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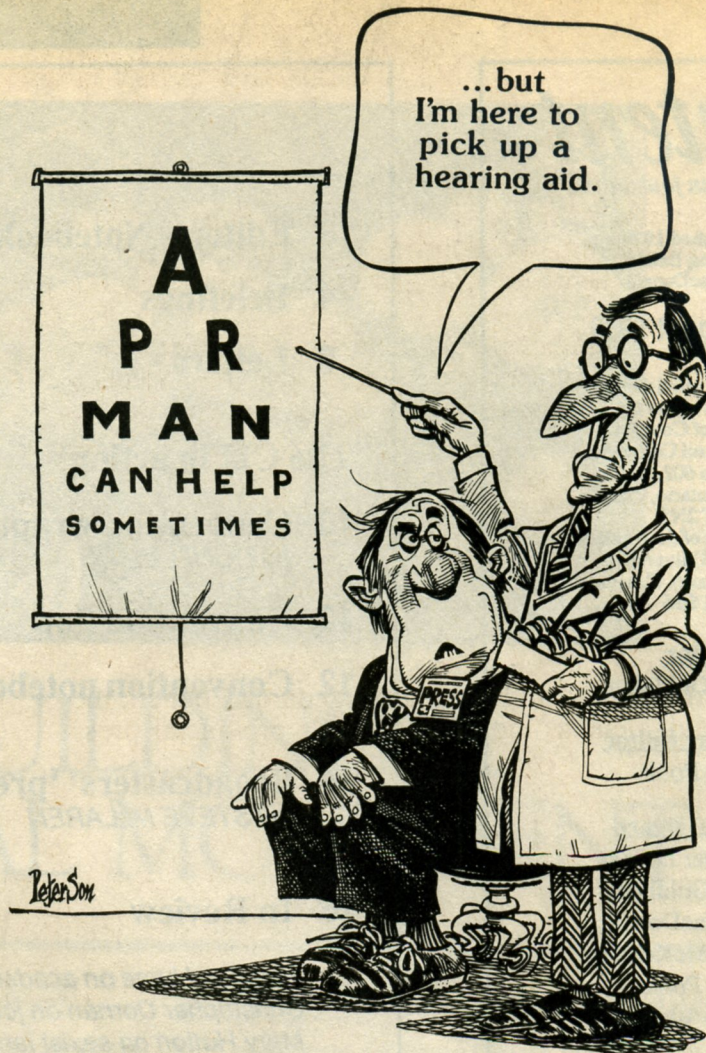
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This issue of *Content* pays special attention to books--a range of book reviews on the media and the craft of journalism by some of the best-known names in Canadian journalism.

Among the sampling of media reviews are Stephen Brunt on sportswriting; Mark Abley on literary features; Stephen Hume on coverage of disasters; and Trevor Lautens on McLuhan.

Elsewhere in the issue, the Centre for Investigative Journalism recent convention in Ottawa is reviewed in a wrapup of key panels, a separate look at women's issues and a CIJ notebook on major resolutions ranging from the Doug Small budget leak debate to the bid to give the CIJ charitable institution status.

As well, Steve McLaren takes a look at the new -- and little-publicized -- Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, the broadcast equivalent to the print media's provincial press councils.



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Labor peace returns to Timmins newsroom

Four Timmins Steelworkers Union members returned to work with their first contract six months after they started walking the picket line. The workers are part of the editorial staff at the Thomson paper in the northern Ontario city.

In a rare move in communications circles, last June the Steelworkers Union was certified as bargaining agent for journalists at the *Timmins Daily Press*. This occurred after the traditional communications unions declined to represent the reporters and editors, because of the small size of the bargaining unit and the distance between the unit and headquarters.

The first contract offered to the workers included a cut in pay for two of the employees and freelance restrictions. The contract the employees eventually agreed to is essentially the same one they turned down at first.

Steelworkers Union representative Gerry Loranger says the strikers still gained. "They got a union representing them in the workplace," he says, "and their rights are enshrined in a collective agreement prohibiting the company from arbitrarily scheduling absurd work hours." They also have a new grievance procedure allowing the union to represent them to management. The strikers gave in on the freelancing issue, accepting the company's terms. Loranger says after discussions, the Steelworkers think the reporters may be able to freelance. "I wouldn't call it a loophole," he says, "but the language may allow our people to freelance anyway. Other newspapers



Strikers settled for contract they first rejected

have identical language and they (reporters) continue to freelance."

The two reporters facing proposed paycuts dodged the bullet. One, Lauri Cerri, quit the paper early in the strike. The other, Charmaine Beardsley, saw her salary go up while she was picketing against the company. Loranger says Beardsley's anniversary of employment, as set out in the agreement, passed during the strike, bumping her up into the next pay class.

On June 9, the strikers joined their replacements and the journalists who didn't walk out, in the newsroom. Tempers flared and insults were hurled during the walkout, but it now seems peaceful. Former "scab" Shane Mills says he is surprised it isn't tense working side by side with the former picketers. "There's a lot of staggered shifts, people are in and out, there's not a lot of people in the newsroom at one time," he explains. "We talk to each other when the

need arises, but we're not exactly going out for beers together."

They may not be drinking buddies, but they'll belly up to the bargaining table side-by-side. Whatever the next contract reads, it applies to both union members and non-members. Non-unionized workers have to pay union dues. Mills says they have the option to join the Steelworkers, an option he hasn't exercised.

Union rep Gerry Loranger says as far as he's concerned, the former scabs and non-striking editorial staff are now Steelworkers. "They pay dues, they're allowed to attend meetings," he says. "If they meet qualification periods then can run for office. When our records are brought up to date, they will be issued a membership card."

Since the collective agreement was reached, the workers have joined gold miners from the Timmins Giant Yellowknife mine. Local 4440 president

Roger Ladouceur says his people are happy and get along with the others. "I don't think there are any hard feelings," he says. "The other workers didn't see what it was like to work at *The Press* prior to the strike, it wasn't a very pleasant place to work. Since we've formed the union and the strike, all that has changed."

--Richard Mason

Richard Mason is a reporter and newscaster for CKAT in North Bay.

Court keeps own counsel on protection of sources

It's still anybody's guess whether the constitutional right to freedom of expression means a reporter can guarantee anonymity to sources or promise to keep discussions under a cone of silence.

Edmonton Journal reporter Marilyn Moysa asked the Supreme Court of

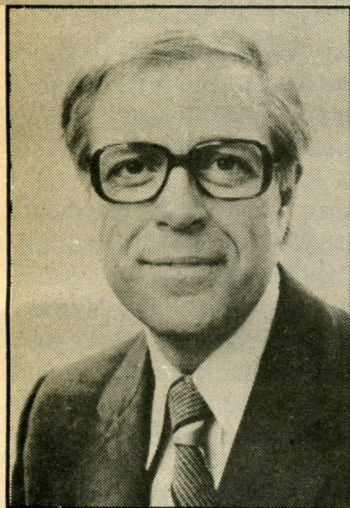
Canada to decide the question, but early in June the judges coolly declined to comment.

The 10-page no-comment written by Mr. Justice John Sopinka says there were insufficient facts to support Moysa's contention that sources would "dry up" if reporters weren't granted some kind of

Group wants to improve journalism

The group of journalists, journalism educators and business people who are planning to create a Canadian Journalism Foundation have adopted a mission statement outlining the main goals of the foundation.

The statement, approved at a meeting in Toronto on June 26, says, "The Canadian Journalism Foundation has been established to enhance the quality of journalism in Canada by honoring outstanding achievements in journalism, by supporting programs of professional development, and by sponsoring research in journalism."



Knowlton Nash

and of any other organization."

The foundation was approved in principle at a meeting in April in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. At the followup meeting in June, the steering committee decided to see whether TV broadcaster Knowlton Nash is interested in becoming the first chairman of the board of governors. As chairman, he'd play a

leading role in launching the foundation and raising funds for it.

A fund-raising committee led by Trevor Eyton, president and chief executive officer of Brascan Ltd., will raise the \$100,000 already committed for interim financing. To broaden the base of funding, major media corporations will be approached for money. Those charged with the task of raising money include Eyton, Eric Jackman, president of the Jackman Foundation and a "founding father" of the whole scheme, and William Dimma, deputy chairman of Royal LePage Ltd. and a former president of Torstar.

Unless media companies are prepared to participate, the planners acknowledge, the scheme may well collapse.

When the idea for a foundation was first discussed francophone journalists and media owners were consulted, but none accepted invitations to attend the recent planning meetings. In an attempt to rectify the situation, Elly Alboim of the CBC and Hugh Winsor of *The Globe and Mail* will suggest the names of francophones who might be willing to join the steering committee.

The working committee plans to meet at the end of August and the full steering committee will meet in the fall to review progress. If all goes well, the founding meeting of the Canadian Journalism Foundation will be held early next year.

-- Anthony Westell

Anthony Westell is Director of the School of Journalism at Carleton University and is a member of the steering committee planning the proposed foundation.

qualified privilege to keep exchanges confidential.

For that reason, the court opted not to rule on the broad question of press rights and left it for another day -- but not without a parting shot that media lawyers will have to round up convincing evidence for their case next time around.

Moysa and the Centre for Investigative Journalism were encouraged that at least the court left open the door for reporters to claim confidentiality in the future.

As for Moysa's predicament, the Supreme Court deferred to a ruling by the Alberta Labour Relations Board and ordered her to testify about a 1985 story she wrote about a unionization drive at department stores in the Edmonton area.

Within days of Moysa's story, six Hudson's Bay Co. employees were fired. The union blamed the dismissal on the newspaper story and asked the labor board to compel Moysa to reveal whether she talked to Bay officials about the union's activities before her article was published. Moysa refused to divulge the information, claiming her freedom of expression as a journalist to gather and disseminate news would be threatened if conversations could not be kept confidential.

But Moysa, in the court's mind, didn't even get past first base on the standard test. Normally, under the common law, a person can claim confidentiality for communications if the exchange occurs with the understanding it will remain private, and if the confidentiality is essential to the relationship between the two people. Also, the confidential relationship must be one the community would wish to see fostered, such as the doctor-patient relationship. And the reporter should be able to show that more harm than good would come from being compelled to testify.

The Supreme Court agreed with the labor board that Moysa's evidence was

relevant and crucial, and she should be compelled to answer the union's questions.

For journalists seeking guidance on the subject, it's a non-ruling.

However, media lawyer Richard Dearden, who backed Moysa's appeal on behalf of the CIJ, says the court did rule that a journalist-source privilege, if such a thing exists, cannot be claimed for information a reporter imparts to sources.

"Journalists should now have a red flag up on whatever they say to sources, because that kind of information is not protected," he says. "It's a new twist."

Dearden says the decision also suggests the court will carefully scrutinize whether a source demanded confidentiality before providing information, and whether it is an underpinning of the journalist-source relationship.

CBC lawyer Dan Henry reads the decision differently. "I don't view Moysa as establishing principles of general application. I see it as confined to its facts," he says.

Henry was recently involved in an attempt to resist an order by the judicial inquiry into the Niagara Regional Police to compel reporter Gerry McAuliffe to produce notes and tapes and reveal his discussions with a source.

A pile of evidence from about 20 journalists was gathered to decry the "chilling" effect on newsgathering that such orders have -- the supporting evidence that was missing in the Moysa case.

But before the matter could be decided by a higher court, media lawyers and inquiry counsel came to an agreement to allow representatives of the CBC and other media expected to be involved in the inquiry to vet reporters' notes and release on-the-record comments.

The question may come up again at the inquiry, but for now there are no definitive guidelines, and no case on the horizon to establish them.

Journalism professor Stuart Adam, who has just published a casebook on Canadian media law, is one who feels that journalists should not be given any special immunity from testifying about their sources.

"It's that balancing question -- what the administration of justice needs in order to see justice done and what we need in order to serve society," he says. "Justice for the journalist could be injustice for the accused or a party who has an interest in the outcome."

--Tonda MacCharles

Tonda MacCharles is the legal affairs reporter for The Ottawa Citizen.

Disinterest in fellowships puzzling

There was a time, not so many years ago, when an advertisement for a fellowship for working journalists would bring in a flood of applications.

But times -- and perhaps journalists -- have changed. The number of applications for the Southam Fellowships for Journalists has been declining in recent years, and the response of working journalists to two other major fellowship programs has been lower than anticipated. Organizers of all three programs say that while they are encouraged by the high quality of the applicants, they're puzzled by the relatively low numbers.

This year, 24 people applied for the five Southam Fellowships. That's an increase over last year, when 16 people applied. But this year's figure is still only about half the number of applications Southam received for its fellowship programs during the 1960s.

The Southam Fellowships provide eight months of study at the University of Toronto. Southam pays all university fees, travel expenses to and from Toronto, a living allowance for out-of-town Fellows and two-thirds of the Fellow's regular salary, up to \$46,000.

Tim Peters, director of personnel for the Southam newspaper group, says he believes the declining numbers are due to changing lifestyles. There are more two-career families today, he says, adding, "Fewer people are prepared to pick up and move across the country and disrupt their lifestyle."

Dona Harvey, the former newspaper executive who oversees the Southam Fellowship program at the University of Toronto, says she thinks the high cost of housing in Toronto may discourage some journalists from applying. Toronto has the highest cost of living in Canada, according to recent surveys.

