

THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF NEWS

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ABSTRACT

This study consists of two main parts: first, a review and assessment of the literature of the mass media; and secondly, the presentation and analysis of the results of three months' fieldwork in a local television news and public affairs department.

Development of research proceeded in a dialectical fashion. The initial literature reviewed was oriented to the completion of the fieldwork, while questions raised in the fieldwork necessitated more thorough study of the historical, political and economic basis of news production.

Examination of literature in the sociology of communications was, for the most part, found to be lacking, because its orientation was to discovering the responses of an atomized audience to the media, rather than to the way program decisions are made, and the basis for those decisions.

A brief review is made of the literature on content analysis of the media, and power structure research, both of which are viewed as static analyses which cannot explain the dynamics of media operations.

Two major and interrelated functions of the media are developed as key explanations of the role of the media, its economic and ideological functions. Both are understood to be an integral part of the larger capitalist economic system. The function of news has two parts. First, the local station is a commercial organization which makes its decisions on the basis of profitability. The station's source of revenue is selling audiences to

advertisers. For this reason, program decisions reflect the concern of gaining or maintaining the largest possible audiences over the entire television schedule. Secondly, television advertising encourages consumption, and this helps to reduce the time of the circulation of capital from product back into capital, and the cost for the producers.

The second major function of television is the maintenance of the ideological hegemony of capitalism. Television, and television news programs accomplish this in two basic ways, through the reinforcement of existing conceptions of the world, and through the omission of any competing interpretations of social reality and the maintenance of strict parameters on debate.

Fieldwork was conducted previous to much of this analysis and questions raised resulted in a return to the data. Focus of the research was to discover the social organization in the news room that resulted in the production of news. The main focus of news room activities was to filling the time allotted for the news and public affairs program. One of the most important contributions of this paper is a restatement of the fact that the economic imperatives of the employer become the central demand characteristics for the employee. News room workers had no choice but to fill the time allotted, and to fill it successfully, i.e., to attract a large audience.

Because of the organizational basis of news selection, which included such factors as budget demands, staff availability, cost of film, newsmen were found to have only the vaguest idea of what it is that constitutes the news. The only general area of agreement was for 'spot' or spectacular news items, such as fires, robberies and major disasters.

Sources of news items for televisions were found to be restricted, with few stations having any independent research capacity and a heavy reliance being placed on other media for news ideas and background. As a result, television does not offer another source of news, but rather the same news in a different medium.

An important element in making news comprehensible to an audience, and to make up for television's inability to be present when most stories actually occur, is the construction of news items either through rehearsal of events which are pre-planned, or the re-construction of events which have already occurred or did not come off as anticipated.

The conclusion of this study is that the social production of news is shaped by the economic imperatives of the commercial stations. These imperatives are those of the market place and the maximization of profit, which is also the base from which the ideological hegemony of capitalism flows. These two elements, operating at different but inter-related levels, underly news production, which is based on the common sense or vulgare understanding of these phenomena, and encourages the belief in the 'truth' of the news.

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INTRODUCTION

This study concerns the social production of television news. It investigates in detail one aspect of the vast outpouring of information and entertainment that constitutes television. Television itself is only one of the major channels of mass communications in North America, others being the newspapers, radio, magazines and movies.

Television, however, is a particularly important channel of mass communications at this point in time. Its combination of audio and visual techniques lends it an illusion of particular accuracy in showing events as they 'actually happen'. Audiences have the impression that they are witnessing the event in its totality as it 'actually' occurs. This is particularly true of television news.

This aspect of the impact of television news has been the subject of recent study. In an article on television news, Fortune Magazine reports that most people, by a margin of two to one, believe what they hear and see on television as opposed to what they read.¹ The Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media² states that "two in three Canadians watch the news daily on television, and more than nine in ten watch television news at least once a week".³ It further reported that:

for facts, background and interpretation, people are more inclined to rely on newspapers than on television, radio or magazines. Television is used for reports on special events (such as moon landings) as well as for 4 entertainment and relaxation.

In spite of this, however, the Report also discovered that "television is the most believed and most important medium for international

news and for Canadian news of national importance."⁵ Newspapers, on the other hand, are more trusted for local news. 56 percent of the respondents in the Mass Media Report thought that television was the most important media for international news, and 48 percent thought it was the most important media for national news. The corresponding figures for newspapers were 24 percent and 29 percent respectively; 60 percent and 52 percent thought that television was the most believable medium for international and national news respectively. The corresponding figures for newspapers as the most believable news source were 19 percent for international news and 26 percent for national news.⁶ It is interesting to note that the majority of the respondents felt that news stories "should be happy without too many gory details".⁷

The extent of television ~~uses~~ gives some indication of its impact. The Mass Media Report estimated that children under ten watch approximately 12 hours of television per week, while the median number of weekly hours for adult viewing is approximately 13. At least one person in four, watches 20 hours of television a week.⁸ These estimates tend to be on the conservative side, compared to others which indicate that children spend more time watching television than at any other activity except sleeping.

Television is big business. National advertising revenue for television in Canada was \$94 million in 1968, and local advertising revenue was \$24 million. This constitutes an increase of 70 percent and 58 percent respectively between 1963 and 1968. Similar advertising revenue for newspapers was \$64 million nationally, and \$147 million locally in 1968. These figures represent increases of 25 percent and 52 percent respectively between 1963 and 1968.⁹ Since the total amount of money spent on advertising

has remained quite stable, it can be seen that television is encroaching on the advertising revenue of newspapers.¹⁰

The production of television news is also big business. Although figures are not available for Canada, Fortune Magazine estimates that the NBC spends approximately \$67 million for its news budget, while the estimated figure for CBS is \$42 million.

PART 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF MEDIA RESEARCH

This study is concerned with the social organization of the production of television news. It is an investigation of the actual social processes that mediate between events as they 'actually happen' and as they are 'worked up' and presented as television news.

This study is part of the larger literature on the mass media and, in particular, on television. Hopefully, it will also be a contribution to the sociology of knowledge. It differs; however, from most literature in the field of mass media, a central thrust of which has been the impact of the various media messages upon the audience. The audience, seen either individually or collectively, has been the object of research. Implicit in making the audience response the problematic is an acceptance of the media as given. This research begins at the opposite end by making the content of the media, and in particular the content of news programs, its problematic. As such, it can be viewed as part of the larger area of enquiry that would make the social organization of knowledge the focal point for research.

Another distinction between this study and much other literature in the field is that it analyzes within the context of the power relations and economic imperatives of the larger society. Although the bulk of this research is the result of fieldwork conducted over a period of four months

in the news and public affairs section of a local television station, the fieldwork can only make sense if it is related to the general social trends of which the media is a part.

The initial fieldwork investigation was oriented to the ethnographic description of the newsroom and those activities directly emanating from it. Appendix A discusses some of the problems in conducting such ethnographic fieldwork and the discomfort that is often caused by the interviewers presence.

Before discussing the theoretical and methodological background to this research , it is necessary to give an overview of existing approaches to the study of the mass media. From a review of the literature, it will be possible not only to give a critical appraisal of the state of the field but also to retrieve those elements of existing work that will prove useful to the analysis undertaken here.

Early Mass Media Research

The history of mass media research can only be understood as the history of the attempt to understand the impact of the various media on individual behaviour. This research was based on a model of a social system which is composed of disassociated individuals. This model was influenced by nineteenth century economic theory of the marketplace, which stressed the activity of many isolated individuals in the achievement of balancing growth in the economy. Both prevailing stimulus-response theory in psychology, and the emphasis in late nineteenth century classical sociology on the breakdown of interpersonal relationships in an industrialized and urbanized society gave a theoretical basis for this model of the audience.¹²

Larson, in his overview of the effects of mass communications, comments that much early and present research (he is writing in 1964) was based on two implicit assumptions:

(1) modern urban society is an atomized mass of disconnected individuals, and (2) there is a direct relationship between the sending and receiving of mass media content in such a society. 13

DeFleur states that the major question that has dominated theory and research in the mass media:

has been their effect. That is, how have the media influenced us as individuals in terms of persuading us to believe in new political ideologies. . . or to change our patterns of behaviour in some significant way as the result of attention to the mass media communications? 14

He traces the increasing elaboration of research based originally on a simple stimulus-response model of human behaviour, and its developing consideration of such intervening variables as selective perception and retention, the influence of groups and group norms, and the effect of local opinion leaders in the change of attitudes as a result of the mass media.

Klapper¹⁵ notes a similar transition in mass media research. The increasing elaboration of research models was simply an attempt to more accurately gauge the effect of the media. The stimulus-response model viewed people as infinitely malleable as a direct result of media intervention. The stimulus (media) was able to elicit a direct and immediate response from the organism (audience). It was the simplicity of this approach which Klapper felt lead to increasingly elaborate research designs.

As a result of research conducted by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet¹⁶ on the 1940 American presidential election, an interest in the

effect of interpersonal communication and influence in the transmission of mass media messages was developed. Their study sought to determine the effect of radio and television on the vote decisions of their survey sample. They discovered that these media had relatively little impact on voter choice, and that this was particularly true for changes in voter decisions from one candidate to another. It was found that those people who changed their votes were most influenced by personal friends and acquaintances, and that people tended to vote in the same way as influential peer group members. After further research, it was discovered that within this web of interpersonal relations, some individuals were seen to exercise a disproportionate influence. These people were called 'opinion leaders'.

This discovery of the impact of 'opinion leaders' and interpersonal influence shifted the grounds of mass media research towards an emphasis on the role of people in the flow of mass media communications. People were no longer simply atomized individuals, or representative of social categories, but members of various communities and groups. This complex web of interpersonal relations was instrumental in increasing or decreasing the resistance of individuals to various messages sent by the mass media.

Personal Influence was an outgrowth of the above study. Katz and Lazarsfeld continued the shift in mass media research noted above by observing that:

the overriding interest of mass media research is in the study of the effectiveness of mass media attempts to influence-usually to change-opinions and attitudes₁₇ in the very short run.

They describe four intervening variables in the mass communications process: 1) exposure, 2) the differential character of the media, 3) content,

and 4) attitudes and psychological predispositions.¹⁸

Their study attempts to integrate small group research with this new insight of mass media researchers. They studied the patterns of personal influence in Decatur among the 800 women in their sample, in the areas of marketing, fashions, public affairs, and movie-going. Although they found that different opinion leaders exercised influence in each of these areas, they discovered that:

the opinion leaders tended to be both more generally exposed to the mass media, and more specifically' exposed to the content most closely associated with their leadership. 19

This became part of the content that was passed on to others in the "two-step flow of communications". However, over 58 per cent of the position changes

were apparently made without involving any remembered personal contact, and were, very often, dependent on the mass media. 20

This study demonstrated the importance of individual mediation of mass media content in a significant number of situations where people changed their position. However, it also demonstrated the influence of the mass media in the absence of personal mediation. After this study, research shifted to the effects of personal influence and the diffusion of innovation, rather than mass media research per se.²¹

The research of Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, of Katz and Lazarsfeld, as well as the overviews provided by DeFleur and Klapper, all point to a very selective impact of the media. Mass communications are most effective in reinforcing existing patterns of behaviour or belief, and least effective in converting people from one opinion to another. The media are

effective in moulding people's opinions on topics where they have had no previous opinion, or in encouraging superficial changes in areas where no deeply held beliefs are affected. Such superficial changes would include brand-name switches.

