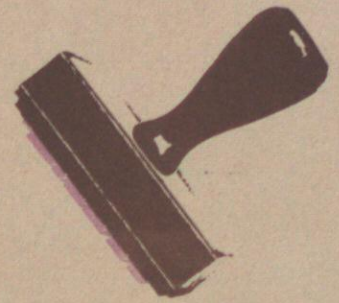




## BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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COMMENT

#158 - April 1976

### THE NEWS MEDIA AND THE METRO TORONTO TEACHERS' STRIKE

#### INTRODUCTION

This *Comment* examines the media coverage given to the recent strike of Metropolitan Toronto's high school teachers, which ran from November 12, 1975 to January 19, 1976. It represents part of a much larger research project on the relationship between the media and local government, a project which includes a one-and-a-half day conference on the topic to be held this May, 1976, and which will culminate in the publication of a BMR *Civic Affairs* in the summer. The thrust of the total project is twofold:

- to analyze the nature and quality of local political coverage with a view to suggesting how media coverage of local government might be improved, and
- to define, as clearly as possible, the influence of the various media on local decision-makers.

This case study of the media coverage of one important issue offers a useful introduction to the general subject. While the issue of the teachers' strike may seem to be a "cause celebre" and therefore untypical because of the intensity of the emotions it aroused, it has the advantage of being a familiar one to most, with media performance in high relief. Many people involved in the strike consider the role of the print and broadcast press to have been of paramount importance to the outcome; others deny this and discount the media factor, a debate which in itself raises basic questions about the nature and effects of media reportage and commentary.

The strike by Metro's 3,800 secondary school teachers -- the first in Metro under the new legislation (Bill 100), granting teachers the right to strike -- was the longest and biggest teacher strike in Ontario's history. It lasted nine weeks, affected 140,000 students, and came to an end only after the Province passed legislation forcing the teachers back to work under compulsory arbitration. The arbitrator's decision on March 5th directed that:

the salary scales and cost-of-living allowance proposed by the Boards become effective as of September 1, 1975, and remain in effect until August 31, 1977.

The same proposal which the teachers had so vehemently and wholeheartedly rejected in November and gone on strike against was in the end endorsed by the arbitrator as just, equitable and in the public interest.<sup>1</sup>

By all accounts the vast majority of high school teachers emerged from the strike discouraged and angry. Bitter resentment was expressed against the public, the Metro and local school boards, the Anti-Inflation Board, the Province, including the Education Relations Commission, and the media. From the teachers' perspective,

- the public was either unsympathetic or vocally hostile and insulting,
- the Metro school board, backed by the six area municipal boards, was arrogant, negotiated in bad faith and never made an offer which the teachers could have accepted,
- the Anti-Inflation Board interfered unnecessarily with the bargaining rights granted to teachers by Bill 100,
- the Province ordered them back to work without any compensation, and the Education Relations Commission was ineffectual, and
- the media both reflected and reinforced public antipathy, thereby creating a climate for abuse of the teachers as professionals and undermining their bargaining power.

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1. His award, which is subject to approval by the Federal Anti-Inflation Board, provided for a 39.2 percent pay increase over two years.

Strong concern has been expressed by all parties -- trustees, teachers, reporters, columnists, provincial politicians and the appointed arbitrator alike -- that the decline in teacher morale resulting from the strike may permanently damage the school system as a whole. Undoubtedly this malaise is partly due to the financial terms of the arbitrator's award and to the frustration of a year of fruitless negotiations, mediations, fact-finding, strike, further mediation and back-to-work legislation which led up to the arbitration. However, from our discussion with teacher spokesmen as well as from letters to the editor and teacher interviews in the print and broadcast press, it is evident that public attitudes during the strike lie at the heart of teacher resentment. If the long-term consequences of the strike are as negative as predicted and if teacher discontent and alienation has been caused in large part by perceived public and media hostility, then we suggest that the role played by the local media in the event is of more than academic interest.

#### Study Format

The data base for this *Comment* was quite extensive and our research consisted of the following:

- a systematic review of the main reportage and related comment in Metro Toronto's three daily newspapers, the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, and the Sun for the period of October 3, 1975 to January 20, 1976. All front page stories, all editorials, all signed columns, the major press advertisements published by the teachers and the Boards, and selected letters to the editors on the topic were included. They were systematically examined as to headlines, ideas and people mentioned or quoted in the first three paragraphs, and the overall impression conveyed by the story (e.g. use of loaded words, accompanying pictures, etc.).
- a review of the transcripts of all news items dealing with the teachers strike on both television evening news broadcasts of CBLT and CFTO for the same time period.

