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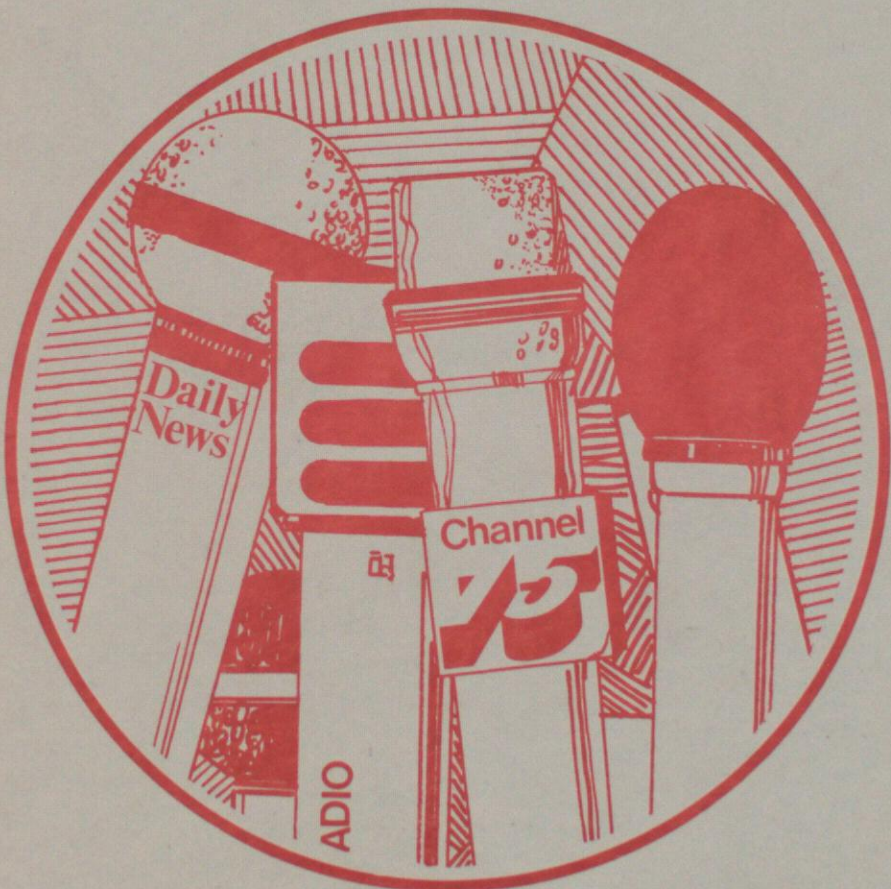


BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

A bulletin issued by the Bureau of Municipal Research

CIVIC AFFAIRS

AUGUST 1976 2 TORONTO STREET TORONTO



THE NEWS MEDIA AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The institution of a free press is customarily regarded as the central nervous system of democracy. Lying at the heart of the British and American political traditions, the liberty of the press has invariably been extolled as vital to an informed electorate and essential to the very survival of a democratic system.

Historically, of course, the "press" referred to newspapers, magazines and book publishers. With the advent of radio and television the term has broadened to include that portion of the broadcasting media devoted to the gathering and reporting of the news. Hence the "press gallery" — on Parliament Hill, Queen's Park or City Hall — is comprised of newspaper reporters and columnists together with reporters from the broadcast media. *In this study the term "press" and "news media" are used to describe both the print media and that part of the broadcast media concerned with the dissemination of the news.*

The overall purpose of this *Civic Affairs* is to examine the relationship between the news media and local government. Specifically, it deals with the news media in Metropolitan Toronto and the extent to which it serves the public and influences decision-makers on municipal matters.

This publication is divided into four sections, which can be read, more or less, as separate units. Chapter I explains the local news operations of the various newspapers and broadcast media in Metropolitan Toronto. Based on information gathered from an extensive series of interviews, it describes the variety of formats and approaches used by the Toronto news media in covering local government.

Chapter II looks at the influence of the media on local decision-makers. Attitudes of our local politicians toward the press as revealed in a confidential evaluation questionnaire are described.

Chapter III is devoted to the results of the Conference on the Media and Local Government, sponsored by the Bureau of Municipal Research in May, 1976.

Chapter IV presents a case study of one recent important issue — the Metro Teachers' Strike. In addition to examining the newspaper coverage in detail, including front page reportage, editorial statements

and the observations of signed columnists, we interviewed representatives of all sides in the conflict in an effort to evaluate the quality and impact of the press coverage.

The remainder of this introductory section explores some of the underlying issues relating to democratic theory and sets out our assumptions.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NEWS MEDIA IN REPORTING LOCAL NEWS

Any attempt to describe and assess the role being played by the media in local decision-making immediately raises some basic questions. These questions concern the nature of public opinion, the role of the media in both shaping and reflecting public opinion and the complex relationship of the media and public opinion to the whole process of decision-making in a democracy.

Public Opinion: Various Publics

It is a pervasive theme in Canadian political philosophy (as in the American) that "the people" play an active and significant part in the policy-making process. According to democratic theory, the people create their own governments, choose leaders and *by the force of the ballot and of public opinion* determine the broad objectives and courses of public action. Public opinion is portrayed as the ultimate tribunal, an essential check on executive authority and an integral part of the whole system.

We all know that this classic view is largely fictional. Behavioural research in recent decades has convincingly demonstrated that the relationship of public opinion to decision-making is far more complex than the traditional myth suggests.¹

Some scholars have suggested that public opinion in a democracy is stratified in a kind of pyramidal structure. According to this theory, the mass public, at the base of the pyramid, is generally uninterested and uninformed about complex political issues, and, at the most, affects the selection of leaders at election times; upon this base there are several layers of "publics", ranging from the "informed" or "attentive" public to the "policy and opinion elites" and finally to the "political elites" — the elected and appointed public officials — who make the policy decisions. While this pyramid model is only one theory of public opinion, it is useful. It points out what most of the research in this area confirms: that there is a great deal of differentiation in how individuals are exposed to the media and how they respond.

The significance of such sophisticated interpretations of public opinion for this study relates to the questions of who the press influences and to what degree. They indicate that circulation or audience statistics may be less meaningful in terms of political impact than the credibility of a given newspaper or a political commentator with a numerically limited but "elite" constituency.² We shall need to bear this point in mind when we evaluate the influence of the various media on local decision-making.

Turning to the role of the media as both a mirror and a creator of public opinion one must be equally 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; it is not unusual for mayors, controllers and aldermen to be elected without editorial endorsement or inclusion on the published election slates. Yet within broad limits one assumes that the press helps to formulate public opinion and reflects the attitudes and feelings of its audience.

Is the Press Really Free?

To discuss the press (i.e. print and broadcast media) and its role in attitude formation raises a more fundamental question: to what extent is the press in Canada "free"? While we assume that in a totalitarian state, the images of reality are carefully shaped by the government, with the press serving as a mere government tool, it is widely believed that in a democratic society like Canada, the press is significantly (if not totally) free from both government pressure and the economic control of vested interests.

Recently this assumption has come under intense attack. The bitter controversy in the United States over the direction of U.S. foreign policy in the 1960's dramatized the fact that certainly on occasion the press has served as an instrument of the government.³ The concept of the "credibility gap", which has become a part of the American idiom, extends to the press as well and left-wing critics of the American system include

the press as one of the tools by which the ruling government and corporate elites manipulate and control public opinion.

But one need not subscribe to left-wing conspiracy theories to recognize that there are dangers to a free and independent press. These threats derive from *two* main sources – the ever-growing power of government and the institution of the press itself. The governmental component of the danger to press freedom is connected to the continually widening scope of governmental activities, the extensive apparatus of government propaganda and the obvious opportunity to manipulate information and even prevent disclosure. The second source of danger is tied to the nature of the news media itself – both the growing trend towards news monopoly and standardization and the pressures on reporters that result from routine commercial criteria.

In the *Special Senate Committee Report on the Mass Media*, commonly known as “The Davey Report” (1970) both of these potential dangers to press freedom were studied with respect to the Canadian scene. It found that the threat of governmental interference with the freedom of the established media was minor; the most flagrant instance of government suppression of press freedom was the harassment suffered by the underground press in certain Canadian municipalities.⁴

The most likely source of infringement on the freedom of the press is not posed by government, the Report stated, but by the “economic tendencies of the press itself”.⁵ Indeed the authors speculated that this continuing concentration of ownership in the media might make it necessary in the future to legislate against excessive monopolization so as to preserve a sufficient number of diverse news and information sources.

In spite of these qualifications, the Committee concluded that by and large the press in Canada was “free”. It did confirm, however, that a more subtle kind of pressure within the institution of the press threatens the ideal of press freedom:

“We are satisfied – as are most reporters – that a “party line” does in fact exist in many newsrooms. But like pressure from advertisers, it operates subtly and capriciously when it operates at all.

Frankly, we don't view *deliberate* suppression of the news by owner-publishers as much of a problem. It happens, but seldom blatantly. More often, it is the result of a certain atmosphere – an atmosphere in which boat-rocking is definitely not encouraged – and of news editors trying to read the boss's mind. This leads to journalistic sins (of omission, mostly) that result from lassitude, sloppiness, smugness, and too chummy a relationship with the local power structure”⁶.

It is also true that in a broader sense, if press freedom means “the ability to inform and comment freely so as to effect change”, the press is inevitably constrained by the context in which it operates. Pressures arising out of a shared set of economic and political values between the professionals within the media and the dominant governmental and business interests naturally tend to reinforce the middle-class bias of the established media.⁷

Thus in considering the press in Canada and in Toronto as “free” we acknowledge at the outset the limits of this freedom. One of our purposes in this study has been to look for evidence of the pressures mentioned above – overt government suppression or manipulation of news, the growing concentration of media ownership, self-imposed censorship within the newsroom and the mutuality of interest between those who make the news and those who report and analyze it.

Influence of the Media on Decision-Makers

The relationship between local decision-making and the reportage and evaluation of local issues in the media is difficult to define. One can point to obvious illustrations of the power of the press – cases where press coverage appeared to directly affect the outcome. Two very recent examples are the rent control issue and the Spadina Subway art project. In the case of rent control, Premier Davis' move to introduce rent review legislation is widely attributed to the daily diet of reports on the subject served up by the Toronto media prior to the provincial election. In the second instance, the initial cancellation of the art in the subway project was blamed by proponents of the plan on negative media publicity.

The key to the influence of the press on local policy-making is its *dual* role in the political process:

i) On one level the news media function as purveyors of information and/or opinions and help to shape mass public opinion; this in turn affects policy formation, usually indirectly. Within this first role, as a formulator of public opinion, the press sets the limit of public discussion, not only by what is reported and how, but by what is omitted.

ii) On another level the press exerts an independent influence and functions as an active participant in its own right. It was this second function which Douglass Cater had in mind in his description of the press as an extra-constitutional “fourth branch of government”.⁸

Within this second role of the press as *participant*,⁹ four separate but overlapping functions can be distinguished: the press as representative of the public, the press as critic of government, the press as advocate of policy, the press as policy maker. This classification of functions is helpful in understanding the different ways in which policy makers use the media: as a daily measure of public opinion, as a source of information upon which decisions are based, and as a source of policy ideas and analysis. In addition, individual journalists may play an influential role in certain decisions.

While politicians may express hostility to the news media or indifference about them, we began this study with the assumption that the majority of them take more out of the press than they might admit. One of our aims was to demonstrate the nature and extent of this influence.

Media Coverage of Local Politics

The focus of this study is the press and local government. One of the first questions we asked was: is there anything unique about the importance of the news media to the *local* political process?

The essential role of the media for all levels of politics has been clearly spelled out. As the federal government's Task Force on Government Information summed up, the mass media “occupy so central a role in modern society that they may rightly be considered the main gatekeepers of most public information . . .” (Vol I, p. 20).¹⁰

In his study of news coverage of provincial politics in Ontario, Frederick Fletcher emphasized that if it weren't for the presence of the press gallery at Queen's Park, the entire parliamentary ritual would take place unnoticed:¹¹

“The parliamentary ritual acquires its significance in large part from the public attention it gets, and this attention is conveyed almost entirely through the mass media, since few Ontarians attend the sessions or read Hansard. The incentive for opposition members to question ministers, criticize government policies, and make alternative proposals in a chamber where the governing party holds a clear majority lies more in the hope of accumulating public support for the next election than in changing policy in the short term. Thus, the gallery is a necessary part of the system through which the Legislature performs its central function of making the government accountable for its actions.”

The City Hall press gallery is equally indispensable for the same reasons – and for an additional reason as well.

There are no political parties at the local level, no “master agency” linking society and government. If political parties are truly the “major connective linkage” between government and the people, as political scientists say they are, then obviously, a significant feature of the political system is missing at the municipal level. Presumably this makes the role of the press all the more crucial.

For one thing, there are no party ideologies, standing research committees or professional staffs¹² to distill reports, sift and edit ideas and produce neat simple policy statements which are designed for easy reporting. The City Hall press gallery must deal with a flood of “raw” information. As the main “gatekeepers” regulating this information flow, City Hall reporters are often the first people to see reports produced by the bureaucrats, the first to synthesize and digest them for both public officials and the public at large. In the case of local government the media serve as the channel for available information which flows un-screened and unchecked from a myriad of government sources to the people.¹³

Not only is the information undigested and unrefined. The absence of parties means there is no organized instrument for articulating the opposing views of any given report or policy. The question that arises is, does the absence of an official opposition in Metro Toronto politics impose special responsibilities on the news media? Should reporters, for example, adopt what one press critic advocates — an “adversary relationship” in which journalists assume an aggressive “watch-dog” approach toward government?¹⁴ While our research indicates that the vast majority of local politicians believe that reporters should remain neutral and passively objective, one might argue that because there are no political parties, it falls to the press to ensure that the conflicting side(s) of any issue is aired. In order to report what is going on in government clearly and completely to the public the journalist may need to investigate City Hall events more thoroughly than he would have to if opposing views were being articulated by a loyal opposition.

The significance of the absence of parties at the local level is most apparent during elections. At the senior levels, the chief responsibility for arousing interest in and educating the electorate on political matters falls to the parties; acting as “brokers of ideas”, political parties are the middlemen who sort and stress the major issues in order to create a program to sell to the public. At the local level, however, the news media itself selects from all the ideas pressing for attention the issues which they feel have widest public appeal.

The challenge to the media presented by this non-partisan situation is underlined by the fluid pattern of municipal politics. With the noteworthy exception of Toronto City Council where three identifiable groups exist (the old guard, the moderates and the Reform Caucus), politicians in Metro operate on an individual basis. In very few instances does one single voice represent a collective viewpoint. This has the benefit of increasing the points of access to information for reporters.¹⁵ It can, however, make it more difficult for the media to convey and interpret the meaning of council or subcommittee debates and to report on the process of

decision-making.

It has also been argued that the subject matter of local politics makes the job of the City Hall reporter different from that of his colleagues in the Queen’s Park or Ottawa press galleries. Much of the municipal agenda deals with services to property (roads, streets, water and sewage services, protective services, etc.). Debates on these matters are frequently tedious, apparently unconnected to more stirring broad policy issues and may affect only one small area of a municipality, as in zoning and transportation matters. This contrasts with senior level debates, which by their very nature deal with questions of more general interest or at least which geographically have more widespread relevance. Moreover, the long-term importance of policies on official plans or the extension of transit and road facilities, for instance, is often difficult to convey. Provincial and federal issues — rent control, seat belts, hospital closings, inflation, unemployment and capital punishment, to name a few — can be more emotional and more immediate in their impacts than the “nuts and bolts” problems of local government.

This argument is only partially valid. For one thing, local government has become more “political” in recent years with the rise of the urban growth issue. The implications of planning and land use decisions are appreciated by a certain aware segment of the public. However, most local matters do not become urban issues even to the extent that “limiting growth” has.

It is also true, of course, that many senior level issues are complex, abstract, localized, long-term in impact and therefore uninteresting to the mass public.

The subject of this *Civic Affairs* is especially timely. We are hearing a good deal about the need to “decentralize” government — particularly in the area of human services (such as health, education, recreation and social services). We are told that in order to make policies more responsive to real needs and in order to make human service delivery more cost-effective, we have to decentralize power and responsibility to the regional, local and even to the community level. Witness the recent report of the Toronto Neigh-

bourhood Services Work Group which calls for the devolution of power to local communities — real power — to decide priorities, hire staff and deliver the services.¹⁶

This desire to partially localize the decision-making process presumes a higher degree of citizen awareness and interest than currently exists.

Yet, many media spokesmen whom we interviewed during this project argue that the public has neither the interest in nor the capacity for in-depth media coverage of local politics.

This inconsistency between the expectations for citizen interest and knowledge on the one hand, (which are prerequisites for true accountability in a decentralized scheme) and the current state of relative ignorance and apathy about local government on the other, raises several questions. Two of these are:

- 1) would this enlarged municipal role in the provision of services, which are more personal in nature than services to property, increase the opportunity for the news media to stimulate general public interest in local government?
- 2) if a decentralized municipal strategy is adopted, is the present centralized structure of the news media adequate to cover the various issues as they affect each community?

In brief, we suggest that the already formidable challenge to report and interpret the news in a manner that is accurate, balanced, comprehensive, informative, relevant and interesting at the local level may become even greater.¹⁷

1. Largely as a product of the behavioural movement in political science, there has been such extensive social science research in the area of mass communications, public opinion and policy-making in democratic societies that books have been published consisting only of bibliographies. A representative collection of material is Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts, ed., *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Urbana; University of Illinois Press, 1971). Some of the more important contributors to the movement were Robert Dahl, V.O. Key, Jr., Harold Lasswell.
2. This is underscored by analyses of public opinion which demonstrate that most of the so-called inattentive mass public tend to model their views on those of respected acquaintances — the opinion leaders who are in turn influenced

by the media. See Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication* (Glencoe, 11.1.: 1955).

3. As during the Bay of Pigs and Tonkin Gulf incidents.
4. *The Uncertain Mirror, Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media* (1970), Volume I, p. 105
5. *Ibid.*, p. 109
6. *Ibid.*, I, p. 87 The Committee found that one-newspaper towns were the most frequent victims. Our research suggests that these findings apply to the Toronto press, as we discuss in Chapter I.
7. The role of the mass media in reinforcing the dominant ideologies and values in society is discussed in depth in Wallace Clement, *The Canadian Corporate Elite: An Analysis of Economic Power* (McClelland and Stewart Ltd. 1975)
8. Douglass Cater, *The Fourth Branch of Government* (Boston: 1959).
9. This definition of four participant roles is based on a systematic study of the relationship between the press and foreign policy formation by Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton: 1963); Chapter 2. While Cohen’s analysis focusses on the foreign policy formation process, his formulation is applicable here.
10. Government of Canada, *To Know and Be Known* Report of the Task Force on Government Information (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1969) 2 Vols.
11. Frederick J. Fletcher, “Between Two Stools: News Coverage of Provincial Politics in Ontario”, in Donald C. MacDonald, ed., *Government and Politics of Ontario* (Macmillan, 1975) p. 252.
12. Exceptions are the Mayor of Toronto and the Metro Chairman; both enjoy the assistance of trained personnel who perform such tasks as preparing policy statements, synthesizing reports, writing press releases, etc.
13. Perhaps we should not take this tradition of access to information for granted. On May 20, 1976, the Metro Social Services and Housing Committee debated the existing policy of providing agendas and reports to the press in advance of committee meetings. Two important motions discussed, though not passed, were: a proposal to withhold agendas and reports until all committee members had received them; a proposal to restrict comments by the civic staff until items had been dealt with by the committee. Both of these proposals would threaten the tradition of openness at the municipal level, which some reporters fear is already eroding.
14. William L. Rivers, *The Adversaries: Politics and the Press* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
15. In a cabinet system civil servants are responsible to one minister and are far less independent than municipal appointed officials. Consequently there is far less secrecy and greater access for reporters at the local level.
16. (City of Toronto: April, 1976): This strategy of decentralization has not been generally accepted. Yet many of those who call for

greater centralization at the Metro level on the grounds of efficiency acknowledge the need for a process which provides for meaningful local input.