This research confirms the material presented later in this paper concerning the use of the media in reinforcing the ideological hegemony of corporate capitalism. In addition to the ownership of the media and the ideological nature of the social organization of 'working up' news, the media presently affect people most significantly in reinforcing existing beliefs, and placing parameters on new topics of debate.

The question is, why did sociological research emphasize individual response? As Raymond Williams has pointed out, this research tacitly accepted the deep contradiction between the broadcasting model of "centralized transmission and privatized reception".²² The reasons given by DeFleur for this emphasis are very interesting, and worthy of closer scrutiny:

There are several possible explanations for this frequent failure to look beyond effect. First, the early "mechanistic S-R" theory of mass communications concentrated upon this effect. Second, financial support for studying this "practical" problem is far easier to obtain than for more "theoretical" questions. Third, there has been a high level of popular interest in effects, and therefore a more ready audience for publications dealing with them. ²³

The two important points in this explanation that have not been covered concern the financial support and the audience for publication of researchers doing mass media investigations. The direction of research was determined by those who could provide the funds. Sociologists, then, became the servants of those in power²⁴, in directing their research.

Not only did sociologists and other social scientists subject the questions of ownership, control of production of the mass media to insufficient scrutiny, but they were also actively involved in developing professional skills that would assist in making the centralization of programming more efficient. Out of the skills developed in pure research, or in the service of media corporations, the technical skills were developed which became the basis of public opinion polls, advertising research, and the various rating services.

Research into television followed the pattern that had been previously established for other forms of mass media, and in particular, radio. The research techniques that have developed around the evaluation of television audience response have become increasingly elaborated. The rating services are now able to differentiate the composition of television audiences by various social attributes such as age, sex, income level, and place of residence (rural or urban). This, however,

Content Analysis

Another major areas of mass media research has been that of content analysis. The aim of this research has been to quantify the content of different television news programs, or newspapers, and to compare the different coverages given various points of view, either on the same issue by 'competitors' within the same medium, or on the same issue in different mediums. Lyle²⁵ reports on a content audit conducted on television news programs in the Los Angeles area. He found that the non-news content of the news programs ranged from 25 percent on the hour programs to 33 percent on the half-hour or quarter-hour programs. Much of this non-news time was

consumed by commercial messages.

In his own evening audit, he found that there were a total of 103 stories on the seven different television stations. However, only five stories were covered on all seven stations, and 65 stories were covered on only the one station. This gives some indication of the latitude exercised by different stations in the selection of news stories. However, the stories that had the greatest coverage were the major national and international news items, which were fed in by the network news syndications. The local news items received a much greater variation in coverage. Lyle also discovered that on each thirty minute news program, there should be at least one "lighter side of the news"²⁶ item, lasting usually from three to five minutes.

Cirnio²⁷ catalogued a number of different forms of bias in news presentation as a result of a survey of literature based on content analysis. He found that bias existed in the source of news through the selection of news, the omission of news, the placement of items in news programs, and in photograph and visual selections. Other forms of bias, some of which are peculiar to newspapers, include bias through the use of captions, in the headlines, and through the 'coincidental' placement of other articles and news items. Through an analysis of the major television news program and newspapers, he documented the way the media avoided controversial issues such as hunger and malnutrition in America, the problems of auto safety, and the hazards of smoking.

The general impression gained from looking at content analysis research, not only in television but in other areas also, is that the content always involves a bias of subject matter. The debate may range as to the appropriateness of the bias, but at least within sociology, there

seems little debate on its existence. The bias, however, is often seen in a somewhat random fashion, and there is seldom any attempt to extend the analysis of content bias beyond the limitations of a particular program or a particular medium. This subject will be returned to in the next chapter, dealing with ideological hegemony.

The Role of Media in Society

Sociologists, in attempting to explain the content bias and the general reinforcement of prevailing norms, have looked at the social functions of the mass media in contemporary society. This discussion has received relatively little attention until very recently. The content of this discussion has been in an ahistorical and very abstract fashion, which has been in marked contrast to the detailed and sophisticated empirical studies conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of the media in reaching an audience.

Larson²⁸, for instance, in his overview of the literature, makes only one comment which takes into consideration the relationship of the mass media to the rest of the social structure of society; and this is a quote from Lang and Lang to the effect that

the impact of mass media communications can be understood only if the specific decisions of mass communicators, their relation to power holders, and the distribution of withholding of information from communication channels are included in their analysis. 29

Lazarsfeld and Merton,³⁰ in their influential essay, note three functions of the mass media: The "Status Conferral Function" is the bestowal of a certain legitimacy on those individuals, groups or organizations which receive media attention, as opposed to those which do not. The "Enforcement

of Social Norms Function" refers to the ability of the media to expose deviations from accepted public morality, thus requiring some form of social action to sanction those who are offenders. This results in lessening the gap between public and private morality.

The third social function of the media is the "Narcoticizing Dysfunction", which refers to the encouragement of passivity in the population. The authors view this as dysfunctional because of the necessity of having an active and informed citizenry in order to make democracy work. The "Narcoticizing Dysfunction" is the result of a steady stream of information, which gives the audience the impression that they know what is happening in the world, while at the same time encouraging a passivity in response to social problems. The media encourage the replacement of action with the simple satisfaction of knowing about the problem.

Later in the essay, they discuss the reasons why media perform in this manner:

Since the mass media are supported by great business concerns, geared into the current social and economic system, the media contribute to the maintenance of that system. This contribution is not found merely in the effect of advertisement of the sponsor's product. It arises, rather, from the typical presence in magazine stories, radio programs and newspaper columns, of some element of confirmation, some element of approval of the present structure of society, and this continuing reaffirmation underscores the duty³¹ to accept.

Porter, in his study of the Canadian social structure, argues that: social cohesion depends to a great extent on the intensity with which people accept collective sentiments and values³² as their own.

He labels those activities concerned with providing social cohesion as the

ideological function:

the unifying of value themes is achieved through control of media of communication, and therefore the structure of the ideological system becomes articulated with other systems of power. ³³

We will return to a more extensive discussion of the ideological role of the media in corporate capitalism in the next chapter on ideological hegemony.

Power Structure Research

One of the areas of research that has deliberately attempted to investigate the relationship of the media to the power relations that prevail in the larger society is power structure analysis. Power structure research investigates the ownership and control of the media, including the concentration of ownership within each media, and the relationship between media ownership and other sectors of the corporate economy.

Porter³⁴ in his research on the media elite, came to the conclusion that there was extensive and continuing centralization of the mass media in Canada. He concluded, however, that although the media operated as profit-seeking businesses, and had great internal concentration, the media elite was different from other sectors of the corporate elite. His plural elite model was based on the functional separation of the various institutions of society. There was need for co-ordination between the various elites, but he argued that it was problematic whether or not there was sufficient evidence of overlapping ownership and power within these various institutions, such that they constitute a ruling class. He did, however, provide a great deal of data to demonstrate the growing pattern of concentration in Canadian newspapers, and the strong tendency for major chains to own media outlets in several locations, or to own competing media in the same location.

Ten years later, Wallace Clement, based on data drawn from the Senate hearings on the mass media, replicated and extended Porter's investigation. According to Clement, there were extensive ownership and directorship links between the media elite and the economic elite. The social background of elites and their corporate ties made them virtually one and the same group, sharing the same ideology of corporate capitalism. Clement concluded that

upper class control in the interest of corporate capitalism is, indeed, characteristic of the mass media in Canada. They would have had to show that, in fact, the 'diverse and antagonistic sources' are actually different³⁵ faces of the same upper class and its elite.

The Mass Media Report, which had extensive current data on media ownership, also expressed some concern about the increasing concentration of news sources in Canada:

But the trend toward fewer and fewer owners of our sources of news and information is already well entrenched. There are only five cities in the country where genuine competition between newspapers exist; . . .³⁶

And later, in the same vein:

In broadcasting, ownership is far more diversified. But the trend towards concentration is accelerating. Nearly a dozen TV stations that once enjoyed local control, or substantial local participation, have come under the control of major³⁷ broadcasting groups.

Similar research has been conducted in the U.S.A. Ehrlich has done research in the ownership of the American mass media, and has concluded that

First, we can see that the directors of the mass media are integrally enmeshed within the corporate and governmental structure of the entire society, Secondly, we can understand that by their social positions these moghuls of the mass media have an inescapable investment in the status quo.³⁸ (emphasis in the original)

He has also shown that public television is under the control of members of the commercial media, and members of the political, economic and military elite.³⁹

Power structure research, although a distinct advance over research which neglects the power structure of society, still has serious shortcomings. Research tends to be mechanistic and static. Typically, it becomes so involved in gathering factual information on specific corporate ties that it neglects the dynamic relations that exist under capitalism.

As a result, it is not surprising that power structure researchers advance a theory of social groupings rather⁴⁰ than social dynamics.

There is, however, a body of research which extends beyond simply looking at the concentration of ownership and control on a national basis. This research looks at the extent of the use of the media, and in particular the electronic media, as a form of cultural imperialism.

Herbert Schiller,⁴¹ one of the major researchers in this field, discovered that the American Department of Defence owned 38 television stations and 200 radio transmitters throughout the world. In addition, the U.S. Information Agency, prepared regular television programming for 97 countries, and, until very recently, extensively funded the Voice of America.

The three major American networks have extensive international operations: CBS (1966) sold services and films in 100 countries; NBC did a \$2 million business through syndicating 125 film series to more than 300 television stations in 83 countries; ABC, through its international network (Worldview) can reach 60% of all world television homes.⁴²

A recent UNESCO study by Karl Norderstreng and Tapio Varis looked at the international flow of program material. Their report noted a great imbalance in the international flow of programs between countries, with the

United States contributing a disproportionate amount of the programming. Most of the countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Near East import over 50 percent of their programming, mainly from the United States.⁴³ While more than 3000 hours of television programs per year flow from the western countries to the socialist countries of Europe, the flow in the opposite direction, to western European screens, is only 1000 hours per year.⁴⁴

Schiller has pointed out that

the character of television in any society, at any time, is the character of the social system that prevails.⁴⁵

He goes on to comment that

if a social system is so powerful that it is able to extend beyond its own borders, we have an additional consideration. We may find imposed on a weaker society a type of television, or any other cultural form, that prevails in the dominant society. This will reflect, however, the characteristics of the social relationships between societies and even within societies.⁴⁶

Smythe, speaking at the same symposium, pointed out that

in approaching the problem of international program flow, it must always be understood that all of the varied array of cultural products and processes (ranging from "Peyton Place" and Coca-Cola to cosmonauts and pingpong matches) exist in a world of real power formation. Clearly, the evidence of the present study reflects the fact the TV program content has been developed as an important tool of cultural strategy in the capitalist nations for the expansion and defence of their respective systems, as against each other, and as against the socialist system.⁴⁷

And further on, he states that

this relation of TV content to the 'real' world is a dialectical one; the TV 'world' reflects the 'real' world on the one hand, and in turn changes the 'real' world.⁴⁸

Canada imports over one third of its programs. In addition, over

three-fifths of Canada's population is within range of American stations.⁴⁹

The immediate reason for American hegemony is easy to discover. It is to the financial advantage of the commercial stations in these countries, in the absence of any countervailing government legislation, to purchase their programs from other countries that have already made the initial expenditure on production. Besides these financial advantages, the American programs imported into these countries are valuable in maintaining the status quo, and in encouraging passivity among the populace, thereby reinforcing the position of national ruling groups.