- although the categories selected for analysis of the coverage were "subjective" in their emphasis on the content of the material, the research included measurement of such quantitative data as inches of newsprint and minutes of broadcast time devoted to the strike issue.
- background information was obtained from the following key documents: the Fact Finder's Report and Analysis (October 16, 1975), the Proposal of the Boards to the Arbitrator, the Brief Submitted by the Teachers, the respective replies to these presentations by each side and the Arbitrator's Award.
- finally, information was gathered by means of personal interviews with representatives of the teachers, School Boards, Education Relations Commission and the media.

The most common criteria for evaluating news coverage relate to standards of accuracy and fairness. These require that the story be "true", well-researched and based on verifiable sources; that it be complete, balanced, and include all of the relevant facts; that it convey the "fabric of what it was really like", that is the situation or context of the event; that opinion and interpretation be separated from the reportage of the event.

In addition, since news is "consumed" as a form of entertainment, the news story must be interesting and dramatic enough to hold public attention.

The application of these commonly accepted criteria to the media coverage of the teachers' strike proved very difficult. Our problem was how to measure "fairness" and "accuracy". The basic cause of the strike had been the unresolvable conflict over what constituted a just and equitable settlement. A central point at issue, for example, was how the Boards calculated the value of their proposal. According to the Boards' method of calculation, their proposal in dollars amounted to an average increase for all teachers (assuming they remained in the same bargaining unit throughout the school years 1975-76 and 1976-77) of 24.6% in the first year and 39.2% over two years. This included the allowances which the teachers would receive over their basic salary and a cost-of-living allowance (COLA) for the second year only based on an estimated 6% inflation rate.

The teachers objected to this method of calculation. They wanted to measure the increase on basic salary alone. According to the OSSTF the Boards proposal represented only 32% over two years, not counting the additional COLA allowance.

In this analysis of the coverage, the Bureau staff sought to avoid assuming the role of judge as to which method of calculation was correct or which proposal was most fair. For the record, the arbitrator has decided that the salary increases proposed by the Boards "however they may be calculated, are very substantial and fully meet all the valid arguments that the teachers have made out for a salary increase". However, the fact that the arbitrator decided in favour of the Boards' salary proposal does not mean that the cases of either side were fairly presented in the media or that the issues of the conflict were explained in a way that was genuinely informative or constructive.

#### BRIEF SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

We began our analysis of media reportage and commentary by looking at two aspects which we felt were indicative of the nature and quality of the coverage. These were:

- (a) how the main issues of the conflict, notably those concerning remuneration, were portrayed, and
- (b) the image of the teachers as presented in the media.<sup>1</sup>

A systematic survey of the reportage and editorial and columnist opinion in the printed press together with the news reports on CBC and CTV television for the period October, 1975 to January 20, 1976 revealed the following:

1. The complete study, which will be published as a chapter in our summer *Civic Affairs*, employed five categories of analysis. The other three were: (c) the image of the Metro School Board in the media, (d) the changing focus of media attention as the strike continued, and (e) the interpretation of the impact of the strike (on the public, on students, on the teachers).

1. the pattern of editorial and columnist opinion was uniformly hostile towards the teachers
2. the unflattering cumulative portrait of the teachers painted by this segment of the press stressed five characteristics: that teachers were
  - a) indifferent and uncaring towards their students
  - b) greedy and irresponsible
  - c) lazy and spoiled by a "soft" job
  - d) weak, complaining and petulant
  - e) sheepish and boss-led by more militant leaders
3. on the essential wage and benefits issues themselves, the net effect of the daily reportage as opposed to commentary and opinion was superficial, confusing and at times misleading; news reports, however, were generally balanced, not slanted towards either side. On the matter of whose figures were used, those from both sides were.

For the public trying to understand the dispute, the reports were undoubtedly confusing. For example, by comparing teachers' figures directly with those of the School Board, the gap seemed small -- certainly resolvable by compromise. In defence of the reporters, both sides were using different figures, different bases of calculation or speaking two different languages, as a Star senior editor put it.

What the media failed to do was to provide a comprehensive overview of the issues. The media failed to coherently organize the facts and issues in a manner that the claims of both parties could be clearly understood.<sup>1</sup> Related information, such as how other provinces were dealing with the AIB and collective bargaining with their provincial employees, or details of teacher wage levels in other Ontario cities relative to cost of living, etc., were not incorporated into news reports in an informative way. For an issue that absorbed such a vast amount of media attention, insight pieces or in-depth (one-two page) background reports were noticeably lacking.