17. Part of this Introduction formed the basis of a speech delivered at the spring News Media Conference by Anne Golden.

I HOW THE NEWS MEDIA COVER LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN METRO TORONTO

According to the Special Senate Committee Report on Mass Media in Canada (1970), the people of Toronto are well served by their news media — both in terms of the quantity of news sources and the quality of the reportage and commentary — compared to the rest of Canada.

The report states that there are only ten Canadian cities with at least two newspapers under separate ownership — only nine if you exclude Vancouver, where the two main dailies are published by a single corporation that is jointly owned by two newspaper groups, and only seven cities if Moncton and Sherbrooke are discounted, since the two competing dailies are in different languages.¹

Torontonians enjoy the “luxury” of three competing English-language dailies (there is also an Italian-language daily). Only the *Globe and Mail* is part of a newspaper chain; it is controlled by F.P. Publications which owns or controls a total of nine Canadian dailies.² The *Toronto Star* is a public company whose major shareholders are members of the Board of Directors. The company publishes the *Star*, Canada’s largest daily, and has interests in many suburban weekly newspapers as well as other media holdings. The *Sun* is owned by *Sun Holdings* which is a private company involving a number of Toronto individuals.

In addition to the daily newspapers there are some three dozen newspapers which are published weekly or bi-monthly. These non-ethnic community-oriented papers (almost all are tabloids), which range in circulation from a few thousand to up to 60,000, tend to stress local political news; they often provide information about local government which either has not been covered by the establishment media or provide a different perspective.³

Fifteen radio stations broadcast to the Toronto public and eight of these are independently controlled.

Toronto has four major local television stations: CBLT, the local television station of The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; and three private stations — CFTO, the affiliate of CTV; Global TV, a regional network for southern Ontario produced

in Toronto; and CITY TV, an independent and strictly local station. In addition, Hamilton’s TV station, CHCH, covers and broadcasts to Metro Toronto. Finally, there are eight cable television companies: Rodgers, Metro, York, Graham, Maclean-Hunter, Keeble, Scarborough, and Wired City Communications, which focus extensively on local events and municipal political coverage.⁴

Not only does Toronto have a relatively healthy diversity of news information sources in an area of ever-increasing concentration, it also enjoys higher quality media than most other Canadian cities.

After examining the print media across the country, Senator Davey’s Senate Committee found that the vast majority of the nation’s daily newspapers were either “mediocre” or “dreadful” in quality. The major criterion used was, how successful is the newspaper in preparing its readers for social change?

Only a handful achieved a level above mediocrity:

Some newspapers dig. Some newspapers are a constant embarrassment to the powerful. Some manage to be entertaining, provocative and fair at the same time. There are few such newspapers in Canada . . .

Among the “handful” cited by the Report were the three Toronto dailies — the *Star*, the *Globe and Mail* and the now-defunct *Telegram*.

While the Report did not evaluate the quality of broadcast journalism in the same way, it is evident that relative to the rest of the nation, the people of Metro Toronto are exceedingly well-served. For example, some major cities have just one or two television stations, with almost no local news or public affairs programmes, and a few radio stations whose local political coverage consists of headline-type news summaries. The Toronto public on the other hand, has a choice of dozens of news broadcasts and public affairs programmes that deal with municipal events, at least occasionally, in a serious way.

The City Hall Press Gallery

Twenty-four reporters and columnists

from the print and broadcast media comprise the Toronto Municipal Press Gallery, most of which is housed in a series of offices on the second floor of City Hall.⁵ Also sharing the pressroom, although technically not part of the Press Gallery, is the *Globe and Mail's* staff of five reporters and one columnist.⁶ While the press gallery includes reporters from three television stations (CBC, CFTO, and CITY) and half a dozen radio stations (CBC, CFRB, CFGM, CHUM, CKEY, CFTR), only the print reporters and columnists maintain continuous watch over the ongoings at City Hall; the one notable exception to this pattern is CBC radio (CBL) whose municipal reporter provides consistent coverage of City Hall events. Consequently, the electronic media are not taken seriously by the print journalists as reporters of local political issues; they are dismissed as the "scalp and run" gang who "rip and read" their stories from the newspapers.⁷ The radio reporters point out that this is unjust, and that they can and do monitor City and Metro Council debates in their downstairs offices (either personally or via tape recorders).

In this chapter we shall review the internal operations of the print and broadcast media, looking briefly at how each daily newspaper and the leading television and radio stations go about covering local political news.⁸

As we proceed, we need to bear in mind what it means "to cover local government in Metro Toronto". With six area municipal governments, one regional government and six local boards of education, there are thirteen different elected bodies which constitute local government in Metropolitan Toronto. There are also a multiplicity of special purpose bodies and intergovernmental authorities which have decision-making responsibilities. The sheer complexity of this local government structure is an essential feature of the context in which the media operate.

DAILY NEWSPAPERS

The Globe and Mail

The *Globe and Mail* views itself as Canada's "national" newspaper. In distinct contrast with the *Star*, which attempts to be a "community" newspaper, the *Globe* covers local news with one eye

on the country-at-large. Political events in the City of Toronto and Metro are watched closely on the assumption that what happens in Toronto is of general national interest. The paper makes no attempt, however, to provide day-to-day coverage of local politics in the other five boroughs comprising Metro and will ordinarily only publish a borough story when it is deemed to have some national significance.

The *Globe* also sees itself as a "newspaper of record" for governmental affairs and feels obliged to provide almost documentary reports of certain events.

Thus, having decided to focus on City and Metro political news, the *Globe* has made a major staff commitment to the coverage of City Hall. Its City Hall Bureau, staffed by five reporters and one columnist, is equal in size to the *Globe's* Ottawa bureau and larger than the four man Queen's Park bureau.

As a newspaper of record, the *Globe* feels it has a major responsibility to inform the public in a thorough and comprehensive way. In contrast to Metro's other two dailies the *Globe* writes for a special constituency. As one senior *Globe* editor explained, they write for the business, professional and community leaders in society and not for the average man, who, according to the mythology of advertising, demands and requires superficiality and simplicity.

Consistent with this "elitist" approach the *Globe* editorial staff encourages its reporters to acquire expertise in a subject. Unlike the *Star*, the *Globe* divides the City Hall assignments so that each reporter has a specified beat. Each reporter is therefore given responsibility for specific committees or boards; thus one reporter covers the City Departments of Works, Neighbourhoods and the Planning Board together with City Council on a shared basis; he also monitors events in Etobicoke; a second reporter helps to monitor City Council as well as covering the major meetings of Buildings and Development, Parks, City Executive and the Board of Health (Toronto). A third reporter covers the TTC, Metro Works, Legislation and Licensing, and also "keeps an eye" on East York. Metro Council is the domain of the bureau chief Alden Baker, who also covers the borough of York. A fifth

reporter concentrates on the municipal politics of North York and Scarborough. This system of assigning areas of speciality in such a way that reporters cover either City or Metro politics means that reporters are busy monitoring meetings one week, but have a good deal of free time for research on the alternate weeks when their committees or councils are not sitting.

As Colin Vaughan pointed out in his recently published "field guide to all those strange birds in the City Hall press gallery",⁹ *Globe* reporters seem to have the highest degree of job satisfaction of all newsmen. Dubbed a "reporter's paper" in comparison with the *Star* which is known as the "editor's paper", the *Globe* allows free reign to its reporters in selecting and writing about the issues.

Every so often, *Globe* reporters are rotated, but the general policy is to encourage the staff to develop the expertise in the assigned areas of speciality needed to write about issues in a detailed and knowledgeable way.

Last year, after not having run a regular City Hall column for some fifteen years¹⁰, the *Globe* added a municipal columnist in the person of former sports writer, Dick Beddoes. It was hoped that his irreverent colourful style would engage the interest of those who might not normally read page 5, and thereby broaden the *Globe* audience for municipal affairs.

The "play" of local news, that is the placement and length of local government stories is determined by several factors including the newsworthiness and interest of the item and the space available. The present *Globe* format groups local stories on pages 4 and 5 of the first section, unless they qualify as front page news.

The *Globe's* format is thus very different from that of the *Star* which contains a special Metro News section and specific zone pages for suburban coverage.

Both the *Globe* and the *Star* consciously seek to keep the news side of their papers separate from their editorial and opinion columns. But the *Globe* senior staff claim to be more definitive in the division. For example, the kinds of "crusades" which result from the *Star's* editorial policies on news reportage are considered to be foreign to the *Globe and Mail's* approach.

A further difference between the two

newspapers is found in the relationships that are permitted between reporters and politicians. The *Globe* has a clear policy on "off-the-record" discussion; if a politician wants to comment "off-the-record" the *Globe* reporter is not permitted to acquiesce but is required to make his or her position known; and if need be, the reporter must leave rather than become privy to information which cannot be reported. The purpose of this policy, which is not common to the *Star*, is to discourage reporters from becoming too "chummy" with politicians. This is not to say, however, that sympathies between *Globe* reporters and certain public officials don't exist.

The *Globe's* policy with regard to "Letters to the Editor" is worth noting. While the *Star* pro-rates its letters according to the viewpoints expressed on a given issue, the *Globe* does not numerically balance letters on a day-to-day basis. While some attempt is made to be representative and to let opposing viewpoints have their say, the *Globe* dislikes repetition. Letters are selected primarily on the basis of style, pertinence, subject matter and originality.

The Toronto Star

The *Star's* approach to disseminating news and opinion was succinctly summarized in a 1969 policy statement:

"The *Star*, as a mass circulation newspaper, aims to present the news in terms of people and its effect on people so it can be read and understood in all sections of the community." While the *Globe* aspires to be a newspaper of record for the nation, the *Star* endeavours to be the voice of the Metro Toronto Community. While the *Globe* writes for the so-called "attentive public", the decision-makers and the opinion-leaders of society, the *Star* gears its coverage to the average person, the uninformed mass public.

This basic aim accounts for both the method and the format by which local politics is reported in the *Star*.

Unlike the *Globe*, where reporters are free to select the stories for reporting within their area of responsibility, the *Star's* reporters receive their assignments daily from their bureau chief. In the past this method of assigning stories had led to

internal politicking and jockeying for position and concomitantly, a considerable degree of job frustration. *Star* reporters prefer the *Globe's* "reporter system" for two main reasons. First, in personal terms they see it as a better arrangement in which to function. Because the present system of day-by-day assignments keeps them "in limbo", *Star* reporters feel they have less opportunity to develop expertise in an area and less freedom to explore subjects in full. The "reporter system", in their view, allows journalists to develop more fruitful contacts, increase their self-confidence in an area and, in short, leads to greater personal satisfaction. Second, they suggest that this increased familiarity with a given subject and the relevant public officials results in better written, more informed news stories.

The *Star's* editorial answer to these objections to their present method of operation flows logically from the paper's general goals. Senior editors argue that because their stories are directed to the masses and not any special elite constituency, it is better not to have "experts" writing them; specialization can lead to excessive detail, over-technical or jargonistic language and an academic style which makes the reportage less easily understood and less relevant to common concerns.

The fact that the *Star* frequently rotates its reporters reflects this distrust of having their staff become too "expert" or committed to one subject area.

As one would expect, the *Star's* staff commitment to municipal news is far greater than that of the *Globe*. In addition to the City Hall bureau, which is comprised of a bureau chief and three reporters, there are three suburban bureaus, located in North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke. Each of the suburban bureaus is manned by a team of three people.

In terms of staff and space, the *Star's* local emphasis is evident. Of the three hundred and twenty people who work in the editorial department, ninety-five are committed to the City desk in various capacities – editing, reporting, etc. (This figure does not include general editors and reporters who handle news of all types, much of it local; nor does it include the photography personnel, who also spend

an estimated 80% of their time on local news.) Looking at the general space breakdown, local news is allotted more space than either national or provincial news. On a typical daily basis, for example, there might be some thirty columns of Metro news, twenty-three columns of National-Provincial stories and only eighteen columns of foreign news. This breakdown does not include other sections of the paper like Insight or Entertainment which also carry local news nor does it include the signed municipal columnist.¹¹

In September, 1975, the *Star* introduced a new format for local political reportage by creating suburban "zoned editions". Actually, this change was an expansion of an idea, first used in 1967-68 when a special zone page for Peel-Halton was created. The first page of the Metro News Section continued to be reserved for local news that went to all of the Metro Toronto area. The second page, or "zone page" was held for the community news that was relevant to the area of distribution. A total of three suburban and two-ex-urban pages have been instituted.¹²

The *Star's* decision to establish zone editions was an attempt to respond to the reality that much of the paper's readership is located in the suburbs and the urban areas adjacent to Metro. If the *Star* was to fulfill its basic aim of disseminating the news as accurately, responsibly and fully as possible and in a manner that would genuinely inform the "community", it needed to give more space to the boroughs and outlying areas whose concerns were being neglected. There was an obvious economic motive for the innovation; the *Star* hoped that by providing what were termed "reward units" to borough readers, they in turn would demonstrate their appreciation via higher circulation figures.

One cynical view is that the zone editions were created to enable the *Star* to compete with and effectively eliminate the community weekly newspapers. However, this seems an unlikely explanation considering that, first, many of the suburban weeklies are owned by the *Star*¹³, and second, that the *Star* has not tried to usurp the unique community services which these weeklies provide by covering local sports and social

events; the zone pages focus predominantly on local political news. The obvious advantage of the zone page is the additional space it allows for borough news coverage.¹⁴

Thus in sharp contrast to the *Globe*, the *Star's* policies toward local coverage proceed from the conviction that reporting local community events is the newspaper's first priority. It is a *Star* "joke" that no matter what happens, the first question asked at number one Yonge Street is "what does it mean to a person in Metro?"

The *Star's* policy on the relationship between the editorial pages and the news pages of the paper differs from that of the other dailies. While a clear demarcation is stipulated in that editorial opinions are not intended to either bias the content of the reportage or cause a newsstory to be suppressed, there is a significant connection between editorial opinion and news selection. The following statement of *Star* news and editorial policy clearly sets out both the extent and limits of this relationship:

The editorial page not only expresses The *Star's* opinions but also reflects its judgments as to what are the most important topical issues and events.

The page should, therefore, serve as a guide to news selection in the realm of politics and public affairs – but in respect to subject matter only, not as a biasing influence on the writing or editing of stories and columns. In short, the areas of interest reflected on the editorial page should be well covered in the news columns, and this emphatically means coverage of disclosures, facts and arguments which contradict *Star* editorial policy.

The Toronto Sun

As a tabloid the *Sun's* central objective is to inform the public in a brief and entertaining way. Because the tabloid format is so fundamentally different from that of a broadsheet it is not valid to compare the *Sun's* operations with those of Toronto's other two dailies.

The *Sun's* approach to local government news coverage can be quickly summarized. The City Hall staff consists of two newspeople – a reporter and a columnist. The columnist, John Downing,

deserves special mention in view of his long experience reporting and commenting upon municipal politics – he has covered City Hall since 1958. Since the *Sun* relies very heavily on its signed columns for reportage and evaluation of political events at all levels, Downing's columns are considered a vital component of the local coverage.

The *Sun* tires to give the image of being a local paper and will give preference to headlining a local story on page one over a national or international news-story. Unlike the *Star* or *Globe*, the *Sun* does not departmentalize its news; local news may be played from page one on through the paper, although Downing's municipal column appears regularly on page four.

The key to all stories in the *Sun* is that they be tightly written. Indeed, no story can be longer than twelve inches unless approved by senior staff. The assumption underlying the tabloid format is, of course, that readers will get "turned off" by overly long stories. Consequently, the editorial hand at the *Sun* can be a heavy one – for the purpose of keeping stories short and to the point.

Editorial policy is determined by the editor, Peter Worthington, who works in consultation with the publisher. Prior to elections, this consultation process is expanded to include other members of the staff, such as journalists.

Due to both the tabloid format and its small staff at City Hall, the *Sun* is unable to keep a close eye on the happenings in Metro's five boroughs. To help compensate for this, every six months or so the *Sun* will interview the mayors of each of the boroughs and do a story on the problems and upcoming events there.

While the *Sun's* editorial staff acknowledges that local coverage would be more satisfactory with more staff (the boroughs could be monitored, for one thing) they stress that given their staff and space constraints, the *Sun* does a creditable job. They point to obvious indicators of the success of their overall approach: rising circulation figures, increased advertising business, in-house readership surveys which show that the *Sun's* editorial page is better read than either of the competition's editorial pages and that a relatively high percentage

read the columnists. By means of their columnists the *Sun* is able to present a full range of informed opinions on the leading political issues, and to present it in a small 'package' that is easy for the average person to read.

In terms of quantity and background provided, the *Star* and the *Globe* readers are naturally "better serviced" in the attention paid to local government news, although at times, a *Sun* column will explain an issue more clearly than its competitors. *Sun* spokesmen explained that the constraints of time and space, felt by all journalists, are felt more keenly by a small paper lacking the revenue and manpower to cover municipal government in a complete and thorough way.

TELEVISION

CBLT (CBC – Channel 5)

CBLT's daily evening newscasts are *24 Hours* (6-7 p.m.) which has a strong local emphasis and *Final Edition* (11:30 p.m.) a fifteen-minute newscast of strictly local news. The latter is not considered a major local newscast, an attitude which was confirmed this April, 1976, when *90 Minutes Live* (Peter Gzowski), CBC's pilot for a late-night talk show, was scheduled after the *National News*, thereby delaying *Final Edition* to midnight.

24 Hours, the major newscast for local affairs, is divided into two segments: the first half hour presents the so-called "hard" news in which local events, according to the program's producers, are emphasized "all the way"; the "journal" segment or second half hour contains the softer news, the in-depth stories, the background material and interviews.¹⁵

This hour-long format has been in effect for approximately seven years. The addition of the half hour current affairs or Journal section has permitted CBLT to examine complex issues in depth. A recent example is its coverage of Toronto City Council's passage of a new Official Plan. While CBLT's news section tried to convey the factual information in an almost academic fashion, using maps for example, the Journal segment televised a debate between the leaders of the two factions in Council, Mayor David Crombie and John Sewell.

The *Journal* section also justifies serious investigative reporting. One staff

reporter covers municipal affairs for the news segment. In addition, a Story Editor specializing in urban affairs (Maggie Siggins, a former City Hall reporter and commentator), does in-depth investigative reports on such local political topics as daycare, Metroplan and the Metro budget.