A recent news item emanating from the CRTC-sponsored seminar on television violence, and based on a CRTC staff research paper, pointed out that Canadian networks can purchase a top-run American situation comedy (like "All in the Family", "Mary Tyle Moore", or "MASH") for approximately \$2000, while they can realize revenues of \$24,000 from them. On the other hand, programs like "The Beachcomber" are produced by the CBC for some \$65,000 per segment, while realizing revenues of only \$24,000 per week.⁵⁰

For Canadians, the concern has been the political and cultural impact of the heavy influence of and dependence on American news and cultural programming. Warnock⁵¹ has documented the effect of American news sources on Canadian newspapers, while pointing out that these newspapers are already over 50 percent advertisement; and thus there is little space given to Canadian news originated by Canadians.

Joseph Scanlon reports that between October 1972 and September 1973, 26.4 percent of the items carried by broadcast news were non-Canadian, every one from ABC. He also points out the extensive use made by the two national television networks of American new coverage. CBC uses mainly CBS material,

while CTV uses ABC and NBC.⁵² Although needing further research, the evidence indicates a substantial reliance by Canadians on Americans for their news of world events. This, of course, means that Canadians are receiving an American perspective in their international news. Ironically enough, the Mass Media Report, as already noted, indicates that it is precisely in the field of international news coverage that Canadians find television most believable.

Continuing on the theme of cultural imperialism, but extending beyond it in a much more pervasive way, which includes the populations of the metropolis as well as the hinterland, researchers such as Schiller⁵³ and Enzensberger⁵⁴ have called attention to the way in which the ruling class is using information to shape and determined the minds and world view of the entire population.

Technological Determinism

One final area of theory and research remains to be investigated in our review of the literature on mass media, particularly television. This debate centres on the role of technology in shaping human institutions and social arrangements. To polarize the discussion, a very influential segment of writers believes that social organization at a particular time and place is the result of technology that is introduced. On the other side of this debate are those who claim that technology develops out of a certain set of social relations, and reinforces those relations. The position taken in this section of the paper is that, although there is a dialectical relationship between social organization and technology, technology is developed out of existing social relations, the outcomes of specific developments having both predictable and unpredictable

consequences. The unpredictable consequences can affect the social organization and change social relations.

A typical statement concerning the relationship between technology and social structure can be seen in Larson:

technology has made it possible for the few to speak directly and almost incessantly to the many. There is also a technology to increase reverse flow in the form of audience ratings, opinion polls, and marketing research. 55

Apart from the massive assumptions implied in his statement on the functions of opinion polls and audience ratings, the fetishization of technology is the crucial point in these remarks. Larson, along with many other sociologists, views the relationship between a particular technology and the existing social structure as direct and inevitable.

Larson's statement lacks any historical perspective and can be seen to be a result of the prevailing ahistorical and conservative approach in sociology at the time of his writing. Mills⁵⁶, in his important essay Sociological Imagination, discusses the lack of historical perspective in sociology and the emphasis on "abstracted empiricism". In the particular instance under examination, little thought is given to the actual historical development of the mass media, including radio and television.

The view that television or radio has altered our world, and that we should therefore study the effects of such an impact, begs the question of whether or not "it is reasonable to describe any technology as a cause".⁵⁷ Williams points out that, if technology is a cause, then the best we can do is to try to modify or control its effects.⁵⁸ Social relations are viewed as emerging passively out of existing technological developments.⁵⁹

The development of television was part of, and dependent upon, a complex of inventions which included electricity, telegraphy, photography, and radio.⁶⁰ The development of electricity was important in this process, and was itself developed in response to the emerging demands of industrial production. The growth of railways to transport the goods of industry and to connect fast-growing new cities made the development of telegraphy necessary in order to allow for the scheduling of trains, and to allow for business communication. Radio was conceived as an advanced form of telegraphy.

It is especially a characteristic of the communications system that all were foreseen-not in utopian technical ways-before the crucial components of the developed system had been discovered and refined. In no way is this a history of communications systems creating a new society or new social conditions. The decisive and earlier transformation of industrial production and its new social forms, which had grown out of a long history of capital accumulation and working technical improvements, created new needs but also new possibilities, and the communication systems, down to television, were⁶¹ their intrinsic outcome.

The initial development of radio and television for person-to-person business communication changed, as the increasing standard of living of the workers, combined with their shorter work day, resulted in an emphasis on the purchase of individual homes and individual consumption. This was prompted by, and parallel to, a shift in the economy from one based on basic industries to one which required the expansion of individual consumption in order to maintain its growth.

For people isolated in a home that was becoming increasingly more removed from the "world where it happens"⁶², the radio became a source of information from the outside. While radio served to keep people informed

of the outside world, it is interesting to note that television serves increasingly as a surrogate experience. Television provides the illusion of experiences, of doing things and being active, in a fantasy life which replaces the mundane world of day-to-day experience.

⁶³
Marshall McLuhan is the prophet par excellence of the technological determinists. McLuhan sees the evolution of history as the result of technological innovations in transportation and communications (the medium). In this approach, he is expanding the concepts developed by his teacher H.A. Innes.⁶⁴ McLuhan explains change as a process in which each new medium creates a new environment, which will in turn create new people. People are then placed in the position of adapting passively to the new medium. This is apparticularly comforting ideology for those who want current social arrangements to continue. It says essentially that activity is futile, since it is technology, or the medium, which determines social structure.

Alvin Toffler's Future Shock is another example of this genre. He talks of change arising from the rapid acceleration of technological development, and recommends various ways of ensuring successful adaptation to this change which has overwhelmed the individual.

Not only is McLuhan not interested in the actual historical circumstances of the development of various technologies, he is convinced that there is little direct relationship between technology and ideology or social programmes. His catchphrase 'the medium is the message'⁶⁶ states that content is irrelevant, that only the form is important. McLuhan's popularity can be partly explained by his ability to give a comprehensive explanation for the discomforts many feel, and of which the mass media is cert-

ainly a part. McLuhan's ahistorical position stems from his complete acceptance of the present social pattern. He has fetishized technology, and especially the electronic media, by removing them from their historical situation and the productive relations in which they occur. A relationship which exists in a particular period of time is translated into a natural state.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF TELEVISION

Two important and simultaneous functions of television must be elaborated. The first is the economic function. This has two parts: television as a business activity of a particular sector of the corporate economy; and commercial television as a necessary component in the expansion of capital. The second function of television is that it plays in the reproduction, expansion, and creation of those values and norms which sustain the existing social structure, and therefore contribute to the ideological hegemony of corporate capitalism. These two functions, as we shall see, are by no means separate, but are, in fact, simultaneous aspects of the same process.

Television as a Corporate Activity

Central to an understanding of the history of the commercial nature of electronic media (radio and television) is the source of the industry's profit in various phases of its development.⁶⁷ Initially, profit was made through the sale of individual radio sets as consumer items. Programming was supplied by the companies manufacturing and selling the sets, in order to attract customers for their commodities. Asa Briggs points to David Sarnoff, the first commercial manager of the Radio Corporation of America, writing in 1915 of the commercial possibilities of radio:

. . . if only 7% of the total families thought well of the idea (owning radio crystals), it would, at the figure mentioned, mean a gross business of about

\$75 million which would yield considerable⁶⁸ revenue.

Sarnoff also recognized the advertising benefit of having the RCA name prominently displayed on each set.

Later, once the AT&T-owned WEAf station sold the first advertisement, the commercial revenue and profits of the radio stations shifted from the sale of radio sets to the sale of commercial time. Programming, which had been initially used to attract private purchase of individual sets, now became a way of attracting audiences, who in turn could be sold to the advertising sponsors. Advertisers paid radio stations an amount proportionate to the size of audience made available to receive their commercial messages. It can then be clearly seen that the major product of radio stations became the audience they delivered, rather than the programs they broadcast.

Television followed the same commercial pattern developed in radio. RCA founded both NBC and ABC in order to provide broadcasting that would attract people to purchase television sets. Indeed, the initial programming of television was taken directly from the popular radio programs of the time. As the number of sets increased, television was able to compete with other media for the advertiser's dollar. Programming which originally served to attract individual purchase of television sets now served to increase audience ratings, and therefore the sale value of commercial time. It appears that there is an initial period in the introduction of a new media in which it is necessary to attract customers to purchase the basic hardware before the audience becomes large enough to itself attract large-scale advertising revenue.

Once television advertising revenue becomes the sole source of television

income, all programming decisions must necessarily reflect this imperative. Programming must be developed within the parameters of what is acceptable to the advertiser and will, at the same time, attract a large audience. Decisions concerning program content and format, as well as time slot scheduling, must all be based on building the largest possible audience. But in addition to attracting their own audience, programs must also contribute to building an audience for a particular segment of the day.

Tuchman⁶⁹ gives supporting evidence for this proposition when she quotes from the biographies of Fred Friendly and Edward R. Murrow to the effect that the decision to replace programs is usually made on simple economic criteria. Television schedules are worked out in such a way as to win control of a particular time slot, and hopefully also a major chunk of the audience. Similar programs are placed opposite each other on different networks, and popular programs are moved from their original spots to others to compete with popular programs on other networks offered in that slot.

The result of producing and locating programs in order to attract a large audience is the 'least-risk' policy in programming. So it is that most programs ignore the unusual, the controversial or the experimental in favour of programming that will be the least offensive to the largest possible number of viewers. Programs therefore follow already successful formats, and conform in worldview to the 'common-sense' world of the potential audience.

McQuail⁷⁰ and Katz⁷¹ offer alternative explanations for the rigidity and blandness of most television programming. McQuail discusses the ritualized behaviour of producers as a way of coping with the lack of data about the audience. Their reference point then becomes what has previously been

successful with audiences.

Katz, while ignoring the business orientation of the media, argues that its blandness stems from stations seeking to be on the air almost non-stop. He states that only bland or violent serials (produced mainly by Americans) can hope to fill the time. Serials become necessary because of the impossibility of filling time every night, week in, week out, with one-shot or original programming, such as documentaries or specials. He argues that the non-stop format characteristic of radio, and carrying over into television, is inappropriate to the technology of television. The thoughtless duplication in television of a format which is appropriate to an instant media like radio is an example of the failure to determine the best use for each media technology.

Katz's argument, which is explicitly concerned with small developing nations, and which, in regard to television programming, would include Canada, is intriguing. But it ignores the increased profitability that airtime makes, and makes no mention of the ideological benefits accruing to the national elite in developing nations from importing bland entertainment.

News and public affairs programming, although a special type of programming, are viewed on the same basis as any other. For large segments of the audience, these programs are the initial contact with the evening schedules of the television stations. There is, therefore, competition to make the news programs as attractive as possible. One way in which this is accomplished is through the development of public personalities as newscasters. The introduction of the informal news show, where a number of newscasters chat among themselves, and the addition in many news casts of the comic

relief, are recent attempts to make the news show seem more like a part of the evening's entertainment.

The format of a series of short and discrete news items, which appear to be self-contained and independent from each other, is another attempt to attract viewers. Some explanations for this format have centred on the nature of television technology. Katz, among others, says that it is not an inherent trait but rather a misuse of television technology. Although Katz's argument centres on technology independent of social organization and social goals, it is clear that the length of a news item is not simply a function of the technology of the media.

A more useful explanation, it seems to me, can be developed from some of the research done on children's programming. Melody⁷² argues that the reason children's Saturday morning television programming, and children's programming in general, consists of short cartoons with a lot of violent action, arises from the child's short attention span. Longer programs, or less violence, would result, according to media managers, in the loss of the children's audience.