The Southam program is not the only fellowship program reporting lower interest than expected.

This year there were 10 applications for the three-year-old Michener study-leave fellowships. The program provides two four-month-long fellowships worth \$20,000 each. Recipients may use the award to study at any university, in Canada or abroad.

Paul Deacon, president of the Michener Awards Foundation, says the foundation is concerned by the low response, and will probably do some additional advertising this year. He adds, however, that the program is still fairly new, and perhaps word hasn't really spread yet.

Another fellowship that may be suffering from a lack of awareness is the two-year-old Atkinson Fellowship in Public Policy. The fellowship is named after Toronto Star founder Joseph E. Atkinson and was established to continue his tradition of liberal journalism in Canada. The fellowship is the most lucrative of its type in Canada: the recipient of the fellowship gets a

\$60,000 allowance and a research budget of \$25,000 for a one-year research project leading to a book or series of articles on a topical issue in the forefront of public discussion.

Adele Jushka, secretary of the Atkinson Fellowship Committee, would not say exactly how many people applied for this year's fellowship. But she said the committee had hoped to get more applications than it eventually received.

"We're trying to establish ourselves, to publicize the fellowship, but a lot of people still don't know about us," she says. Some of that may be remedied in the fall, when the first Atkinson fellow, Ann Pappert, completes her work on the social and policy implications of reproductive technology. This year's fellow, Paul McKay, has begun work on a series of articles on environmental policy that will be completed in 1990.

Numbers of applications aren't the whole story. Jushka, Harvey and Deacon all say that the applications they receive are of an outstanding quality. And that, says Harvey, is both fascinating and a matter for celebration.

--Jennifer Hopkins

Jennifer Hopkins is a freelance writer in Ottawa.

All a reporter ever wanted to know about nuclear power

After years of complaining that the media coverage they receive is more concerned with propagating opinion than conveying information, someone in the nuclear power industry has made an effort to change things.

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Watch for the next issue
of content
in early October

Canada's biggest operator of nuclear reactors, Ontario Hydro, has published *A Journalist's Guide to Nuclear Power*.

The big, 108-page book with section-marking tabs and "quick hit background" entries on everything from nuclear waste to nuclear liability insurance was unveiled in January.

It has been generally well-received by reporters who cover Hydro and nuclear power. Its compiler, Michele McMaster, recently picked up an award from the International Association of Business Communicators for the guide and Hydro seems pleased with the product.

But will it do the job?

Designed for the general assignment reporter in mind, it's ideal for those who have to find their feet quickly in a highly technical field such as nuclear power.

For the veteran "nuke" beat reporter, the information offered is light on detail, but is a good general reference that can provide definitions and statistics without having to wade through the long, dry prose of technical works.

Ontario Hydro's attempt at an unbiased guide includes unflattering information along with the selling points of nuclear power.

However, Energy Probe's chief critic, Norm Rubin, is not as complimentary

toward the guide, despite his organization being included in the guide's list of alternative sources.

"It's very slick P.R.," says Rubin. "Hydro isn't going to come out with a guide that openly advocates nuclear power. This is very subtle."

Rubin fears the guide will have two adverse effects on reporting.

One is the gratitude factor. A reporter knowing little or nothing about nuclear power will find the guide a godsend. The book even goes so far as to include a page of questions to ask when covering a radiation leak.

"There's going to be a sense of debt to Hydro," claims Rubin.

The other result, according to Rubin, will be the position of authority Hydro will assume among reporters.

A caveat that should not be ignored is that this guide is really only concerned with the operation of CANDU reactors. For many nuclear industry observers, that's not the story.

"Everybody's looking for another Chernobyl," says Jim Algie, a reporter at the *Orillia Sun Times* who has covered Hydro for the past five years. "The real issues revolve around the waste nuclear energy produces."

Spent fuel disposal, uranium mine safety, radioactive tailings at Elliot Lake and the decommissioning and demolition of old nuclear plants receive scant attention. Nuclear waste is dealt with in one page, decommissioning with less than one.

But what will perhaps turn out to be the true Achilles heel to Hydro's plans for improving the quality of reporting is newsroom awareness that the guide exists.

Unless it gains some status as a reference tool along with Hansard, the city directory and Sources, it will be utterly worthless. General assignment reporters, especially those in broadcast, will need to grab it from the shelf as they head off to cover a story.

Otherwise there will be a return to overworked media relations officers, innumerable callbacks to clarify scientific explanations and a general lack of understanding between the media and the industry.

-- Scott Whitfield

Scott Whitfield is on a tour of duty at Ontario Hydro before returning to Carleton University this fall for his Master of Journalism degree.



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Author critiques book critic

To the editor: I was pleased to see the lengthy review of my book *Radical Rag -- the Pioneer Labour Press in Canada* in your May/June 1989 issue. However, I wish to correct several errors that might cause some misconceptions among your readers.

Reviewer Roger Bird's main criticism is that I don't explain why the labor movement's newspapers "remained such a marginal force." Indeed, I took great pains to study the reasons why, and I explore them throughout the book.

Of course, lack of money was the principal reason why many of the papers folded prematurely. Again, I took pains to describe the situation. I also note that the strident writing that characterized the labor press was not acceptable to many working families, especially given the advent of the popular "people's dailies," the forerunners of the modern newspaper.

Bird suggests that my study has inaccuracies. No doubt it contains some. But he has clearly failed to unearth any significant ones. In fact, much of his review relies on facts that he found in *Radical Rag*.

He says there were no press barons previous to the arrival of William Southam in 1877. What was *Toronto Globe* founder George Brown if not a baron? (Baron, by the way is defined as a "powerful or influential person" in the Oxford English Dictionary.) Brown was a wealthy, anti-union newspaper owner long before 1877, as were others.

Bird is also in error when he says I fail to include population or circulation figures. The book contains all the relevant population and readership information, including a breakdown of French and English readers.

In Hamilton, for example, the cradle of the labor press, I note that there were

2,300 workers among the "fledgling population of 19,000." In London, I was fortunate to uncover a rare document revealing press runs and costs for the *Industrial Banner*. I cite it in the book.

Bird argues that I am remiss for not citing the famous *New Yorker* press critic A.J. Liebling as the source of a quote by Canadian Labor Congress president Shirley Carr. This is hardly an error on my part. I consciously left Liebling out of it. Many media critics, including some of our pioneer labor editors, coined similar lines before Liebling was born.

It is true that he is credited with the famous line that freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one. But the idea is not his exclusive property. I saw no need to cite him in a direct quote from the labor movement's national leader in a book about the labor press. Surely the fact that she said it is far more important in this context.

Finally, I do not agree that the early labor press was a "glorious flop," as Bird suggests. He seems to think that longevity is an accurate measure of success in the opposition or alternative press.

Many of the labor papers I covered (13 are listed in the table of contents, not nine as noted in the review) died prematurely. Despite their short lives, they increased public awareness of the horrible working and living conditions working people faced in the Victorian era. They were the main voices of dissent, appearing weekly in an attempt to counter the anti-labor propaganda emanating from the daily press.

Far from being flops, the spirit of these weeklies is sorely missed today as we watch the labor "beat" disappear from the mass media.

Ron Verzuh
Ottawa

Drug crisis perspective 'overdue'

To the editor: Peter Unwin's fresh perspective on drug "crisis" coverage was long overdue and much appreciated ("Media's crusade against drug 'crisis' simple-minded," May/June).

Why do otherwise suspicious and cynical reporters parrot police estimates of "street values" and regurgitate the self-serving tales of pushers on parole and indifferent parents rationalizing their children's alienated habits?

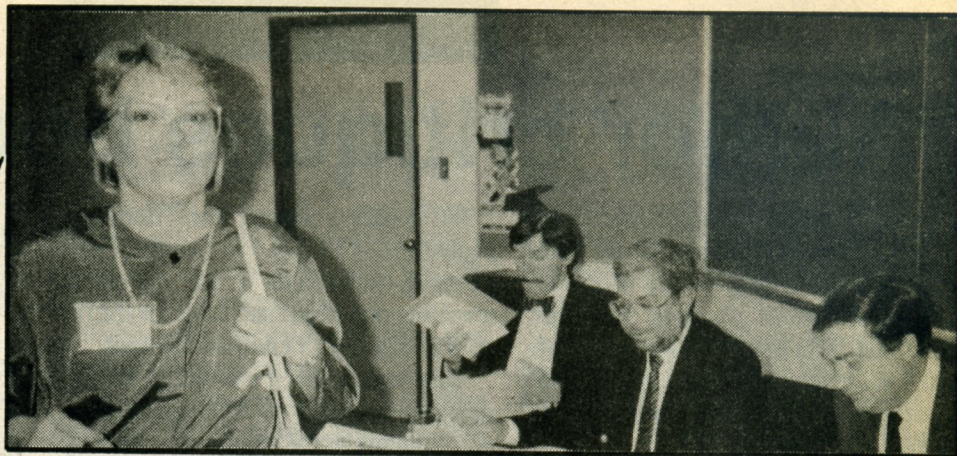
These "drug crisis" stories are best defined as public service journalism, a cut above un-edited press releases and unidentified advertorials but not of sufficient value to displace good ad copy. Public service journalism puts the ends, however laudable, ahead of the means.

The stories demean the reader by withholding facts, conflicting opinions and alternative interpretations. And the journalists' disrespect for readers must ultimately affect the quality of their work. Why bother to corroborate a dicey estimate or clarify a nagging inconsistency in a "serious" story when you can't trust your audience with a distinction between physical and psychological addiction?

Who can be trusted to cover the war on drugs when everyone's enlisted in the army press corps?

Douglas Burn
Toronto

SCRUM 89



Controlling the press

CIJ ponders government manipulation of media

by Doni Eve

The Centre for Investigative Journalism (CIJ) used its annual convention to pass a resolution condemning the criminal charge laid against a parliamentary reporter in connection with last April's federal budget leak.

In a panel on the same issue, however, panelists and delegates split on the federal government's move to charge Global Television's Doug Small and four others with possession or theft of budget documents.

In the resolution, members protested the "use of the criminal code to intimidate journalists and their sources" and the laying of a charge against Small.

The resolution also authorized the CIJ's president and board of directors to seek status to intervene in the case to help defend Small and the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.

During the panel discussion at the convention, held June 2-4 in Ottawa, some felt strongly that the charge was a threat to freedom of the press. Others suggested it was the kind of risk journalists must take if they deal in such documents.

Small said there was never any question of the right of the network to publish any material it got.

Professor Klaus Pohle of Carleton University said journalists could not consider themselves immune from prosecution. There is a tradition of publishing but not immunity. There is no real issue of freedom of expression; it is simply a case of taking a calculated risk.

George Bain, columnist and media critic, came close to the Pohle position, arguing that journalists have no inherent right to privilege.

But Jim Travers, general manager of *Southam News*, thought there is a basis for a case of freedom of expression. The government had looked bad in the budget leaks and hence was seeking a way to turn the tide by laying criminal charges. There were elements of a press control strategy.

Many other journalism-related topics were discussed during the convention.

The issue of press control came up again in the final plenary discussion.

The panel held a wide-ranging discussion of issues of concern to journalism in general and political journalism in particular.

Jeffrey Simpson, national affairs columnist for *The Globe and Mail*, said journalists should make a better effort to see things within their greater context.

He added that journalists are happy to accept what opposition politicians say because it makes for an easy story. Journalists should give as much attention to opposition statements as they do to those from the government, according to Simpson.

Don McGillivray, Ottawa columnist for *Southam News*, said politics is covered like a race, and winners are given better treatment than losers. He said journalists should measure politicians against certain moral standards -- what's right as opposed to who won.

The panelists also discussed government control of the media, pointing out how the government is manipulating the media by preferring scrums where the politician controls the questioning over formal press conferences.

Panelists discussing CBC-TV's airing of a story about an alleged Liberal leadership putsch in the middle of the federal election held a lively exchange of views.

The National's Peter Mansbridge, who reported the story, defended the network's decision to run it, saying he knew it was true. Contrary to other media criticism, he said the CBC did not rush the story to air and had at least two sources backing up each fact.

He added he knew CBC would be criticized for airing such a story, but had a responsibility to tell the truth, and could not continue reporting on the Liberal campaign without discussing this aspect.

Peter Connolly, chief of staff to Liberal Leader John Turner, said he agreed with the general facts of the story, but pointed out several inaccurate statements.

William Johnson, Ottawa columnist for the *Montreal Gazette*, was one of the journalists who had criticized CBC's decision to air the story. He said it was an example of the power of television because when aired it gave the sense something momentous was happening.

He said when he read the transcripts the next day, however, he found no substantial facts, and added journalists owe it to their audiences to be precise, not illusive, suggestive or insinuating. He also said it's up to the news media to criticize and police other news media, because no one else will.

In a panel on plagiarism, panelists agreed plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be ignored or soft-pedalled by editors. Without firm action by a newspaper, its credibility would be damaged and the paper's standing in the community undermined.

Bill Peterson, executive director of the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, in a particular case decided on dismissal of an employee after a second instance of plagiarism. Those accused of plagiarism were given proper notice and the opportunity to be represented by counsel.

John Honderich, editor of the *Toronto Star*, said credibility was a precious

commodity for newspapers -- which could be eroded in cases of plagiarism.