In the past year, the Journal segment of *24 Hours* has introduced a new feature – public opinion "surveys". The purpose of the surveys, which are based on audience telephone responses to a specified 'yes' or 'no' question, is to elicit public reaction to events. The program's producers feel that the public should have a chance to voice their views on certain controversial issues, partly in order to balance the opinions of the "elites" and the opinion-leaders of society. This was especially true of their first survey feedback effort (February 1976) which dealt with the Art in the Spadina Subway Project.¹⁶ After a presentation of the "facts", viewers were asked to phone in during the week to vote on the project. The result? 550 calls against to approximately 190 in favour. The creators of the poll see this as valuable information for decision-makers – essential input from the general public. Critics of such television plebiscites argue that they are overly simplistic and can distort public understanding.

The second feedback concerned the Metro budget. After receiving some information on the main budget problems facing Metro, viewers were asked to choose between paying increased taxes or having service cuts. They chose service cuts by a margin of about 10:1.

Because the television poll idea has proved "successful" CBLT is attempting to modify its telephone set-up to permit viewers to vote in a certain way simply by dialing a given number; this would facilitate the registration of many more "votes" than the current switchboard system.

The most important outside media influence on the selection of CBLT's news stories is the Harry Brown Show (*Metro Morning*); both the executive producer and the news producer of *24 Hours* listen to it; and there is also consultation between the assignment editors of the two shows.

Both the *Globe* and *Star* also influence

the daily assignment agenda, although the *Globe's* influence is presumed to be stronger due to timing. The printed press also influences Journal stories in that newspaper clippings are an important research source.

CFTO (CTV – Channel 9)

Of all five Canadian local television stations broadcasting to the Metro Toronto area, CFTO has the largest news viewing television audience.¹⁷ However CFTO's commitment to local political coverage seems to be weaker than either CBLT's or CITY's.

CFTO has a very uncomplicated policy on municipal coverage: to cover municipal politics "as best it can". Municipal affairs is one of the few beats the station has, with one full-time municipal reporter assigned to it; additional staff reporters are assigned to local events as needed.

Local news programs are aired seven days a week: at 6:30 p.m. on *Worldbeat* and at 11:20 p.m. on *Nightbeat*. While *Worldbeat* carries no network news, the amount of local political reportage varies; as an omnibus program, stories are chosen according to common standards of "newsworthiness". The forty-minute *Nightbeat* show is the major local newscast produced by CFTO.

In addition to the two daily newscasts, municipal affairs are discussed sporadically on three other CFTO programs: *Toronto Today*, a morning talk show which is broadcast five days a week, from 8:00 to 8:30 a.m.; the half-hour *Fraser Kelly Report*, which appears every Sunday at 6:00 p.m. and is devoted to the discussion of political events at all levels of government; the Saturday night *Norm Perry Show* (10 p.m. – 11 p.m.), an interview program which occasionally focusses on local political events.

During civic elections CFTO makes a special effort with extended local news programming before, during and after the elections.

Finally, CFTO consciously strives to be original and, although those in charge acknowledge reading the newspapers, they claim they are not dependent on the print media. At the same time, it is frankly conceded that in-depth background and continuity of staff cannot ordinarily be

provided. The station's senior staff suggest that, by its nature, the broadcast media are generally able to just provide a digest of local news.

CITY (Channel 79)

CITY places great emphasis on local stories which can be treated in-depth. The general philosophy regarding local coverage is summed up in the signs that decorate the station's walls:

"Think local, name names".

The City staff aim to cover local events in greater detail than the other broadcasting stations do and in a more provocative, hard-hitting way. They try to deal with public officials in terms of what they actually did in a situation, getting behind the official description of the event. With a strictly local audience, CITY limits itself pretty much to local Metro Toronto events. They have a significant policy concerning follow-up programming, and issues such as the Spadina Expressway and the Toronto Island have been covered on a continuing basis.

Local government news is covered on three programs: The half-hour *Money Game* show at 8:00 p.m., weekdays, begins with a quick summary of business news but then proceeds with personal interviews which often relate to local politics – notably budget priorities. Yet an issue like the parking garage at the end of the Spadina arterial road has been discussed twice on *The Money Game* since local spending is a financial as well as political question. *The City Show* (8:30 – 9:30 p.m.) is the major current affairs program for the discussion of local political issues. Finally the half-hour evening newscast (9:30 p.m.) presents the news with a local emphasis.

CITY's operation for information programming is small and low-budget with a total staff of 11 and only 2 general reporters. They do have a seat in the press gallery and try to have someone at City Hall at least in the mornings.

GLOBAL TV

Because it is a southern Ontario network rather than a local Toronto station, *Global* tends to focus on issues that are either of regional interest or are especially newsworthy in the particular

local area.

With a total reportorial staff of eight reporters working out of Toronto as well as three reporters in Ottawa, *Global* covers a considerable part of the province from Windsor to Kingston and north to Sudbury. None of the reporters is assigned to cover any of the municipal City Halls.

Thus Metro Toronto issues do not receive special attention unless they are of unusual local significance or of interest to the rest of southern Ontario.

Another factor which reduces *Global's* coverage in Toronto is that its two daily newscasts (6 o'clock, 10 o'clock) are produced only on weekdays. As a result, when Toronto City Council passed its new central area official plan on Friday night, January 30th, *Global* did *not* cover it. The earliest opportunity for a report on the item would have been the Monday following, by which time, of course, it was "old news".

Global's approach differs from that of the other television stations in that reporters and broadcasters are allowed to "express informed opinions" in their newscasts. This kind of "editorializing" is specifically prohibited in the reportage of other television and radio stations, with the important exceptions of those radio broadcasts labelled "news and comment".

Other than the two daily newscasts, *Global* does not produce any current affairs shows that deal with local government.

Even though no reporters are specifically assigned to cover local councils, *Global* feels satisfied that its staff is experienced and professional enough to cover local events fairly and completely. Reporters are given a good deal of freedom in terms of time, issues they select and in expression; and in this respect, *Global* feels it is analogous to the *Globe*, the so-called "reporter's paper".

They keep apprised of local events by listening to *Metro Morning* (CBC radio), by monitoring their "opposition" in television, by scanning the *Star* and *Globe*, and through personal contacts.

According to the assignment editor, *Global* would like to have a City Hall reporter in Toronto, if the budget permitted.

RADIO

CBC* 740 AM, Toronto

The central thrust of CBC local programming is "information programming". The phrase simply means that the great majority of local CBC shows aim at presenting information of all kinds, including news, current affairs, agriculture, sports and consumer news, arts and cultural information.

In the realm of news and current affairs, CBC radio has both national and local programs. Normally, national news is presented on the hour¹⁹; some national newscasts are in-depth (for example, *The World at Six*, from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m.) while others are mini-newscasts lasting only 2½ minutes. In the fall of 1976 these bulletin-like mini reports will be expanded from 2½ to 3½ minutes.

Local newscasts occur only in prime time, which for radio coincides with meal times. Thus, there are local newscasts at 6:30, 7:30 and 8:30 a.m.; 12:30 p.m.; 4:30 and 5:30 p.m., this last being the biggest CBC local newscast with an average length of 9 minutes.

There are also some regional Ontario newscasts during the day as for example at 1 p.m. which runs some 6½ minutes.

The key to CBC's local political coverage does not lie in the local newscasts however, but in its current affairs programs. The following current affairs programs cover local political news to varying extents:

Metro Morning, Weekdays 6-9 a.m.

Hosted by Harry Brown, this is the most influential of all the public affairs programs in regard to municipal events. It provides the most immediate form of in-depth coverage of topical issues. The show often clusters view points around a specific topic and will pursue a topic for several days, if warranted.²⁰ It broadcasts at peak periods for radio listeners generally and reaches public officials at the start of each working day. *Metro Morning* focusses on the major current issues in the Toronto-Hamilton area.

Radio Noon, Weekdays, noon - 2 p.m.

This magazine-type show has stories with a province-wide appeal, including information for Ontario producers and consumers; it also does topical features and lets listeners phone in their views on

controversies. *Radio Noon* is estimated to have increasing impact since the open-line format for the second hour of the program was introduced in January, 1976. **The Bruce Smith Show**, Weekdays 4-6 p.m.

According to CBC's promotional literature, this show "takes the rush out of rush hour with just the right music plus interviews, reports and topical comment...". Like *Metro Morning*, this show deals with topical issues, often municipal in orientation, but is "softer" in the sense that there is more music and the pace is more relaxed.

Warren Davis Tonight, Monday to Thursday, Midnight to 1 a.m.

This show emphasizes topical, Metro issues. Because it comes on so late, it is presumed to be less influential on local decision-makers than the shows cited above.

These are the four main information CBC radio shows that report and comment on local political events. Together with the local newscasts, they represent a major commitment to local coverage.

This local emphasis is quite recent. Roughly five years ago, the CBC conducted a major internal study and analysis which recommended more local programming. The implementation of this policy was reflected in two ways:

- a) the organization of program distribution

In the old days, when national news was stressed, the CBC used seven or eight huge regional transmitters to distribute programs. It is now opening small stations in communities across Canada manned by staff who live in the area and are consequently more aware and more responsive to local concerns; these stations broadcast to a more immediate audience.

CBC also uses low power relay transmitters and at times will program separately for these relay stations. For example, while *Metro Morning* is being aired, the transmitters will receive another program called mid-Canada a.m., which is produced in Toronto but heard only in northern Ontario. This permits shows like *Metro Morning* (also the Bruce Smith Show) to be truly local.

- b) the schedule itself

The policy change stipulated that the

prime time of radio should be locally programmed. The specific application of this general principle is spelled out in detail for each time period. Note for example, the national CBC objectives for the 6 to 9 a.m. period on all local radio stations across the country, which read in part:

"to present a live locally-produced program of local, regional, and national and international news and comment, of relevance and consequence to the lives of the people served by a particular transmitter or string of transmitters . . . to (provide) . . . the most complete and reliable news service . . . about the community being served to balance the national and international news from the network; . . . to develop thoughtful commentary about civic and regional events to combine with national and international commentary from network . . ."

With regard to staff, CBC local radio has 8 reporters; most are general reporters and municipal affairs is one of the few assigned "beats"²¹. Because the national radio news room, staffed by approximately forty newspeople, is also located in Toronto, the local CBC radio station can manage with a staff of just eight reporters. At the present time, there is a feeling at the senior staff level that a second municipal affairs reporter is needed; and they hope that a second position will be created in a year or so. It is acknowledged that with just one reporter covering City Hall, borough politics tend to get short shift despite the elaborate system of local programming.

What are CBC radio's primary sources for local political stories? According to the Program Director for the Toronto Region, CBC radio depends on all the media — radio and television newscasts, the daily newspapers, even magazines as well as their own City Hall reporter. There is a close relationship between all CBC news operations. For example Jay-Dell Mah's reports are often used on CBLT while *Final Edition* is recorded by CBC radio and clips are used on the *Metro Morning Show*.

Who is the intended audience for current affairs shows such as *Metro Morning*? The audience target is defined by the national statement of objectives,

mentioned above:

"General, all ages. As high as the number of people who can be attracted to a program of uncompromisingly-high standards designed to set in perspective their several worlds and assist them in coping with these worlds".

In summary, it is essential to stress that CBC radio is most untypical of the broadcast media generally. The time constraints, the need for hard-hitting stories, the dependence on commercial advertisements for revenue, and the lack of manpower to explore issues on an in-depth basis which characterize most private radio stations obviously do not limit the CBC in the same way. Even the single CBC municipal reporter has more time than other private radio newsmen (who must file stories for newscasts on an hourly basis) for research and monitoring.

CFRB — 1010 AM

CFRB is the most listened to radio station in Metro Toronto, indeed in all of Canada. With an estimated audience of some 440,000²² at prime time, CFRB views itself as a unique station — "almost all things to all people".

CFRB has no policy statement regarding objectives for news coverage generally or for local political coverage specifically. But there is a clear verbal understanding reaffirmed in regular meetings among news directors and reporters that each newscast should aim at telling listeners about those events of the day which they would find interesting and relevant. CFRB does not feel any obligation to educate the public as to the processes of local government and consciously seeks to keep stories light enough and simple enough to be readily understood by the general public. Moreover, because CFRB's "local" audience includes most of southern Ontario, the station tends to have a more regional outlook. This tends to restrict the extent to which strictly City news or borough issues are covered in detail. Borough news is a particular problem to cover and it is customarily ignored unless there is unusual interest.

CFRB has two types of daily newscasts. The majority, twenty-three in number, are "straight, factual and objective" and contain no editorializing;

seven times a day news broadcasts include news and comment, with those by Gordon Sinclair and Charles Doering being the most opinionated.²³

The general pattern for newscasts is as follows: every hour of the day on the hour and every half hour in "drive time" (6-9:30 a.m. and 4-7 p.m.). They are usually five minutes in length. There is no set format for each newscast. All newscasts can cover all levels of government and the order of stories depends simply upon what is deemed most important according to the criterion: "what all of the people should know about".

CFRB has a total reporter staff of six; three are general reporters and City Hall, Queen's Park and education are the three assigned beats. CFRB's municipal affairs reporter, who determines his own daily agenda, spends some 80% of his time covering City and Metro politics and the remainder on general assignments, including sports and traffic.²⁴ Interestingly, despite the size of his area of responsibility, he feels that he has adequate time for research and preparation. Because his objectives are limited to reporting the issues that interest the average person and writing about them in such a way as to convey only the general meaning of that issue, he deliberately avoids becoming deeply involved in the intricacies of local political events. Thus, for example, he tends to avoid detailed planning and development conflicts in favour of more broadly appealing human interest stories.

How does he plan his day? Generally, CFRB's local affairs reporter depends on municipal agendas and all radio and television newscasts to keep apprised of the events. Occasionally, he will listen to *Metro Morning*. Unlike several other broadcast representatives to whom we spoke, he does not read the newspapers or use the *Star* or *Globe* to determine his assignments.

As well as regular newscasts, local political news may also be covered on the following programs:

Let's Discuss It with Art Cole, the Director of Community Affairs. (This position was created in September, 1972, to "zero in on local issues".) This half hour Sunday night program (6:10 p.m.) offers in-depth discussion of a variety of

issues, including local government matters.

Answers, also with Art Cole, an irregularly scheduled show which is usually heard 2 or 3 times a week, handles questions about current events (the only regularly scheduled time is Sunday, 1:05 p.m.)

Betty Kennedy show, a public affairs program which varies daily, depending on what's current.

Dialogue, a four-and-a-half minute discussion of topical issues, broadcast daily and heard 3 times a day.

CKEY — 580 AM

CKEY's approach to local news reportage is guided by two convictions.

The first is that the mass public is only interested in the news to the extent that it affects them directly, and that, consequently, the average listener doesn't care about the complexities of decision-making. The responsibility of the media, according to CKEY's news director and municipal affairs reporter, is to chronicle the events of the day — not to educate or message deliver. In their view a more elaborate or detailed news coverage of local politics would *not* lead to increased citizen involvement in or concern about local government.

The second premise is that the key to high quality coverage lies in the personal experience, effort and competence of the people that make up the CKEY news organization. The emphasis is on versatility and flexibility among the staff rather than on structured assignment patterns.

There are approximately 10 reporters, depending on who is included; in addition, there are 4 reporters for the two specialty areas of sports and consumer affairs. One covers City Hall regularly²⁵, but at least two other reporters are equally comfortable reporting municipal affairs, when necessary. In addition, many of the staff, including senior staff and broadcasters have had extensive City Hall experience.

This staff broadcasts some 36,000 words every day. (By comparison, a 75-page newspaper contains about 186,000 words.) CKEY insists that the "rip and read" allegations are absolutely unfounded, that it is *not* dependent on the printed press or wire services as its news sources. In fact, CKEY claims that the pattern is

just the opposite — the printed press relies on radio! As one senior staff person summed up: "we can move around the *Star's* front page just like that!" CKEY's main sources for newstories are personal contacts.

Newscasts are heard generally on the hour, and on the half-hour during drive time. Of these newscasts, three include news and comment (7:00 a.m. — Joe Morgan; 8:00 a.m. — Charles Templeton; 5:00 p.m. — Peter McGarvey). In all the rest, reporting is not editorialized. There is no regular structure to the newscast, although there is a Metro thrust where suitable.

CKEY does have a stated editorial, news and information policy. However, it deals with standards for the *quality* of news reportage rather than content. It calls for diligent, aggressive, responsive, speedy, accurate and thorough broadcasting of the news, without fear or favour. It states that the primary responsibility is to deliver the whole truth, as objectively as possible, taking care to clearly separate reporting from comment and attempting to seek out and air alternative viewpoints. "We should seek all significant sides of any particular cause or issue", states the policy, "in order to be as balanced as possible in the presentation"²⁶.

What about the content of newscasts? We asked CKEY spokesmen: what does the average CKEY listener learn from your newscasts about local political events? The answer helps to explain both the goals and thrust of the station's local news coverage:

The average CKEY listener would be well-informed about what happened and about the short-term and long-term implications. But he might not understand how the decision was reached.

CHUM — 1050 AM

As a youth-oriented radio station, whose basic product is music, CHUM approaches political news at all levels with a view to keeping the attention of the station's listeners. Local news does not have any special priority. CHUM feels that it has an obligation to entertain and to inform people but does not

believe it is "in the education business". The criteria for judging what is included on each newscast and in what order are, very briefly, "what is newest and biggest" in the world of news.

In reporting events of Metro-wide concern, CHUM tries to simplify the event by reaching for the most readily identifiable aspect(s) of the story. For example, they might report a complex issue related to planning or transportation by looking at what the end result might be.

CHUM does not have any current affairs programs that deal consistently with municipal politics. Sometimes the *John Gilbert* (phone-in) *Show* will feature municipal politicians and, on occasion, CHUM will do a documentary program on a local issue, as it did on Spadina.

Newscasts are heard hourly and there are two kinds: long newscasts of up to thirteen minutes in length, including weather and sports, are broadcast during "drive times" and at noon; one-minute "updates" are broadcast on the hour at other times during the day.

CHUM has a flexible approach to reportage. There are four regular staff reporters, one of whom covers both Queen's Park and City Hall.

In putting together the daily assignments for reporters, CHUM's news director checks the *Globe* and the *Sun*; TV newscasts and radio stations CKEY, CFRB, and CFTR are also monitored. In contrast to other broadcast stations, CHUM does not use *Metro Morning* as a guide to what it should cover that day.

In sum, CHUM has modest aims with regard to local government news coverage.

In our interviews with media spokesmen we asked a number of questions dealing with infringements on press freedom; we asked reporters whether they had personally encountered censorship or suppression of legitimate stories; and we asked editorial staff whether pressure was ever exerted in order to promote certain "causes" or suppress information that might help causes not favoured by the owners or editors of the newspaper/station. The answers formed a very clear pattern

which is easily summarized.