A similar situation seems to exist for news programming. Series of short actions, which lack explanatory power, seem to maintain the interests of adult viewers in the news show, and therefore hold them as an audience for later evening programming. Another feature of turning news into entertainment is the humorous final item on the news show, which serves to weaken the impact of the news, and make it less unpalatable as a viewing activity.

Tuchmann⁷³ discusses the low cost of producing documentaries and public affairs programming as opposed to entertainment programs, as a major

reason for their inclusion in television schedules. This is an added impetus to the CRTC and FCC regulations concerning public affairs programming. She points also to the use of documentaries in non-affiliated American stations to attract audiences with minority interests. This makes it possible for smaller stations to compete economically with larger stations by appealing to specific interests.

The merits of a program are assessed in quantitative terms based on audience ratings. Ratings reflect the amount of audience that is saleable at any given time, and so allows stations to by-pass qualitative judgments. Until recently, the value of a program (audience produced) increased directly with audience size. The introduction of demographic audience analysis has changed all this. Demographics has resulted in advertisers being interested not just in audience size, but also in the composition of that audience.

The ideal audience for the advertiser can vary according to the nature of the produce being sold. Audiences can be broken down into age groups, income levels, or social categories such as housewives, children and old-age pensioners. In particular, advertisers are interested in reaching the 18-49 age group, which is the most affluent grouping.

Fletcher⁷⁴ provides an interesting example of how this works when he points to shows like Jackie Gleason, Red Skelton, and others of the 1970-1971 season. These programs were not dropped because they were not reaching a large audience, for they were very popular, but because they were not reaching the audience the advertisers wanted.

The emphasis on the economic criteria of decision-making is contrary to the public programming explanations developed by the media managers. Brown⁷⁵

discusses some of the ideologies developed by these managers to explain programming decisions. These include giving the public 'what it wants' or 'we only reflect society'. This ignores the original screening process on programs which advertisers demand, and economic considerations make necessary. Audiences, at the most, are able to select from those programs made available to them, while audience feedback in the form of audience ratings comes after a particular series has been developed. In any case, audience ratings allow audiences only to reject programs, but do not allow any positive or ongoing audience participation in program development.

Another media ideology which relates more specifically to news and public affairs programs is the concept of the 'neutral' reporter who merely reports the 'facts'. This proposition will be examined in detail in this study in the investigation of the social organization of news production, which intervenes between an event and its presentation on television. This is in addition to, and more pervasive than, the known cases of bias in news reporting due to ownership or advertiser intervention.

Brown cites the recent media ideology⁷⁶ which states that the special freedoms given to the media mean that it must assume a socially responsible role. There is however ample evidence that social responsibility is defined in terms that do not call into question the prevailing economic and power relationships in society, of which television is one part. It is evident that social responsibility, when manifested in documentary productions, is based upon economic considerations, and with a view to producing overall the largest possible audiences.

Television, as one sector of corporate activity, seeks to produce for

potential advertisers the largest possible or the most valuable audience, in order to be able to sell this product for the largest sum and therefore maximize their profits. This should not be seen in an individual sense as the work of evil or greedy men. Rather, it is the normal and reasonable activity of business men meeting their responsibilities to the corporation owners in the same manner as every other, and within the imperatives of the capitalist system. Operating within these imperatives is one of the ways in which television owners and practitioners accept and extend the prevailing ideology of corporate capitalism.

Commercial Television and the Expansion of Capital

Television also plays an important role in the economy generally. A central problem in contemporary corporate capitalism is the need to keep increasing consumption in order to maintain the extremely high level of productivity that has been reached. Increased consumption is necessary for two main reasons. First, it allows the economy to keep expanding, without which the whole framework of contemporary capitalism would collapse.

Secondly, increasing the level of expectations of workers in a way that can only be resolved in increased consumption effectively keeps workers locked into the commodity market, and maintains the necessity of their selling their labour for wages. Increasing consumption, which can be separated from an increasing standard of living, can be seen in the present time to temporarily resolve a deeply embedded contradiction in capitalism.

Advertising is essential to increasing consumption, and can be seen as a form of circulation cost. Lebowitz notes:

the tendency of production to outrun consumption. Its manifestation initially will be in the form of an increased time of circulation, and, in particular, an increased length of time in which value remains in the commodity form. In addition to its absolute in-

crease, the time of circulation also undergoes a relative increase due to the effects of innovations on the time of production. This time of circulation, the time that capital takes to pass back to a phase of productive employment, appears clearly to be the limit to the expansion of capital; it is the measure⁷⁷ of the divergence of production and consumption.

This article points to a contradiction inherent in capitalism, in which production increases in such a way as to tie up capital for increasingly larger periods of time. Over-production therefore represents an inability on the part of capital to realize itself in the early sale of the commodities, and therefore to be freed for reinvestment. This additional cost to the capitalist takes the form of interest on idle capital. Further charges result from increased costs in the storage of commodities.

According to Lebowitz, there are two traditional alternatives available to the capitalists in this situation. The first is to decrease prices in hopes of increasing consumption. The second is to substitute voluntary costs oriented to reducing circulation time. By spending money to encourage consumption, and therefore a reduction in the time capital is tied up in circulation, the capitalist is hoping to reduce his overall costs .

Voluntary circulation costs include such things as the use of sales-people and advertising. The company using advertising hopes to gain an advantage over its competitors through the increased speed with which its capital is realized by the sale of its commodities. The first to spend money on advertising gains an initial advantage over competitors. This advantage produces excess profit. However, as competitors also begin to advertise, advantage is lost. It then becomes necessary for all capitalists to maintain their level of expenditure in advertising in order to maintain their position

in the market. Additional funds and innovative advertising will again temporarily shift the balance in favour of the one capitalist until that program also becomes dispersed throughout the industry. And so the scale of such methods has to increase in order to keep up with and surpass competitors.

This competition is not reflected in commodity prices, but only in advertising attempts to increase consumption. The increased scale of expenditures in attempts to reduce circulation time result in further concentration in both the media and the industrial sector. Concentration comes as a result of the necessity of commanding ever larger amounts of money in attempts to gain advantage over competitors. As a result, many smaller units of production are forced out of the market.

Television is the medium par excellence for the encouragement of consumption. It therefore serves the vital and central function in contemporary capitalism of reducing the amount of time capital is contained in circulation, and therefore allows for the expansion of capital. This process, of course, necessitates an even greater expenditure on the next round as a result of the expansion of capital arising from the reduction in circulation time.

The role of television, through providing audiences to advertisers, is an integral part of the necessary expansion of capital.

Ideological Hegemony

Television must be placed within a larger theoretical context. Research on audience reaction stressed the individual, atomized member of the audience and ignored both the centralization of information dissemination and the power relations within which it exists. Research on the power structure of the media,

on concentration in the communications industry, on corporate links with other areas of financial and industrial power, on government regulations and on the flow of television programs, have placed research and theory on the media in the context of actual power relations in our society.

It is clear from the results of this latter type of research that contemporary liberal myths of pluralism and 'freedom of news' have little or no basis in reality. Discussing the reduction in the number of newspapers (where, unlike television, there was initial competition), the Mass Media Report comments that:

It could also- but not necessarily- lead to a situation whereby the news (which we must start thinking of as a public resource, like electricity) is controlled and manipulated by a small group of individuals and corporations whose view of What's Fit To Print may closely coincide with What's Good For General Motors, or What's Good For Business, or What's Good For My Friends Down At the Club. There is some evidence, in fact, which suggests that we⁷⁸ are in that boat already.

There are many instances recorded of owners interfering with the content of their newspapers or television stations. There is also a good deal of evidence pointing to the existence of a near monopoly of information in specific regions of the country.

Individual instances of interference, while indicative of the individual use of individual wealth, are not the major vehicle through which the content of the media is adapted to support existing power relations. The research cited provides sufficient evidence to dispense with the myth of pluralism, and to accept as empirically grounded the concept of a 'ruling class'. This is an important consideration in later understanding the role of television. The use of the concept of a 'ruling class', or, as is later

used, 'ruling idea', should not be mistaken for a narrowly deterministic model of social control, nor taken to imply that there are no points of disagreement within the 'ruling class'. There has been a definite tendency to interpret 'ruling class' and 'ruling ideas' as static concepts. As will later be seen, this is far from the intention of this study.

The social histories of various media make it clear that the structure and social organization of these media form parallel developments in the rest of the economy. The structure of the media in a period of small capitalism and small-scale production will obviously be different from the structure and organization of, for example, television, in a period that is characterized by 'monopoly' or corporate capitalism. This stage is distinguished by a worldwide concentration of power and wealth, and an increasingly symbiotic relationship between the state and the corporation.

There are two major but intertwined explanations for the control exercised over media content. The first can be expressed in the concept of 'ideological hegemony', and the second is grounded in the necessary functions that the mass media, and television, perform in a period of mature capitalism.

Marx presented the central position of the ruling class in this well-known passage in German Ideology:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of dominance.

This passage emphasizes the role of ideas in a relatively narrow way. It was Gramsci who made a major breakthrough in describing that:

the ruling class maintained its power in advanced industrial nations not through the use of violence, but through 'ideological hegemony'. To be sure, violence might be used in a crisis, but its constant use is too great a drain on the resources of the state. We have a situation existing where the values of corporate capitalism and the ruling class are the pervasive ones. 80

The ruling class is able to maintain power by getting subordinate classes to accept the capitalist worldview, not through violence, but through voluntary acceptance of its values. 81

According to Williams, hegemony is:

an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations. 82

Fiori says of Gramsci's concept that:

the philosophy of the ruling class passes through whole tissues of complex vulgarizations to emerge as 'common sense', that is, the philosophy of the masses who accept the morality, the customs, the institutionalized rules of behaviour for the society they live in. 83

This common sense should be seen, not from an idealist position, but rather as that set of explanations and ideological statements which arise from and seek to legitimize the prevailing form of the relations of production.

Raymond Williams, in his critique of the use of base and superstructure, argues that these terms have been used in a narrowly deterministic fashion that implies a direct "reproduction of the reality of the base in the superstructure". 84 Because of the "deep contradictions in the relationships

of production and in the consequent social relations (there is) the continual possibility of the dynamic variations of these properties."⁸⁵

Rather than seeing the superstructure (ideology) as a direct consequence of the base (the relations of production), Williams argues that ideological hegemony supposes the existence of "something which is truly total."⁸⁶ He emphasizes the depth of hegemony as the

central, effective and dominant system of meanings and values which are not merely abstract but which are organized and lived.

And finally, he points to the dynamic nature of hegemony:

it is not only the depths to which this process reaches, selecting and organizing and interpreting our experience. It is also that it is continually active and adjusting; it isn't just the past, the dry husks of ideology which we can more easily discard.⁸⁸

It is generally agreed among sociologists that the media and the education systems seek to legitimize the prevailing order. Power structure research has shown in whose interests the process of legitimation occurs, and the similarity of background and class between those who control the media and those who effectively control the rest of the economy. The concept of ideological hegemony allows insight into the pervasiveness of the penetration of the dominant system of values, meanings and practises, while at the same time discarding idealist notions of determinations between base and superstructure.

Examination of the 'organized' and 'lived' aspects of ideological hegemony is the focal point of the research in this paper. It is necessary to point out again that operating within a given set of values and within a particular economy will place limits on organizational practise but will not determine the practise.

Smith, in studying the way knowledge is worked up in various institutional arrangements, comments that:

our relation to others in our society and beyond it is mediated by the social organization of its ruling. Our 'knowledge' is thus ideological in the sense that this organization preserves conceptions and means of description which represent the world as it is for those who rule it rather than as it is for those who⁸⁹ are ruled.