Honderich felt it was important for each media organization to work out its own guidelines. The origins of plagiarism in some cases, he said, could be rooted in psychological disorder.

Bob Hoffman, professor of psychology at Carleton University, suggested perpetrators of plagiarism were punishing themselves and punishing journalism. Some of those engaged in this practice were trying to enhance their status; they had a low estimate of their own self-worth.

On the subject of AIDS reporting, Randy Shilts, author of *And the Band*

missed because journalists don't know enough about the issues.

Elizabeth May, senior policy advisor to former federal environment minister Tom MacMillan resigned over the government's handling of the Rafferty-Alameda Dam project. She said she called an "embarrassing number" of reporters to tell them about the story and they didn't pick up on it.

May added there is no consistency in coverage of the environment, even if there is a special reporter assigned.

Barbara Robson, environment reporter for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, said journalists should try to find the best sources possible and learn to discern vested interest from evidence. Delegates present were concerned about how to network to find these sources.

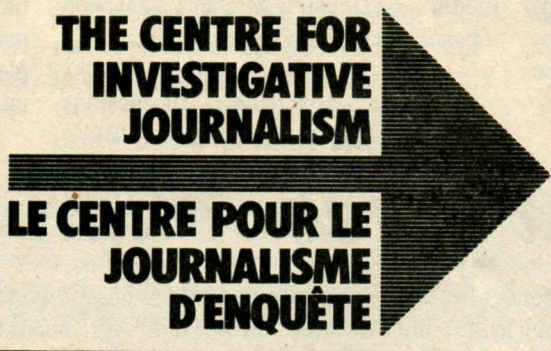
In a panel on sports reporting, all three participants indicated they were aware that some athletes were using illegal performance-enhancing drugs long before this fact became public knowledge. But they were unable to get specific evidence backed by facts in interviews or on tape.

Mark Lee, host of CBC Radio's *Inside Track*, followed the story for several years, but ran into a roadblock when it came to proof. James Christie of *The Globe and Mail* and author of a book on Ben Johnson, echoed Lee's remarks.

Dr. Geoff Gowan of the Coaching Association of Canada, said the media did not have enough resources to uncover the story.

The issue of lack of resources and time from media organizations to fully investigate stories was brought up again and again throughout the convention. In several of the panels, participants agreed this was a prime concern for investigative journalism.

Doni Eve is a freelance writer based in Ottawa and a frequent contributor to content.



Played On, said the media tend to prefer sensational aspects over broader public policy issues when reporting on AIDS.

Anne Mullens, medical reporter for the *Vancouver Sun*, suggested this is because in an ongoing story such as the AIDS issue, there is a problem keeping it fresh and new.

Chuck Grochmal, co-founder of the national lobby group AIDS Action Now, pointed out how the media are misleading in their descriptions of people with AIDS and in stories which focus only on the sensational aspect.

There is also a double standard, Grochmal says, -- the media would describe a non-gay person with AIDS as an "innocent victim," but some articles leave the impression AIDS is a self-inflicted injury among gay men.

Panelists discussing media coverage of the environment felt a lot of stories are

The heat was on

Male, Central Canadian, Anglophone domination criticized

The CIJ convention organizers took some heat for not having a diverse enough representation on the panels and leaving the word "women" out of a lunchtime session.

It all started with the organizers' decision to re-name the Women's Network Lunch as the Network Lunch to make men feel welcome.

When the issue was raised at the annual general meeting, also held at the convention, many delegates said they wanted women to remain in the title of the lunch. But they didn't want it to be the only forum at the convention for the concerns of women journalists.

Instead, they proposed the organizers do a better job of seeking out more women, francophones and representatives from outside of Central Canada to serve on the panels.

This year, only one panel was represented entirely by women -- a panel on covering health care. Many others were represented entirely by men, and a few featured one or two women panelists.

As well, there was only one representative from the French-language media -- *Le Devoir's* Michel Vastel -- on a panel discussing Quebec media.

In the key-issue panels -- discussions of the budget leak charges; CBC's

coverage of Liberal Party member plans to oust their leader during the election; drugs in sport; and the final plenary discussion -- all the panelists were anglophone men, most from Central Canada.

CIJ president Stephen Bindman says this wasn't from lack of trying on the organizers' part. He said they made a point of seeking out women for the panels, but many weren't able to come.

For example, women asked to participate in the drugs in sport panel, the panel on Quebec media and the final plenary discussion, among others, were unable to take part.

Convention notebook....

The *Globe and Mail* earned top honors for investigative newspaper and magazine reporting in the annual awards presented by the Centre for Investigative Journalism.

Jock Ferguson and **Dawn King** won the newspaper prize for their series of articles on the close links between municipal politicians and land developers in York Region, north of Metro Toronto.

Andrew Nikiforuk won the magazine category for "Harvest of Despair," an examination of the decline in the Prairie wheat economy, which appeared in the *Globe's Report on Business*.

Stephen Bindman, *Citizen* and now *Southam News* legal affairs specialist, was re-elected president of the Centre for Investigative Journalism. **Frances Bula** of the *Vancouver Sun* becomes secretary. **Don McGillivray**, *Southam News* columnist and former CIJ president, was chosen treasurer. **Julian Sher**, CBC Montreal, was named vice-president, external. **Charles Bury** of the *Sherbrooke Record* was re-elected as CIJ chairman.

The CIJ adopted a motion opposing any federal cutback that would seriously reduce the CBC news and current affairs services, at the regional and national levels as well as the English and French services.

The CIJ annual general meeting adopted a resolution opposing the inclusion of journalists in the list of professionals to be

granted temporary working privileges under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and urged the provision be removed from the accord.

A resolution to modify the CIJ letters patent was passed at the annual meeting of the organization. The net effect of several changes would enable the CIJ to obtain charitable status.

Most CIJ sessions were well-attended but the top drawing card was undoubtedly the panel involving **Doug Small**, Global Television Ottawa bureau chief, and the question of budget leaks. Small himself explained that he was hampered in his discussion of the charge against him by the advice of his lawyer to be hush-hush before the court hearing.

Delegates at the convention filled out a questionnaire indicating whether a university setting (Ottawa University in this case) was preferable to a hotel; most CIJ annual conventions have been held at hotels in Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa.

The 1989 convention, like its predecessors, injected new questions into the panel list. Among them was one on travel writing -- "biting the hand that flies you." Another dealt with plagiarism, a serious problem for media management. An additional theme was sportswriting in an atmosphere of illicit drug-taking.

"The organizing committee felt it made a strong effort," Bindman said.

Julia Bennett, the CIJ's newly-elected director for the National Capital Region, adds that the lack of women and regional representation was not a result of "endemic discrimination".

"You go for the best people that are available and don't cost a fortune to fly in," she said. "Wherever the convention is held, you'll have a core of people from that area."

Carole Roy, who helped organize the convention, says the fact that women were so poorly represented on the panels shows they need the extra support they get from the lunchtime forum.

"Women still need a special status," Roy said. "The CIJ is like the rest of society -- it's hard to get certain issues on the agenda."



One of few panels with female participants

Bindman says the organizing committee discussed this issue at a post-mortem following the convention. He adds that the group who organizes next year's convention -- possibly to be held in

Western Canada -- will be asked to be even more sensitive to these concerns.

-- Doni Eve

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Broadcasters set up own 'press' council

Regional bodies will adjudicate complaints from public

by Steve McLaren

A Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) announcement calling for the establishment of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) went virtually unnoticed in the press and, ironically enough, in the broadcast media themselves. However, this new body represents an evolution in the CRTC's attitude toward public responsibility, and the ever-warming relationship with private broadcasters.

The council will handle complaints against private television and radio broadcasters that in the past would normally have been investigated by the CRTC. The Council, an autonomous offshoot of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB), will be composed of a national executive made up of six broadcasters and six members of the public (one of whom is the chair), supervising five regional councils.

The new broadcast council will handle complaints along the lines of a provincial press council. After a complaint is filed, the broadcaster in question is to reply within 15 working days. If the complainant is not satisfied, the matter is referred to the appropriate Regional Broadcast Council, which will hear the case and decide on the merits of the broadcast in question.

Once the council decides, a press release of the result is issued and the broadcaster, if found to be in violation, must broadcast the decision on the air. Although the CAB would discourage it, the complainant could go to the CRTC if still dissatisfied.

The council would base decisions on whether an individual broadcaster complied with standards drafted by the CAB over the past few years. Right now that would include a general code of ethics, as well as specific codes covering violence in television programming and sex-role portrayal in both radio and TV. Complaints that might result in litigation, such as libel suits, would not be handled by the council. The CAB officially accepted the council's structure in November and, with an initial budget from the CAB of more than \$200,000, it is expected to start hearing complaints shortly.

The CAB, however, has demanded some rewards for its industrially entrenched social consciousness. It broke from CRTC wishes by demanding that adherence to any or all of the codes of ethics be on a voluntary basis. For the CRTC to enforce compulsory adherence to the CBSC would, according to CAB president Michael McCabe, be "duplicative, costly and subject to legal challenges."

Not only that, the CAB wants a present condition of licence -- compliance with the CAB's codes on sex-role portrayal -- removed once the council is in full swing. This allowance, if approved by the CRTC, would indicate a real shift in power over programming, and this has concerned many women's and consumer groups.

The CRTC however, has welcomed this broadcasting body. At the CAB's annual meeting in November, then CRTC chairman Andre Bureau said he

was convinced social and ethical issues "can be dealt with more effectively by a self-administered mechanism than by rigid regulations from outside." And Jeff Atkins, the CRTC's acting director of services, says, "It's a part of a general philosophy to lighten the regulatory burden on broadcasters by getting rid of things that might be unnecessary and out of date."

Some government officials also suggested having a broadcasting self-regulation body. In 1982, the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee recommended setting up advisory committees in each province, to help in performance evaluation. Their rationale reflects the new council's way of thinking: "Just knowing that their work is seriously and continuously being assessed would affect broadcasters' daily decision-making." And the 1986 Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, while concerned that broadcasters would have too much freedom, felt that self-regulation should be adopted when consistent with the public interest.

The main reason the CRTC made this jump by proposing guidelines for industry standards in January, 1987, can be traced to the increasing complexities in communications technology that were unheard of 20 years ago -- things like increased cable television, pay-TV, satellite transmission, home shopping networks and pay-per-view broadcasts, not to mention innovations in the CRTC's other concern, telecommunications. In 1987 alone, the CRTC determined licencing requirements for 10 new

pay-TV channels, as well as the transfer of two others (TSN and Muchmusic) to basic cable. Because of this, the CRTC has to emphasize supervision over regulation to "deal with the often abrupt and unforeseen requirements often imposed on licensees by technological change," according to Bureau.

CAB consultant Ralph Hart, who previously worked at the CRTC as both director-general for broadcast programs and director of television policy, offers another reason, the attitude of the CRTC chairman. Says Hart: "Andre Bureau came from the broadcast industry; his predecessor, John Meisel, is an academic. Bureau is a good deal more pragmatic and far more concerned with the bottom line and the economics of broadcasting than Meisel.

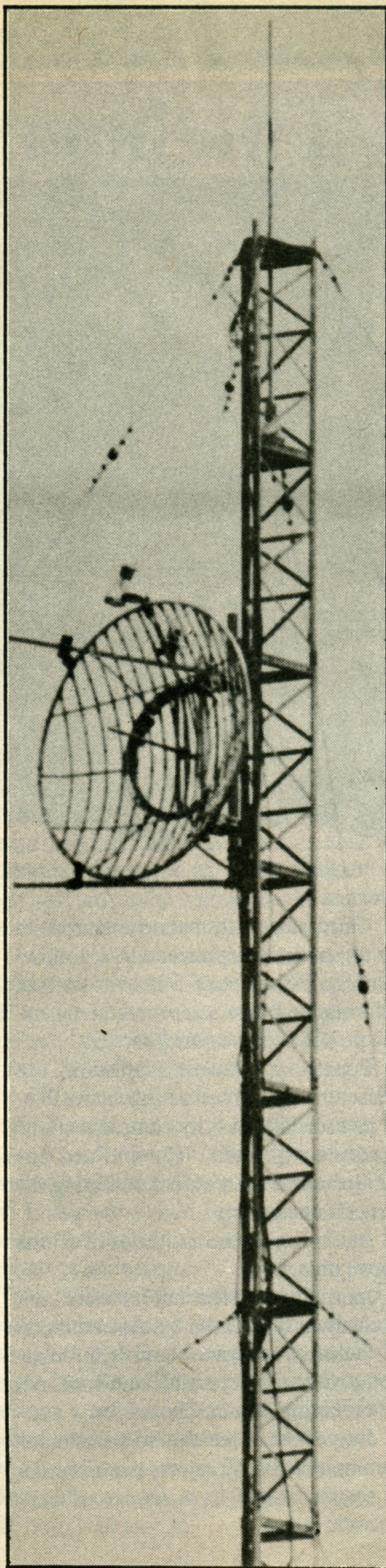
"Meisel was a good chairman and a brilliant man, but I don't think this development would have been nearly as likely to have taken place if Meisel had continued to be chairman today."

If that is true, many critics of the CBSC might wish he'd come back.

Sylvia Gold, president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, concluded in a 1987 press release that the CRTC's own policing of sex-role stereotyping in the broadcast media is at best only partly successful, because it represents self-regulation without monetary penalty or the threat of license refusal.

