depends on its ability to continue to please vast numbers of viewers. The only means it has found thus far to accomplish this is its lowest common denominator theory, which is beginning to drive the better educated viewers and those more able to find entertainment elsewhere away from the tube. How long before other kinds of viewers become tired of the same old thing on the tube?

There can be few doubts that in many instances the men who control television don't try very hard to use their precious resource for something besides the very ordinary and commonplace. We can't expect television to become a cultural oasis for the intellectual elite in this country. These people already have access to what they like to see. There is more opera, more drama, more symphony, and more dance available across America in most larger cities and on college campuses today than ever before. Those who find diversion in more commonplace entertainment have few places to go besides television to satisfy their longings. Yet the medium should not altogether exclude those at the top either. This is a tough dilemma, and the person with a solution has presently not appeared. Perhaps all that is needed is a simple switch in programming strategy. Instead of attempting to please a majority all the time, maybe TV should try to please everyone at least some of the time. There is no reason why ten percent of prime time could not be set aside for the culture minority, and ten percent for the news- and information-oriented population, and twenty percent for someone else. The strategy dictates otherwise at present. To the cable-ists the obvious answer has always been more channels, more channels. But realistically that is probably not going to be an answer. The people who want to see the Philadelphia Orchestra or the Joffrey Ballet once a week are not going to be happy viewing the Dubuque String Quartet or Miss Finch's Dancing Class on a cable channel. And there is nothing to suggest that much more is available at the local level in most cities. So it will be up to the national media—the networks and various program syndicates—to solve the problem. And a solution must be found before the more intellectually-oriented in the audience—who also happen to be the more affluent—decide to bag the tube for good.

THE MOVIES AND THE FUTURE

In order to consider the shape of the motion picture industry in the future it must be remembered that the film industry is in the midst of a major alteration right now. Aside from the dismantling of the huge production companies, it has seen a major change in its clientele. Twenty years ago most of us watched the products of the Dream Factory in a movie theater. Today better than half of what is produced by the industry is viewed by an audience at home via television. And this trend is undoubtedly going to continue. So the television-oriented half of the business has probably charted a course that will remain constant in the foreseeable future. But what about the remainder of the industry and the production of film for theater viewing? That's another question.

There are probably three major things that keep people going to the movies today. First, watching a movie in a theater is different than watching a movie on television. Then, going to the movies is a kind of special social activity of which viewing the film is only a part. Finally, they are showing things on the theater screen that you can't see at home.

Of these three, the last will probably change the fastest. Television is growing up. Less and less censorship is occurring. (Although we are having

less censorship of sexual and political material, there seems to be a whole new thrust aimed at censorship of violence. Who knows what will happen?) And it is not hard to imagine that someday there will be no difference between the two media. We will see it all on television as well as in the movies.

The difference in viewing a film at home and in the theater could dissipate as well if television screens enlarge to full wall size, as many predict. But differences will still remain. There is a peripheral vision problem that exists when one is watching television: the viewer tends to be aware of what is going on elsewhere in the room. This doesn't occur in the darkened theater. And there will always be some kind of interruptions in the television programming (commercials, you know).

It is the social activity dimension that will remain constant. Going OUT to the movies will always provide an additional experience that viewing television cannot provide. Young people will still use movies as a fundamental part of their dating behavior. The social activity dimension will probably dash most of the predictions of the wired-city prophets. Shopping at home would be fun sometimes—but many persons enjoy shopping in a store, getting outside, seeing and talking to someone other than the family, viewing and touching and trying on new products. Going to work and going to school offer the same social dimension. And somehow playing bridge with someone by television just doesn't seem to have the same charm of the warm companionship that often exists around the card table.

Movies and movie theaters will continue to have an important role to play—although it might be more of a social one. The medium will still probably remain an area in which creative visual techniques can be attempted. Success of a film depends on one or two million people, whereas success on national television depends on tens of millions. The film industry will continue its recent trend to seeking the safe harbor of the minority tastes. If it is content with this role and ready to give up its mass audience role, it can probably succeed nicely in the years ahead. Attempting once again to attract tens of millions to the theater on a weekly basis will require new strategies and new devices as yet undeveloped. The movie that will attract a vast audience will still be produced, exhibited, and meet with mass approval. But it will become rarer in the future.

THE BEGINNING

As the last few pages of this book were being written, man walked on the moon for probably the last time in this century. As the two American astronauts prepared to enter their lunar module in preparation for the flight back home, the color television camera—controlled from Earth—panned across the bleak lunar landscape, stopped momentarily, poked its stubby nose into the sky, and focused on the blue orb Earth. It was an eerie experience to sit at home and look at a live picture of the planet we inhabit. Man has progressed mightily in the five centuries since the invention of printing, the beginning of mass media. In fact, when printing first began on any scale at all, most citizens of the world still believed the earth was shaped

like a dish. Now through television we can see for ourselves what brave European sailors and navigators proved nearly 500 years ago.