Smith discusses concepts as being ideological when they are determined situationally, when the relationship between the concept and "what men actually do" is not problematic. The underlying conditions do not appear as determining the use of the concepts, but as its genesis i.e. what can be thought.

Television, and in particular television news, mediates 'actual' events to people in the audience. It is important to understand that 'news as seen' is not identical, nor could it be, to events as they actually occur. News items are the result of "working up" those events. This is true not just for news, but also for the increasingly larger sector of our experience which is mediated through socially organized practises to become "documentary reality". As Smith points out:

what is special to our kind of society is that much which we recognize as that which we know, much that is classifiable as what has been called observable, is already worked up and produced in a process which mediates its relations to what men have actually done in the place where the process begins. The mediating process itself is a practical⁹⁰ activity.

The socially organized practises of producing news are the result of "what men actually do". The news, however, is not presented as though it were the outcome of socially organized activity, but rather is abstracted from that activity to become 'news as such'. It has been separated from its

working up, and the ideological premises implicit in the actual organization have been lost to us, as news takes on a natural life as "what actually happened".

Geras describes the process "of reducing the social objectivity of the forms of capitalist relations to a natural objectivity"⁹¹ as fetishism. In the social production of news, the news is abstracted from the actual relations of which it was a part in such a way that it appears separated from people. The actual structure of the news-gathering process will be seen to be taking place within the prevailing ideologies and dominant values, such that these, far from being problematic, have actually provided the concepts which become explanations of the news-gathering process.

FOOTNOTES: PART ONE

¹Sheldon Zalaznick, "The Rich, Risky Business of TV News," Fortune Magazine, May 1, 1969, p. 93.

²Canada, Senate, Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media, Report, 3 vols. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970). Hereinafter called the Mass Media Report.

³Mass Media Report, Vol. 111, P. 5.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 6.

⁶Ibid., pp. 41-42, Tables 3-4.

⁷Ibid., p. 15.

⁸Ibid., p. 6.

⁹Mass Media Report, Vol. 11, P. 127, Table 40.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 126, Table 39.

¹¹Zalaznick, "The Rich, Risky Business of TV News," p. 94. Due to organizational reasons and bookkeeping figures, the upper figure is probably more accurate for CBS.

¹²Melvin De Fleur, Theories of Mass Communication (New York: David McKay, 1969), pp. 97-117.

¹³Otto N. Larson, "Social Effects of Mass Communication," in Handbook of Modern Sociology, ed. Robert E.L. Feris (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), p. 352.

¹⁴De Fleur, Theories of Mass Communication, p. 118.

¹⁵Joseph Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1960).

¹⁶Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, The People's Choice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948).

¹⁷Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (New York: Free Press, 1966), p. 19.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 31.

²⁰Ibid., p. 142.

²¹Larson, "Social Effects of Mass Communication," p. 369.

²²Raymond Williams, Television: Technology and Cultural Form (London: Fontana, 1974), p. 118.

²³De Fleur, Theories of Mass Communication, p. 162.

²⁴For a discussion of the use of social science in industry, see Loren Baritz, The Servants of Power (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1960).

²⁵Jack Lyle, The News in Megalopolis (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 98-99.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Robert Cirno, Don't Blame the People: How the News Media Uses Bias, Distortion and Censorship to Manipulate Public Opinion (Los Angeles: Diversity Press, 1971).

²⁸Larson, "Social Effects of Mass Communication."

²⁹Ibid., p. 351.

³⁰Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Social Action," in Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America, ed. by Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), pp. 445-473.

³¹Ibid., pp. 465.

³²John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 457.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 460.

³⁵Wallace Clement, The Canadian Corporate Elite: An Analysis of Economic Power (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 342.

³⁶Mass Media Report, Vol. 1, p. 5.

³⁷Ibid. A more recent study, which confirms the trend under discussion, is reported in a special media report appearing in the Financial Post, May 1, 1976, p. S-4, entitled "Ownership: Where the Power Is Concentrated in the Canadian Media."

³⁸Howard A. Ehrlich, "The Politics of News Media Control," Insurgent Sociologist, Vol. 1V, Number 1V, Summer 1974, p. 35.

³⁹Ibid., p. 39.

⁴⁰John Mollenkopf, "Theories of State and Power Structure Research," Insurgent Sociologist, Vol. V, Number 111, Spring 1975, p. 251.

⁴¹Herbert Schiller, Mass Communications and American Empire (New York: Beacon Paperback, 1971) pp. 81-82.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 82-83.

⁴³Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis, International Inventory of Television Programme Structure and the Flow of TV Programmes Between Nations (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Reports and Papers in Mass Communications, Number 70, 1973), p. 12.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁵Nordenstreng, International Inventory, p. 49

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁰Canada, Canadian Radio-Television Commission, Symposium on Television Violence (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1976), pp. 164-165, Tables 3-4.

⁵¹John Warnock, "All the News It Pays To Print," in Close the 49th Parallel, etc: the Americanization of Canada, ed. by Ian Lumsden (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970).

⁵²Jospeh T. Scanlon, "Canada Sees the World Through U.S. Eyes: One Case Study in Cultural Domination," Canadian Forum, Sept. 1974, p. 31.

- ⁵³Herbert Schiller, The Mind Managers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).
- ⁵⁴Hans Magnus Enzenberger, "The Industrialization of the Mind," in The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Politics and Media, selected and with a postscript by Michael Roloff (New York: Newberry Press, 1974).
- ⁵⁵Larson, "Social Effects of Mass Communications," p. 350.
- ⁵⁶C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 50-75.
- ⁵⁷Williams, Television: Technology and Cultural Form, p. 9.
- ⁵⁸Ibid., p. 10.
- ⁵⁹For a discussion of the relationship between the organization of work and technology, see Harry Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the 20th Century, with a foreword by Paul M. Sweezy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).
- ⁶⁰The material in this section comes from Raymond Williams, Television: Technology and Cultural Form; from Gaye Tuchman, ed., The TV Establishment: Programming For Power and Profit (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974); and from Dallas Smythe, "On the Political Economy of Communications," in Communications in Canadian Society, ed. by Benjamin Singer (n.p.: Copp Clark, 1972).
- ⁶¹Williams, Television: Technology and Cultural Form, p. 19.
- ⁶²Dorothy Smith, "Women and Corporate Capitalism," Unpublished manuscript.
- ⁶³Herbert Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).
- ⁶⁴Harold Adam Innis, The Bias of Communication (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1951). Also by Innis, Empire and Communication, revised by Mary Q. Innis, foreword by Marshall McLuhan (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972).
- ⁶⁵Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970).
- ⁶⁶McLuhan, Understanding Media, pp. 17-21
- ⁶⁷See Footnote 60.
- ⁶⁸Asa Briggs, "Prediction and Control: Historical Perspectives," Sociological Review, Vol. 13, 1969, p. 41.
- ⁶⁹Gaye Tuchman, ed., The TV Establishment.

⁷⁰Dennis McQuail, "Uncertainty About the Audience and the Organization of Mass Communications," Sociological Review, Monograph No. 13, February 1969.

⁷¹Nordenstreng, International Inventory, pp. 47-49.

⁷²William Melody, Children's Television: the Economics of Exploitation (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1973).

⁷³See Gaye Tuchman, ed., The TV Establishment, and Frank Wolf, Television Programming for News and Public Affairs: A Quantitative Analysis of Networks and Stations (New York: Praeger, 1972).

⁷⁴Allan Fletcher, "Advertiser's Use of TV Ratings: Some Recent Changes, Implications," Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 48, 1971, p. 264.

⁷⁵Roger Brown, "Some Aspects of Mass Media Ideology," Sociological Review, Vol. 13, 1969, pp. 155-167.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 155-160.

⁷⁷Michael Lebowitz, "The Increasing Cost of Circulation and the Marxian Competitive Model," Science and Society

⁷⁸Mass Media Report, Vol. 1, p. 4.

⁷⁹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 19.

⁸⁰Glen K. Hirsch, "Only You Can Prevent Ideological Hegemony: the Advertising Council and Its Place in the American Power Structure," Insurgent Sociologist, Vol. V. Number 11, Spring 1975, p. 79. (This special issue of the Insurgent Sociologist is also known as New Directions in Power Structure Research, ed. by William G. Domhoff).

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Gwynn Williams, "Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 21, Number 4, 1960, p. 587. Quoted in Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power (London: Quartet Books, 1973) p. 162.

⁸³G. Fiori, Antonio Gramsci: Life of an Italian Revolutionary (New York: New Left Review Books, 1970), p. 238. Quoted in Glen K. Hirsch, "Only You Can Prevent Ideological Hegemony," p. 79.

⁸⁴Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," New Left Review, Number 18, Nov/Dec 1973, p. 4.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 8.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 9.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Dorothy Smith, "The Social Construction of Documentary Reality," Sociological Inquiry, Vol. 44, Number 4, 1974, p. 267.

⁹⁰Dorothy Smith, "The Ideological Practise of Sociology," Catalyst, Number 8, Winter 1974, p. 54.

⁹¹Norman Geras, "Fetishism in Marxist 'Capital'," New Left Review, Number 65, Jan/Feb 1971, p. 79.

PART 11: FIELDWORK

CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELDWORK

Fieldwork for this study was conducted over a period of three months in the news and public affairs section of a local television station. This station is part of a cross-Canada network of publicly owned radio and television stations, comprising approximately forty production centres, and covering 98 percent of the population of Canada with its radio signal, and 97 percent with its television signal¹. The particular centre in which this fieldwork took place is the third most important in Canada for this network, but distinctly behind the first two in terms of local autonomy and budget resources.

It should be pointed out that virtually all of the television stations in Canada, until recently, were either owned by one of the two national networks, the other being private, or, if owned independently, affiliated with one of these networks. In both cases, the responsibility for national and international news coverage remains in Toronto. Recently, the CRTC has licensed a series of third independent television stations in major population centres in Canada.

The activities of the network under study are legislated by the federal Broadcasting Act in a two-fold manner. First, the Broadcasting Act establishes the Canadian Radio and Television Commission, which in turn establishes guidelines for the entire broadcast industry. Secondly, the Act creates a National Broadcasting Service, which is the immediate parent of the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), the station under study.

As this fieldwork was conducted in a public television station, it might perhaps be argued that the underlying structure of news production might be different here than in the private networks. This is, in fact, not the case for the news program investigated. Several reasons for this can be briefly mentioned here, to be later developed within the context of specific aspects of this fieldwork.

On private television stations, all programs, including news, can be commercially sponsored. On the CBC, however, "news, programs directed to children of pre-school age, school programs and religious programs"² are not allowed commercial sponsorship because:

the CBC, as a publicly owned and supported medium of information must not only be above extraneous influence in program decisions but must demonstrate this fact in its programs. Unbiased information programming is so basic to the CBC's mandate in the Broadcasting Act that its presence in the schedules cannot be permitted to be ³ determined by commercial considerations.

However, even if the news cast is not commercially sponsored, the rest of the news hour is.

Further, the public news program competes with news programs from commercial networks for audience loyalty. This results in the adoption by the news cast of many of the strategies of its competitors. A third reason for the similarity between private and public news production is the importance attached by the corporation and its news department to generating a large enough audience to flow into the evening's schedule, and thus increase the commercial value of that time.⁴ Finally, the station is dependent upon other commercial sources for its news items. This includes American television networks for American and international news coverage not covered by its own correspondents, wire services servicing other com-

mercial media, and radio and newspapers.