1. While the Globe, for example, did devote one entire editorial (November 10) to a detailed summary of the Board's wage-benefit proposal -- this represented only one side's perspective.

HOW INFLUENTIAL WAS THE MEDIA COVERAGE?

In an effort to evaluate the nature and degree of impact of the media coverage of the strike, we focused on three basic questions:

- 1) to what extent was the media coverage responsible for the actions of the Metro School Board from October, 1975, to January, 1976?
- 2) what role did the media coverage play in the decision of the Province to legislate the teachers back to work precisely when and in the manner that they did?1., and
- 3) what are the anticipated long-term impacts of the media coverage on the parties concerned and on the education system?

It must be noted that we are confining our discussion of the impact of media coverage on the teachers' strike to the strike itself and the back to work legislation (January 16, 1976). We have *not* looked at its influence on the arbitration process or award. Further we are using the term "media coverage" to include news reportage (print and broadcast), editorial and columnist opinion and press advertisements.

At the outset, we acknowledge that in spite of extensive social science research in the area of mass communication, public opinion and policy-making in democratic societies, in spite of volumes that have been written on whether the press shapes or reflects public opinion, in spite of in-depth analyses that have been done on how both policy-makers and opinion-leaders use and interpret the media, *the fact remains we really don't know precisely how much impact the media do have on any given decision.*

We can, however, make a number of assumptions based on these studies:

- that the press both helps to formulate and reflect public opinion;
  - that as a formulator of public opinion the press may overtly attempt to mold opinion in its editorials or journal segments (in the case of broadcast media);
1. The back to work legislation (Bill 1) provided that all outstanding issues be referred to an arbitrator and that teachers return to work under the old contract. While it took away the professional development days, it could have been harsher (e.g. it could have legislated the school board offer as final; it could have taken away the spring break). On the other hand, it could also have given more benefits to the teachers, notably interim compensation.

- that the greatest power of the press lies in its role as reporter, for in its reportage it sets the limits of public discussion -- not only by what is reported and how, but by what is omitted;
- that this public opinion then, in turn, influences politicians via letters, phone calls, etc.;
- and
- that policy-makers use the media (reportage and commentary) to some extent as a daily measure of public opinion, a source of information upon which decisions are based and as a source of policy ideas and analysis.

In the case of the Metro teachers' strike, media impact was increased by an added ingredient -- the newspaper advertising campaign waged by each side. In November the Board placed a series of four ads in the daily papers with the slogan FAIR'S FAIR.<sup>1</sup> The impact of this advertising campaign according to Board Chairmen and public relations people, was extraordinary. So powerful that in a sense they "oversold" the public. Instead of simply consolidating public opinion behind the Board's position, they led people to believe that the Board's offer itself was excessive and irresponsible. Both teachers and trustees acknowledge this "overkill" result.

The OSSTF ads -- "What's It All About" and "Our Position", on the other hand, appear to have backfired and hurt the teachers' cause.<sup>2</sup>

In an effort to define the nature of the media role more precisely for the case of the Metro Toronto teachers' strike we interviewed representatives of the teachers, the print and broadcast press, the Metro School Board and local Boards and the Provincial government.

1. The Metro Toronto School Board placed two sets of advertisements in the papers. This was the second set, which appeared as follows: Globe and Mail November 20, 21 (2/3 page) 22, 25 (full page) Star November 20, 21 (2/3 page) 22, 25 (full page), Sun November 20, 21, 23 (all full page). Using case studies of "actual people", the ads set out how the Boards' wage offer would specifically benefit individual teachers at the various salary levels; those figures were compared in dollars and cents to what would happen under the OSSTF proposal.
2. One matter not dealt with in this *Comment*, but obviously important in understanding *why* the teachers received such negative media coverage is that of public relations. It is widely recognized that media "management" is vital to how events, issues and personalities are treated in news reports and commentary. This event -- the teachers strike -- confirms just how vital a role media skills and public relations expertise do play. This aspect will be discussed in the *Civic Affairs*.



Predictably, the estimates of the degree and nature of media influence varied greatly.

### Teachers

The greatest impact of the media coverage by all accounts was on the teachers. Judging from letters to the editors, statements quoted in the press and on television and comments from teacher spokesmen, it is clear that teachers were deeply angered and hurt by the negative press they received. One of the important legacies of the strike is the damage done to teacher morale as a result of the media coverage.