We have tried to do many things in preparing this book. Hopefully we have given you an understanding of how the media work, and why they work. We have also tried to make you aware of the importance of masscomm to all of us, both today and in the future. Finally, we have attempted to give you the criteria you need to undertake a basic evaluation of the media, to see if they are working for society as well as they might.

We have entitled these last few paragraphs "the beginning" because now it is up to you to make use of some of the ideas we have left behind. If you are one who believes that the functioning of mass media is really too important to our society to be left to the men who own and who control masscomm, then it is time for you to begin to do something about it.

In no other nation do the people have as much power as we have in America. If things are not done, it is only because we don't have the knowledge, the ability, or the will needed to act. Masscomm has helped forge a nation and its people. It will play an even larger role in the future. We have to decide now what that role will be.

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In preparing this chapter, this is the material that has been extremely helpful.

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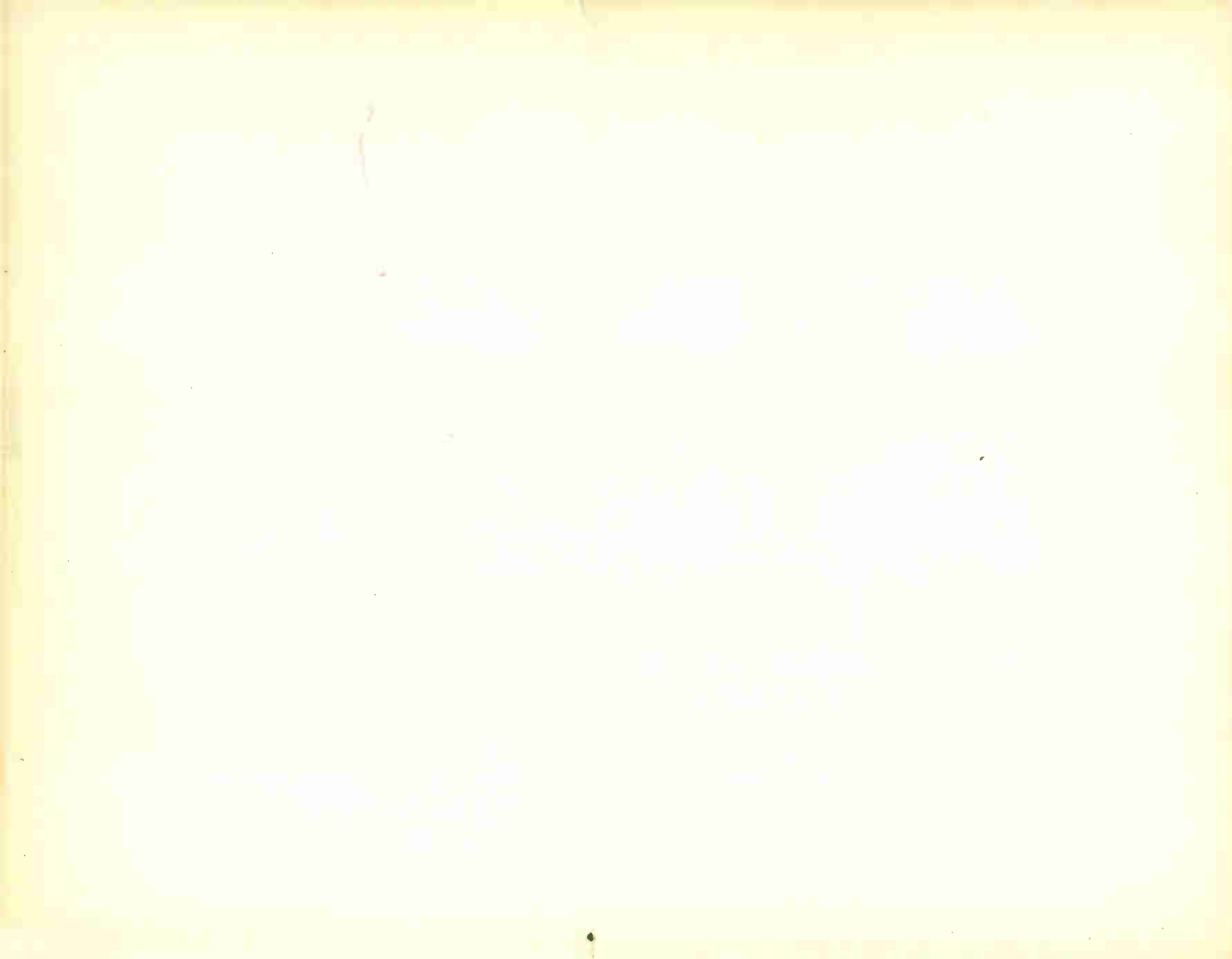
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