Gold has also pointed out that by dealing with issues like sex-role stereotyping on a case-by-case basis, the CBSC is going against the conclusion of the CRTC's own task force, that it is the cumulative effect of stereotyped portrayals, and not individual incidents, that are likely to lead to discriminatory behavior.

The consumer group Media Watch is upset as well. In an open letter to the CRTC, it chastised broadcasters for developing a council that fails to ensure it takes full responsibility for its actions. Instead, the council devises a "reactionary" proposal that expects solutions to social problems through "specific com-



ments from members of the public on a complaint by complaint basis," it said.

Media Watch also complained that, since the CBC, Radio-canada, and cable broadcasters are not covered, and since private broadcasters may decide not to adhere to CAB codes, the council's creation may cause nothing but more confusion for complainants who don't know where to complain. The complexity is intensified in the province of Quebec and in Windsor, where press or media councils with broader roles can make judgments on broadcasting news or informational programming.

Fraser McDougall, a past executive secretary of the Ontario Press Council, points to another potential problem. "Broadcasting is such an immediate things," says McDougall. "It's here and then it's gone, and you don't remember exactly what was said. It's very difficult, sometimes, to get those guys to give you the tapes or a transcript, where with a newspaper, you've got it right in front of you."

Fewer than 20 years ago, an editorial in *Broadcast* magazine challenged the CRTC to prove that it was capable of anything more than "the theoretical ideas of a handful of civil servants and some advisors, whose judgment based on practical experience is, to say the least, questionable."

It is therefore ironic today that the CRTC and the CAB are agreeing to give at least the impression that broadcasters will regulate themselves more closely. Hart, who sees the two as closer than ever before, says an effective Canadian Broadcast Standards Council will hand out decisions similar to what the CRTC has in the past. "By and large the CRTC over the years on these matters has been appropriate," Hart says. "Hopefully the judgments of the CBSC will be as appropriate.

Steve McLaren is a recent Carleton University Honors Journalism graduate. This review is taken from his Honors Research Project.

Of disasters and doublespeak

By Stephen Hume

Bad Tidings: Communication and Catastrophe

Edited by Lynne Masel Walters, Lee Wilkins, Tim Walters

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

220 pp.

Every newly-appointed city editor quickly discovers the propensity of some reporters to gravitate to the beat's droning bureaucratise in their own writing.

The city desk's continuing struggle is teaching young writers that the planning department's "urban perimeter sanitary landfill disposal site" is really the "south side dump" to the readers.

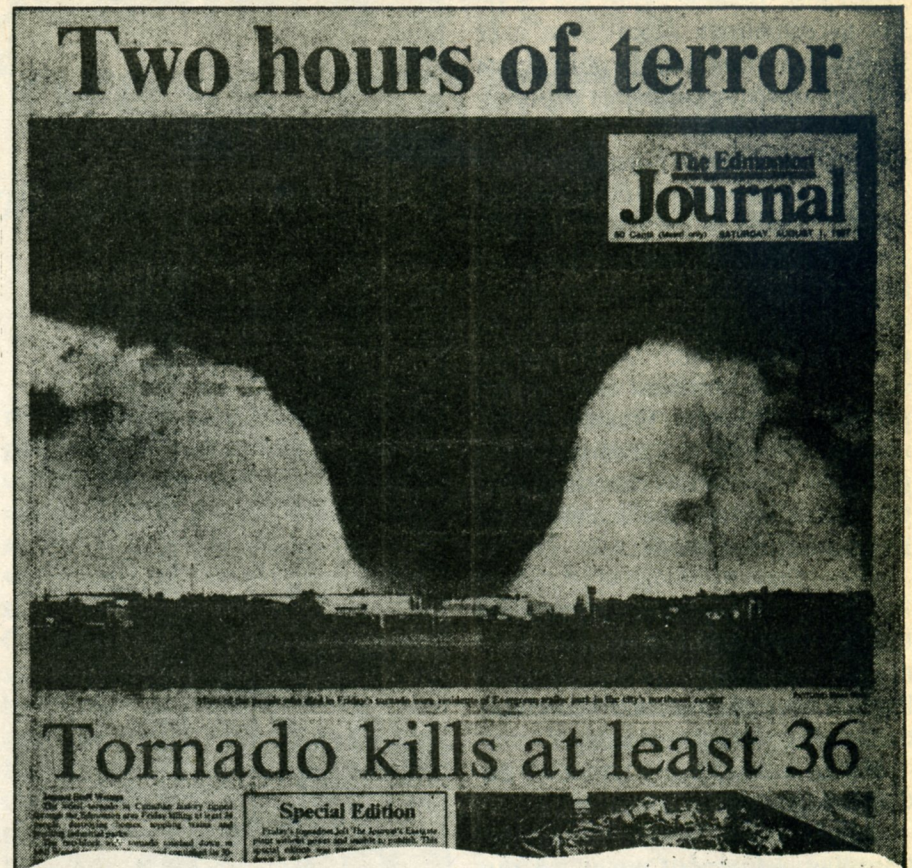
Among the reasons for this phenomenon are the unconscious cultural insecurities of upwardly mobile journalists and their desires for acceptance by perceived elites.

Professional jargon, as George Orwell points out in his famous essay "Politics and the English Language," serves its users in a number of ways.

First, it offers a mechanism for identifying status. Only the initiates have access to the social exchange of certain information, a rite which affirms the participants' special rank.

Second, it provides an instrument for excluding the rest of society from the established elite. Understanding is restricted to those who learn the proper rituals of naming. If this evokes the image of secret tribal societies like the Blackfoot Dog Soldiers or the Welsh Druids, it's because there's a direct line of descent.

Those with understanding of the proper rites, naturally, profit directly



from their roles as interpreters and brokers.

Third, since information is the currency of power in organizations, it follows that establishment of formal classes of information brokers is a method of seizing power over the uninformed.

Fourth, in Orwell's opinion, the denser the formal rhetoric, the more likely its user fails to fully comprehend the concepts expressed. Complicated circumlocutions are a way of obscuring the writer's uncertainty.

Journalism is the antithesis of all the above objectives.

Journalism is the act of inclusion, not exclusion. It is driven by dissemination of the most accurate possible information to the widest possible audience, not by brokering it to the chosen few.

Journalism is the democratization of communication. It rejects the invention of special languages in service of technocratic elites.

Journalism empowers the uninformed with knowledge required to take control of broad public and social agendas; it seeks to dismantle arbitrary barriers which inhibit the flow of information.

An encounter with a book like *Bad Tidings: Communication and Catastrophe*, written by assorted professors of journalism, is depressing because it commits the sins listed above.

Lynne Masel Walters, Lee Wilkins and Tim Walters edited this collection of essays about the way in which the mass media deal with social, political and environmental disasters.

Although some of the essays challenge conventional wisdom about the mass media, for the most part the writers present these challenges in technical language which cannot appeal outside the university and which makes the ideas largely inaccessible to the general public. The crime of populism, it seems, is still a capital offence in the academy.

In assessing the essays of *Bad Tidings*, perhaps it is best to begin at the foundation of all writing -- with the text itself.

The principle of Ockham's Razor holds that if two competing theories can explain the same thing, the simpler theory prevails. The aesthetic of economy is practical as well as elegant.

Every good city editor knows this principle applies to writing with the same force that it applies to scientific reason. The clearest, simplest writing is usually the most effective in conveying information accurately.

But *Bad Tidings* is a book of complex constructions and passive rather than active voice. The writers prefer the latinate polysyllable to the direct Anglo-Saxon that is the muscle of English writing.

Citing 300 seemingly endless and often obscure authorities in a slim volume of 11 essays pays devout homage to the medieval idea of scholarship. These devotions doubtless keep the Grand Inquisitors of scholarship from declaring the authors heretics, but they do render the text interminable.

Turgid writing is not a requirement of scholarly discussions of mass media and contemporary culture. Doubters should see the meticulous works of Guy Davenport and Sven Birkerts for comparison.

Both Orwell and William of Ockham suggest that an idea not expressed in clear, vigorous, straightforward language is probably still fuzzy in the mind of the person attempting to share it.

This collection addresses important issues in the study of mass communications, but it suffers grievously from muddy prose, academic jargon and opaque thinking that is often rooted in assumption rather than demonstrable fact.

Lee Wilkins, for example, reaches the sweeping conclusion (with no supporting evidence, for once) that the AIDS epidemic has become "modern humanity's worst plague."

The skeptical city editor, always suspicious of superlatives like biggest, best, most, worst, must ask: "By whose criteria?" By gross numbers of deaths? Some estimates suggest ten million people may carry the AIDS virus worldwide, yet how many children will die of diseases like measles compounded by malnutrition by year end? Thirty million? Forty million?

As I write, many North American Indian tribal groups struggle to recover from the emotional and economic poverty caused by near-annihilation during smallpox, tuberculosis and influenza epidemics which killed eight out of ten people -- in some cases within living memory.

None of this diminishes the devastating consequences of AIDS. Note, however, that while measles is a killer of the hungry, the voiceless, the powerless, the disenfranchised, AIDS in North America has so far been primarily a killer of the well-educated, well-organized and well-off -- people who hold many material and social values in common with university professors and middle class journalists.

AIDS is indeed a sinister and sobering medical threat. Those caught up in the epidemic deserve a massive scientific and social response. But AIDS is not the "worst" plague facing humanity, it is one of many dreadful plagues.

Epidemics are always "worst" for those who die in them, but objectively speaking, such terms have little meaning and if anyone should be aware of the dangers of imprecise language it is a scholar of journalism.

Ms. Wilkins' statement was a minor aside, but remains a good example because it is typical of a major worry that books like *Bad Tidings* raise with any working journalist. That is the apparent lack of concern for clear, accessible writing by academics whose job it is to teach young journalists a craft which begins and ends with words.

The bulk of these essays analyze the mass media's coverage of natural events like hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes, and with man-made catastrophes like nuclear accidents and chemical spills.

In the culture of the newsroom, nothing achieves unity of purpose like the rallying of professional journalists to cover a great disaster.

I've personally taken charge of such coverage half a dozen times in during almost 25 years as a reporter and editor in the newsrooms of major metropolitan dailies.

Shipwrecks, air crashes, train wrecks, chemical plant explosions, forest fire evacuations, drifting clouds of lethal and explosive gas over remote villages and big city suburbs -- I've directed coverage for them all.

The chaotic communications, the flood of fragmentary information from disconnected sources, the struggle of reporters isolated in the field to assess what is important and what is not, the editor's burden of weighing the relevance and accuracy of what reporters provide, the insatiable public appetite for details -- all these are powerful factors impinging upon the hasty editorial process.

Yet this sense of deriving meaning from chaos to the best of one's constrained abilities is almost entirely absent from the learned professors' bloodless evaluation of all the media's shortcomings in reporting disasters.

Reading these essays, I'm reminded of an incident from the First World War. Sergeants in the front line trenches were ordered to advance their platoons into enemy machine gun fire.

They advanced with great courage and determination and were slain in neat, orderly lines. At this point the staff officers, standing on tiptoe in their polished boots and watching by peri-

scope from behind the lines, demanded to know why the men were lying down and refusing to advance.

"They are dead, sir," ventured one of those (I like to think a war correspondent) whose dirty job it was to go forward when called.

The analysis in *Bad Tidings* yields the same sense of the staff officer's detachment.

Why do the press not always advance immediately to the truth when covering catastrophes? Because we are sometimes trapped and confused in the crossfire of circumstance and public demands for immediate information.

Joe Scanlon of Carleton University, in one of the few essays that is a pleasure to read, grapples with the moral and ethical dimensions of situations most likely to yield this result -- the terrorist incident

designed specifically to manipulate the media.

Contrary to the view of the journalist as cynical exploiter of such events for commercial gain, the terrorist incident in which the wrong decision might result in tragedy is every editor's nightmare. And every editor I know is troubled by the balancing of obligations to the public against obligations to minimize harm to unfortunate individuals.

But there are no formulaic answers to these dilemmas, just as there is no foolproof formula for winning battles -- however much the staff officers want one. Media response to discrete events will always require unique decisions which can only arise from particular circumstances.

The media's obligation to the public is to report swiftly and accurately about

events which occur. It is not the media's obligation to assist the government in fulfilling its political agenda.

Although careful to maintain an apparent neutrality, Scanlon does hint at a formula and seems to suggest that voluntary refusal -- (government coerced self-censorship might be another description -- to cover "terrorists" may be necessary to avoid direct government control of such coverage. Scanlon's position, however, seems to imply the possible legitimacy of such control.

He fails to ask the critical question: Who decides who is the terrorist and under what circumstances coverage is legitimate?

The government? The law enforcement agencies? The military?