The teachers' estimation of the overall significance of media coverage for the failure of their strike is extremely high. They believe that the press provided the Boards with the support they needed "not to bargain in good faith". In other words, by "overselling" the trustees on the virtues of their position, the media coverage prevented fruitful negotiations. Had the press coverage been more sympathetic, say the teachers, the Boards would have felt compelled to make further concessions. And, according to teacher spokesmen, "even a gesture or token move" toward compromise in the crucial last days of bargaining before Christmas, 1975, would have ended the strike without back to work legislation.<sup>1</sup> A December settlement, in turn, would have enabled the teachers to return to their jobs without the deep sense of bitterness and humiliation they now feel.

1. Beginning December 5, 1975, a final attempt was made to reach a settlement under the auspices of a team of provincially-appointed mediators. For the first ten days nothing fruitful occurred. But a potential breakthrough did exist when the Metro Board put forward a final proposal on December 20. The Board's Final Proposal (which still required approval by the six area boards) provided for a one-year agreement which was "end-loaded" and would therefore have broken the tradition of parity with the elementary teachers. It also provided for a fully-compensating cost of living allowance from January, 1976. This represented a step beyond the original offer and was close to being acceptable to the teachers. Some have stated in hindsight that one or two additional concessions would likely have broken the impasse (not all agreed with this assessment). The Board members, however, felt they'd gone "as far as they could go" -- certainly further than many trustees or the majority of their constituents would have wanted. In their view, the decision by teacher leaders to recommend rejection of this proposal is proof that the teachers did not want a settlement.

Reporters, editorial writers and columnists

Almost without exception, the reporters, editorial writers and signed columnists we interviewed insisted that media coverage did *not* create or lead public opinion. In their view, the negative feelings vented in the editorial and opinion columns merely reflected the existing public attitudes.

Several journalists suggested that having just come out of an unpopular public strike (i.e. the Postal Strike), the Metro community may have been predisposed against public employee strikes generally. In this sense, the columns hit an exposed public nerve which may have strengthened the impact of their observations.

However, every journalist to whom we spoke emphasized that, in their view, the public did not need the pundits to get them to resent the strike and the strikers. Several mentioned that the fact that the teachers' strike was a middle-class strike by "professionals" increased public antagonism (i.e. while the people might tolerate strikes from the working class they will not react the same toward middle-class strikers).

The Metro School Board

The trustees credit the media with having had considerable negative impact on teachers. As the Boards' Rationale for Proposal to Mr. Justice Dubin acknowledged,

"Negative public reaction as expressed on television, radio and in the press to the recent teachers salary demands, news reports of teachers failing to permit elected members of the Legislature to speak and other individual negative statements by friend and acquaintances about public education and the teaching profession have left many teachers depressed and concerned about their vocation."

Beyond this effect on the climate of opinion and on teacher morale generally, the trustees acknowledge that the media coverage had direct significance for their own behaviour during the October - January period.

Media support for the Board position was one of three essential factors contributing to the decision of the trustees to "hold the line" on salary negotiations. These three factors, which were inextricably linked, were:

- 1) *federal intervention* -- the creation of the anti-inflation program and the Board to enforce it (announced in Prime Minister Trudeau's October 13th speech) and the public announcement of the AIB decision on November 28 that the Board's original offer itself exceeded what they would allow. The significance of this development in fundamentally altering the climate of opinion in which the strike took place cannot be overemphasized.
- 2) *the wage offer* itself -- which the Board Chairmen and trustees deemed eminently fair, if not overgenerous.<sup>1</sup> A second aspect pertaining to the 39.2% offer was that it met the Boards' goal of maintaining parity with the elementary school teachers in Metro. (The parity issue was especially strong in North York and East York where junior high schools exist.)
- 3) *media (and public) support* was the third key element. The impact of the all-pervasive anti-teacher sentiment in the media (which of course, was bound up with the first factor -- the anti-inflation program) was felt directly and indirectly by trustees. First, it had the direct effect of reassuring the Board that its decision to "hold the line" was "right" and popular. Second, it presumably helps to account for the overwhelmingly one-sided anti-teacher response from the public as reflected in phone calls and letters and personal exchanges; and this public feedback was unquestionably taken seriously by the trustees.<sup>2</sup> To a large extent, then, the determination of the Board throughout November and most of December not to offer concessions was bolstered by the media stand.<sup>3</sup>

1. Certain Board chairmen and many trustees felt the 39.2% offer was too high.
2. This point was heavily stressed in interviews with Board Chairmen.
3. It is interesting that in their Reply to the Brief Submitted by the Representatives of the Teachers, the trustees quoted from a November Globe and Mail editorial to prove that "certainly the press and public are aware of the exceptional nature of the Teachers' 'package' (i.e. the Boards' offer).