Newspaper reporters from the *Toronto Star* stated that while overt censorship was not evident, the kind of internal pressure described in the Davey Report was operative at times. It worked in a very subtle way. Reporters quickly learned what kind of stories received the best play, and what kind were most quickly cut or "buried" in the paper. As a result, some reporters feel reluctant to pursue a position with which editorial staff don't agree. *Globe* reporters seemed less conscious of a controlling newsroom atmosphere. Editorial staff on all three papers emphasized the separation between the editorial and reporter sides of the paper (with the qualification at the *Star* as to prominence given to subject matter in terms of assignments and placement in the paper²⁷).

Reporter and editorial spokesmen for the electronic media, including television and radio, all denied that a "party line" existed within their newsroom. The only editorial constraints were "good taste" and "newsworthiness".

Our overall impression is two-fold: first, that on occasion the views and interests of media executives do affect news coverage in terms of the emphasis given to certain subjects²⁸; second, that, in general, censorship or editorial bias do not seriously infringe upon freedom of the press in Metro Toronto's local government coverage.

As this survey demonstrates, there is a wide variety in methods and formats employed by the Toronto news media to report local political events. In part, this is due to differences in ownership (private/public), organization size, budgets and audiences. The variations also reflect basic differences in both the goals among the media for news dissemination and their expectations regarding the public's demand and capacity for local government news. Evaluation of the quality of coverage depends upon the objectives and criteria that are either explicitly or implicitly adopted.

This survey, therefore, highlights a number of issues and themes which were dealt with at the Bureau's spring conference on the News Media and

Local Government. Chapter III of this *Civic Affairs* describes the results of this conference.

1. *Op. Cit.*, V.I., p. 19.
2. For a clear outline of the complex patterns of group ownership of Canadian newspapers and broadcast stations, see Volume II of the Senate Committee Report on Mass Media; entitled *Words, Music and Dollars*, it is a detailed study of the economics of the communications business in Canada.
3. For a list of the non-daily, non-ethnic press in Metro Toronto, see Appendix A.
4. The provincial education station OECA Channel 19, is for all practical purposes, irrelevant to local political coverage. We would also point out that this survey does not include French language radio or television stations.
5. The radio newsrooms are located on the first floor (except for CBC radio which shares space with CBC TV on the second floor).
6. According to the *Globe* Editor-in-chief this lack of participation is not the result of any clear-cut policy decision; rather, the Gallery is regarded as a house-keeping organization in which membership is not deemed worthwhile.
7. See Colin Vaughan's "A Field Guide to All These Strange Birds in The City Hall Press Gallery" *Toronto Life* (January, 1976)
8. The four radio stations looked at were selected on the basis of audience statistics. According to the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (Fall, 1975) the following stations had the highest number of listeners in Metro Toronto: CFRB, CKEY, CHUM and CBC. In addition, the audience profiles confirmed that their audiences were the most educated.
9. *Toronto Life* (January, 1976).
10. The last regular *Globe* City Hall column was by Ron Haggert in 1960.
11. The *Star's* municipal columnist, Michael Best, has been writing three columns a week about City Hall for 5 years.
12. In the ex-urban areas, the zone page comes first and Metro news is on page two.
13. See Jon Caulfield, "Fighting a Corporate Octopus", *Toronto Citizen* (May 18-31, 1973). Caulfield states the "The *Star* owns 80% to 100% of every suburban Metro newspaper with a paid circulation of 5,000 or more". These include the Etobicoke Guardian (100%), the Etobicoke Advertiser (100%), the Don Mills Mirror (80%), the Downsview Weston Mirror (80%) and the Scarborough Mirror (80%).
14. These zone pages may be the beginning of a mini-newspaper. A study is currently underway to determine the impact of these pages on circulation.
15. On Tuesday night, *The Rogers Report*, also an investigative current affairs show, is broadcast instead of the *Journal* segment.
16. A survey run by the Art Gallery suggested that the public favoured the project.
17. Based on Bureau of Measurements Early 1975 Fall Figures, CFTO's Worldbeat and Nightbeat shows both have the largest adult audiences for Metro Toronto.
18. CITY programming consists of 3 production units: information, variety and access programming.
- * Technically, the Toronto AM radio station of the CBC is called CBL. However, about a year ago, CBC radio decided to de-emphasize call letters and to stress instead the frequency, the corporate letters and the city. This practice was adopted for all AM and FM radio stations of the CBC across Canada.
19. There are exceptions: there are no national newscasts at 3 p.m., 9 p.m. or 11 p.m.
20. This is clearly exemplified in Metro Morning's coverage of the Metro Teachers' Strike, discussed in Chapter IV.
21. Others are Queen's Park and (currently only) arts and entertainment.
22. BBM figures for the fall, 1975, show that at 8:00 a.m. CFRB's weekday audience of adults (18 years old +) in the full coverage area is 442,700. This compares with CBC radio - 108,300, CKEY - 125,700 and CHUM - 126,800.
23. Bob Hesketh and Torben Wittrup also do news and comment, but in a less outspoken manner.
24. Until 1971 CFRB kept a reporter at City Hall all the time, but decided that this was not justified in terms of news content or programming opportunity.
25. The current City Hall reporter generally is present in the City Hall press gallery offices the first half of the week. He also keeps an eye on North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke.
26. This is part of CKEY's "Controversial Broadcasting Policy" which sets out guidelines for equitable access to the air waves for advocacy/adversary persons - both from paid and unpaid sectors.
27. See above, page 12.
28. For example, the coverage given in the *Star* to such issues as the Yonge Street clean-up Rent Control, Art in the Subway, redevelopment of the Waterfront (Metro Centre).

II THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEWS MEDIA ON LOCAL POLITICIANS

The news media are generally credited with having immense power over what and how we think. Opinion differs over which medium has most impact on public attitudes towards political issues. As we pointed out in the Introduction the question of influence is complicated by many factors, such as influence on whom and what kind of influence. If you accept the opinion of some media specialists, television is now the most powerful force in democratic politics in terms of both whom it reaches and the persuasive power of its impact. Others argue that while television may have the greatest power for "image-making" and therefore be pre-eminent during election campaigns, the "print culture" is still dominant for the opinion-leaders of society; the extent of newspaper influence is considered especially significant under conditions of low involvement (as in the Metropolitan Toronto political scene).¹ Still others insist that radio is the most important medium for primary news dissemination, that radio reaches an audience largely missed by either newspapers or television, and that for many people it is their first link to the world.

In this chapter we consider the question of media influence by describing the results of a two-page questionnaire which was sent to all elected officials in Metropolitan Toronto (February, 1976). The overall aim of the survey was to learn how Metro's local decision-makers view the news media.

The response to our mailed questionnaire was approximately 50%; we received forty-seven completed questionnaires from the total of ninety-five that we sent.

As the table on the next page shows, daily newspapers are by far the most important news medium for Metro's local politicians. When asked to rank in order of importance which of the media they used as their main source for local government news, over 70% put "one or more daily newspapers" as their first choice, and 95% ranked them first or second.² Nine respondents turn to a weekly newspaper as their first source,

and ten more rank it as their second most important source for local government news. As one might expect, there is an extremely high correlation between those who depend on weekly newspapers as a first or second source and those who rely on the daily press; in almost every case, those who ranked weeklies first put dailies as their second source; and in every instance, if weeklies were ranked second, dailies had been ranked first. There are obvious explanations for this heavy print bias among politicians, not the least of which is the fact that newspapers can be read at any time while newscasts must be heard at specified times of the day. It may also reflect greater trust for the printed word, greater respect for the research and thought put into reportage by newspaper reporters, the feeling that newspaper reports strongly influence radio and television coverage and the belief that newspapers are also the most important source for the general public.

Radio was somewhat higher on the scale than television with fifteen politicians placing it second and only ten ranking it third. Only six politicians turn to television second and for most it is their third or even fourth source for local political news.

When asked to estimate which of the news media was most influential on the general public in regard to local government issues, the majority ranked the daily press first, but close to 25% (11/46) of the respondents said that television was most important. Seven said that weeklies were most influential. Radio was ranked lowest in its impact on the public in regard to local politics. This is interesting when one considers the audience statistics for radio — which are far greater than the newspaper readership or television audiences.

Certainly, those involved in radio news production disagree with the perception of the politicians; those we interviewed believe that while the print media may be most influential on decision-makers, radio has the most influence on the general public.

SUMMARY TABLE*

1. a) Which of the following media do you turn to for local government news? Please rank in order of importance:

	FIRST CHOICE	SECOND CHOICE	THIRD CHOICE	FOURTH CHOICE
NEWSPAPERS	71.4%	23.8%	3.3%	—
RADIO	4.8%	35.7%	33.3%	29.4%
TELEVISION	2.4%	14.3%	50.0%	41.2%
WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS	19.1%	23.8%	13.3%	29.4%
NONE	4.8%	2.4%	—	—

b) Which of the following media do you think is most influential on the general public in regard to local government issues?

	FIRST CHOICE	SECOND CHOICE	THIRD CHOICE	FOURTH CHOICE
NEWSPAPERS	60.4%	24.4%	13.2%	4.8%
RADIO	2.3%	26.8%	44.7%	23.8%
TELEVISION	23.3%	24.4%	23.7%	28.6%
WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS	14.0%	22.0%	15.8%	42.9%
NONE	—	2.4%	2.6%	—

* For each choice the percentage varies somewhat, due to the fact that not all respondents ranked each of the media through all four choices. Note that the first column totals 102.5% because one "first choice" was divided between two of the media.

Three of the questions asked local politicians to rate the various newspapers, radio stations and programs, and television newscasts and programs as to the quality of their local government coverage. The results were as follows:³

2. a) Which Metro daily newspaper provides the best coverage of local government news? *Star* — 83%
Globe — 13% *Sun* — 4%
- b) Which Metro daily newspaper provides the worst coverage of local government news? *Sun* — 58%
Globe — 33% *Star* — 9%
- c) Which Metro daily newspaper do you think has the most influence on decision-makers? * *Star* — 70%
Globe — 27% *Sun* — 3%

* Vis-a-vis local government issues.

3. a) Which radio station in Metro provides the best coverage of local news? *CFRB* — 46%, *CBC* — 38%, *CKEY* — 14%, *CHFI* — 2%
- b) Which radio station in Metro provides the best coverage of local news? (only 12 responded) *CHUM* — 6/12, *CFRB* — 1/12, *CKFH* — 1/12, *CFGM* — 1/12, *ALL* — 2/12
- c) Which radio program provides the best coverage of local issues? (out of 19 responses). *Metro Morning*

8/ 8/19 (the only consistently named program)

4. a) Which television newscast in Metro provides the best coverage of local news? *CFTO* — 47%, *CBLT* — 36%, *CITY* — 17% (36 responses)
- b) Which television newscast in Metro provides the worst coverage of local news? (only 16 responded) *CBLT* — 7/16, *GLOBAL* — 4/16, *CFTO* — 3/16, *CHCH* — 1/16, *ALL* — 1/16
- c) Which television program (public affairs) provides the best coverage of local issues? (out of 16 responses) — *The City Show 10/16* (the only consistently named program)

In an attempt to learn to what extent politicians depend on the press for basic information we asked:

In the past year did you ever use a newspaper account of a report as a substitute for reading the full report itself?

The responses were: 20/45 — never; 14/47 — once or twice; 11/47 — several times; two frankly admitted that they had "more than they care to admit". The point is that for well over half of the politicians who responded newspapers are, at least on occasion, a basic source of

information.

We also asked politicians to define what they felt should be the reporter's proper role in relation to local decision-makers. Should he/she be a "passive chronicler: to observe and record local government events", an "aggressive critic: to function as an opponent or adversary of political leaders" or "both". The majority chose a "passive" role; only 1 opted for an aggressive or adversary role for reporters. Twenty of the respondents checked "both" with some qualifying explanation as to how aggressive or critical the reporter should be.

Several questions were designed to learn what criteria local politicians would apply to news reportage and specifically what they thought each of the media could do to improve their coverage of local issues. Because the questions were open-ended, we can best give the results by summarizing the main impressions gained from the questionnaires.

Local politicians in Metro emphasize standards of accuracy and objectivity as the primary criteria for judging the quality of reportage. When asked "what qualities do you think are necessary in a newscast or newstory" almost every respondent included such phrases as: "factual reporting", "presenting both sides", "no editorializing", "accuracy and honesty", "unbiased and complete reporting of facts". The second set of criteria suggested was related to the depth of the research; several politicians mentioned "enough background information to explain the context" of a story, "good research", "detail" and "time to tell the story fully". Very few elected officials referred to the quality of the writing as an essential criterion; one said it should be well-written, another said it should be "interesting" and "presentable", a few mentioned "brevity" and one pointed to a "a sense of humour". The dominant concern, however, was about the accuracy and objectivity of the reportage.

This was confirmed by the responses to the second part of the question quoted above, "what characteristics make a newstory 'bad'?". The answers were very consistent: "sensationalism", "slanted reporting", "out of context", "biased" and "one-sided reporting",

"editorializing", "exploitation of insignificant issues" etc.

It is interesting that the elected officials' overriding concern about the quality of media coverage is that the press tell the news "like it is" without distortion. In emphasizing accuracy and objectivity, they disregarded questions of the scope of coverage (i.e. what is being covered) or its perspective. No one suggested, for example, that the newstory/newscast should seek to disseminate information which lies behind events or should consciously seek to question institutions.

Questions 8, 9, and 10 asked the local politicians to suggest how each of the media could better serve the public in reporting local issues. The advice was, for the most part, general: more space, more time, more "in-depth" coverage, more homework, and expanded coverage of the boroughs. Several responses repeated the points made in the earlier question on the quality of newstories: tell both sides of an issue, greater accuracy, less bias, less playing up of personalities, etc. A few made specific suggestions: less rotation of local reporters, innovation of borough pages in the *Globe* and *Sun*, television coverage of council meetings, specific radio and television programs devoted to civic affairs, more interviewing of civic leaders by broadcasting media reporters, including non-headline makers.

Our overall impression after reading the questionnaires was that almost all of the elected officials felt there was room for improvement in local government news media coverage — both in quality and quantity. However, the criticism was far from scathing and the nature of the suggestions for improvements indicates a basic satisfaction with the general approach of Metro's news media.

1. Dan Nimmo, *The Political Persuaders: The Techniques of Modern Election Campaigns* (Prentice Hall, 1970) p. 133

2. Out of 47 responses, 5 just checked without ranking, 30 ranked newspapers first, another 10 ranked them second and only one put them third (one person split their first choice).

3. Percentages based on total number of responses.

III RESULTS OF BMR SPRING CONFERENCE ON THE NEWS MEDIA AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Session I — Does the Press Do Its Job In Helping People to Understand Local Government?

Moderator:

Susan Fish, Policy Advisor to Mayor Crombie

Speakers:

Graham Fraser, Reporter, "Globe and Mail"

Barbara Greene, North York Controller

Reactors:

Barrie Zwicker, Editor and Publisher of "Content"

Ted Moser, Assistant Managing Editor, "Globe and Mail"

Discussion in this session was limited to the printed press. The focus of the session was the range and scope of press attention, rather than objectivity and accuracy. Graham Fraser explained that with the constant risk either of misinforming people or losing them, the press adopts a variety of roles, only one of which is entertainment.

In part, the type of story told in the press depends on the type of reader the reporter has in mind. But since there can be different levels of interpretation for any one story, the message is usually intended for an audience comprising both a general readership and an informed citizenry, the average reader as well as the opinion-maker. Fraser argued that the press should serve as both a passive commentator and a critical interrogator. The public itself must take some responsibility for exercising healthy skepticism regarding what is presented to them.

Evaluating the frequently mundane, day-to-day operations of local government is what the press does *not* do well. The press is geared to report change, not stability; even feature writers emphasize what is happening today that is different from before. On this issue there was disagreement; some participants argued that the media cannot be expected to teach civics lessons, while others maintained that the press already does at least stimulate interest in the workings of government by including information about the institutional background in newstories.

Another example of what the press

In this chapter we present a summary of the main themes and issues as they emerged during the sessions of our News Media and Local Government Conference.¹

Keynote Address by Senator Keith Davey

Senator Keith Davey set the stage for the Conference by summing up the main themes of his Senate Committee Report on the Mass Media in Canada. In that report he had stressed three major concerns: the quantity of media voices, the quality of the media and Canadian cultural survival.

With regard to the quality of the voices, Senator Davey reaffirmed the two criteria he used in his report: first, *accuracy* — whether the newspaper, television station or radio station accurately reported all the facts and second, the extent to which the media helped to prepare the public for *social change*. Using these two criteria, he told the participants of the Conference that news coverage of municipal affairs in Metro Toronto is better than or equal to any other Canadian city.

The coverage is "adequate, but it leaves a lot to be desired, especially in its neglect of Borough Governments".

The bulk of the Keynote Address was devoted to what Senator Davey called "a box score" on the performance of the media in Toronto, which rated individual columnists in the printed press, as well as the various media, in an entertaining and provocative way.

In general, Senator Davey said that "from time to time" the *Globe* and *Star* "have insightful coverage of local government, but all the news media place too much emphasis on the absurd, the unusual, confrontations and personalities".

Senator Davey concluded by suggesting that while we do not have the press we need, we have the press we deserve.

A number of points raised by Senator Davey were discussed during the Conference sessions, summarized below.

does not do is gossip about the personal lives of politicians. In part this is due to Canada's strong libel laws; in part it is because reporters feel private lives don't affect public interest. One panelist, however, regretted that there are no political gossip columnists. On the few occasions when reporters have become too "chummy" with politicians, the media itself could act as a check, by pointing out how the friend's interest differs from the public's.

With regard to the media's role in reducing public apathy toward local government affairs, at least one panelist tried to expose the fallacy of equating better information with increased interest. He regarded "information overwhelm" as a characteristic of the press which can increase the alienation of the audience.

There was general agreement that the media frequently present too much about too little. Too often the media trivialize important issues, or else miss the significance of events altogether. Barry Zwicker emphasized that too often the news business reacts to events. The environment issue and consumerism were mentioned as two examples of patterns of events that the media failed initially to identify: only after Rachel Carson and Ralph Nader had publicized the issues did the media pay attention to them.

Most of the blame for the flaws in coverage was attributed to municipal news editors. Editorial "arrogance" regarding what is newsworthy precludes the necessary self-questioning of assumptions. Sacred editorial cows over-ride clear judgments of what information should be presented. Even the words used in the media reflect conservatism: words and phrases invented to express new realizations of how events come together are dismissed by editors as "jargon" or "lingo", and the old concepts are substituted. Too frequently the justification of "not enough space" is used to explain the allocation of media resources when really it is the judgments regarding usage that should be clarified.

The issue which was raised by Controller Greene and reiterated a number of times throughout the session, by panelists and

audience alike, was the extent to which the media ignore Borough coverage. Not all agreed that the media should be faulted for this. Some suggested that Borough news was not significantly new or different from City news, and that in any event it was up to the borough weeklies, not the daily papers, to cover local events. On the other hand, it was countered that borough weeklies can do nothing to promote a shared understanding of the problems across Metro, and that the main problem is the centralization of the press gallery at City Hall.

In answer to the complaint from the audience that some politicians get all the coverage, a panelist stated that reporters, frankly, are turned off by the publicity-seeking antics of a number of Borough politicians, and that those elected representatives who receive a lot of coverage do so usually because they are members of Metro Council as well as a local council.