In China, the government says the terrified students crushed beneath its tan

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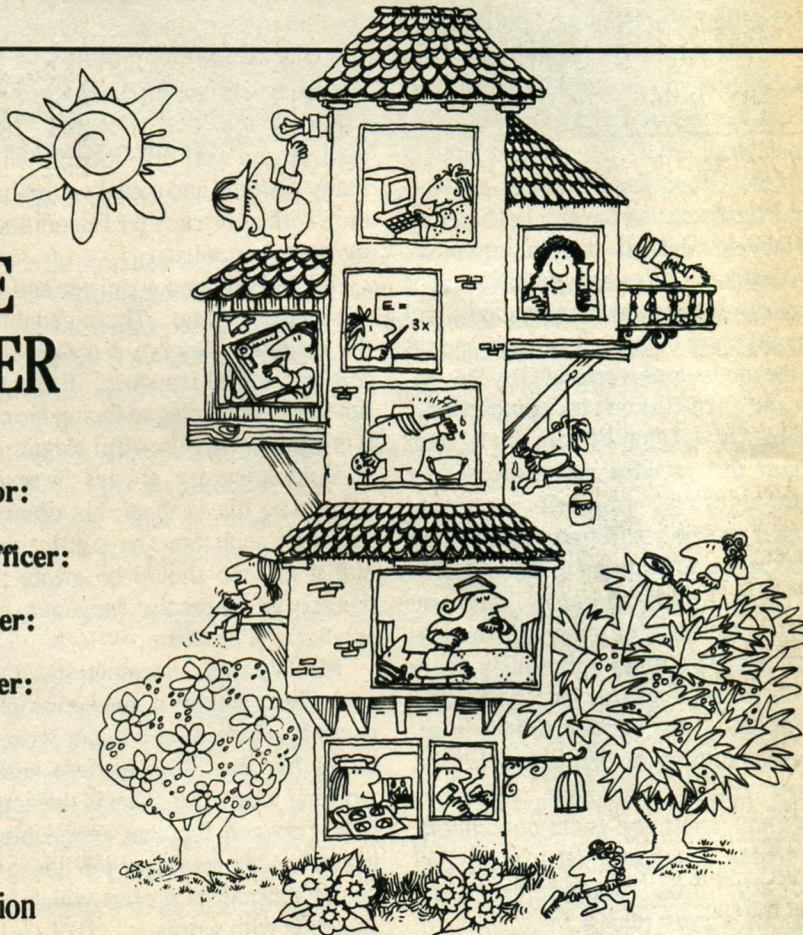
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treads are the terrorists. The People's Army says the western media are the subversive agents responsible for encouraging "counter-revolutionary hooliganism." According to the Chinese government, the squashing of unarmed students under tanks didn't happen -- although "subversive" western photographers captured the gory details on film.

We're not immune from this kind of thing. Even here in relatively peaceful Canada, our governments' official agents have committed surreptitious acts of politically-motivated violence and organized conspiracies to intimidate and harass law-abiding citizens. Medical patients were subjected to secret experiments without their knowledge. Bureaucrats have withheld and even fal-

sified information regarding the magnitude of environmental accidents.

Within the past few months we have witnessed the official forces of the Quebec government responding with gas and brutality to the unarmed and unsophisticated women and children of a peacefully demonstrating Indian band. Who were the terrorists in that incident?

Any editor organizing coverage of a catastrophic event has at one time or another struggled with conflicting information, the duplicitous self-interest of officials, lying government authorities, absent communications and the pressing need to provide a frightened public with even the barest details.

And every editor of intelligence and integrity knows how frighteningly easy

it is to get it all wrong -- and yet how eventually, miraculously, in spite of our own misjudgments and stupidity, we somehow muddle through the tyrannies of uncertainty to a fairly accurate representation of what is right. It is a rather large point which seems lost on the editors of *Bad Tidings*.

Stephen Hume has served as Arctic correspondent, city editor, news editor, editor-in-chief and general manager of The Edmonton Journal. He is the author of three books, the most recent of which is a collection of essays entitled Ghost Camps: Memory and Myth on Canada's Frontiers, released this summer by Ne-West Press.

Mind your language

By Mary Hutton

Language, Gender, and Professional Writing: Theoretical Approaches and Guidelines for Nonsexist Usage

by Francine Wattman Frank and Paula A. Treichler
The Modern Language Association of America, 341 pp.

For those resistant strains of sexism lurking in the dark dank corners of academe, this book is the perfect antidote.

American authors Frank and Treichler, professors and linguists in their own right, designed their book primarily for the academic world. Its well-developed and carefully rational approach is a pleasant-tasting medication for those who have become encysted in their stubborn loyalty to traditional and outdated language. But it is a questionable loyalty in light of research which shows that sexist language has real and negative consequences for women and girls.

The series of essays in the first half of the book, often cogent, sometimes pedantic, present a convincing argument for the elimination of sexism in language. Not simply a tool used to reflect reality, language helps determine how reality is formed, expressed and understood. In verbal communication, what the speaker means and what the listener understands are

sometimes two different things, particularly if one is a man and one a woman.

Francine Wattman Frank reports that usage in the mass media varies. "Although there is a trend in favor of nonsexist usage, some prestigious publications, such *The New York Times*, have stubbornly resisted it. Until 1986, in fact, a woman could not be given the courtesy title Ms. in the *Times*, no matter what her own preference might be."

Elsewhere, Paula A. Treichler explores the construction of dictionaries, the process by which words are perpetuated or eliminated. It hints that even (gasp) Webster is infected with the sexist virus, and argues for a feminist dictionary.

Perhaps the strongest argument for using non-sexist language is one borrowed from the behaviorists. Frank cites linguists who conclude that knowledge of a person's attitudes has little value in predicting behavior. "If anything, people seem more likely to bring their attitudes into line with their behavior than to modify behavior in accordance with their attitudes." Research shows that "people asked to write in support of something they oppose or to give speeches they disagree with tend to change their opinions to favour the views they express."

For the grumblers who resist on the grounds that non-sexist wording is hopelessly awkward, the authors provide extensive guidelines for acceptable language. In suggesting creative alternatives Frank and Treichler clearly illustrate that language is a limitless resource for anyone who regards writing as a craft.

Mary Hutton is an Ottawa writer.

Fool's game

By Christopher Dornan

Behind the Jester's Mask: Canadian Editorial Cartoons about Dominant and Minority Groups 1960-1979

by Raymond N. Morris

University of Toronto Press, 230 pp.

Generally speaking, journalists are not altogether wild about academic commentary on their work. They don't pay it much attention as a rule, but when they do, they tend to roll their eyes and go away muttering about impossibly grandiloquent theorizing lurking behind impenetrable thickets of jargon.

It's not simply the style that puts them off, however. The scribblers are a relatively self-contained occupational community, with their own ideals and goals and mechanisms of self-assessment. Not only do they resent the presumption that academics "understand" journalism better than journalists themselves, but they especially don't like what the tweed-heads have to say.

And who can blame them? For at least the past 15 years, the most interesting academic work has embarked from the premise that the congratulatory claims of mainstream journalism are hopelessly naive. The press is not, say the mortarboards, the adversary of self-interested power, nor is it necessarily the champion of democracy. It is, rather, an "ideological state apparatus," toiling in the service of state and capital.

In short, when the academics would expose journalists as the unwitting subalterns of a social order that stands over them (and their professional ethos, by corollary, as an expedient delusion), how are the scribblers to respond?

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Okay class, how does this support the military-industrial complex?

Angrily, usually.

In which case, it's probably just as well that not many journalists will read Raymond Morris's *Behind the Jester's Mask*. This is the sort of book the scribblers love to hate, dense with discussion of Marxist political economy, Goffman frame analysis, and symbolic interactionist research methodologies -- all of it adding up to that odious, killjoy conclusion: the press is not as it would have us believe.

Worse, Morris (a sociologist at York University) picks on newspapers' most visible emblem of their political autonomy: the editorial cartoonists. These guys are the journalists' journalists: empowered with not only a critical, but a satirical voice; at liberty to lampoon idiocy or abuse wherever they find it.

They're even relatively free from the interference of editors -- a newsroom rarity. Over the past 25 years (and large-

ly, it seems, because of the efforts and example of Duncan Macpherson), the cartoonists have graduated from the drudgery of illustrating superiors' editorial viewpoints to artistry in their own right.

Pitted against this windmill of a professional ideology is Raymond Morris, all got up in a Don Quixote costume.

Morris is here to press the point that cartoonists, far from being the gadflies of power, are in fact skills for the prevailing order. They sketch happy-face dissent, at best; their work constricts, rather than expands, the range of debate; they serve to defuse, not to provoke, the confrontation of ideas. In the end, they're just another class of worker in the daily labor of the newspaper: by staking out what's ludicrous, criminal, unethical, outrageous, they school their readership in a politically-charged version of "normalcy."

Morris dubs them "the jesters of the bourgeoisie."

The metaphor isn't idly drawn. The opening chapter -- by far the book's most engaging -- considers the role of the fool in the courts of medieval Europe. It's popularly supposed that the fool was a free wit, exempt from reproach, licensed to deflate even the most powerful. Morris argues the contrary: Although expected to make sport of the passing scene in general, ultimately the jester served his political master at the expense of the clergy and courtiers, the monarch's chief rivals for power. In that sense, the fool was a political instrument.

Needless to say, Morris finds the jester's contemporary equivalent on the editorial page. While the cartoonist's daily barbs are intended to signal that the paper defends no interest beyond that of the public good, Morris insists that in fact they work to prohibit genuinely searching critique.

True, they hound politicians, rendering them as duplicitous buffoons, but in doing so they limit their "legitimate" targets to a handful of national and regional leaders, diverting attention from the myriad other spheres of power, from the bowels of the bureaucracy to the boardrooms of Conrad Black. It's not simply that the cartoonists are too narrow in their focus, opting for the familiar caricature of the easily-recognizable. It's that the range of political satire has been so constricted that the affairs of capital, for example, are simply not fair game. As Morris points out, were the cartoonists to accord the Reichmanns or Paul Desmarais the same treatment they lavished on John Turner, the result would be flatly libellous.

With that in mind, Morris and his assistants combed through 7,000 cartoons, originally assembled by Peter Desbarats and Terry Mosher for their 1979 book *The Hecklers*. Driven by a computer-coded content analysis, the aim was to examine the portrayal of dominant-

minority group relations (in particular, anglophone-francophone and American-Canadian) in order to test a series of hypotheses about whether, and in what ways, the cartoonists play to entrenched interests.

The conclusion, not surprisingly, is that, yup, the inksters are the paid lackeys of the status quo. Francophones, for example, were relatively consistently depicted in anglo cartoons as threats to the established order. Other minority groups (women, native Canadians) were all but invisible, except when they, too, were rendered as disruptive.

Behind the Jester's Mask therefore contains a fascinating and provocative thesis. Unfortunately, the cartoonists are not the only hostages to a professional ideology. Raymond Morris is as constrained by the conventions of his trade as the inksters are by theirs.

Bluntly put: Morris is a sociologist of a particularly hard-minded hue. It's not enough for him to raise a demurring voice and to illustrate his contentions by appeal to example. Such an approach would be dismissed by his colleagues as "essayistic," as lacking in an empirical base and methodological rigor. That's why his analysis stops in 1979: because that's when his pre-assembled "corpus" ends.

The result is a book that dissolves into arcane minutiae and sociological hair-splitting, the force of the original thesis dissipating in the midst of Mann-Whitney U tests of statistical significance.

This isn't necessarily bad sociology, but it's bad cultural criticism. Not only is the lumbering content analysis not necessary to "prove" the larger point, it's not even a particularly apt analytical technique. No one would think of subjecting the motifs of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* to Mann-Whitney U tests, so why should political satire be any more susceptible to number-crunching?

More crucially, however, it's the book's unreadability that proves its un-

doing. It's a solid work, yes, but it's pitched at the converted. The folk who might actually benefit from hearing that there's more to the inksters' art than meets the eye are the cartoonists themselves, their fellow journalists and their audiences. Fat chance.

But until the academics present their case forcefully, and in a manner that's readily understandable (even if eminently contestable), the journalists are entitled to roll their eyes and mutter all they want.

Christopher Dornan is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Program in Mass Communications at Carleton University.

Pointing fingers, striking poses

by Robert Roth

Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy

by Sidney Kraus

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 184 pp.

This book traces televised U.S. presidential debates dating back to the Kennedy/Nixon encounters and attempts to "review and explore what we have learned about televised presidential debates, consider the impact of such encounters on the election process, and apply that knowledge to questions of policy."

As someone who has actually participated as a facilitator in background negotiations between sponsors and candidates concerning debate format, Sidney Kraus is clearly, and openly, a proponent of the debates.

Being part of the "system" has its pros and cons. We gain much insight into how the debate formats are established and particularly how much the candidates and their strategists control the format, including veto power over who may sit on the media panel.

On the con side, Kraus possesses that intellectual blind spot all too typical of liberal, American social science. "Democracy" is defined as American-style, liberal democracy rooted in the two-party system (with the occasional entry of a third candidate). Any discussion of alternative models -- social

democracy, multi-party democracy -- are consigned to oblivion with all the dispatch of matter being sucked into a black hole.

Consequently, in arguing that the debates should be institutionalized and that the "major parties" should play a direct role in their organization, Kraus fails to acknowledge the obvious contradiction this arrangement poses for one of the ideals of liberalism, namely to encourage a multiplicity of ideas. He would further entrench the one, dominant ideology to which both major parties subscribe.

When Kraus does deal with critics of the debates, it is usually to counter their arguments. He acknowledges the debates have drawn negative comments for emphasizing image over substance and dwelling on winners and losers. In response, he literally argues that these traits are fine because they reflect the American way.

"Americans are competitive and want to win," Kraus declares matter-of-factly, and the debates reflect this value. Horse-race journalism is justified because people like horse races and the debates are an excellent mechanism for creating

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excitement and involving voters in the electoral process.