As will be shown later, the CBC station operates within the context of market relations, as do the other television stations. While public funding permits the national network to subsidize drama and entertainment programs, and even some consumer and public affairs programming, the news program functions in a manner similar to that of other television news rooms. I was told on several occasions that if the news program were allowed to sell advertising, it would make a profit, and that the budget allocated to it was not equal to this potential advertising income.

There are, however, also differences between public and private news networks. Commercial stations have their licenses renewed by a government appointed commission, and hence are susceptible to the kind of indirect pressures described by Halberstam in the American context.⁵ The CBC, is, on the other hand, further dependent upon Parliament for a major portion of its yearly budget. Debates, triggered by the content of CBC news programs, are occasional features of Parliament. One recent example was the motion of censure passed unanimously by Parliament against CBC for giving greater coverage to the death of Howard Hughes, an American billionaire, than to that of Wilder Penfield, the internationally famous Montreal neurosurgeon.⁶

In both cases, however, public and private, the pressures on the network are more indirect than direct. The fact that there is so little direct intervention can be ascribed to an ongoing form of self-censorship which maintains news and public affairs programming within a range acceptable to both advertisers and government. This self-censorship, although a continual part of the organizational features of news production, only becomes

evident in times of crisis. For instance, it is widely acknowledged that the CBC backed down from providing any thorough coverage of the 1970 War Measures Act..

Network Organization

The CBC has a highly centralized administration based in Toronto, which establishes commercial and program policy, published in a regularly updated Program Policies Manual. This and the CBC News Style Book are the basic guides to programming decisions and on-air activities. The centralized control over personnel and budget decisions permits tightly controlled implementation of these policies.

The programming schedule for the national network determines both which programs are purchased from outside the CBC, mainly from American television production companies, which will be developed by the CBC for the national network, and the time periods which will be made available for local programming. Regional officers of the CBC can develop local programming or even ideas for network programming, but these must receive national office approval. These decisions are relevant only to the English Canadian network; there is a separate French structure for Quebec.

The budget established nationally consists of the allocation of resources derived from commercial advertising and from grants from the federal Parliament. Approximately 80 percent of these funds are public, while the remainder is commercially derived. The allocation of the budget does not relate to the amount of money that a particular program might make from commercials, but rather to what various regional and program directors are able to 'win' through negotiation. This process, as far as the regional news is concerned, involves convincing the head office of the economic benefits

of giving the news more money with which to compete with the private network opposition in Vancouver.⁷

The specific news program with which this research was concerned was the early evening news hour, from 6:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. This hour was allocated to local production, consisting of news, public affairs, sports and weather. Research concentrated on news and public affairs, and was only peripherally concerned with sports and weather aspects of the program.

The formal organization chart of the local program shows one executive producer, who is responsible for the whole hour, and under him, a producer for each of the news and public affairs sections of the program. The news department is additionally responsible to a regional news supervisor who, according to news staff, is on a status level equivalent to that of the executive producer of the hour. The news supervisor is responsible for news quality on both radio and television throughout the province. (Since the completion of this fieldwork, this position has been split, so that both radio and television have their own news supervisors.)

Policy decided at the national level influences and lays down certain restrictions within which the local people must work. As mentioned earlier, the national office decides the location of the newshour in the daily schedule, the number of commercials that are to be sold, the money available to the local program, and on what basis personnel will be hired. Each of these decisions has some effect on the structure of news production, which I will mention now and cover in more detail throughout the paper.

Because it is a national network, most of the local station's evening time is taken up with programs that are syndicated nationally, and have national advertising. There are national contracts which specify that

programs must be carried 'down the line'. The network would lose money if these were not carried by every station, so there is no choice in the matter.

In the case of this particular television station, these decisions meant that there were only two half hour segments after 7:30 P.M. originating locally each week. The national office decides which hours in the day shall be available to local stations, and these are the same right across the country. In other words, the local station has no say about the amount of time its news hour receives, or the time at which it is scheduled.

Although commercials are sold locally for the news hour, two different producers informed me that it was network policy to pool the amount of money collected across the country on commercials and divide it up among the local stations. The only local area exempt from this policy, according to my informants, was Toronto, which, according to the producer, is exempt from many of the policies that otherwise hold across the country.

Since decisions concerning the fate of most programs are made centrally, and are not necessarily related to making a profit from commercial sponsors, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the future of specific programs and the individuals associated with them. Staff are unclear about the basis on which programming decisions are made. For this reason, a great deal of time is spent in trying to guess in what direction the administrators are moving, and in keeping up with the gossip of 'Mother CBC'. I might add that this is also true at the provincial or regional level where staff often commented on the seemingly arbitrary decisions that assigned programs to the trashcan for what were, to them, unclear decisions.

Although there was no confusion over programs while I was there, staff members, when asked, were unsure which programs they would be working on next year, and expected to remain unsure until the regional program director notified them of his decision. No one could say whether or not the public affairs part of the program would be back in the fall, or of the fate of any of the other programs. Although it was true that many had been connected with the same program for many years, it was also true that the name, format and personnel of those programs had changed constantly. This situation is less true of the news room, which is assured of continuity, than it is of the public affairs program, where the continuation both of the program and the staff associated with it, appears to be problematic.

Indicative of this was a practical joke played on one of the producers when he was sick. His desk was cleaned out and all mention of him removed from the office, even to the extent of replacing his assignments on the blackboard with someone else's name. In light of the constantly changing situation, this was seen to be funny.

Since the completion of this research, there has been a major re-organization of the news room, which partially resulted from a libel suit brought by the regional news director against a newspaper reporter who accused the network of poor legislative coverage on television. Although the regional director won a nominal victory, there were subsequently a number of organizational changes which resulted in the regional director and the assignment editor being shunted aside. These changes were justified in order to make the news program more aggressive. It had been viewed as doing poorly in relation to its competition on the private networks. ⁸

Later, the local late night television news program was reduced in length from fourteen minutes to five or six, while the sports sections was reduced from ten minutes to four and a half. This was done to make room ^(for) a ninety minute late night variety talk show originating from Toronto. In addition, the 10:00 P.M. radio news cast, the major local news round-up of the day, is to be transferred to Toronto, while other local news casts have been reduced in daily number from thirteen to four on Saturdays, and from nine to three on Sundays. Several senior staff changes were also made, without local consultations, and apparently behind the backs of regional administrators.

An attempt had once been made to extend the television news hour because it was felt that this could be done locally without any increase in costs. Although the regional supervisor supported this idea, it was defeated at the national level. Granting this request would have made it necessary to give extra time to all of the stations on the network, and some did not want the extra time to fill. The local producer felt this to be a punishment, because his news department was more of a go-getter than some of the others.

The national office also decides how many minutes of commercials are to be sold for the news hour, which determines the program time available. The decision to hire free-lance cameramen is also made nationally. As we will explore later, this affects the number of news stories that can be covered, because the free-lancer gets paid by the story, and the budget permits only a certain number of stories averaging over every few days or a week. Over and over again, news reporters commented that the effect of this policy was to restrict the number of stories covered. As it was explained to me, this decision was made by the network in order to avoid having to send out union crews, which require three men (cameraman, soundman and

assistant); the freelance cameraman does all this himself. This policy, however, has subsequently been changed since the completion of fieldwork. The cameramen, while remaining 'independent', are now on a yearly contract and are expected to be available for the fully day rather than just on a per story basis.

Several different departments are involved in the course of producing the news hour, primarily news, public affairs, sports and weather. But these departments also draw on others in putting together their section of the show, such as telecine, VTR, advertising, traffic, film editing, music library, art and graphics, and the control room (which also includes the stage crews). On each section of the news hour, any one or all of these departments may be called upon for assistance. In addition, each time the show is put together, program staff might have to deal with different people from each of these departments. The time of the day as well as the stage of development of the program may vary each time someone is called in to assist. There is therefore no set relationship between departments, but one which is constantly changing.

The departmental breakdown as it appears in the CTS Manual⁹ is as follows. Telecine looks after the projection of all films and slides used in programs and station breaks, including news films, commercials, movies, station identification slides, etcetera.

Video Tape Recording (VTR) is used for most of the studio interviews. It is cheaper to use than film because it can be used over and over again, up to approximately one hundred times; and makes for a much cleaner editing job on the tape because it can be done electronically.

The advertising department is responsible for the sale of commercial time, and for notifying the news department in the morning as to the amount of time that has been sold for the newshour. This will determine the total length of the show. Although there is an upper limit on how many commercials can be sold, this limit is often not reached, thus lengthening the total time available to the newshour public affairs program.

Various station facilities are booked in the traffic department, these facilities being shared by a number of different programs.

Film editing is a separate department from which the various editors are assigned to programs upon request. One editor is assigned permanently to the news program, although this might be a different person each day. Although most editing for other programs is done in the section of the building where the editors have their offices, the film editors work out of the news room when they are assigned there. The newsroom has its own editing equipment because there is so much rush work that editing has to be done right away and they could not therefore wait to book a time in the editing department, or spend the time looking for a film editor.

The music library is located in another building, and is used when a particular record is wanted to create a background effect, or when advice is needed on the best record to use to achieve a particular kind of effect.

The art department, as far as the news is concerned, creates any graphics that are needed for the program, including names to identify speakers.

The control room is where the show is put together for the air. From the control room, the producer can direct the procedures down in the studio

as well as in VTR and telecine. It has a permanent staff which works in conjunction with whatever producer happens to be putting a show together. This room must be booked in advance when time is needed outside of the regular time allocated for a program. This time would be used for taping a studio interview, putting together a particularly difficult piece of film and voice or sound over film, and then putting it on tape previous to the program rather than trying to do it live.

The studios and offices if both the public affairs and the news programs are located in a remodelled garage which has become a labyrinth of hallways, storage rooms, and offices.

Public Affairs Department

The public affairs office (see Appendix A) is located on the main floor in a central area that is surrounded by hallways and offices. A desk on the immediate right of the entrance is used by a receptionist. On the opposite wall are desks for one of the interviewers and one of the production assistants. The remaining four desks are used by the script assistant, another interviewer, another production assistant; the fourth being used by the cameramen or other of the technicians for purposes such as filling out time forms or reading the papers.

On the immediate right of the entrance are also the offices of the two producers of the program. One is concerned with the day-to-day operation of the show, while the other deals with long range items. Across the hall from this office is the office of the executive producer.

There is a good deal of open discussion in the larger room, and between the larger room and the two offices. It is particularly the day-to-day producer who will sit in this room and talk to others about the pro-

gram; often people will go to his office for the same purpose. This is particularly true of the script assistant, whom the producer described as his 'right arm and the right arm of any producer'. The script assistant keeps track of the ongoing development of the program, the time that each item requires, and the total time left for that particular day. The production assistant is responsible for putting together ideas, for doing some of the background research, for directing in the studio, and for directing interviews and films that are made away from the studio.

There are blackboards on the wall in the places indicated on the diagram in Appendix A. One blackboard is a listing of shelf items, programs that have previously been produced but not yet used. On the other blackboard is a list of the day's program and the time in minutes and seconds that each item will take. Such a list will be begun the night before and added to during the following day, or changed as circumstances require. By noon of the broadcast day, the board will typically look like this:

News	20:00
Spts	4:00
Wtr	4:00

Dr. Glen Kirchner	3:30
Laurier-Can Council	4:00
Farris Obit Jack	5:00
Girls Pix in Paper	3:00
About Town	
Stox	1:28

There is a blackboard for notices concerning meetings, future assignments or the sketches of the next day's program. For most of the time I was in the office, I was located by the desks of the two production assistants. However, I would also go out on interviews or observe the production assistant direct in the studio while the show was being put on the air. I would also spend time in the control room with the producer

and script assistant while the show was going on the air.