There were two final comments from the audience. First, both the media (and this conference) had ignored an entire aspect of municipal politics: appointed bodies, such as hospital boards and children's aid societies. One reporter stated in reply that he personally had been denied entry to a hospital board meeting. But the point still remained that public scrutiny of these less visible public bodies occurs only when their decisions have created headline news.

Second, a member of the press from outside Toronto area registered his disappointment that a conference of such importance had focussed its attention exclusively on the Metro Toronto news media.

Session II—The Influence of the Media on Decision-Makers

Moderator:

John Downing, City Hall columnist for the "Toronto Sun"

Speakers:

David P. Smith, Alderman, Metro and City Executive Committees
Dorothy Thomas, City Alderman
Frank Drea, M.P.P., former columnist for the "Toronto Telegram"
Claire Hoy, political columnist for the "Toronto Sun" Queen's Park

There appeared to be general agreement among the panelists in this session that the media can and do influence decision-makers. However, there were differing opinions as to the extent of this influence and its implications. There appeared, too, to be a consensus that the media plays an important role as a communicator between levels of government. None of the panelists supported the notion that the media creates public opinion. However, as Alderman David Smith put it, "it does fan the flames". For example, he said the media devoted more attention to the debates over the location of a new Massey Hall than it did to the City's overall policies with respect to the core. In his view, this is but one example where the media sensationalized an issue and gave it priority over one of far greater importance.

Alderman Dorothy Thomas, a former member of the Reform Caucus, shared many of Alderman Smith's perceptions. Nonetheless, Alderman Thomas did point out that political reporting is generally done through a bureau and that such bureaus are very clubby with the more influential politicians. As a result, she contended that the press generally accept as issues those defined by these politicians. She claimed that successful politicians learn to use reporters who support their point of view. In her view, clubbiness undermines objective reporting and discourages investigative reporting. She contended, for example, that the Watergate story would never have been broken by Washington correspondents who were part of the 'club'. Ms. Thomas argued that once a reporter is accepted as part of the club, he or she becomes compromised.

Neither of the local councillors had much regard for columnists, a view not shared by their provincial counterpart, M.P.P. Frank Drea. He argued that the columnist can look back and forward and can put government activities in some perspective, a function a reporter does not have time to carry out.

Mr. Drea believed that the media have an enormous influence on decision-makers and that their role is invaluable to good government. In his view, as government

becomes bigger and more complex, it is impossible for the individual citizen to police it and, indeed, it is impossible for it to police itself. He argued that government needs the media as both a stimulus and a control mechanism. Without the media, he believes government would be determining consensus with virtually no access to the individual, a situation he considers very dangerous.

In his view, gun control, efforts to clean up Yonge St. and rent control are all issues of widespread concern which were given attention by government only after they were given considerable attention by the media.

As to policing government, Ms. Thomas contended that the presence of the media at council meetings reduces absenteeism, helps to keep politicians honest and prevents them from vote-switching to please those who sit on both sides of the issue. She did acknowledge that politicians can and do change their minds but if they do so, the media can report it.

While Mr. Drea did not share Ms. Thomas' cynicism with respect to the objectivity of those involved in the media, Claire Hoy, a Queen's Park columnist did. He contended that the press are far too soft on politicians. He asked, for example, how often do the media ask politicians whether they have fulfilled their campaign promises and, if not, how often do they remind the public they have failed to do so.

A number of those who attended this session pointed to the Metro teachers' strike as an example of biased reporting in the media. Claire Hoy countered that coverage on this issue reflected public opinion. He claimed he had never been involved in an issue where the public had been so unanimous in its opinion.

A school board trustee pointed to the fact that school boards generally receive very poor coverage by the media. In this connection, John Downing pointed out that many special purpose boards and commissions throw out the media when they are discussing anything contentious. However, he singled out hospital boards as the worst offenders.

There appeared to be an almost unanimous belief that the printed press had the

greatest influence on local and provincial decision-makers. The reasons for this were perhaps best summed up by Rob Gregory of CKEY. He pointed out that while the purpose of all media is to inform the public, each uses different methods because each has different strengths. Newspapers, for example, can be preserved and are portable. Therefore, a person can read them whenever he or she has the time. In addition, a person can take the time to digest detail. As a result, the press do more in depth reporting than the electronic media. They generally have larger staffs to analyze issues, etc. In this connection, Claire Hoy contended that we will never get good investigative reporting in Canada until we demand it because, at present, the major papers that could afford to do it are not investing the money required to make it possible.

Radio has the advantage of immediacy. Therefore, if there is an accident or an assassination, people turn on their radios. Because of this, radio stations opt for very brief coverage of news items and tend to include things the public will remember.

Television has the advantage of showing what is happening and tends to emphasize this strength rather than analysis of issues.

Session III Demonstration Session, Questionnaire Results

This session began with a videotape summary of a local political "event". The "event" consisted of the passage of the new Official Plan for the City of Toronto by City Council, which took place during the morning, afternoon and evening of Friday, January 30, 1976.

This particular day was chosen because it represents the culmination of four years of effort to reform the existing official plan. In both practical and symbolic term it was the most significant achievement of Mayor Crombie's administration.

The Council meeting on the actual day of voting - Friday - was the event selected. In fact, that event began the week before on January 23rd when the debate over the proposed new plan started. There were six long days of Council debate, therefore, preceding the day of voting.

Of course, in a sense, that event began long before Council's debate. There had been two years of study to develop

criteria and goals, months of preparation of the final proposals including public discussion, and eleven intense days of debate by the Planning Board - all leading up to the official plan vote.

Thus at the outset we acknowledged the inherent limitations of the exercise: first, "our event" represented one day in an event which really took place over a lengthy time period involving several smaller "events".

second, the videotape represented some eight hours of voting and discussion; but it was only 30 minutes long. Obviously there were inherent dangers in the selection and editing process.

We tried to ensure that the edited videotape represented the event as fairly and accurately as possible. To do this we sought the advice of spokesmen from those who both defended and opposed the new plan as to what should be included in our summary film. Then the edited version, which took the various opinions into account, was viewed by a panel consisting of Ron Soskolne, planner; Jay-Dell Mah, CBC reporter; Alderman Anne Johnston. All agreed that the videotape was a reasonably fair, unbiased summary of the day's happenings.

Following the summary film of the event, we presented some of the media coverage from television, the daily newspapers, and radio, including, CFTO and CBLT television news (for both Friday and Saturday nights), CFRB radio, and newspaper reports from all three Toronto dailies.

The audience was then asked to fill out a short evaluation questionnaire.

The overall purpose of the Confidential Evaluation Questionnaire was to give the participants at the conference the opportunity to assess the nature and quality of the media coverage of the event they had just "seen". In asking a series of questions that dealt with the accuracy and the informative quality of the various newscasts and reports, we were interested in the main differences in the coverage by the three media - television, radio and newspaper - and, even more specifically, whether the audience perceived a significant difference between the three newspapers and the three electronic media. We thought that the exercise might be useful in showing how each of the media could have done

a better job in reporting the event. It was a difficult exercise. The total presentation was 55 minutes long; each of the news reports was presented once, one after the other; the time was limited. We received ninety-two completed questionnaires.

The results appear on the following chart, with percentage figures based in each case on the number of respondents who answered the question:

CONFIDENTIAL EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Broadcast Coverage:

	a) Was the <i>emphasis</i> in the newscast (i.e. individuals quoted; the facts mentioned first or repeated), fair and accurate?		
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
CFTO	39%	45%	16%
CBLT	65%	19%	16%
CFRB	63%	16%	21%

	b) Did the newscast provide enough information to enable you to understand what City Council was doing that day?		
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
CFTO	39%	53%	8%
CBLT	67%	29%	4%
CFRB	45%	48%	7%

	c) Did the newscast provide enough information about the consequences of the new Central Area plan?		
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
CFTO	9%	86%	5%
CBLT	33%	63%	4%
CFRB	11%	82%	7%

	d) Were there any errors or distortions?		
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
CFTO	47%	21%	32%
CBLT	33%	33%	34%
CFRB	38%	37%	35%

	e) Were there any significant omissions?		
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
CFTO	63%	14%	23%
CBLT	40%	33%	27%
CFRB	54%	20%	26%

f) What attitude did the news reports convey about the new plan as to whether it was good or bad for the City?

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	NOT SURE
CFTO	68%	14%	18%
CBLT	78%	9%	13%
CFRB	65%	7%	28%

g) Rate how well you feel each of the electronic media reported the event. The coverage was:

	Very		
	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
CFTO	3%	42%	55%
CBLT	24%	52%	24%
CFRB	13%	44%	44%

2. Rate how well you feel the newspapers reported the event. The reportage was:

	Very		
	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
GLOBE	41%	49%	10%
STAR	34%	46%	20%
SUN	2%	78%	20%

From these results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1) CBLT had the best coverage of the three electronic media: roughly 2/3 of the respondents felt that the emphasis was fair and accurate and that the newscast provided enough information to enable them to understand what happened. None of the three electronic media was considered to have provided sufficient information about the implications of the new Central Area Plan, but CBLT rated significantly higher than either CFRB or CFTO. Interestingly, * even CFRB's coverage was rated better than that of CFTO, which received the lowest score on every question and was deemed unsatisfactory overall by a clear majority (55%).²

2) The *Globe* was rated highest of the print media. Ninety percent of the respondents found the coverage "very good" or "adequate". While only two people deemed the *Sun's* reports "very good", a high number found them "adequate". Only 20% of the responses rated the *Sun* "unsatisfactory" compared with 55% who found CFTO's coverage "unsatisfactory". It would appear that the public is more tolerant of the *Sun*, accepting it as a tabloid with limited space for reportage but has higher expectations than were fulfilled in this case by CFTO. The one news source

which received the highest vote for overall quality of reportage was the *Globe and Mail*.

3) Additional comments helped to explain why CBLT did so well and why CFTO rated so poorly. People were impressed by CBLT's attempt to explain what the new planning restrictions meant by showing examples of buildings of a specified density. CFTO's coverage was criticized in several questionnaires as being too brief and lacking in background information. While some suggested that CFRB newscasts needed more detail, they also acknowledged the technical limitations of radio.

4) The main differences cited between the three media were:

- television: had greatest immediacy and best conveyed the mood of the event
- radio: also had the advantage of immediacy, but lacked depth and, like television, was only able to hit the highlights due to time constraints
- newspapers: by far the best able to provide the details of what happened and the background information

5) Question 4 asked the participants how, on the basis of this exercise, each of the media could have done a better job in reporting the event. The most common recommendations, in order of frequency were:

- show the implications and consequences of Council's decision; give a more in-depth analysis
- give more background information
- report how all sides felt
- give examples
- more-in-depth interviews
- less focus on personalities

Almost all of the suggestions for improvement would require the allocation of more time/space to reporting the event.

In the discussion which followed the demonstration, reaction to news media coverage of the vote on the downtown plan for Toronto was mixed. While some participants expressed feelings of satisfaction with the general coverage, a number of specific criticisms were raised.

Coverage tended to highlight the process of decision-making and the interplay of personalities in City Council. The complex range of issues involved in formulating a downtown development plan were not fully explored.

There was no evidence of an economic

impact analysis, relating the plan to unemployment levels in Metro, and the range of interests viewing the plan from this perspective. The alternative concepts of downtown development, being offered by critics of the plan, were not seriously discussed, nor were the themes raised by critics. These issues included the deconcentration of downtown functions and the preferred scale of housing density.

Others cited the need for media coverage to clarify basic technical terms for the average citizen. It should not be assumed that everyone is familiar with land-use notions of "five times", "twelve times" coverage. If citizen interest in municipal affairs is seen to be vital, then issue clarification becomes an important media responsibility. It also becomes important to report on citizen interest in these issues; one participant noted the absence of reports on how citizen leaders of community institutions perceived the downtown plan debate and its outcome.

Those of the media involved in covering City Hall spoke of the volume of press coverage of the downtown plan, its technical complexities, their perceived need to report municipal issues, both in terms of content and personalities.

The exchange between media and non-media participants never achieved levels of consensus. Instead the session provided a forum for articulation of alternative perspectives on the quality of media work in urban affairs.

Session IV Improving Media Coverage of Local Government

Moderator:

Charles K. Bens, Executive Director
Bureau of Municipal Research

Speakers:

Maggie Siggins, story editor specializing
in urban affairs for CBC "24 Hours",
Jay-Dell Mah, Municipal Affairs Reporter,
CBC

Ron Haggart, former City Hall columnist
and Senior Producer for the CBC current
affairs show, "The Fifth Estate"

Jay-Dell Mah discussed the problems faced by radio broadcasters in covering local government. He explained that the challenge facing radio reporters is to capture in a 40 to 60 second comment a message that is relevant and intelligible.

Unlike newspaper reporters, who have access to research files, radio reporters end up in reference libraries to do their research and these collections are inadequate. Furthermore, reporters often do not receive the agendas of the borough councils on a regular basis. As a result, they do not know what is happening and the borough coverage is "hit and miss". Jay suggested that the boroughs get their coverage at Metro itself and are not as ignored as others have suggested during the seminar.

He recommended more reporters on the job to cover local politics, but added that this would require a change in current management policies and priorities. He felt that the range of impact for radio is underestimated, and estimated that over 1.25 million people probably hear one newscast compared to the half million daily circulation of a newspaper like the *Toronto Daily Star*.

Ron Haggart encouraged the newspapers to do more investigative or "original" reporting at the local level and not take events or pronouncements at face value. He called for a local talk show of local affairs, and also suggested that the "drama" of City Hall, which is both entertaining and informative, should be captured on television more often than it is now.

Maggie Siggins responded that television can do the best job of covering local politics, but instead often does the worst. Some problems are technical: film is expensive, production time is lengthy, and local news clips are only about 2 minutes long. In some council chambers, film cannot be shot. She suggested that videotape could be a solution and also recommended experimentation with "phone-in" shows where politicians would speak for themselves on television.

One member of the audience noted that many local meetings, particularly those of special purpose health and education bodies are not covered at all, and he recommended the pooling of media resources and the sharing of information. Competition, he suggested, could occur in the research side of reporting. Haggart responded that pooling might produce mediocrity, but admitted that it might have advantages.

During the audience discussion, John Downing agreed that reporters do not routinely receive reports and agendas from all the municipalities in Metro, and predicted that borough coverage would improve if reporters did not have to get out to the events themselves.

Graham Fraser argued that the state of borough coverage is a reflection of their "political culture" to some extent. He said "politics" had come to Toronto City Hall but not to the boroughs. Ron Haggart agreed.

Marvyn Novick criticized all the media for persisting in viewing local government as a regulator and servicer of land. He said that in spite of the fact that over three quarters of municipal expenditures are for human services, coverage and knowledge of these areas is low. He argued that problems requiring the attention of the human services are not limited to Toronto but can be found in the suburbs and should be reported.

1. See Appendix B for Conference Programme.
* Interestingly - because of potential scope of television for news reportage in terms of visually showing what happened and what it meant is presumably so much greater than that of radio.
2. Note that in explaining that the new plan would provide for more housing in the core, CFTO's Friday night coverage conveyed an erroneous impression. By using the word "dwellings" and by showing footage of detached and semi-detached new suburban housing to illustrate the plan's recommendation for more low-to-moderate income housing in the downtown core, CFTO's reportage was inaccurate. Only a few conference participants noticed this distortion, however.

IV THE NEWS MEDIA AND THE METRO TORONTO TEACHERS' STRIKE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter 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. 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 8,800 secondary school teachers — the first in Metro under the new legislation (Bill 100), granting teachers the right to strike — was one of the longest and the biggest teacher strikes in Ontario's history. It lasted nine weeks, affected 140,000 students, and only came to an end after the Province passed legislation forcing the teachers back to work under compulsory arbitration. The arbitrator's decision on March 5 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.

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.

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 chapter is 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, 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 and radio transcripts from selected newscasts and public affairs shows from CBC, CFRB and CKEY.

— 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 case of either side was fairly or adequately presented in the media or that the issues of the conflict were explained in a way that was genuinely informative or constructive.

With the criteria stated above in mind, we have analysed the media reportage and commentary according to four inter-related themes. These are:

- (a) how the main issues of the conflict, notably those concerning remuneration, were portrayed,
- (b) the image of the teachers as presented in the media,
- (c) the image of the Metro School Board in the media, and

- (d) The changing focus of media attention as the strike continued.

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE

A The Main Issues of the Conflict

When the teachers' strike entered compulsory arbitration there were, according to the arbitrator, over twenty-six items still to be settled.¹ The most contentious of these were about money: salaries, cost-of-living allowance, allowances for responsibility, post-graduate degree allowance, special education allowance and lump sum payments. As one reporter summed up, the fight may have been about things other than money, but "the bucks are a convenient way of keeping score".² By reviewing the treatment of the salary and other monetary issues in the newspaper and television transcripts, we should get some indication of the tone and vantage point of the coverage. Bearing in mind that the Board and the OSSTF disagreed on almost all of the figures used – dollars and percentages – we shall note whose numbers were used, and the context in which they were set.

In the period from the beginning of October until November 12, when the strike began, the pattern in the printed press regarding the salary issues was as follows:

Globe and Mail

In five major news reports on the impending strike the *Globe* used four different figures to explain the salary dispute.³ The first article focused on factfinder Stanley Hartt's denial of a CBC report that his offer was for 79% as "miles wrong"; it did not explain, however, what the factfinder's report did propose. The second article, entitled, "43% Teacher Raise Rejected by School Board Chairman" used the teachers' interpretation of Hartt's proposal – "average increases of 43 percent over two years" in the lead paragraph. This article, which appeared on page 5 of the *Globe*, was the paper's most detailed news story on the salary issues in this period and it did try to clarify that each side had different figures. The third and fourth articles used the school boards' interpretation of its offer as an average increase of "40% over two years", which

in dollar terms meant a minimum category raise from \$8,100 to \$11,575 and a maximum category raise from \$18,800 to \$24,820. The fifth article, a page 1 announcement of the strike under the headline "99% of Teachers Strike", explained the monetary dispute in dollar figures, not percentages. It used the teachers' figures (i.e. Hartt's) which called for salaries ranging from 13,356 to 25,224, as compared to the Boards offer that ranged from 11,575 to 24,820. As Hartt's figures did not include the potential cost-of-living payments or annual increments, this presentation could be described as "pro" teacher, although the paragraph did not specify that Hartt's recommendation covered a two-year period. The story was long (45 column inches) and it went on in subsequent paragraphs to repeat the Board's figures again, then to point out that the Board calculated its offer as 39 percent while the teachers maintained it was only 31 percent.

In summing up *whose* figures were used, *both sides* were.⁴ In three of the five news reports the teachers' numbers dominated, while the Board's view seemed most prominent in two. The reporting of the competing claims was thus, in our estimation, fair or even advantageous to the teachers in terms of the figures used.

However, 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. However, if the offers were compared using the same method of computation the gap was enormous and the cause of the strike was more evident. In defense of the reporters, both sides were using different figures, different means of calculation or speaking two different languages, as a *Star* senior editor put it.⁵ That the reportage was confusing may have been unavoidable, given this situation.