It simply never occurs to Kraus that other values, such as co-operation and sharing, might be more crucial to survival in the era of the ever-shrinking global village, and that perhaps mechanisms promoting such alternative values might be worth considering. There is never any question in Kraus's mind that combative, prize-fight American values are anything but the pinnacle of human achievement and that their continued promotion could be anything other than a boon to civilization.

One of the tantalizing high points of the book is Kraus's contention that media -- television in particular -- are growing in power as opinion makers. He questions the conventional wisdom which argues that media merely reinforce electoral predispositions. He argues that political partisanship is decreasing and instillers of traditional values such as party, family and religion are waning in influence. Media are filling the vacuum, he suggests.

He also makes the case that media do alter, even distort, events, citing several studies to back up his case. One of the

earliest studies examined television coverage of a parade for General Douglas MacArthur on his return from Korea in 1951. The study revealed that the reactions of people who lined the route were "substantially different" from those who watched the parade on television.

In another study, television viewers of the first 1960 Kennedy/Nixon debate

rated Kennedy the victor while radio listeners gave Nixon the edge.

A study done of the second debate between Ford and Carter in 1976 showed that those responding within 12 hours of the debate gave Ford the win, but those interviewed between 12 and 48 hours after the debate gave Carter the win. The conclusion drawn was that "the passing of time required for the news to reach the public brought with it a virtual reversal of opinion."

All in all, both academics and serious students of journalism will find this publication useful and stimulating. In spite of the thick red, white and blue lenses through which the topic is filtered, the book does make a valuable, well-researched contribution to the on-going discussion of debates, their significance and

the role of the media in influencing voter opinion.

Robert Roth has been an Ontario journalist for 20 years. He contributed to a Carleton University study of the 1988 Canadian election debates and is continuing research on political debates for his Master of Journalism degree thesis.



Politics of bread and circuses

by Stephen Brunt

The Sports Writing Handbook

by Thomas Fensch

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates,
262 pp.

Sports journalism is a queer hybrid, part news, part hype, part poetry. It is an old axiom -- one repeated by Thomas Fensch in *The Sports Writing Handbook* -- that the best and worst writing in any newspaper can be found in the sports section.

You will notice that no one ever says the best and worst reporting originates in the sports department of a daily. Sports has traditionally been a great place for stylists and a wasteland for those trying to uncover news (by that I mean real, previously unknown information, not the type of cheap and easy gossip that often masquerades as courageous sports coverage).

It is so because, in a large sense, sports doesn't really matter. While it is wildly popular with spectators and its coverage is one of the most widely read aspects of any paper, in the end sport itself is of no consequence. Who wins and who loses (which is, at base, the classic sports story) changes no lives aside from those of a few athletes and a few bettors.

Removed from the normal plane of existence, where a writer's words can change the world and affect ordinary people, the stylist finds great liberty. Suddenly, subject matter unfolds only to be worked into prose. Liberties can be and are taken, personalities grow on the page if not in person, dramatic structure is imposed where there is none. Put someone who knows the rhythm of a

good sentence in that situation and they can't help but fly.

But at the same time, without the weight of real life on their shoulders, sports reporters get journalistically lazy. There is no task that I have encountered in journalism as physically demanding as covering a game on deadline, and sports beat writers crank out more copy than just about anyone in a newspaper, but rarely do they really stir the waters, really change their surroundings by the way they report about them.

In a genre where half-baked opinion flows free and easy from even the lowest-level television talking head, real, thorough and controversial reporting is extremely rare. Sports figures are treated with far more deference by reporters than politicians are by even the most cowardly pack animals, and the truly newsworthy aspects of sport, the things that can give it relevance -- drugs, business, safety, academic corruption, etc. -- are too rarely attacked head-on.

Teaching sports journalism through a textbook is therefore a problematic exercise, one at which Fensch of the University of Texas at Austin, is only sporadically successful. You can't turn someone into Red Smith or Frank Deford or Allen Abel -- the type of writers normally held aloft as the genre's standard-bearers -- in a classroom, and if journalism schools dwell only on the various ways to convey "they won" or "they lost", what's the point?

So much of the time, the schools simply ignore sports. When I studied journalism at the University of Western Ontario, sports writing was not discussed as a specialty or genre or at all. Like entertainment writing or food writing or any of the other sub-species of reporting which make up a good half of the average daily newspaper, it was passed over in the drive to teach the basics of straight news reporting and feature writing.

There is nothing inherently wrong with that approach. The same standards

and techniques would apply to sports as to news. But, as I have found moving back and forth between the two solitudes, they are not at all the same in practice. There has to be a better way to prepare students for the special demands of sports without bleeding out their hard news instincts.

The problem with Fensch's textbook is that in trying to break down daily newspaper sports style to offer novices a formula, it comes up with what amounts to a recipe for hack writing. What is the point in pulling apart mediocre work in search of patterns? Should anyone be encouraged to use one-word leads, first person leads, parody leads? Certainly there are circumstances under which some or all of the above might work, but they would be few and far between, and the results of misuse so horrific, that they would be better ignored.

Fensch goes further, even offering a "quick and dirty" guide to what type of leads best fit which stories. For instance, he says, if you're writing about an accident or other incident that might include a fatality, you could use a summary lead, a "name prominent" lead or a quotation lead.

If teaching sports writing means teaching people to churn out AP-style summaries with maximum efficiency, then this textbook serves a purpose. It seems, though, that there might be higher standards to which a student could aspire, something beyond formula. After all, with a basic sense of inverted pyramid news writing, it's not that difficult to find a form to suit the content without having to refer to charts. Students would be better served as they learn to report by reading A.J. Liebling, reading Smith, reading Abel or Tom Boswell or any of the other superior sportswriters of today and the past. Learn from them how beautiful, moving and humorous sportswriting can be. Combine that with the scepticism and news sense necessary in any good

reporter, the willingness to challenge convention, and you would produce the perfect sports journalist.

Ironically, the single most honest, useful and entertaining aspect of Fensch's book is an essay by *Sports Illustrated* writer Craig Neff, which was originally published in the *Gannett Center Journal*. In the process of discrediting by implication much of what the author of the book has preached in preceding chapters, Neff offers a list of 19 things which confuse, amuse and embarrass him about his craft, and for anyone who has spent time in sports they ring absolutely true: the inane but necessary practice of hanging around locker rooms, waiting for athletes to emerge from the shower in the hope that one of them might have something interesting to say; the quote trading and deal cutting that turn journalism into something else; the leaps on and off bandwagons.

"Much of sports journalism has been and will always be speculative, a judging of the alignment of stars and planets and divisional races," he writes, "But doesn't it bother you just a little to see sportswriters devoting more time to the injustices of All-Star Game voting than to steroid use, grade fixing and the shortage of minority and women sportswriters?"

Neff concludes that any sportswriter, in order to better deal with the complex issues that ought to be tackled, would benefit from spending time in the news side of a paper. For those already beyond journalism school, it makes a heck of a lot of sense.

Stephen Brunt has worked in news, entertainment and sports at The Globe and Mail, and is currently the newspaper's sports columnist. In 1989, he was a finalist for the National Newspaper Award in Sports Writing and runner-up for the Centre for Investigative Journalism's award for investigative reporting.



McLuhan hated posing for cameras

Life and times of a media guru

By Trevor Lautens

Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger

By Philip Marchand

Random House of Canada, 320 pp.

Marshall McLuhan, what are you doin'?' -- was any question of the 1960s, not excluding the one about where have all the flowers

gone, better put? And who more perfectly cast to put it than Goldie Hawn, and in what more appropriate forum than the television show *Laugh-In*?

Philip Marchand answers Hawn's question absorbingly well. His book should snatch whatever inadequate prizes a Canadian biography qualifies for, and then some.

To dispose at once of a criticism: there is the small disappointment that Marchand doesn't bring us entirely up to date about McLuhan's kin -- perhaps out of discretion? His father, Herbert McLuhan, an amiable and well-liked talker not given to much action, and his mother, Elsie, a tougher and more ambitious soul whose tours as an elocutionist led to a kind of de facto marital separation, are not, so to speak, disposed of. Nor is the

reader brought up to date about McLuhan's wife Corinne, a staunch Texas-born woman of durable good looks. These are odd oversights in a biography that is meticulous without being fussy and candid without drumming up sensation.

Anyone who experienced the McLuhan phenomenon -- so appallingly recent, it seems, yet vanished, vanished -- is almost certain to come away with his or her earlier perceptions transformed. But one moment please ... there are youngsters in the crowd, we must remember, to whom the name McLuhan means little or nothing.

Marshall McLuhan was the great media guru of the 1960s, who while doubtless drawing on the works of others, explained (or obscured) communications as no one else ever had. The explanation seemed, in general, a happy as well as an exciting one, and it fit in well with the '60s release from the dry custom and stultifying authority: cultural radicals like Abbie Hoffman, Timothy Leary, and John Lennon were among the admirers. McLuhan was hailed as the maharishi of media, a sort of loin-cloth mystic.

That's ironic, because Marchand methodically removes the loin cloth and reveals a soutane. McLuhan's Catholicism was well enough known, certainly to his intimates and fellow academics, but then so was Columbus Catholic, and in his celebrity years McLuhan the discoverer was no more identified primarily as a Catholic than Columbus was. Even in his earlier years McLuhan consciously sought to avoid the identification (and the stigma) of being a Catholic scholar. But he was.

Marchand doesn't strain to hawk this point, but he doesn't have to: the evidence testifies effortlessly. McLuhan despised Marxism and preferred France; loved the church traditional (as only a convert -- from the Baptist church -- could) as opposed to the church progres-

sive; was literally apocalyptic, believing that events in the Middle East foretold the second coming of Christ; and as long ago as the early 1940s envisioned (accurately?) feminism and homosexuality -- the former creating the latter -- undermining the family, the social order, and morality as he cherished them.

It was characteristic of McLuhan that he demonstrated this thesis not with conventional sociological analysis but through the example, elaborated later in *The Mechanical Bride*, of the cartoon character Dagwood Bumstead. In a 1944 article, "Dagwood's America," McLuhan perceived dire effects from the ineffectual Dagwood being emasculated in front of the children by the more resourceful and tough-minded Blondie. He wanted to write a book on the matter. It was to be called *Sixty Million Mama's Boys*. It never appeared.

It was weird that this Thomist, this religious and cultural conservative, was wired up to invent seemingly single-handedly the language of the electronic age. It was a language that crackled with aphorism, metaphor, pun, dysfunction, leaps -- obscurities that turned on the new touchy-feelies and turned away the plodding linearites. Never mind Robert Fulford's penetrating remark in a review of McLuhan's *Understanding Media*: "Sometimes it seems that he has written the book without reading it."

In that dawn when it was bliss to be alive, everyone who was anyone knew that from the fingertips of technology there had been created a global village, and it was good; that the medium was the message; and that there were two Canadians who were not dull. The other was Pierre Elliott Trudeau. (The two corresponded; on McLuhan's part the attitude was just this side of idolatry.) Other aperçus among the vast torrent of words -- and McLuhan was primarily a conversationalist-bordering-on-monomologist, rather than a writer -- were

that North Americans went out of their homes in order to be alone, and that, as Marchand writes, McLuhan believed "his gloomy predictions were eagerly absorbed by the media because the media needed a lot of bad news to help sell its good news -- its advertising ... Genuinely good news, on the other hand, was upsetting because it almost always threatened people with change."

Such ideas, creating and catching a mood and often translated by acolytes from the mystic of communications who spoke in tongues, were so engaging, so heady, that few noticed that the master didn't necessarily approve of them. In the 1960s he perceived television's sensual appeal; in the 1970s he advised rationing it, especially for children. But by then the McLuhan rocket had come down.

It seems strange and capricious that it went up, piteous that -- and how -- it sank and fizzled out. McLuhan was a frenetic worker who had lifted himself from prairie obscurity (born in Edmonton, a graduate of the University of Manitoba who never felt educated until he studied at Cambridge and was stimulated by the ideas of F.R. Leavis) by assimilating huge chunks of knowledge that he transformed with something like genius into his allotted 15 minutes of fame. Then (to skate over a lot of events) his health faltered. In 1967 a tumor the size of a tennis ball was removed from his head in the longest operation of its type in American medical history. He seems never to have regained his edge. In 1979 a massive stroke horribly reduced the great talker's speech to hours-long repetitions of "oh boy, oh boy" and a dreadful "wuh, wuh." He died on the last day of 1980. Read all about it: no one is ever likely to tell the McLuhan story better.

Trevor Lautens is a Vancouver Sun editor and columnist.

Think good, rite better

By Mark Abley

Writing Literary Features

By R. Thomas Berner
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates,
109 pp.

Has American journalism really sunk to the depths of R. Thomas Berner? "This fact error, while regrettable (sic), does not detract from the technique." "Books such as this one imply that only a limited number of ways exists to write a certain type of story..." "The anecdote is to the feature what the inverted pyramid is to the hard news story." "By not using direct quotations, the writer maintains better control over the story." On the evidence of *Writing Literary Features*, Berner has a certain amount of difficulty composing a single paragraph that is free of slipshod arguments, fatuous assertions, or just plain appalling prose. Even his epigraph is ungrammatical.