Analysing the role of the media from mid-December on is more difficult. The fact that the Committee of Board Chairmen made some concessions in its final December proposal -- concessions which would have resulted in a breaking of the parity tradition for example, suggests that the second factor referred to above was less crucial.

Meanwhile, by late December editorial and columnist opinion was beginning to split; and, again, this was reflected in phone calls and letters to trustees. The Globe and Mail, which had opposed the passage of Bill 100 that gave the teachers the right to strike, was vigorously urging the Government to act. "If Mr. Davis were interested in the business of government," summed up the Globe, "he would have asked the Legislature for the power to send the teachers back to work before he went off on his long Christmas break."<sup>1</sup> Other columnists, on the other hand, wanted the teachers to be left out on strike -- to suffer. "Don't be hasty", was Dick Beddoes' advice to Bill Davis (January 8, 1976):

"Don't let the O\$STF negotiators off the hook by making them martyrs. Let them wear parkas on the picket line for a while longer instead of sackcloth and ashes in the classroom."

Some members of the Board were becoming concerned that public attitudes as reflected and reinforced in the media would have a backlash effect on the education system by producing an unhealthy reservoir of public animosity towards the teachers. This partly helps to explain the softening of the Board's position in late December. Three other reasons offered by Board Chairmen to explain the softening of the Board's stance were: the momentum created by the intense mediation process itself; the desire to settle by negotiation without further damaging the Board-teacher relationship; the desire to get the schools open again in the New Year. All of the Board members felt that this was the last chance, if there was going to be a settlement at all. Thus the decision of the Metro Board to make a more generous proposal in late December reflected several considerations other than media influence.

1. "Burden of Responsibility for a Costly Strike" (January 6, 1976) The Star's editorial position was different. Having supported the right of the teachers to strike (Bill 100), the Star did not demand back to work legislation until January 7 ("Send Teachers Back to the Classrooms"). But the Star did urge that when the strike was over that teachers "make up the time spent on the picket lines" by scrapping professional development days, the winter break and by extending the school year. (Star editorial, November 17). The Sun (December 2) spoke vaguely about "eventually reopening the schools", perhaps using retired teachers, or relocating other teachers.

## The Province

The chief role of the Provincial government in ending the teachers' strike consisted of

- a) the Education Relations Commission's hearing (January 10, 1976) and recommendation for back to work legislation on the grounds that an impasse had been reached which would not be broken before the students' ability to complete their year's work successfully would be jeopardized
- b) the decision to legislate the teachers back to work and the form of that legislation (which the teachers regarded as harsh, particularly in that the Province did not provide for interim compensation<sup>1.</sup>)

According to provincial spokesmen, from both the Minister of Education's office and the ERC, media coverage generally and editorial opinion specifically were of minor consequence for their role in the Metro teachers' strike. This is borne out when we remember that editorial columns had been sounding the alarm about the "injury" being imposed by the strike on Metro Toronto's 140,000 students since early November.<sup>2.</sup> The Globe editorial message, reiterated almost daily, stressed two key points: first, the teachers had irresponsibly rejected a wage-benefit package which itself was overgenerous and inconsistent with the anti-inflation program; and second, someone had to speak for the 140,000 student victims of the strike; this had to be the Ontario government -- who should legislate an end to the strike.

Provincial spokesmen point out that the decisive force shaping their response to the strike was their commitment to Bill 100 and its provisions. Regardless of media pressure, the Province was going to let the strike run until all hope of negotiated settlement had passed. By the end of the first week in January, the press was unanimous in feeling that this point had been reached. In a political sense, then, the press may have helped prepare the scene for a legislated end to the strike.

1. This contrasts to the situation following the 1974 York County Teachers' Strike, for example. In that case, teachers were legislated back to work with interim compensation.
2. Globe editorials of November 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 26, December 9, December 17/75 (Before November, the Globe used a student population figure of 127,000: on November 11 the 140,000 number was adopted.)