At any given time that anyone entered the public affairs office, they would see several people reading newspapers or magazines. An initial reaction to this might be that the staff was goofing off, but this is, in fact, a very important part of the job because newspapers are a source of program material.

The day starts at different times for different staff members. The production assistants take turn, week in, week out, starting the one at 8:30 A.M. and the other at 11:00 A.M. The production assistant on the later shift is responsible for being stage director and has to stay until the show is over. The secretary starts early and the script assistants work the later shift. The producers are there from about 10:00 A.M. until the show is over; the interviewers generally work from home, but show up when they have a job to do or a meeting to attend.

The script assistant starts the day by phoning the advertising department and asking 'how much time'. She is given the amount of time for which commercials have been sold for that evening's program. The news department is then contacted, and an early division established for the time allotted to each of the respective sections of the program. This has already been set by the policy of giving so much time to news, and so much to public affairs, the total time being written on the blackboard along with the items for the day.

News Department

The offices of the news department are located in the same building, on the second floor (See appendix B). The newsroom is divided into three main sections: the office of the producer and assignment editor;

the area where the reporters have their desks; and the section where the film editing is done. In addition to this there are, under the furnace pipes in the room adjoining the editing room, two of the four teletype machines which are installed in the news room.. These machines are the main source of news both nationally and internationally, the Canadian Press and the Associated Press.

The editing room includes a projector and a screen for viewing film as soon as it returns from being developed, and two tables containing the equipment for editing and splicing the tape. There is also a teletype machine which provides short articles and pictures. This is located in the middle of the room, on the throughway between the furnace room and the reporter's room.

The main area is that occupied by the reporters. Each has his own desk, these being arranged front-to-front in a rather haphazard way around the room. In one corner is the desk for the sports reporter, and beside him the monitor over which programs are viewed, and where the 'feed' from the national syndication is viewed and videotaped.

On the wall separating the editing room from the reporter's room is a blackboard, hanging just over the sports reporter's desk. Here are listed the news items for the day and the reporters and cameramen covering them, as well as items sent in from other parts of the province:

Lawson-Debating	Cable	Hold 16
Dry Dock Layoff	Cable	
City Hall-Sweeny & Wilson	R. LeB	
Graham-Downtown Planning	R. LeB	
Leg. Recesses	Johnson	
Richmond High Clean-Up	Cine	
Alberni Sewers	Flett	
Traffic Point Survey	Cine	
Rockhounds Paradise		
Handford Hot Garbage		

The first column is the title of the item, the second is the name of the cameraman. Later in the day, the time of each item will also be listed. The first item on this list is being held for the weekend news cast. Toward the end of the week there will be four or five such items; this will be discussed later in the section on demand characteristics.

Along the wall of the reporter's room, there are two kinds of files: one is a collection of background slides to be used on the screen behind the announcer during the news program; the other is a series of files on each program, including rough drafts and final versions of the news casts, as well as notes on the sources of the stories and notes given to the reporters by the assignment editor.

The line-up editor is in the same corner of the room as the sports reporter. Above his desk is a radio and a tape recorder where he records the news casts of one of the local radio stations. He is responsible for taking the stories off the wire source and, in conjunction with the assignment editor, deciding which stories shall constitute the news cast. It is also his job to decide which of the stories off the national syndication will be used that evening. He puts the news program in its final order and arranges for having the news items timed, handing this information over to the producer who is in the control room.

The other desks in this main area are occupied by the reporters, as well as the national reporter and the French national reporter. At the end of this room, and by the last office, is the teletype which connects this office with other CTS stations.

The assignment editor and producer occupy the end office. The assignment editor is the first on the job in the morning. He reads the papers,

listens to the news on the radio, checks the wire service and, according to him, follows his own hunches in making his assignments later in the morning. The producer mainly edits copy, co-ordinates the activities of the others in preparing the show, and prepares for the control room production. In the corner behind the assignment editor is a large radio which is always tuned into the local police radio frequency. Beside him is the secretary's desk; she works in this office until around 3:00 P.M. and then works in the reporter's room filling out line-up forms.

It is in the control room that the program is actually assembled before it goes on the air and as it goes on the air. There is a rehearsal time for each of the film and VTR items for the news section of the program which is supposed to take place before each show. Many times, however, the material is not ready far enough in advance for a rehearsal. One day when I was in the control room, an item was not finished until about thirty seconds before the program went on the air, causing a good deal of discussion about other close calls, and instances where an item was actually thrown together as it went on the air.

The control room has a permanent staff of technicians, but the person completely in charge is the producer of the show going on the air. The head technician and his crew take all their instructions from him. In the control room, there is a long panel of instruments and monitors. One technician is in charge of the lighting, another of black and white, and a third of lighting. There is also a head technician, and the person at the control panel. The producer and script assistant sit next to the person at the control panel.

Above the producer, there are half a dozen monitors; two of them are directly connected to the two cameras in the studio. The monitors allow the director to keep an eye on the program as it is going on the air, to look at the program in color, to check what is coming in on telecine and VTR before it goes on the air, and of course, to watch what both cameras are producing on the floor.

The technicians at the control panel can cut from one camera to another on the floor, or switch in film, slides or commercials from telecine, or tape from the VTR. The producer, the script assistant and the technicians all have complete copies of the script, as does the announcer down on the floor. The stage director can be seen as an extension of the producer on the floor; he only relays messages from the producer or the script assistant. The stage directors have often referred to themselves as puppets, and said that they move according to whatever strings the producer pulls. The producer is the key around which all the activity revolves.

The script assistant keeps track of each item and how much time remains in it. She also gives the countdown to the stage director, who signals the announcer or the host as to how much time is left, how much time remains on film, on tape or on the commercial before he is on the air again. The countdown is heard simultaneously by the studio director and the producer, who can then signal the panel technician in advance to cut from one medium to another. It is through the script assistant that the producer keeps track of whether he is over time or has extra time.

CHAPTER FOUR

AIR TIME AS A DEMAND CHARACTERISTIC OF
THE NEWSROOM AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

The main characteristic and chief function of all media is their ability to deliver an audience to advertisers. The advertisers, in their turn, pay to the media owners a rate based on the number of thousand viewers for each program.

Media owners and executives are concerned above all else with producing a product which will attract an audience. This holds for all commercial media, whether the audience partially pays for the produce, as for newspapers, or receives the product 'free', as is the case for radio and television. Likewise, non-commercial and partially commercial media, operating in the same commercial milieu, will have to adopt similar strategies in order to attract the audience.

News and informational programs are equally subject to the demands of gaining and maintaining an audience. This is particularly crucial for television, where news broadcasts occupy predetermined periods of time and entail substantial investments in the production of news, as well as alternate competing uses for that time period. Unlike newspapers, whose format is primarily informational, and which can expand or reduce the size of its product according to the amount of news and advertising available, television news is much less flexible. Radio has a cheaper production cost and a more fragmented audience, as well as more flexible time scheduling, all of which entail less substantial capital investment and economic risk.

The money spent on advertising in all media has had a relatively steady growth of approximately 4.6 percent per year, while remaining a steady percentage of the GNP. While the money spent on advertising has remained relatively stable, the distribution of this money among the various media has shifted over the years. Television, in 1955, received 3.6 percent of the advertising dollar, and in 1975, 13.5 percent. The same figures for radio are 8.7 percent and 11.2 percent respectively; and for newspapers, 81.9 percent and 67.7 percent respectively. Television, which is the prime source of national advertising, received 47.1 percent of all national media advertising in 1973, 48.3 percent in 1974, and 51.3 percent in 1975. Newspapers, on the other hand, are primarily dependent upon local advertising.¹⁰

These shifts are continually taking place. The advertising cost per thousands persons reached for television has been increasing faster than in other media, a reflection of the increasing penetration of television in the Canadian population, and the limited supply of advertising time on the two national networks. As a result of approaching an upper audience limit, and the introduction of independent television stations, the total amount of television advertising will probably stabilize or increase only slightly.

Newspapers, on the other hand, after a period of a high increase in costs, are reducing labor costs through automation and stabilizing in other areas, which will make them more competitive for the advertising dollar. This is particularly the case as newspaper chains have also become publishers of strings of local weekly papers, and are considering producing newspapers " 'custom-made' " according to the special interests of the reader.¹¹

There is, then, a constant competition between the various media in proving their efficiency in delivering maximum audience for minimum unit cost. This competition determines the percentage of the advertising market each media will command, and is the source of most of their decision-making regarding both the content and delivery system for the media.

Not only is there competition between different media, but there is also an even more intense competition between competing networks and stations of the same media. Each station seeks to maximize the total audience not only for each of its programs, but also for its entire schedule, thus maximizing its advertising revenue. Whereas the cost of producing news shows and entertainment programs is relatively stable between networks, the attraction of an audience to sell can create huge profits for those most successful in this competition.

What is an economic imperative for the corporations becomes a demand characteristic for each employee's job. The necessity of filling, in this case, approximately forty minutes of news and public affairs time is the most visible sign of whether or not the news room is 'doing its job'; and ratings, and hence advertising revenue, are the most visible signs of whether it is doing its job successfully. This is what I will call, after Turner, a 'demand characteristic' of the job:

By demand characteristics, I mean to refer to those situational and contextual features which persons engaged in everyday routine orient to as organizing and governing their activities; and I use the term in deliberate contrast to other possible ways of 'explaining' or accounting for what the social actors do in going about their daily business. 12

For Turner, the demand characteristics are located in the situational and organizational features of everyday routines. This study, however, is directed towards showing that these features have an underlying structure which can be explained only by understanding their connection to the market relations underlying those everyday routines. Because it is the intention of this study to investigate these linkages in a specific historical and work situation, the abstract term 'social actors', which implies an ahistorical and distant relationship to these market relations, can be replaced with the more concrete 'worker' or 'employee'.

Within the parameters of a profit oriented media system, the news program, operating on a limited budget, must produce a marketable commodity in competition with other network programs and entertainment features. The employees of the news and public affairs section develop organizational routines through which they expedite their daily task of filling forty minutes of allotted program time.

There is not an individual production of the news, as many would have us believe, nor is it in the tradition of the individual reporter seeking out the 'truth'. Increasingly for all media, but especially for television (because of the power and cost of the medium), news is a social product. It is the result of many different individuals working within organizational structures and daily routines which are the result both of external market relations and subsequent budgetary and personnel network policy, and also of their own creative organizing, which allows them to most efficiently produce 'the news'.

While most television programs exist simply because of their ability to generate saleable audiences, there are additional factors for television

networks and stations to consider in regard to news and public affairs programs. Private commercial television stations are issued licenses by the CRTC on the condition that they provide a certain amount of informational programming, that is, news and public affairs. The CBC has, as well, a public mandate to provide information programming.

Because it is not possible to entirely dispense with news and public affairs programming, television stations in Canada, and also in the United States, must make the best possible use of this necessity. Epstein¹³ has shown how news and public affairs programs, being cheaper to produce than entertainment programs, can be slotted into times of competitive weakness vis-a-vis other stations. Halberstam¹⁴ has similarly indicated how CBS, in its early days when it was competitively weak, used its news and public affairs programming to appeal to specific audiences while gaining prestige for public service and simultaneously increasing its ratings. Later, when CBS was the leading American network, the value of the prestige of these programs diminished when CBS could attract larger audiences, and more profit, through entertainment programs.