While this brief review suggests that the figures used do not justify complaints of "unfairness", the context in which they were used was sometimes less neutral. For example, in the final article mentioned above, the meeting at which the board discussed its last offer was

described thus⁶:

"The Board came under attack at last night's meeting for its offer to the teachers . . . One woman drew enthusiastic applause from the 150 people at the meeting when she yelled: "When are taxpayers going to stand up and fight these unions?" Another man was applauded when he accused the teachers of holding up the public for ransom. "What's wrong with everybody? Half the people in this room would love to be offered increases of 40 per cent."

The board calculates its offer as a 39 per cent increase. The teachers, by not including annual increments and cost-of-living payments, say it amounts to 31 per cent."

Thus while a newsstory may have included information and quotations from both sides, as this one did, the inclusion of specific statements could give it an anti-teacher tone.⁷

In three of the five *Globe* stories cited, the context in which the figures were set were, in our view, neutral.

The editorial position of the *Globe* was unreservedly negative towards the teachers. This will be discussed under the second theme of this analysis – "the image of the teachers as presented in the media."

The Toronto Star

The *Star* used both sets of figures and appeared to give each side's claim equal weight. The October 16th article, announcing the factfinder's proposal, was headed "43.9%" in Two Years Suggested Raise for 8,300 Teachers". On October 29 ("Teachers' Pay Demands Called Unreasonable") the Metro School Board's figures were featured. Two days later, a *Star* article described the meeting of the teachers at Maple Leaf Gardens which denounced the School Board offer: "8,000 Metro Teachers Jeer Pay Offer". While the tone of the article was negative to teachers, in terms of their image, three figures were stated – 39.2% (Boards version of its offer), 31.4% (the teachers' view of the Board's offer) and 43.9% (the teachers version of their own demand). The Board's view of the teacher demand was not stated in the *Star* until November 6 ("9 out of 10 Metro Teachers Vote to Strike"); after 13 paragraphs the story explained that the board calculated the teacher demand as 62.9% (if the cost of living rose 8% in 1976 and 6% in 1976-77). Similarly the November 7th article, opti-

mistically entitled, "Last-Ditch Talks to Avert Strike Called by Wells"⁸, used all four figures: 39.2, 31.4, 43.9 and 62.9. The November 10th article used both sides' figures and explained that the gap between the two positions over two years totalled \$60 million.

Again, the context in which the numbers were used varied. Out of nine major stories on the high school strike between October 16 and November 12, the Bureau's tally of the score is *even* – three were pro-teacher, three were pro-Board and three cannot be described as favouring either side.

Toronto Sun

The salary figures appearing in the *Sun* contrast with those in the other two daily papers. Compare the story headlines of the three papers on October 17, announcing Metro School Board Chairman, William Ross' rejection of the factfinder's proposal:

Globe: "43% Teacher Raise Rejected by School Board Chairman"

Star: "Teacher Strike is Threatened in Pay Fight"

Sun: "Board Throws Out 61% Teacher Raise Report"

While the *Sun* did use all the figures in subsequent articles, the 61 or 62.4 percent figure (based on Hartt's proposed salary increase plus cost of living) had more prominence than it did in the other two dailies.

The figures in the *Sun* were especially notable for their inconsistency. For example, on October 29 a *Sun* report stated that the average teacher then earned \$13,700 and would make \$21,182 under the Board's offer. Two days later the *Sun* editorial gave the salary for the average teacher as \$16,448 which the Board's offer would raise to \$22,894 (these latter figures were in fact relatively accurate). A reading of all the *Sun* articles and editorials in the period up to the strike suggests that this paper's record for inconsistency and variances in the use of salary figures was the worst of the three Metro dailies.

What the press generally failed to do was to provide a comprehensive overview of the issues. It failed to coherently organize the facts and issues in a manner that the claims of both parties could be clearly understood. 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. Two of the key justifications of the teacher's position were that they had fallen behind in compensation due to years of spending ceilings and that they deserved to have parity with other Ontario school boards. Therefore, the day-to-day focus of the bulk of the reporting tended to obscure the historical and comparative perspectives.

Television

A television viewer would have been just as confused, perhaps more so, in sorting out the numbers' game.

Early CBC reports⁹, prior to the publication of the factfinders proposal, announced that Hartt would recommend a 79% increase in salary and fringe benefits for the teachers "that would cost taxpayers an extra \$300.00 a year". These figures of 79% for the factfinder's proposed wage and benefit increase and the \$300.00 estimated cost to homeowners in extra municipal taxes were repeated on the October 16 broadcast. On October 24, however, the same reporter explained that the factfinder's report,

"released last week, recommended an average salary and benefits increase of 63%."¹⁰

Three days later the CBC report used the 43.9% figure which included only pure salary increase. (This was the figure favoured by the teachers).¹¹ Subsequent CBC reports seeking to clarify the salary dispute used a variety of percentage and dollar figures. The complexity of the money issues and the confusion that the reporting must have produced in the public mind is best illustrated by a CBC in-depth re-capping of the strike and negotiations that appeared on February 24, 1976.¹² The theme of the twenty-five minute program was:

"What lies behind this current dispute? They want more money but, is that all there is?"

The announcer's explanation was as follows:

"(The teachers) wanted more money.

Top pay was to go up 9,000.00 to 27,000.00. They wanted a cost of living allowance. And, in addition, they wanted more teachers and more non-teaching preparation time each day, a packet that totalled almost 73%. Metro School Board rejected a Provincial factfinder's recommendation of 43%. Chairman Ross offered 40%. But the Anti-Inflation Board still felt the Metro offer was too high. In January the Board's offer of 24% over one year was rejected by the teachers three to one. And then they were legislated back to work."

Viewers could not possibly have made sense of this summary. Weren't the teachers demands (worth 73%) and the factfinder's 43% proposal the same? Were the School Board and the factfinder only 3% apart? If so, why did there have to be a strike?

Turning to the question of *how* the numbers were used, it is not possible to identify most reports as pro-teacher or pro-Board. There were some broadcasts which were clearly sympathetic to the teachers¹³, and some to the Board¹⁴. Due to the usual format of a TV new report which generally quotes several people with diverse opinions, most reports were *not slanted* towards either side.

The most significant factor affecting the context in which news items were reported and this was true for all the media — was surely the existing climate of opinion in a time of inflation and restraint. The public simply was not convinced that the OSSTF stand was justified. A CBC report on the eve of the strike interviewed one teacher to learn his story. The report itself was "pro-teacher" to the extent that it permitted the man to present his case. But even though the teacher clarified why he felt he deserved a raise of from \$16,000 to \$23,000 including a cost of living allowance, many listeners must have felt his salary demands were simply too high.

Radio

Evaluating radio coverage of the teachers' strike presents a special problem. The programming formats of the various stations are so different that comparisons are inappropriate. Moreover, and this is just partly true of television, in radio often the most important reportage and

commentary of local events does not occur during the mini-newscasts lasting only three minutes or so but during the daily public affairs programs. With these difficulties in mind, we have reviewed some of the reportage and commentary on the strike broadcast by three leading AM radio stations in Toronto — CKEY, CFRB and CBC, again for the October — January period.

CKEY's reports on salary negotiations were essentially fair but brief — varying in length from 35 seconds to 2 minutes, 25 seconds¹⁵. In terms of their number and length they cannot compare to either CFRB or CBC; the latter produced the greatest amount of reportage and opinion on the strike of any of the electronic media.

By the end of the strike, however, Charles Templeton, who attempted to be evenhanded in his morning newscasts, was becoming exasperated with the teachers. On January 6th, after the massive vote by the teachers at the Queen Elizabeth Building to stay out without strike pay, Templeton commented:

"Well now, one can have some sympathy for the teachers. Some of their arguments are valid, but their timing was wrong from the beginning. And their stubbornness in the face of the inevitable has been incredible. And now, they're making certain that the end, the inevitable end, the end that has been inevitable for two or three weeks now, is going to be bitter . . ."

CFRB followed the teachers' strike quite closely. In terms of quantity, the station broadcast more information and opinion on this issue than any other local private radio station.

The reporting was fair in the sense that the figures of both sides on the salary question were used. However, the reports repeatedly stressed the federal anti-inflation program as a pivotal contextual factor,¹⁶ which from the teachers' point of view was pejorative. (The teachers argued that they were exempt from the Federal wage and price guidelines because their contract was signed before January 1, 1974).

The real key to the tone and objectivity of CFRB newscasts was the newscaster himself. Gordon Sinclair, for example, was generally negative towards the teachers, as the following excerpt from his November 12th report illustrates:

The teachers have rejected what seemed like the best offer ever presented to any teacher of any quality in Canada. Many high school teachers . . . are grossly overpaid already. And I said *overpaid* . . . On a merit basis many of them would be swept out like the three little kittens who lost their mittens. Similarly, the comments of Charles Doering were frequently negative, in contrast to the more neutral reports filed by reporter Tony Andras.

On the other hand, the teachers were able to present their side to the CFRB audience through interviews, as on *The Betty Kennedy Show* of October 30th, when the hostess conducted a sympathetic interview, almost twelve minutes long, with Douglas Dinsmore, Chairman of the Metro OSSTF negotiating team.

Of all the electronic media, CBC radio coverage of the teachers' strike must be seen as in a class by itself — both in terms of quantity and impartiality. Obviously, because of the "information programming" format which is the basis of the CBC schedule, the potential for reportage and commentary was unique. Unlike CFRB, where individual newscasters are allowed freer reign, CBC reports contained less editorializing and opinion.

The most important CBC radio show for coverage of the strike was *Metro Morning*. A summary of the reportage and commentary on that show for just one day — November 12th, the day the strike began — represents the general pattern of *Metro Morning* coverage in two ways: first in terms of sheer quantity it indicates how much time was allotted to provide background from various perspectives; second, it was characteristically conscientious about balancing the viewpoints presented.

A review of all of the transcripts from *Metro Morning* for the period November 1 — January 20 confirms that interviews were balanced both as to who was questioned and to length and time slot. (see next page)

B The Image of the Teachers as Presented in the Media

a) editorials and commentary

(see chart next page)

For those who confined their reading about the strike to newspaper editorials and signed columns alone, a very jaundiced

METRO MORNING SCHEDULE – NOV. 12

Date	Topic	Length of Time
November 12, 1975	Student Plans for Teachers Strike	3.05
November 12, 1975	Two Teacher Viewpoints – 2 Teachers	5.33
November 12, 1975	East York Board Policy in Strike	1.14
November 12, 1975	Parents Reaction to Teachers Strike (Warren Davis broadcaster)	2.35
November 12, 1975	Toronto School Board Stand on Strike – Gordon Cressy	5.08
November 12, 1975	North York Board Policy Re: Teachers Strike	1.00
November 12, 1975	Picket Line in North York – Teachers	4.45
November 12, 1975	Teachers Position in Strike – John Volpe	5.50
November 12, 1975	Etobicoke Board Policy – Re: Teachers' Strike	1.02
November 12, 1975	Update on Teacher Picket Line	1.03
November 12, 1975	Student on Picket Line	3.00

SUMMARY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS ON METRO TEACHERS' STRIKE

Date	Title
The Toronto Star	
November 12, 1975	Teachers Flout Inflation Restraint
November 17, 1975	Teachers have a Debt to Students
November 19, 1975	Teachers: Guidelines Must Apply
November 22, 1975	Irresponsible Behaviour by the Teachers
November 24, 1975	Set Teachers Pay on Province-wide basis
November 29, 1975	Teacher Pay Ruling: Tough but Fair
December 2, 1975	Teachers Could Set Fine Example
December 31, 1975	Are Our Teachers Trade Unionists?
January 7, 1976	Send Teachers Back to the Classrooms
January 9, 1976	Strike Law Fails to Protect Students
The Toronto Sun	
October 31, 1975	Teachers
November 17, 1975	The Real Losers
November 18, 1975	Forbid Strikers
December 2, 1975	Victims
December 16, 1975	Flabby Race
December 18, 1975	Gallant Teacher
January 6, 1976	Losers
January 11, 1976	Teachers
January 16, 1976	King Christophus
Globe & Mail	
November 4, 1975	The Arithmetic Lesson
November 6, 1975	An Absurd Position
November 10, 1975	The Offer They Spurned
November 11, 1975	A Strike Plan That Betrays Contempt for the Students
November 13, 1975	Students Without a Voice
November 14, 1975	Where There's a Will
November 19, 1975	It Began at Queen's Park
November 26, 1975	Your Answer is Ready, Mr. Wells
December 9, 1975	School Board Pays and Students Suffer
December 10, 1975	Voters? What Voters?
December 15, 1975	Dead Right
December 17, 1975	Past the Point of Damage
December 18, 1975	It is What They Say . . .
December 22, 1975	An Addiction of Responsibility

December 22, 1975	Students Come Last, Again
December 23, 1975	Government by Indecision
January 1, 1976	Into the Future, Darkly
January 5, 1976	Burden of Responsibility for a Costly Strike
January 9, 1976	Waiting for the Law
January 14, 1976	For Tidying
January 16, 1976	Let Their Be Peace in the Classroom
January 17, 1976	A Sense of Essentials
January 21, 1976	Still Another Middleman

picture of the typical Metro teacher must have emerged. Editorial and journalistic opinions, as expressed in all three dailies from early October until January, was almost uniformly hostile. As one journalist observed, editorial writers and political pundits had not been in such unanimous accord on a subject since Hitler invaded Poland!¹⁷

Within this general pattern of hostility several recurrent themes are distinguishable. One theme which was dominant from early on and which recurred regularly in editorials and columns of all the papers was that of teacher *indifference* and *callousness* toward their students. One of the most disturbing things about the strike, wrote Norman Webster, was that for teachers,

“the profession of teaching had become just another job and the students so much raw material”
(November 18, 1975)

Witness also the following two excerpts from *Globe* editorials:

November 11: *A Strike Plan That Betrays Contempt for The Students*
“Perhaps if the teachers had been talking directly with the school boards, they would at least have found themselves drawn in to consider what could be done for the students if a strike did occur.”

December 22: *Students Come Last, Again*
“Toronto students are going to be denied classes so that striking teachers can enjoy holidays over Christmas and New Years. It's hard to believe, even after five and a half weeks of a strike, that the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation and consenting teachers could be so *stupidly callous* to the needs of students” (italics added).

The *Star* also emphasized this theme by stressing that the real issue of the strike was the situation of the students; the people responsible for their unhappy plight were the teachers. The November

17 editorial tried to hit this point home: *Teachers Have a Debt to Students*
“ . . . if this goes on for long I can see us having to take the whole year over again.”

These words by . . . a Grade 13 student . . . express with dismal simplicity what is rapidly becoming . . . the real issue in the current teachers' strike. . . . Whatever the other terms of the settlement that has to come sooner or later, the teachers should be required *to make good the damage they are now doing to young lives.* (italics added)”

A second premise which was closely related to the notion of the uncaring, insensitive teacher was that the teachers were greedy and irresponsible. Dick Beddoes took to referring to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation as the O\$\$\$TF.

The *Star* editorial November 12 described the teachers' irresponsibility: *Teachers Flout Inflation Restraint*
“The teachers are wrong to flout the intent of the law. Ottawa's controls are absolutely vital if Canadians are not all to be losers to inflation . . . If the teachers are not willing to support the fight against inflation and continue a strike that brings considerable disruption to some 140,000 students and their families, we all suffer.

This is not the level of responsibility society has come to expect from its teachers. (italics added)”

While the editorial admitted that the anti-inflation program might not seem fair to the teachers who were in the middle of negotiations when the strike began, it emphasized that teachers nevertheless were still earning \$6,000 more than the average industrial wage. The implication was that for teachers to

irresponsibly demand more than 40% was greedy.^{17a.}

The same thesis was advanced ten days later.

November 22: *Irresponsible Behaviour by The Teachers*

"Metro's high school teachers are behaving *irresponsibly* in insisting on their legal right to settle first and only then go to the Anti-Inflation Board to see if they can keep whatever they gain."

Whether or not the existence of the Anti-Inflation Board was used by some as a convenient rationalization for assuming an anti-teacher position, there is little doubt that the establishment of the AIB and the subsequent announcement of its opinion that the Board offer itself was "excessive" (November 28) introduced a major roadblock into the path of the strikers. It became a constant feature of the context for editorial opinion and reportage from mid-November on. And it had the effect of contributing to the public perception of the teachers as greedy.

The editorials of the *Toronto Sun* played on these same themes of selfish indifference to students, irresponsibility and greed — in their own irreverent style. October 31: *Teachers*

What kind of teachers are loose today — or rather what kind of a union is running them? asked the opening line of this editorial.

Not the dedicated committed types of yesteryear, answered the *Sun*. They are "well paid militants who want more . . . people who will manipulate kids into protesting on their behalf. Who'll go on strike and to hell with responsibility and fair play."^{18.}

Teachers were so irresponsible and self-interested that they would not stop at bankrupting the community and sabotaging the system, explained the *Sun*. The editorial ended on this rather fantastic note:

"Okay, so let 'em strike — while they can. Because the way society's going, eventually no one will be able to strike, and we'll have an authoritarian government like India's that dictates and doesn't ask. *And teachers can*

share the blame . . . (italics added)"

And again, on November 17 the *Sun* returned to the now familiar theme of teachers as selfish, indifferent and greedy:

"One thing that Metro high school teachers are conclusively proving by their strike is that they care more for themselves than for the welfare of students — especially the Grade 13 kids hoping to enter university."

The editorial became increasingly strident. The teachers were practising 'gimme gimme' in a time of economic crisis; and their self-interest was "blatant and crude", "a lesson in cynicism and hypocrisy", "a sad and sorry example".

A third theme, which was most evident in certain political columns, also emerged in the editorials — the stereotype of the typical teachers as a lazy slacker, spoiled by a soft job. The *Globe* editorial entitled, "The Offer They Spurned"^{19.} contributed to the general feeling that teachers did not work hard by spelling out the "typical career teacher's job" in detail: he had a total vacation time of over twelve weeks; in addition he had five statutory holidays; of the 197 days he worked, he was allowed twelve professional days. His working day was seven hours, from 9:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. but he taught just six periods a day, or four hours . . . etc.

Closely tied to this theme was the image of the teacher as weak, petulant, complaining. Dick Beddoes' comments summed up the feelings of many: "The old work ethic is obsolete . . . Teachers walk Metro picket lines, pleading hard times, abused by callous employers, sopping up tons of crying towels. Woe is the whiners."

The following *Sun* editorial, which uses this stereotype, is notable too for the feelings of vengeance it exposed: December 2: *Victims*

"One can't help feeling a mischievous twinge of poetic justice that their greed for 11% (or is it 23%) more than the School Board offered has resulted in the Anti-Inflation Board pronouncing even the Board's offer is too high . . . Teachers have skewered themselves.

Teachers are among society's biggest cry-babies. Many . . . are indulged products of an overly permissive education

. . . on the open market many would starve, much less get offered 32% increases plus cost of living bonuses and automatic raises . . . Most teachers have never done hard physical work . . . Teachers are better at whining . . ."