CONCLUSIONS

In answer to the three questions posed at the beginning of this section, we found:

1) The behaviour of the Metro School Board during the teachers' strike can in large measure be attributed to the role played by the media -- particularly during the period from October to mid-December, 1975. Trustees interpreted anti-teacher editorial and columnist statements as significant indicators of public opinion. Coupled with other expressions of public support (phone calls, letters, etc.), this provided them with a strong base of moral support for their actions. *The image of public sentiment conveyed by the media to a great extent governed the latitude which Board negotiators felt they possessed.*

It is virtually impossible, however, to isolate the impact of media coverage from other essential factors which combined to produce the same effect. The creation of the Anti-Inflation Board and its November 28 pronouncement created a climate of opinion which profoundly affected all participants -- trustees and journalists alike. As one Board Chairman put it, "after the AIB, it was a whole new ball-game for everyone; the field had contracted, the rules of the game had changed". It was no wonder then to him that the batters struck out.

Had the media taken a "pro-teacher" stand, it is possible that the outcome might have been different. It could have encouraged the Boards to raise their offer or make a few more concessions during the bargaining. Similarly had the media taken a pro-teacher stand, the response of the public in their letters, phone calls and personal contact which were regarded very seriously by trustees would surely have reflected this, at least in part.

Realistically speaking, this possibility was remote. The virtually unanimous consensus among journalists and editorial writers suggests that even as it exacerbated anti-teacher sentiment, media antipathy to the teachers' cause reflected the public mood. The teachers were almost totally isolated from the rest of the Metro community in their struggle.

2) The decision of the Province to legislate the teachers back to work does not appear to have been directly affected by the media coverage. Bearing in mind:

- that Bill 100 had been passed only after a wrenching debate in Cabinet and that the Government was therefore deeply committed to it
- that in accordance with their responsibility, the Education Relations Commission had to recommend back to work legislation on the grounds that the students would be placed in jeopardy as to their ability to successfully complete their year's work
- that, therefore, the strike had to be permitted to continue for a considerable length of time
- that Globe editorials had been urging back to work legislation for weeks, and on the other hand, phone calls to Minister Wells' office showed that public opinion on back-to-work legislation was split
- that following the rejection of the Boards' December 20 proposal by the teachers on January 7, 1976, it was clear that a negotiated settlement was impossible

it seems that the Province's legislating the teachers back to work on January 16 cannot be attributed to media pressure. *The influence of the media was indirect, to the extent that it helped to create a political climate that welcomed the legislation.*

Were the terms of the back to work legislation affected by the strong media campaign against the teachers? Some have suggested that a more generous bill -- one including interim compensation, for example -- might have emerged if the thrust of media opinion had been different. In retrospect, it would seem that it was the economic climate, rather than the influence of the media, that explains the absence of this provision.

3) The long-term impact of media coverage is expected to be very negative indeed. The nature and intensity of the attacks on the teachers appear to have had a profound effect. Statistics with respect to resignations will tell only part of the tale. The effects of the coverage on the dedication of teachers to their job, on their willingness to "go the extra mile", cannot be defined.

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As a final note, we are not convinced by the claims of the editorial writers and columnists that in this case they did *not* create or lead public opinion.<sup>1</sup> While it is obviously true that there was an affinity between the public mood and media opinion and that, for many reasons, the public was predisposed against the teachers, this does not deny the role of the media in shaping public attitudes. In our view, the press did more than just embody or mirror public sentiment. It helped to transform vague inarticulate notions about the teachers into hardened stereotypes. By articulating these inchoate feelings and crystallizing them into firm arguments, which then became part of the public's daily mental diet for three months, the press contributed positively to the anti-teacher climate of opinion.

These kinds of "conclusions" cannot be proved. The importance of rhetoric as a causative factor influencing events remains a matter of debate. In many ways, the Metro teachers' strike offers a classic illustration of the problem of defining the complex interrelationship between the media, public opinion and decision-making in a democratic society.

*As stated at the beginning of this Comment, by examining the role of the media in the Metro teachers' strike, we have sought to highlight some of the central questions about the nature and impact of media coverage generally. These questions will be among those discussed in depth at our Annual Spring Conference: "The News Media and Local Government", to be held in Toronto, May 13th and 13th, 1976.<sup>2</sup>*

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1. In discussing the role of the press as a mirror and creator of public opinion, one must be cautious. Even a cursory review of Metro Toronto's local newspapers at election time demonstrates that public opinion and press opinion are not one and the same. Yet, within limits, we assume that the press helps to formulate public opinion as well as reflect it.
2. For further information, please phone 363-9265. Attendance is open to all who are interested; two hundred reservations will be accepted.