The sad likelihood is, however, that this slim, inelegant volume will turn up in a lot of journalism courses over the next few years. (In a self-serving introduction, Berner recommends its use by teachers of feature writing, newswriting, public affairs reporting, and even editing.) The word "literary" in the title is misleading, by the way, for Berner does not even mention the kind of journalism that deals with the lives and work of writers. By "literary features," he simply means any feature article that employs such "literary" techniques as -- are you

ready? -- "relevant detail" and "the how of a news event." The book's title should really have been *Writing Newspaper Features*.

And what advice does R. Thomas Berner offer to novice journalists? Like any charlatan, he breaks his subject down into a plausible sequence of 10 straightforward steps. "Missing one or not doing one right," he warns, "can have a negative effect on the following steps." Thus forearmed, the nervous reader discovers that the 10 steps are, in order: reporting; thinking ("I call this *analysis aforeshought*"); organization ("The most natural way to organize facts is logically"); mechanics ("standard punctuation and grammar"); style; the lead; the body; the ending; evaluation; and, finally rewriting. Anyone who takes this plodding series at its face value would undertake no thinking before he reports, no

No, I'm not quoting the poor man out of context. No, I'm not distorting his prose.

evaluation before he finishes, and no organizing after he begins. Berner places far too little emphasis on creative revision, for he relegates everything other than the first draft to a brief tenth step. This is, in short, the how-to approach to our craft and sullen art, long on prescription ("A literary feature will focus on people rather than topics"), short on imagination. Berner has a habit of laying down tedious laws and describing them as though they matter.

Writing Literary Features is, to my mind, irredeemably flawed by its author's dull perceptions and lame writing. However, many of its hundred-odd pages are taken up by Berner's choice of model features; and it must be said that he has chosen reasonably well. His examples, all of which are reprinted in full, first appeared in U.S. newspapers in 1980 and 1981. They concentrate on

death -- a police officer's funeral, a politician's funeral, an attempted assassination, a successful murder, and the life of a gravedigger provide five of the eight topics by which Berner illustrates good feature-writing. While all the stories are at least competent, two of them stand out as examples of superb non-fictional prose: Richard Ben Cramer's piece in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* about the burial of Anwar Sadat, and John M. Crewdson's story in the *New York Times* about the arrival of illegal Mexican immigrants. I read both these articles with admiration and delight; they have the sort of vividness, surprise, warmth, and cool intelligence that characterize the best feature-writing. Unfortunately, I also read R. Thomas Berner's comments on the two articles, and thereby learned that "State of mind in literary features raises questions about whether a story is journalism."

No, I'm not quoting the poor man out of context. No, I'm not distorting his sentences; they defy distortion already. What can be said in defence of a man whose idea of literary analysis extends no further than this: "He tries to get people speaking so the reader can hear the people speaking"? The alarming question is how a man with so debased an ear for the language and so feeble an eye for argument could ever have come to teach a course about journalism, let alone write a book on the subject. The answer, presumably, lies in the inner workings of Penn State University, where R. Thomas you-know-who is a professor in the College of Liberal Arts.

Don't worry, then; American journalism is alive and well. It's only American universities that have sunk so low.

Mark Abley is the literary editor of The Montreal Gazette and a contributing editor to Saturday Night.

Rating the written word

By Stephen Madden

The 1989 Media Guide: A Critical Review of the Print Media

Edited by Jude Wanniski
Polyconomics, 453 pp.

My first boss was the city editor of a small daily in Upstate New York. He knew what sold newspapers, and he made sure everyone else on the staff knew, too. He ended the monthly newsroom meetings of the seven reporters he oversaw with the same admonition. "Get lots of names," he'd tell us. "And make sure you always spell them right. Mention a kid's name in a story and his mother, grandmother, and all his aunts will buy a paper and cut out the story. Names are what sell newspapers."

Somewhere in Jude Wanniski's past, there must have been a city editor from the same school. Wanniski is the editor/author of a Baedeker to the American press called *The 1989 Media Guide: A Critical Review of the Print Media*. It is a publication-by-publication review of 46 "important" American (and a few English) newspapers and magazines and the journalists who produce them, ranging from the heavyweight (*The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*) to the overweight (*The New York Times*, *Time*, *Forbes*) to the malnourished (the *Readers Digest*).

The book follows a straightforward if not slightly preposterous format, based

on some alarmingly misguided conceptions. In the first section, Wanniski passes judgment on how the press performed in 1988. Turns out the press did a pretty good job on the big story (the Presidential election), but as a whole (more on this later) its performance was not quite as good as it was in 1987.

After this prosaism, Wanniski offers in-depth critiques of each of the "serious" publications that have the ears and eyes of America's opinion makers. (My current employer is most assuredly not included.) He devotes several pages each to his analysis of what *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times* and the major magazines did right and wrong. At times his acerbic comments cut right to the bone with their accuracy; at times his windy descriptions of the minutiae of newsroom politics seem only to have been included to show us that he's been an insider and knows what he's talking about. (Wanniski was an editorial writer for *The Wall Street Journal* and is widely credited with having coined the phrase "supply-side economics.")

Then Wanniski gets personal. In perhaps the best-thumbed pages of any book this side of the Warhol diaries, Wanniski rates some 650 members of the working press, assigning them a certain number of stars as if they were so many restaurants, records or hotels. He gives a blow-by-blow description of the reporters' work, comparing their efforts to the previous year's, mentioning particular stories he thought were "yeoman," "insipid," "exhaustive" or "a mere rehash of the conventional wisdom." The personal critiques are listed alphabetically in categories such as columnists, financial reporters and foreign correspondents. After the critiques, Wanniski has agate-sized biographies of the people he has reviewed. Exhaustive. Yeoman.

But why is he doing this and who cares, anyway? If I had been included in Wanniski's roadmap to the American press (I wasn't, even though I wrote a column for *Fortune* for the better part of 1988), my mother would have bought one, even if Wanniski had savaged me. But as far as anyone can tell, the only people buying and actually using *The 1989 Media Guide* are public relations folk -- "Don't worry, Mr. Client. Your story is safe in the hands of Joe Reporter. Jude Wanniski gave him two and a half stars and says he's unrigorous! You'll look great!"

It's hard to imagine that any real decisions of import -- besides who has to pay for lunch -- would be made on the basis of what Wanniski has to say. The book is a great way to tweak friends who got fewer stars than you, or as a handy fodder at salary reviews. But nobody would lose a job based on Wanniski's comments, especially at a place like *Fortune* (I use it only because it provides a handy frame of reference), where several writers considered in-house to be the Delphic oracles of trends in the business community were brutalised by Wanniski's comments. Conversely, several overlooked and oft-abused talents were given high-praise for their -- wait for it -- "yeomanlike" efforts.

Besides, there are some huge lapses in just who gets reviewed anyway. Another *Fortune* example: two senior writers, one who won the Overseas Press Club Award for foreign business reporting and another who broke a major story on Edsel Ford II's discontent with his role at Ford Motor Company, were both ignored.

For a man who had the temerity to name his first book *The Way the World Works*, Wanniski shows a hefty amount of naivete. First and foremost, the press is not a singular, amorphous entity, so any critique of its performance as such

(better in 1987 than last year) is nonsensical.

Secondly, he complains that the group journalism practised at large magazines such as *Time* results in factual error. On the contrary. As someone who checked facts for two years at a Time, Inc. publication, I can assure you that group journalism results in fewer errors. Blander reading, true, but correct bland reading.

Thirdly, does anybody really think that, as Wanniski suggests, the 28 million subscribers of the *Readers Digest* really want to read more stories about the political economies of Third World nations? One more story on political economies would mean one less "Drama in Real Life" or "Humor in Uniform."

Stephen Madden is the former "People" columnist for Fortune. He is currently a staff feature writer for M magazine.

Reading from Left to Right

By Anthony Westell

Agent of Influence: The Life and Times of Wilfred Burchett

By Robert Manne
*The Mackenzie Institute
for the Study of Terrorism,
Revolution and Propaganda,
Toronto, 64 pp.*

The Mackenzie Institute describes itself as being non-partisan, independent and set up in 1986 to "conduct educational programs in those

aspects of conflict that fall between the traditional notions of 'peace' and 'war'". It appears to be Right-leaning and when the director, Maurice Tugwell, says in his preface to this pamphlet that it is the first in an occasional series that will explore aspects of news reporting in an age of terrorism etc., we can expect attempts to document Communist influence in the Western media. Provided that the research is well done and fairly presented, there may be cause for argument, but not for complaint; it will be another contribution to the free market in information and opinion, and there probably are tales to be told and lessons to be learnt.

In terms of research and presentation, this work by an Australian academic is a reasonable start for the series. Wilfred Burchett, who died in 1983, was a controversial Australian journalist who wrote from the Communist side of the fronts in the wars in Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia. Between wars, he lived in, and wrote from, China, the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. His work was widely used in the Western media although there was always some doubt about whether he was an independent, radical journalist, as he claimed, or a committed propagandist in the pay of Communist parties and governments.

Several books have been written about Burchett, who also wrote extensively about himself, and one would have to be a specialist to debate the evidence which Manne offers to support the conclusion that Burchett was in fact "an agent of influence" -- that is, as defined by Tugwell, a citizen of a foreign country who uses influence, reputation, power or credibility to promote Soviet objectives in ways that cannot be traced to direction by Moscow. Manne's most persuasive evidence comes from letters which Burchett wrote to his father which seem to give an account of his life and activities rather different from what one would expect from an independent journalist. There is also the matter of his role

in interrogating Australian and other U.N. prisoners in North Korea which seems to have gone far beyond what might be expected from a journalist, independent or otherwise.

But what is an independent journalist? The assumption here seems to be that a journalist working for a capitalist-owned newspaper in a capitalist society and presenting, consciously or not, a capitalist's interpretation of the news is independent, while a journalist working for Communist newspaper and presenting a Communist view of events is a propagandist. I do not mean to suggest that there is no difference, only that all truth does not lie one side and all lies on the other. In time of war, particularly, and that is when Burchett was most visible, truth is the first casualty, we are told, and it is the exceptional correspondent who does not become a propagandist for one side.

Manne is content for the most part to present the facts about Burchett as he sees them. Tugwell in his preface, says that in a free society the only defence against "mendacious reporting" is a "vigilant news media that will expose fraud within its own ranks as energetically as it publicizes dishonesty in government and business." Dishonesty is one thing and ought to be exposed wherever found; an honest difference of opinion about what constitutes the truth is quite another, and the best defence usually is to publish all serious opinions. Burchett probably was an honest Communist who believed, naively and wrongly, that the view of the news provided to him by a Communist party was by definition the truth. It is doubtful that the Western media did much harm by publishing his version of the truth in competition with that of more conventional journalists.

Anthony Westell is director of Carleton University's School of Journalism.

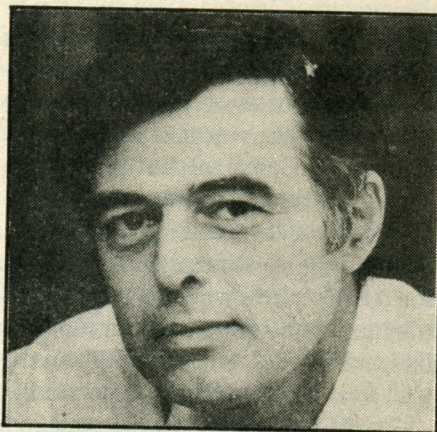
Journalism as literature

Following are excerpts from the keynote speech by Neil Reynolds, editor of the Kingston Whig Standard, at the annual CIJ conference in Ottawa:

Journalists spend a great deal of time discussing ways to improve the product, the stories, that they produce. We know that we must deliver comprehensible, accurate messages to people, and that we must tell comprehensible, accurate stories. At our best, we do; and at our best we do it in a way that meets the criteria of literature. The standard is not impossible: all writers, after all, write one word, one thought, at a time.

Yet this standard -- that journalism be practised as a literary art -- is nowhere taken very seriously in the newspaper industry. And although we have already gone about as far toward mechanistic composition as one might think it possible to go, the formula-writers press ever forward, relentlessly pursuing the sentence structure that can survive in the post-literate society that they insist lies ahead. In a recent issue of the professional journal published by the American Society of Newspaper Editors someone said this: "Remember that your readers' retention level starts to drop after word four." Under a headline that proclaimed 30 tips for city editors, the writer said: "Never over-estimate your readers' attention span -- they will disappoint you every time."

Taken to its extreme, where I believe we have already taken it, this kind of journalism produces uniformly terse and cryptic stories, technically accurate perhaps, but minute fragments of the reality that they purport to describe. We know this kind of journalism amongst ourselves as *Chicken McNugget* journalism, a phrase that unfortunately libels a commercial product that provides more nutri-



Neil Reynolds

tion for the body than formula journalism provides for the mind.

You have heard it all too often. People have no time to read anymore. People can't read anymore. We live in a post-literate society, and we're on our way back to hieroglyphics. Write tight. Write tighter. Write for Grade 8 literacy. Write for the lowest common denominator. We're losing our readers, and our market penetration is down. Order that double-truck color-coded weather map. Order that package of computer graphics. We can win readers -- how? -- by simulating illiteracy.