The *Star* editorial the same day, entitled *Teachers Could Set Fine Example* confirmed this unflattering portrait of the teachers as impotent, but in a more subtle way. After reasserting the *Star's* view that the strike was obviously futile and that the OSSTF stance was unjustifiable in view of the Federal anti-inflation program, the editorial gave some patronizing advice. The teachers could "improve their standing with the public" if they would only return to work. The condescending tone of the lecture made the teachers' struggle appear unavailing and puerile.^{20.}

A fifth theme which emerged toward the end of the strike was that the teachers were led toward collective militancy by their union leaders. To appreciate the significance of this portrayal we need to remind ourselves of the negative feelings held by most Canadians towards union leaders.^{21.} By painting the teachers as boss-led militants the media reinforced the other negative attributes — indifference to students, irresponsibility and greed, individual weakness.

The unification of these various themes into a composite negative image is well exemplified in the columns of Claire Hoy of the *Sun*.^{22.} Hoy was particularly vehement in condemning the teachers for turning down a salary offer that he claimed would have paid the average teacher in Metro "\$100 per day"! Although he went on to explain that this calculation was based on the number of working days (197) per year, it was obviously misleading and designed to shock the reader (annual salaries are not ordinarily calculated on a per diem basis, excluding holidays, weekends etc.) Beyond this \$100 per day message, Hoy took the line that the leadership of the teachers federation was more aggressive than the rank and file,^{23.} and therefore unrepresentative, as in the following excerpt:

" . . . in this case its the students and the taxpayers who are going to have to pay the price foisted on them by a *gang of militant union bosses and*

sheepish teachers" (italics added).

This same line was taken by Bob Anstruther who wrote an education column for the *Toronto Sun*. This fact in itself is noteworthy, for Bob Anstruther was really a pseudonym for a man named Harvey Currell — who at the time was serving as the Information Officer for the Etobicoke Board of Education.^{24.}

Mr. Anstruther (alias Mr. Currell) took the line that the leadership of the OSSTF was unrepresentative; his backhanded compliment that there were a lot of "very decent dedicated teachers", in spite of how the union was acting, contained this innuendo.

He also repeated an idea that appeared in all three papers as the strike neared its end that Metro teachers would take their frustrations out in the classroom.

In their full page advertisement "Our Position" placed by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the teachers proclaimed:

"We are angry and mighty tired of being judged by a misinformed and apparently uncaring public — and at being abused by the biased prattlings of editorial writers and columnists (not to be confused with the working men and women of the media who have reported fairly)."

The above excerpts help explain this sense of grievance.

b) news reports

Anti-teacher bias was less evident in the day-to-day press reportage. Excluding editorial and signed columns, the Bureau staff found that *on balance the majority of newsstories in the daily press were "neutral", that is not derogatory to either side.*^{25.}

There were some exceptions to this trend. In our discussions with teacher representatives we were advised of instances of inaccuracies or misleading reporting (from the teachers' vantage point). Many of these complaints dealt with how the negotiations progressed and were countered in turn by spokesmen from the Boards' side.^{26.} For this reason, we have chosen not to try and judge these events and have not cited these examples.

We did find however, examples of teachers being presented in an unfavourable light; the characteristics attributed to teachers in the editorial and opinion columns noted above did emerge in several

newsstories.

For example, the *Star's* headline for a story that the teachers were planning to charge the school boards for bargaining in bad faith read: "Teachers Cry Foul on Negotiations"; the *Sun* headline regarding the same event (which was that the Metro Board Chairman broke off a meeting with teacher negotiators after 17 minutes on the grounds that they were preparing their submission to the AIB) was: "Teachers' Leaders Stunned after Ross Quit Meeting". Again, the teachers were viewed as weakly reacting to the Board. (In fact, according to teacher spokesmen, they were not at all surprised; the event simply confirmed in their view the Boards unwillingness to negotiate). Finally, in a special column devoted to presentation of the concerns of the teachers written by a teacher, the title read, "Stop Putting Us Down, Teacher Begg". Again, the teacher as *suppliant*.

The picture of teachers as irrational and mob-like was created by the use of certain loaded verbs and adjectives, as in a *Star* story which described 8,000 placard-waving teachers jeering the Board's offer.²⁷ The description of the Toronto high school teachers' demonstration in Ottawa (late November) under the heading, "Angry Metro Teachers Give Macdonald a Rough Session" (*Globe*, December 2) reaffirmed this. The copy began,

Bullshit! shouted angry Metro high school teachers yesterday as Finance Minister . . . tried to explain the governments position on wage controls . . . Similarly the December Queen's Park protest was announced thus:

"Davis, Lewis Shouted Down By 4,000 Teachers During Queen's Park Rally Against Inflation Yell" (*Globe*) and "Teacher Mob Yells Down Davis, Lewis, and Nixon" (*Sun*).

An alternative way of describing the protest might have accented what it was about the speakers and the speeches being made that so provoked the teachers.

Teachers were particularly irritated by attacks on their personal character and professional integrity. The idea that teachers were selfish, uncaring, utterly irresponsible, and lazy, (which was so prominent in the editorial and opinion columns of the press, was given credence in several reports. The following are examples:

- "Teacher Will Vote For a Strike - and Then Take a Holiday" - headline over Letters to the Editor page, *Star* November 5, 1975
- "Student Takes on Striking Teacher" - article on a student who had vowed to picket the OSSTF headquarters; with it was a photograph, occupying 7 inches column, which showed the student carrying a sign: "Those who can . . . do, those who can't . . . teach"
- "Binding Arbitration for Metro Teachers or Fines if Not Back on the Job Monday" - (pg. 1 *Globe*, January 15, 1976) This front page story reached a "new low" in the eyes of teacher spokesmen because of the accompanying pictures. The pictures, each 9" x 4½" showed two boys wearing sweatshirts with the slogans: TEACHERS PRIORITIES: 1 MONEY, 2 MONEY, 3 MONEY AND DO YOUR PARENTS WORK? NO THEY'RE TEACHERS

On the other hand, several stories can be categorized as "pro-teacher". Most noteworthy was the article by Gordon Cressy, Toronto Board of Education Chairman, which appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on December 5, 1975; an accompanying press conference was summarized in the other papers. Entitled, "Sick and Tired of Abuse of Teachers" the article defended Teachers against charges that they were slackers who work short hours and have long holidays. The thrust of Cressy's statements was that teachers are dedicated, have been unfairly criticized by the press and public and that this abuse must end if the quality of teaching was not to suffer in the long run.

Other examples of stories which attempted to tell the teachers' side were "Rather Talk Than Walk - 2 Teacher Negotiators Say" (*Toronto Star*, November 15) and "Teachers Say They Want Respect, Not Just Money" (*Toronto Star* November 20) a long article consisting of six interviews with teachers who were on strike.

Summing up, while a number of articles cast the teachers in a negative light by the choice of pictures, the use of "loaded" adjectives and verbs or negative headings, several reports sought to redress the balance. Our research confirms that it was not the reporting but the editorials and commentary that so negatively represented the role of the teachers both in

the classroom and in the conflict with the Board.

c) advertisements

Although paid advertisements are not part of media coverage, a reference to the impact of the advertisements placed in the newspapers by both sides seems appropriate. In November the Board placed a series of four ads in the daily papers with the slogan FAIR'S FAIR.²⁸ Using case studies - presented in the form of real people²⁹ - the ads set out how the Board's wage offer would specifically benefit individual teachers at the various salary levels; those figures were compared to what would happen under the OSSTF proposal. The personalized examples showed that the teacher package would increase salaries by amounts of from \$10,409 to \$13,155 in two years. The public thus had before them in black and white and in dollars and cents the difference between the value of the two proposals. And 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, seemed to hurt the teachers' cause. They appeared to backfire in two respects.

First, they added to the image of teachers as whining complainers. For example, their vow that

"We will not be humiliated by trustees, many of whom were elected either by a handful of voters or by acclamation. They have no true public mandate" provoked an indignant outcry by political observers, who then proceeded to give the teachers civics lectures on the democratic process.³⁰

Second, the focus on money reinforced the dollar-oriented, materialistic teacher stereotype which dominated the editorial and opinion columns. Some have suggested that it was the use of a media campaign, itself, more than the content of the ads, which was the key to the ads' failure.

d) television

A review of the transcripts of CBLT's

news coverage of the high school teachers' negotiations and strike shows that the reportage was generally "positive", from the teachers' point of view.³¹ Numerous stories, for example, featured interviews with students which emphasized that by and large the students supported their teachers and felt they deserved a wage settlement based on the factfinder's formula. The teachers themselves who were interviewed seemed sincerely convinced of the justice of their case. Public criticism was described as unduly harsh, unfair and damaging to teacher morale in several reports.

In contrast to newspaper reports which portrayed the teachers as weak complainers, the CBLT reports stressed that even in spite of the fact that their strike fund would soon be empty, the teachers were firm in their resolve to "stand up for their rights", with "no intention of caving in". Unlike the printed press' focus on the greed and irresponsibility of teachers, CBC television coverage explained on more than one occasion that teacher wages had fallen behind and that their demands really approximated what teachers were getting paid in other Ontario centres. The innuendo that teachers were being led down the garden path by militant union leaders which appeared in several newspaper columns was not present in the CBLT reportage.

Indeed, of all the CBC transcripts studied for the period October 9 to the end of the strike, *only one can be categorized as anti-teacher*. This particular report (24 Hours, 6:30 p.m. November 5) examined the reaction to teacher demands from professors at the University of Toronto; (not unexpectedly some professors felt that the salary demands were "greedy", particularly since a settlement based on teacher demands would result in some professors with equivalent years experience being paid less than teachers). Apart from this single report, *CBC television news reportage did not actively contribute to a negative teacher image*, but was impartial or even at times frankly sympathetic to the teacher position.

Citizens who depended on CFTO coverage for reports on the teachers' strike would have been poorly informed. Simply in terms of the *amount* of coverage, given to the issue, CFTO devoted considerably less time than that given by CBLT.

The bulk of the reports failed to even mention the issues of the conflict; and those that did failed to explain their significance in a serious way. In contrast to CBLT there was no continuity in the reporters covering the strike and far less interviewing of participants, which in part explains why it was so shallow, perfunctory and, at times, inaccurate.

e) radio

Of the three radio stations monitored, CFRB's reportage and commentary was at times most negative towards the teachers. CKEY limited its news coverage of the issue mainly to its newscasts. CBC, as discussed above, dealt with the issue primarily by means of interviews and was scrupulous in balancing the representation and length of interviews for both sides in the conflict.

CFRB's coverage depended, of course, upon who was reporting or commenting. A brief review of the three *Dialogue* shows which dealt with the strike demonstrates that several of the themes developed in the print media were repeated on the radio.

The first *Dialogue*, on October 30, with Bill McVean and Bob Hesketh, talked about the impending strike with considerable sympathy for the teachers. While they both agreed that "a strike is the wrong way to settle a labour dispute . . . an immoral thing . . . there must be a better way to do this . . .", they also emphasized that teachers were behind monetarily, that they had the right to catch-up and that "if you're going to entrust your child's mind and bringing up to a teacher, surely you've got to pay him a decent salary".

The second *Dialogue* on the issue (November 12, Bill McVean and *Star* columnist, Gary Lautens) was antipathetic towards the teachers: they were portrayed as greedy, contributing to the downfall of democracy, "blackmailing the public", holding society "for ransom", "like hijacking". "like kidnapping"; moreover, they weren't even doing a decent job according to McVean: "They're turning out kids who are semi-illiterate and have to be patched up when they get to university".

The third *Dialogue* program on the subject is worth recalling as an indication of both how increasingly critical the media

commentary became as the strike continued and, more specifically, how the image of the teachers evolved. In contrast to the October *Dialogue* with McVean and Hesketh, the January 15 show was remarkably negative. The theme of the show was that teachers had lost the "respect" they once had. But Hesketh did not agree that *all* of the teachers were "irresponsible". As many as 50% or 60% were probably sorry they had been involved in the strike. It was the "militant fringe" agreed McVean "which really is what led the teachers into this thing". Both confirmed it was the *strike* as a method which had really alienated the public.

C The Image of the School Boards as Presented in the Media

Having looked at the portrayal of the teachers in the media in some detail, we can summarize the treatment accorded the School Boards very briefly. The one dominant impression of the School Board Chairmen that emerged from all of the press coverage — news reports, editorials and signed columns alike — was of *strength*. In large part, this was due to the order of events: the Metro Toronto School Board's role in the conflict was one of rejecting and resisting the teachers' demands. After being accused of "bargaining in bad faith" Board Chairman William Ross broke off negotiations in November. He was the chief protagonist in the story. While some of the reportage (e.g. November 26th television broadcast), was not flattering in that it left an impression of arrogance, nevertheless both the Board and its Chairman were portrayed as firm and strong — in contrast to the peevish, oversensitive, discontented teachers.

Another factor that undoubtedly helps to explain why the teachers received such negative media coverage in comparison with the Board is that of public relations. Both sides in the dispute employed professional public relations people.

The Metro OSSTF negotiators (who had an information officer on staff) hired a professional Toronto-based firm (Berger, Tisdall, Clark and Lesley) which assigned three people to the account. The two provincial public relations officers of the OSSTF were not called upon by

the Metro negotiating team to play a role in the Metro strike.³² The Metro Toronto School Board hired the former *Globe* education reporter, N. John Adams, as Information Officer on a one-year contract; Mr. Adams worked with the six information officers of the local boards of education; he reported directly to the Metro Board Chairman.

The kinds of functions that the public relations people performed included: providing access for the media, writing press releases, setting up and preparing for news conferences, writing and placing the advertisements, providing background information to reporters (a time consuming job since there was a high rate of turnover, among radio and CFTO in particular), and providing information to their respective constituents (e.g. newsletters).

While a comparison of the roles played by the p.r. people for each side is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth pointing out that media "management" was an important factor. This is not to say that the media's "anti-teacher" stand was directly caused by poor media skills on one side or by p.r. expertise on the other. There are too many variables in this issue to make simplistic judgements. For example, did the teachers' ads misfire because they were badly drafted or because there was no receptivity to the teachers' case? Or because advertising itself was the wrong kind of public campaign? Leaving aside the question of skill, however, several reporters emphasized that they encountered very great difficulty in getting through to the teachers; they explained that by mid-way through the strike the teachers "froze up" and that this lack of access helps to explain why the Metro Board Chairman may have been quoted directly more often. The Metro OSSTF information officer denies this lack of access and says that they tried to remain available.

D The Changing Focus of Media Attention

As the strike continued there was a discernible shift in the focus of media attention from the causes of the dispute and particularly the salary negotiations to the question of the effects of the strike. Naturally, the reports followed the events of the strike from October 16 when the Fact Finder's Report was made public, through the vote in favour of strike

action, the creation of the AIB, the on-again/off-again process of negotiations, the public confrontations, the revised December proposal and the teachers' rejection of it on January 7, down to the legislation.

Within this framework, commentators and editorial writers began — from December through to the end of the strike — to refer increasingly to the impact of the strike on the students, who were routinely described as "the real victims".

This survey of the reportage and editorial and columnist opinion in the printed press together with the news reports on CBC and CTV television has revealed the following:

1. The pattern of editorial and columnist opinion was uniformly hostile towards the teachers
2. the unflattering 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 generally balanced, not slanted towards either side. It was also superficial, confusing and at times misleading.

HOW INFLUENTIAL WAS THE MEDIA COVERAGE?

On January 15, 1976, the Ontario Legislature was convened in Special Session to enact back to work legislation for Metro Toronto's secondary school teachers. On January 16 the Bill received Royal Assent and on January 19 the teachers returned to their classrooms.

The provisions of the back to work legislation left all the central matters in dispute between the Board and the teachers to be decided by the arbitrator. His award, which was subject to approval by the federal Anti-Inflation Board, provided for a 39.2 per cent pay increase over two years.³³ This was virtually the same as the last official Metro School

Board offer, rejected by the teachers before their nine-week strike.

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 did³⁴, 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 and back to work legislation. We have *not* looked at its influence on the arbitration process or award.

Now that we have traced the treatment of the teachers strike in the newspaper coverage and television reports, the question of the *influence* of this coverage arises. This in turn raises the very complex but fundamental question of the role played by the print and broadcast press in decision-making.

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 do "know" and can safely assume that the press both helps to formulate and reflect public opinion. This public opinion then, in turn, influences politicians via letters, phone calls, etc. The studies and surveys tell us that policy-makers use the media 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 an effort to define the nature of this 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. 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, 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.³⁶ 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.

reporters, editorial writers and columnists

Almost without exception, the reporters, editorial writers and signed columnists insisted that media coverage did *not* create

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 friends 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.³⁷ 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 this public feedback was unquestionably taken seriously by the trustees.³⁸ 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.³⁹

Analyzing the precise role of the media from mid-December on is more difficult. The fact that the Board made some concessions in its final December offer — 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 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".⁴⁰ 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 picketline for a while longer instead of sack-cloth and ashes in the classroom".

Members of the Board (prompted, in some cases, by their local trustees) were becoming concerned that media coverage would have a backlash effect on the education system by producing an unhealthy reservoir of public animosity towards the teachers. This helps to explain the slight softening of the Board's position in late December.

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 compensation⁴¹.)

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 127,000 (or 140,000) students since early November.⁴² 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 a negotiated settlement had passed.

By the end of the first week in January, the press was unanimous that this point had been reached. In a political sense, it may have helped prepare the scene for a legislated end to the strike.

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 part be attributed to the role played by the media. 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.

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, in his view, 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 and phone calls which were regarded very seriously by trustees would surely have reflected this, at least in part. To this extent, the media could have contributed to the strike being ended by settlement instead of by forced arbitration.

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 to advise the government, 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
- 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.

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. Teacher spokesmen predict that the nature and intensity of the attacks on the teachers will have 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.

As a final note, we are not convinced by the claims of the editorial writers and columnists that they did *not* shape public opinion. While it is obviously true that there was an affinity between the public mood and media opinion on this issue, 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.⁴³

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 case of the problem of defining the complex interrelationship between the media, public opinion and decision-making in a democratic society.

1. Other than money matters, there were: the term of agreement, appointments to positions of responsibility, seniority, professional development, evaluation, unassigned and preparation periods, employee fringe benefits, etc.
2. "Dollar Sign Symbol of the Teachers Strike", *London Free Press* (November 26, 1975)
3. These appeared on October 10, 17, 28, 29 and November 12, 1975.
4. Borden Spears, "The Teachers Strike: Two Sides — and Two Languages" (*Toronto Star*, November 15, 1975).
5. Ibid.
6. "99 of Teachers Strike", *Globe and Mail* (November 12, 1975).
7. Another illustration was the article "Teacher Pact May Take 1-1/2 Years Because of Appeals, Wells Says". By headlining a possibility that was unlikely, as the story in fact acknowledged, a "scare" effect was produced.
8. The headline was misleading because it implied that a potential for settlement existed.
9. CBLT evening news October 8 and CBLT "24 Hours", October 9, reports by Cecelia Walters.

10. CBLT "24 Hours", October 24, Cecelia Walters.

11. CBLT, 6:30 p.m. News, (October 27) David Isaac.

12. CBLT, "24 Hours" (February 24, 1976)

13. For example: report quoting OSSTF President Jim Forster on CBLT "24 Hours" (October 14), stressing the restraints which the teachers had been under for four years causing their incomes to fall behind; also report by Cecelia Walters, CBLT "24 Hours" (October 24) stressing that the teachers had spent a hundred days in negotiations and were willing to accept the report of the impartial factfinder as a basis for settlement.