These conclusions are wrong. We live in a literate society, the best educated society in human history. People read newspapers for utilitarian reasons -- to know generally what's going on -- and for deeper and more fundamental reasons. Newspapers are an expression, an articulation, of community. Yes, life is busy and stressed: newspapers are a quiet, private interlude. In this sense, newspapers are a refuge of peace and, yes, meditation. Newspapers publish comic strips and cartoons, sports and show biz, but they remain serious enterprises that confront people, as individuals and as citizens, with the serious personal-interest and public-interest issues of the day.

People love to read, and given material worth reading, they will love to read it. For my part, I believe that we should never underestimate the intelligence of our readers. I believe that we should aspire to the best writing, the best story-telling, that our talents permit. I believe that we should celebrate, not lament, the seriousness of our purpose. On his death-bed, Thomas Arnold, the father of the poet Matthew Arnold, wrote in his journal: "I have just been looking over a newspaper, one of the most painful and solemn studies of the world, if read thoughtfully." Our journalistic objective should be simply that, solemn -- meaning sober, deliberate and very important. Our writing should elicit thoughtful, reflective and, indeed, painful meditation...



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Short Takes

Ian Haysom has moved into the editor's job at *The Vancouver Province*. Haysom comes from *The Vancouver Sun*, where he was city editor and then assistant managing editor.

There has been no replacement yet named for Haysom at *The Sun*, but there are many other changes afoot. **Judy Lindsay**, who was business editor, has become a full-time business columnist, leaving her old job empty for the time being. And **Jamie Lamb** now writes a cityside column. Lamb had been responsible for a national column written from B.C., but now *The Sun* gets its national coverage from **Geoffrey Stevens**, who writes for the paper from Ottawa. Stevens comes from *The Globe and Mail*. Also, **Nicole Parton** has moved from her op ed column to a general column on page 2.

On Vancouver Island, *The Victoria Times-Colonist* has lost deskier **Wayne Moriarty** to *The Edmonton Journal*. **Jean Koenig**, who was assistant city editor at *The Edmonton Journal* until her move to Victoria two years ago, takes over Moriarty's job.

There's been a bit of a shuffle at *The Calgary Herald*. Assignment editor **Paul Drohan** has moved into a new job as editor of *The Herald's* magazine supplement, *Neighbours*. Drohan was replaced by **Bob McKee**, formerly the night city editor. **Mike Dempster** now has that job. And finally, **Dave Obee** leaves the night city desk for the weekend editor's job vacated by Dempster.

CBC-TV in Calgary has a new executive producer for its *News Hour*. **John Drabble** is moving from CBW-FM in Winnipeg, where he has been senior producer. He replaces **Jon Lovink**, who will stay on doing contract work.

CTV-affiliate CFRN in Edmonton has lost news anchor **Bob Chelmick** to the CBC station in that city. In Chelmick's place, Edmontonians will now see **Daryl McIntyre**. CFRN-TV also has a new assignment editor,

Andrew Smith. Smith replaces **Steve Hogle**, who becomes a beat reporter.

New staff at *The Brandon Sun* include copy editor **Perry Bergson**, previously from *The Dawson Herald* and **Dave Williams**, who left *The Daily Graphic* in Portage La Prairie to fill the post of general reporter. Leaving the newspaper business, *The Sun's* agriculture reporter, **Larry Kusch**, goes to the Department of Agriculture in Winnipeg.

The Moose Jaw Herald celebrated its 100th anniversary by publishing a special centennial edition July 31 with tributes from renowned Canadian journalists.

In radio news, Moose Jaw's CHAB radio has a different news director. **Hal Anderson** replaces **Wilf Braun** in this position.

At CKRC radio in Winnipeg, **Jim Claggett** fills **Jackie Shymanski's** shoes working the weekend shift as reporter and news host.

Also in Winnipeg, at CBW-FM, **Lynn Raineault** moves into the *All-News Program* leaving her position as producer of the *24-Hour Late Night Show*. Succeeding her is **Heaton Dyer** from Australia.

Staff changes at CKCK-TV in Regina are numerous. **Jim McLean** now favors public broadcasting as he begins his stint as executive producer for Regina CBC-TV's *Countryside*. Replacing him as CKCK-TV news producer is **Alana Tayler**, who also co-hosts *Eye on Saskatchewan*. **Rob Hislop** will be late night host, the spot left vacant by Taylor. He hails from CKOS/CICC-TV in Yorkton. Also leaving CKCK-TV is *This Week* host producer **Kathleen Petty**. She'll be entertainment and culture producer for *CBC News World* in Calgary. **James Miller** leaves CKBI/CIPA-TV in Prince Albert to assume the role of host producer for *This Week*.

Keith Spicer, editor of *The Ottawa Citizen*, has been named chairman of the

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Spicer is also a former Official Languages Commissioner for Canada.

The Montreal Gazette's newsroom is being reorganized, and the changes should be in effect in August. **Mel Morris**, managing editor, has been named executive managing editor. Assistant managing editors **Alan Allnutt** and **Michael Cooke** will assume the positions of associate managing editors. A former assistant managing editor, **Robert Walker**, has become *The Gazette's* ombudsman. He replaces **Stephanie Whittaker**, who is leaving the newspaper for family reasons.

Clarke Davey, outgoing publisher of *The Gazette*, will become the new publisher of *The Ottawa Citizen*.

The Montreal Daily News has a new senior managing editor, **Tim Balford**. Balford was formerly senior editor. **Glenn Cole** has been appointed sports editor of *The Daily News*, moving from his position as assistant sports editor.

Nerene Virgin will be the host of a new morning magazine show and relief anchor at CFTO-TV in Toronto. Virgin originally left her position at CBO-TV's *Newsday* in Ottawa to co-anchor a prime-time show for CBC's *NewsWorld*, but changed her mind and decided to accept the job at CFTO.

CJOH-TV's *Newsline* in Ottawa will be losing co-anchor **Kathryn Wright**. After less than a year as co-anchor, Wright is moving to CBC as the sole host of *NewsWorld's* Sunday morning program.

Wayne MacDonald has been named editor of *The Kitchener-Waterloo Record*. He has been managing editor for the last year and a half after spending several years in administration and marketing. The new managing editor is **Carolynne Rittinger**, former assistant managing editor of news. She is being replaced by **Don McCurdy**, who had been assistant managing editor of fea-

Short Takes

tures. **Al Coates**, former city editor, moves into McCurdy's old spot.

Judy Nyman has left the staff of *The Toronto Star* after five years. Nyman is now freelancing in Toronto, specializing in business and finance.

At *The Globe and Mail*, sports reporter **Mary Hynes** is leaving. Hynes is going to CBC as the host of the weekly feature show *The Inside Track*. She is replacing **Mark Lee**, who will be a national reporter for CBC news and sports.

The Globe's Quebec bureau has a new chief, **Benoit Aubin**. Aubin had been covering the Quebec legislature. **Ann Rauhala** has left reporting and is now foreign editor, with responsibility for *The Globe's* 10 foreign bureaus. She succeeds **Gene Allen**, who is now an Ontario legislature staffer.

The former art director at *The Globe and Mail*, **Frank Teskey**, is now the publisher of *West* magazine, *The Globe's* Vancouver-based magazine, which will begin publication in September. The editor of the magazine is **Paul Sullivan**, former editor-in-chief of *The Winnipeg Sun* and senior editor with CBC's *The Journal*. The new art director at *The Globe* is **Jim Ireland**.

Angelika (Ann) Harvey has moved to cityside at *The Vernon Daily News* and now reports police, fire and courts. Succeeding her as lifestyles editor is **Renne Zoritch** from *The Chase-Shuswap Weekly*.

A new president of the Southam Newspaper Group was announced by Southam Inc. president John P. Fisher. **Russell Mills**, succeeds **Paddy Sherman**, who will move to Vancouver as chairman of Pacific Press Ltd. Mills has been vice-president and publisher of *The Ottawa Citizen* since 1986.

Gunnel Pelletier has been appointed vice-president, Quebec, of Canada News-Wire Limited (CNW). Pelletier, a 10-year employee of CNW, will be responsible for increasing the market

penetration of CNW throughout the province.

Also at Canada Newswire, broadcast executive **Howard Christensen** has been appointed the new business development manager. Christensen was formerly at Broadcast News Limited as general executive for eastern Canada.

Willard Z. (Bud) Estey, former Supreme Court justice, has been elected chairman of the Ontario Press Council. Estey left the court in April, 1988, after 11 years. He will assume the chairmanship in January, 1990.

Mel Morris, managing editor of *The Montreal Gazette*, is the new president of the Canadian Managing Editors Conference, succeeding **Murray Burt** of *The Winnipeg Free Press*. **Gillian Steward**, managing editor of *The Calgary Herald*, has been elected first vice-president, and **Murray Thomson** of *The St. Catharines Standard* is the second vice-president. **Scott Honeyman** of *The Ottawa Citizen* is the secretary-treasurer.

The 1989-1990 national executive of the Periodical Writers Association of Canada was elected at PWAC's annual meeting in Toronto. **Heather Pengelly** is the new president, **Shirley Hewett** has been named vice-president, and **Sandra Bernstein** is treasurer. The regional directors elected are: Atlantic, **Lawrence Jackson**; Quebec, **Terri Foxman**; Ontario, **Gloria Hildebrandt**; Prairies, **Helene Hladun**; and British Columbia, **Gail Buente**.

The Windsor Star was the overall winner at this year's Western Ontario Newspaper Awards. *The Star* received seven first place prizes and eight runners up, and took top honors for environmental, editorial and humorous writing. Some of the award winners include: **Alan Cairns**, **Harry van Vugt**, **John Coleman**, managing editor **Jim Bruce**, **Brad Honywill**, **Karen Hall**, **Paul Vasey** and **Sharon Hill**.

Kerry Lambie has been appointed senior vice-president and general

manager of Canadian operations for Thomson Newspapers Ltd., prompting additional changes. **Matt Dundas** is moving from his position as publisher of *The Chronicle-Journal* and *The Times News* in Thunder Bay to Toronto as a divisional manager. He succeeds **Paul Tissington**, who is taking over Lambie's former post as manager of editorial services. Taking over Dundas' position in Thunder Bay is **James Milne**, former publisher of *The Cape Breton Post* in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Leith Orr, former publisher of *The Western Star* in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, is replacing Milne at *The Post*.

The former editorial consultant for Thomson Newspapers Ltd. in Toronto, **John Wells**, has gone to *The Edmonton Journal*, where he is news editor. **Lynne Van Luven** is *The Journal's* new book editor.

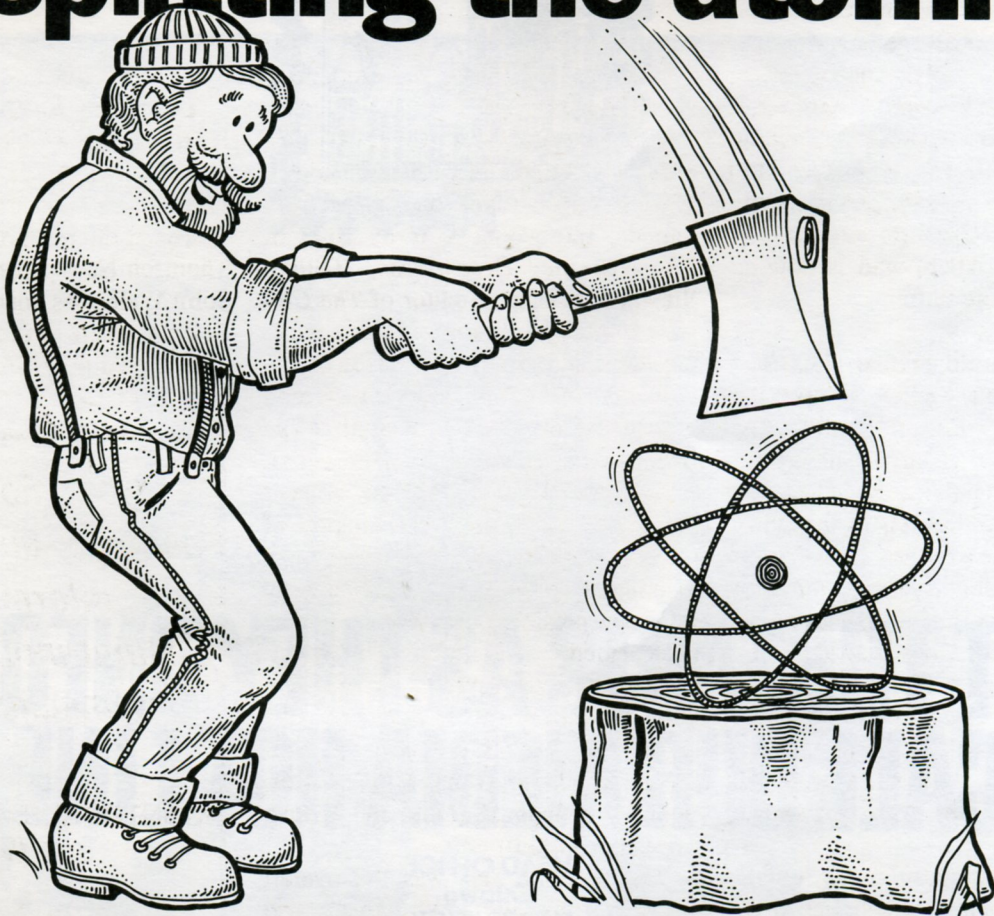
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