14. E.g. CBLT "24 Hours" (November 5), report quoting the reaction of U of T professors to the salary demands of Metro's high school teachers.

15. The two newscasts monitored were the 8:00 a.m. Charles Templeton reports and the Noon broadcasts. Both Templeton and Lee McManus presented both sides of the monetary issue, citing both the Board's view of its own offer and the teachers' estimation that it really amounted to only 31.6% over two years (less COLA and increments).

16. Two-thirds of the news reports examined for the period October 9th-31st pointed to the federal restraint program. The significance of this media focus on the AIB will be more apparent if the Supreme Court rules (in June, 1976) that Ontario's agreement with the federal government on the anti-inflation program was, in fact, invalid.

17. See Chart on page 37-38 for summary of newspaper editorials on Metro Teachers' strike.

17a. This particular editorial is noteworthy in another sense. During the formulation of the editorial, the original tack taken was more sympathetic to the teachers' wage demands. In the final determination of the *Star's* editorial policy (which is based on the publishers prerogative) the editorial's focus was an endorsement of the federal anti-inflation program. To the teachers this "revision" of the first version of the editorial is evidence that the justice and good sense of their case was not presented due to publisher intervention. While publisher intervention is an acknowledged fact of newspaper life, the incident confirms how significant a factor the AIB was in creating the negative climate of opinion during the strike.

18. Yet the teachers point out that by insisting on their legal right to settle first before going to the AIB, they were acting very responsibly; they were following the advice and information which they had received from provincial and federal officials, including Tom Well and Donald MacDonald.

19. The volume of letters and the switchboard action at the *Globe* in response to this particular *Globe* editorial was greater than occurred in response to any other single *Globe* editorial or newstory dealing with the teachers' strike.

20. A particularly abusive example of the use of this theme can be found in a recent Dick Beddoes column, "A Pride of Vocabulary" (*Globe*, March 16, 1976): "School teachers, of course, employ their time in various pursuits. Sometimes they walk around with sandwich boards on their backs. Sometimes they convene for noisy demonstrations. Sometimes they complain about their salaries in bellyaching letters to the newspapers. At all times, they are known as a grouse of school teachers. Their outspoken leaders in Metro contract disputes - Douglas Dinsmore, Margaret Wilson, John Volpe, et al - are all covered by the single phrase, a *flatitude of educators*."

21. A recent Gallup Poll showed 67% of Canadians feel union leaders are agitators or troublemakers. Rosemary Speirs, "Big Labor's Quiet Superman" *Toronto Star* (March 18, 1976).

22. "But Did Davis Have to Give In to Them?" (January 13, 1976). Also see "Some in the Cabinet Say, 'Let the Teachers Freeze'" (January 9, 1976).

23. According to teacher representatives and certain Board Chairmen to whom we spoke, the truth was the opposite. At times, the leaders were being pushed by their membership.

24. In the Bureau's opinion, this fact that the Sun's education columnist was at the same time working for one of the school boards involved in the dispute would appear to indicate an obvious conflict of interest and a breach of professional journalistic ethics.

25. It has been argued that the impact of individual stories is more significant in terms of shaping public attitudes than the cumulative influence of many stories.

26. For example, the teachers were roundly condemned as arrogant and contemptuous for not voting on the new Board offer before Christmas. But according to them, it was physically impossible to have corrected, prepared and distributed the final offer in time to vote.

27. "8,000 Metro Teachers Jeer Pay Offer", *Toronto Star* (October 31); also see "Teachers Yell 'Reject, Reject' . . ." *Toronto Sun* (October 31) Note the capsule summary under the *Sun* picture of the teachers at Maple Leaf Gardens: "The teachers, who are demanding pay hikes of *more than 10,000 a year . . .*"

28. The Metropolitan Toronto School Board advertised in two batches in regard to contract negotiations with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation. The first batch contained highlights of the Boards' offer before the legal strike vote and consisted of full pages in the *Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* on Saturday, November 1, 1975, and in the *Toronto Sun* on Sunday, November 2, 1975.

The second batch consisted of the "Fair's Fair" series which appeared in the following publications in the following order:

Globe and Mail	
Thursday, Nov. 20	- 60% of a page
Friday, Nov. 21	- 60% of a page
Saturday, Nov. 22	- 100% of a page
Tuesday, Nov. 25	- 100% of a page
Toronto Star	
Thursday, Nov. 20	- 60% of a page
Friday, Nov. 21	- 60% of a page
Saturday, Nov. 22	- 100% of a page
Tuesday, Nov. 25	- 100% of a page
Toronto Sun	
Thursday, Nov. 20	- 100% of a page
Friday, Nov. 21	- 100% of a page
Sunday, Nov. 23	- 100% of a page

29. Modeled on the successful NDP advertising technique of the last provincial election, the most effective of the ads fleshed out the case studies as individuals - with names, ages, family details, etc.

30. For example, see "Voters? What Voters?", *Globe* editorial, Dec. 10, 1975.

31. That is, in terms of their image as people and professionals.

32. They did, however, disseminate information about the Metro strike to the rest of the OSSTF membership across Ontario.

33. This award was subsequently rolled back by the AIB.

34. 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). It could also have given more benefits to the teachers, notably interim compensation.

35. This has been amplified by charges and innuendos in editorials since the strike that the teachers were misled as to the facts by their leaders. (e.g.: Why Did They Strike?" *Globe and Mail* March 5, 1976)

36. 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 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 agree 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.

37. Certain Board Chairmen and many trustees felt the 39.2% offer was too high.

38. This point was heavily stressed in interviews with Board Chairmen.

39. 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).

40. "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.

41. 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.

42. For example, see *Globe* editorials of November 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 26, December 9, 17, 1975 (Before November 11, the *Globe* used the 127,000 figure; on November 11 the 140,000 number was adopted).

43. Part of this chapter was originally published as a *Comment* in April, 1976. No paragraph evoked more comment or criticism than this one. People in the media seized upon this particular speculation, criticized the Bureau in editorials and columns and condemned us on the air waves for daring to suggest that the media may have contributed to the anti-teacher climate of opinion. Some trustees phoned or wrote to say that, from their vantage point, public opinion would have been the same regardless of the stand taken by newspapers or broadcasters. We would simply answer as follows:

- 1) we can't really *know* how much impact the media had on public opinion and our conclusion was frankly speculative in nature
- 2) the main thrust of the *Comment* was that the media did influence the pattern of negotiations
- 3) some people in the media are very sensitive to the point of paranoia. We never "blamed" the media for creating the anti-teacher climate of opinion.

CONCLUSIONS

When we began this study we did not expect to arrive at definitive conclusions on a topic for which the criteria are ultimately subjective. We did aim at focusing the spotlight on a subject which has not received critical attention by people outside the media.

This project on the news media and local government had three main purposes:

- * to examine the nature and quality of local political news coverage
- * to define as clearly as possible the influence of the various news media on local decision-makers
- * to suggest how media coverage of local government might be improved

We believe we have succeeded in raising some key questions about the kind of news media structure and approach that is required for the press to do a good job of reporting local government. By providing background information in this publication and a forum for discussion at our Conference we hope we have contributed basic knowledge concerning how the media operate – their constraints and their objectives – which will encourage critical analysis of coverage. We are also satisfied that we have shed some light on the question of media influence: as the case study of the Metro teachers' strike demonstrates, the news media do influence local decision makers on municipal matters, directly and indirectly; politicians (local and provincial) who participated in the Conference confirmed that the press does serve as a communicator between levels of government, and that it is used both as a significant measure of public opinion and as a source of policy ideas. The findings of our survey of local politicians confirm the primacy of the printed press as the most influential of the media.

While we did encounter instances of media "management" of local news – to the extent that certain causes received special attention – we did not find evidence to support the theory that the news media censor or suppress information in order to control society in its own interests or the interests of big business generally. As acknowledged in the Introduction of this *Civic Affairs*, the media are institutions which inevitably reflect the existing socio-economic order and values of the

day. However, no reporters or columnists complained that they were not allowed the freedom they needed to report on local government or that the content of their material was censored.

Our research and the Conference pointed to several issues that are of widespread concern. These include:

- a) the tendency of the Metro news media to neglect the Boroughs
- b) the lack of coverage of special purpose bodies (e.g. school boards, hospital boards, etc.), despite the fact that special purpose bodies spend about 3/4 of our municipal tax dollar, including boards of education, the TTC and Police.
- c) the inadequate coverage of municipal process and context, including the mundane day-to-day operations of local government, due to the media's natural readiness to report what is "new and interesting".
- e) the constraints of time, space and money as well as the complexity of many local issues themselves which inevitably limit the quality and quantity of coverage. While there was general agreement that more and better-trained municipal reporters, more space/time and more resources for research would improve the quality and scope of local coverage, few were convinced that this would decrease political apathy.

Some important issues which were raised in this study and in the Conference sessions were not resolved. For example:

- a) there was no consensus reached as to whether it was the media's proper role and responsibility to stimulate participation in local government affairs by politically educating the public. The potential of the news media for informing and enlightening the public was a topic which was touched upon at the Conference but not examined in sufficient depth.
- b) closely tied to this general question was the issue of the coverage of human services by the media: should the media be consciously trying to describe the social fabric of a municipality, and not focusing so extensively on specific events? It is obviously easier to cover local political events at City Hall, as these events are structured and centralized, than it is to

report on human services which are delivered on an uncoordinated basis. Unfortunately, possible solutions to this problem were not discussed.

c) should the media be doing more investigative reporting and more research, rather than waiting for others to provide facts and reports that offer a news story? Again, while this was recommended by several participants, the means of encouraging this kind of reporting and specifically, how to get the resources allocated for this, were not spelled out.

d) the need to distinguish between quantity and quality; more information will not necessarily be read or absorbed and the problem is how to enlighten without simply adding to "information overload".

e) While no one disputed the value of a community press, a point stressed by Dr. Jeremy Carver during the evening debate, no solutions were offered as to how "alternate" or non-establishment newspapers could be initiated or sustained in a world of increasing corporate domination.

That these and other issues were not dealt with in depth at the Conference may have been unavoidable and may have reflected a certain defensiveness on the part of the media people present. Certainly a great deal of the discussion was related to the work of specific individuals and personalities, rather than the substantive issues as they had been defined for each topic. It also points up the lack of a critical perspective on the municipal scene generally. Had we done this study and held the conference eight or ten years ago, in the early days of the "citizen participation movement" when the growth issues were crystallizing, we suspect that the "flaws" of media coverage of local government would have been apparent and that a consensus as to the nature of these "flaws" would have quickly emerged. Now, however, the issues are more complex and more ideological than the anti-development struggles. As a result, sensitivity to the state of media coverage is less keen.

The long-term results of our inquiry into the news media and local government cannot be assessed now. While the Conference produced few startling revelations, we hope that the climate of inquiry which was evident there will stimulate some creative thinking on how the coverage of local government can be improved.¹

We hope, above all, that it will sharpen public awareness of the nature and quality of the coverage currently being provided by our news media.

1. Two urban planners who are involved in developing innovative communication techniques for improving citizen participation in government attended the conference and have applied some of their ideas to media coverage. Consistent with their basic assumption that entertainment helps to motivate people to learn, the "City Jesters" suggest that some "gaming techniques" (e.g. map games, board games which would clarify the different service responsibilities of Metro's two tiers) would be a useful supplement to municipal coverage.

APPENDIX A A PARTIAL LISTING OF NON-DAILY, NON-ETHNIC NEWSPAPERS IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO

Watson Publishing Limited, Originated 1950 approx., Tabloids, Weekly, every Thursday

Paper	Circulation
Agincourt News	5,000
North York News	3,000
Scarborough News	14,000
Toronto East End News	3,000
West Hill News	4,000

Reporter Newspapers, Originated 1962 approx., Tabloids, Bi-Monthly

Paper	Circulation
Etobicoke Reporter	14,673
North York Downsview Reporter	15,721
North York Yorkview Reporter	15,448
Scarborough Reporter	14,038
Scarborough West Hill Reporter	15,051
Willowdale Reporter	13,701

Mirror Publishing, Division of Metrospan Community Newspapers Ltd., Originated 1958-60 approx., Tabloids, Weekly, every Wednesday

Paper	Circulation
Scarborough Mirror	43,000
Don Mills Mirror	combined circulation of 52,000
North York Mirror	

Herald Newspapers, Division of Toronto-Wright-Media Limited, Tabloids, Weekly

Paper	Circulation	Originated
East Toronto Weekly	combined	1918
East York Times	30,000	1918
Forest Hill Journal	2,500	1946
Leaside Advertiser	2,500	1941
North Toronto Free Press	2,500	1952
North Toronto Herald	2,500	1925
The St. Clair Examiner	2,500	1924

Tribune Newspapers, Division of Reg. Willson Printing, Scarborough Ltd. Tabloids, Weekly, Thursdays

Paper	Circulation
Gerrard Tribune	4,000
Danforth Tribune	5,000
Leaside Tribune	2,500
Scarborough Tribune	5,000
Beaches Tribune	4,000

Independent:

Etobicoke Advertiser Guardian, Division of Toronto Star, Originated 1961
Weekly, Circulation-23,000

Etobicoke Gazette, Division of Inland Publishing, Originated 1972, Tabloid,
Weekly, Circulation-40,000

Scarborough Sun, Division of Byron Publishing, Originated 1966, Tabloid,
Weekly, Circulation—5,000

Toronto Ward 9 Community News, Originated March 1972, Tabloid,
Bi-Monthly, Circulation—18,500

Weston-Rexdale-Downsview Times Review, Division of September House Publishing,
Originated as Weston-York Times in 1898, Tabloid,
Weekly, Thursday, Circulation—26,000

Willowdale, The News Advertiser, Originated 1970, Tabloid,
Weekly, Wednesday, Circulation—60,000

Toronto Ward 7 Community News, Originated May 1970, Tabloid,
Bi-Monthly, Circulation—20,000

Parkdale Citizen Community Newspaper
City Dweller, Weeklies, come out every Monday
—Downtown Edition
—Eglinton-Yonge Edition
—Metro Edition
—St. Clair-Yonge Edition
—St. Jamestown Edition
—Thornccliffe Edition

Toronto News, Originated March, 1975, Circulation—520

APPENDIX B

THE NEWS MEDIA AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Bureau of Municipal Research
Spring Conference—1976

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12th

5:00 p.m. REGISTRATION AND HOSPITALITY
(Civic Ballroom)

6:00 p.m. DINNER (Civic Ballroom)
Keynote Address: The Honourable Keith Davey, Chairman of the Special
Senate Committee on Mass Media

7:30 p.m. INTRODUCTION: Dr. Anne Golden, Research Coordinator,
Bureau of Municipal Research
"The Media and Local Government: Roles and Responsibilities"

8:00 p.m.—
9:00 p.m. DEBATE: *"Resolved that the news media do a good job of covering local
government in Metro"*

Moderator: Ken Cavanagh, Communications Director for Ombudsman,
Former Host CITY show

Arguing for: Borden Spears, Senior Editor, "The Toronto Star"

Arguing against: Jeremy P. Carver, Editor of "Toronto News", former
citizen activist

THURSDAY, MAY 13th (Dominion Ballroom)

9:00 a.m. SESSION I—*Does the Press Do Its Job in Helping People to Understand
Local Government?*

Moderator: Susan Fish, Policy Advisor to Mayor Crombie

Speakers: Graham Fraser, Reporter, "Globe and Mail"
Barbara Greene, North York Controller

Reactors: Barrie Zwicker, Editor and Publisher of "Content"
Ted Moser, Assistant Managing Editor, "Globe and Mail"

10:30 a.m. Coffee

10:40 a.m. SESSION II—*The Influence of the Media on Decision-Makers*

Moderator: John Downing, City Hall columnist for the "Toronto Sun"

Speakers: David P. Smith, Alderman, Metro and City Executive
Committees
Dorothy Thomas, City Alderman
Frank Drea, M.P.P., former columnist for the "Toronto
Telegram"
Claire Hoy, political columnist for the "Toronto Sun"
Queen's Park

Noon: LUNCH (Dominion Ballroom S.)

Introduction of Speaker: Alderman Anne Johnston

Luncheon Address: Mr. Arthur Maloney, Q.C., the Ombudsman of Ontario
"The Role of the Media as Ombudsman"

2:00 p.m. SESSION III – Demonstration/Discussion
 “A Critical Look at Media Coverage of One Recent Local Event”
 Audience will be able to evaluate and compare actual news reportage and commentary on a major issue.

Reactor Panel: Alderman Colin Vaughan
 Alderman Fred Beavis
 Jeff Simpson, Reporter

3:30 p.m. Coffee

3:40 p.m. SESSION IV – *Improving Media Coverage of Local Government*

Moderator: Charles K. Bens, Executive Director
 Bureau of Municipal Research

Speakers: Maggie Siggins, story editor specializing in urban affairs
 for CBC “24 hours”, former City Hall reporter
 Jay-Dell Mah, Municipal Affairs Reporter, CBC
 Ron Haggart, former City Hall columnist and Senior
 Producer for the CBC current affairs show, “The Fifth
 Estate”

4:45 p.m. CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Charles K. Bens, Executive Director,
 Bureau of Municipal Research

BMR MEMBERSHIP

Corporate

A. E. Ames & Co. Ltd.
 Bank of Montreal
 The Bank of Nova Scotia
 Bell Canada
 Board of Trade, Metro Toronto
 Bovis Corporation Ltd.
 Bramalea Consolidated Developments
 Brascan Limited
 Cadillac Fairview Limited
 Canada Malting Co. Ltd.
 Canada Packers Foundation
 Canada Permanent Trust Co.
 Canada Wire & Cable Ltd.
 Canadian Freehold Properties Ltd.
 Canadian Hanson Ltd.
 Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce
 Canadian National Railways
 Canadian Pacific Railways
 Confederation Life
 Consumer's Gas Co. Ltd.
 Crown Life Insurance Co.
 Dofasco Ltd.
 Dominion of Canada General Insurance
 Dominion Securities Corp. Ltd.
 T. Eaton Co.
 Falconbridge Nickel Mines Ltd.
 Gilbey Canada Ltd.
 Greenshields Inc.
 Group R
 GSW Appliances Ltd.
 Gulf Oil Canada Ltd.
 The Imperial Life Assurance Co.
 of Canada
 Imperial Oil Ltd.

Independent Order of Foresters
 International Business Machines Co. Ltd.
 Jackman Foundation
 Kodak Canada Ltd.
 John Labatt Ltd.
 A. E. LePage Ltd.
 Lever Brothers Ltd.
 McLean-Hunter Publishing Co. Ltd.
 National Trust
 Neptune Meters Ltd.
 Northern and Central Gas Corp.
 Parking Authority of Toronto
 Procter and Gamble Co. of Canada Ltd.
 Redpath Industries
 The Royal Bank of Canada
 Royal Insurance Company
 Royal Trust Co.
 Samuel Son & Co. Ltd.
 Shell Canada Ltd.
 Robert Simpson Co.
 Simpsons Sears Ltd.
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