Given this situation, the television networks seek to make news programs as entertaining as possible in order to attract and hold an audience. At the very least, they must not lose the audience that exists from previous programs.

The CBC, unlike private commercial stations, is not allowed to have commercials during its news casts. Nevertheless, the regional news director was very much aware that this did not apply to the remainder of the news hour. Short 'stingers' were added at the end of the news cast to

mark it off from the rest of the news hour, which would be commercially sponsored. The separation between that section of the news hour with commercials and that without may be only fifteen seconds. The regional news director was also aware of the necessity of maintaining an audience for the programs that immediately followed the news hour, so that commercials sold for that time slot could also be sold for the greatest amount possible.

News then must prove itself as a marketable commodity in competition with other media and in competing time slots against other television programs.

Air Time as a Demand Characteristic

The employees of the news and public affairs department of this television station did not have as an option before them the possibility of declaring that nothing had happened on a particular day, and deciding not to fill the time that had been allocated to them. As the chapter on the Contingent Character of News will discuss in detail, the amount of time given over to news casts and public affairs is an organizational and social arrangement that strongly influences what can be considered news, or topical, for any particular program. This section will discuss the organizational arrangements that are made by the news room and the public affairs office to fill air time on days when there are few news items, either because there were few 'newsworthy' events, or because no news crew was scheduled for that day.

This was a greater problem for the news department than it was for public affairs, for two reasons. First, the news program had to give the appearance of immediate topicality in its news items. This was less crucial for the public affairs program, which did not have to present items immediately

as they happened. Secondly, the news program had to continue producing a news show on the weekends, even though there was then only a single reporter and no cameraman at work, and special arrangements had to be made for covering stories at this time.

Periods in which there seemed to be little news are referred to as 'quiet days' or 'dog days'. Expressions commonly heard in the news room, which were descriptive of the organizational arrangements consciously being made to fill in program time, included 'forcing the story', 'weekend fillers', and 'filling in space'.

Forcing the Story

Occasionally when a news team is covering a story, it turns out to be a 'dud'. By this it is meant that when the crew arrived they found the story had not materialized as anticipated, either as a result of the failure of the event, or misleading information in the press release or other news source from which the item came.

One instance of this was a rally protesting an increase in the local electricity rates. The sponsors of the rally had billed it as a mass candle-light demonstration in front of the head office of the public utilities company. When the crews arrived, however, very few people were present, and little was happening.

On another occasion, a news crew was sent to a local high school to cover a story on a student-led clean-up of the local neighbourhood during their lunch hour. The principal personally contacted the news room urging that this story be covered as an example of the responsibility of young people, and to balance current unfavourable stories about youth. The assignment editor expressed interest in this angle, and also pointed out that it fitted into the current interest on pollution. However, as

the news crew arrived in the neighbourhood, both the reporter and cameraman commented that they had never seen a cleaner neighbourhood, wondering why the students felt it needed cleaning and where they were going to find any garbage. It was obvious in a very short time that only a few students were involved. However, considerably more students turned up at the end of the lunch hour to hear the band play at the end of the campaign.

One final example was the time that a cameraman was sent out to cover a story that the assignment editor had first learned from the radio. According to the radio report, the police had rescued a large number of people from rooms above a restaurant that was on fire. When the cameraman arrived, however, he found that there was only smoke damage, and that the people really had not needed saving.

In situations such as these, the news crew really does not have the option of deciding that the event is not newsworthy. As previously mentioned, the budget was based on paying the cameraman for each story covered. If the event was not significant, it would be too costly to the budget to send the cameraman out on another story. Nor was the cameraman interested in the possibility of declaring a non-event, because it meant extra work for him. Further, depending on the time of day, there might be little possibility of re-assigning the cameraman in time to meet the deadline for the next news cast.

It was commonly understood, therefore, that some stories had to be 'forced' in order to make them seem more than they really were. In the first example, therefore, the story focussed not on the mass demonstration, but rather on an interview with the person who called it, standing against

the utility office as a backdrop, discussing why so few people were protesting the rate increase. In the second example, the cameraman had the students fill a barrel with empty cardboard boxes, and put the garbage on top of that; he then grouped the students around the barrel so that there seems to be more students present than there actually were, and more garbage than had really been collected. The story then ended with the camera focussing on the large number of students who had congregated to hear the band play. In the final example, the cameraman simply took pictures of the smoky windows outside the restaurant.

These examples are not intended to point out deviant behaviour by news reporters and cameramen, but simply to distinguish one class of news story. 'Forcing a story' can be seen as one method of constructing a news story, and an organizational arrangement for assuring that the news program is filled within the budgetary limitations imposed.

This expression was not heard in the public affairs department, but here too there was difficulty in deciding what to do with interviews which were not, in their opinion, too successful, and with free-lance stories which were not considered to be up to scratch. This problem was usually resolved by additional editing of the item. There was less pressure in the public affairs office to instantly make a decision, since very little of their material had to be put on the air the same day.

Weekend Fillers

In both the public affairs and news department, there was a gradual storing-up of stories which did not have to be immediately aired, and which could be used when needed as 'fillers'. In the news department, fillers

were most commonly kept for use on the weekend, when there was only one reporter on duty, and no cameraman unless special arrangements had been made. The assignment editor, throughout the week, would look for human interest or feature-type stories which could be kept until the weekend without any loss in news value. These stories were shot and written up in such a fashion that it was not possible to identify the specific time in which they occurred. The weekend news program, then, would consist mainly of a series of re-written wire and radio stories, and film for 'visual balance' that had been taken during the week. Such items included the launching of the first one-man all-aluminum fishboat purchased by an Indian in British Columbia.

Filling in Space

The public affairs department was not on the air on the weekends. Their stories therefore sometimes accumulated for great periods of time, often being shown many months after they were provided. A special blackboard in the office listed all of this 'shelf' material. Items would be taken off the shelf if there was not enough material for that evening's show, and if their length corresponded to what was needed.

Because the producer of the public affairs department had to account for all film shot, and how it was used, in his annual budget report, in order to get the same amount of money or an increase, he was under pressure to use every item that had been produced. On some occasions, it was necessary to find a reason for showing an item that had been on the shelf a long time. One example of this, then, was an interview with a movie star which had been shot six months before it was aired on television. This item was

eventually aired when one of her movies opened in Vancouver. The announcer introduced the item by mentioning that the film had just opened, and that the public affairs people had an interview with the star done when she had passed through town earlier.

Toward the end of the budget year, the public affairs producer would often produce only one new item for each show, while taking others off the shelf to fill the remaining time.

'Filling in space' in the newsroom had a much more immediate character. It involves using up time that has been created because an item did not work out, because it was edited shorter than anticipated, because another section of the news hour had not used all of its time, or even because the pace of the news hour when it was on the air was faster than planned. In these situations, and depending upon the amount of time that was available to the news cast, one item might be selected not because of its importance as a news item, but because it was already written while another was not, or because its length exactly corresponded to that needed to fill the amount of extra time available. A last minute discovery of time does not allow the news department either to stretch another item, or edit it down to fit the time.

These demand characteristics of employees in the news and public affairs rooms can be seen, therefore, as routine features of news production, and ones which are regularly oriented to in the ongoing organizing of their activities in producing the news hour.

Success as a Demand Characteristic

While the need to fill the news time available is the most immediately observable characteristic of news production, the necessity of successfully competing with opposition news programs, and other competing programs in the same time period, is equally important. It is for this reason that the news program, as well as the entire news hour, is structured in a fashion that is similar to that of other commercial news programs, and one that will assure the best competitive opportunity.

Among the strategies used to encourage audience loyalty are: the brevity of news items; the organization of individual news items; the use of 'light' items; and the development of personalities which will attract an audience following.

Brevity of News Items

The typical news item lasts between one and a half and three minutes. In certain very rare exceptions, an item might be considerably longer. The basic format has been designed on the premise that a continuous stream of individual news items is necessary in order to maintain viewer interest.

By covering a large number of stories very superficially, there is a greater chance that the interests of a wide audience will be represented on the news cast. Newspapers are able to have specialty columns, or even entire sections, devoted to specific interests; readers are not forced to read the entire paper just to reach the material that interests them. Television, on the other hand, forces the viewer to sit through the entire newscast to reach an item of interest to him. Short news items

do not require any special knowledge of in-depth understanding of the issues, but are developed with a limited amount of background material, in such a way as to make the issues seem clear. Viewers are given the impression that they have a complete grasp of events, with very little work or personal involvement.

Organization of Individual Items

Although this material will be discussed more fully in later portions of this study, it is necessary to mention briefly the structure of individual news items. Generally, news items are structured in such a way that each item represents a small scale drama that has a beginning, a middle and an end, and which achieves dramatic effect through the emphasis on conflict. The shooting and the editing of this film is oriented to capturing the most dramatic parts of any event. This is explained by the need to show the outstanding features of an event, but it happily has the additional advantage of strong visual impact and concentrated action.

The Use of 'Light' Items

Another factor considered in the overall balance of the news program is the weight or impact of the total program on the viewer. The news producer reasons, and this is not uncommon, that if there is only negative news, viewers will become discouraged and will stop watching the news. The attempt is made, therefore, to achieve some balance by having a 'lighter' news item placed at the end of the news cast. Epstein mentions that the American networks, needing to project a national image in their news but having difficulty, because of the time difference, in getting West coast items for the East coast news cast, have used California as their chief source of light news items.. The ongoing format in this case is that of the 'wacky Californians'.

CBC, in a similar fashion, tries to highlight individual stories that are humorous or incongruous, such as the thief who got his pants caught in the bank vault, and was arrested by the police with his pants down.

The news hour on which this fieldwork was done allowed time periods outside the news portion of the news hour to introduce elements of humour. On both this program, as well as the local opposition and many of the American networks in the areas, the weather forecast was often used to lighten the overall tone of the program. On the program under study, the weatherman was very low-key, introducing jokes about the weather or kibbitzing with the anchorman in the transition between the news and weather sections of the program. His counterpart on the opposition station worked part-time in the nightclubs as a comedian, and introduced many jokes into his weather presentation.

An example of this process working in reverse was recently reported in the papers, where a weatherman in Texas started his presentation with what he called an old Chinese proverb about 'lying back and enjoying rape'. As if this were not tasteless enough, it turned out that the immediately preceding news item was concerned with a case of rape. While saying he was unaware of this item, the subsequent outcry resulted not in his well-earned dismissal, but in an unpaid leave-of-absence.

Kibbitzing has become an important part of many news programs, and can be viewed as a logical extension of the belief that news should be entertaining in order to attract and maintain audiences. CBC has increased its level of informal chatter and comment in response to their opposition's success in a panel format where three people read the news, sports and weather, with light banter and joking between them. This format is also

used on two of the local American news casts received in this area. Humour, then, must be perceived as yet another format to increase audience loyalty.

The Development of Personalities

Another tactic developed by the news producers and network executives to encourage audience loyalty is the development of personalities. Initially, the CBC news hour moved very slowly in this direction, and it is still much more conservative than the commercial networks in this regard. The weatherman, as previously noted, has achieved a substantial following on the basis of his genial, understated humour, and slightly seedy and bemused appearance. This is attested to by his selection as the key personality in a series of advertisements for a local public utility on the value of insulating and conserving energy.

Later attempts to personalize the anchorman achieved some success, but there was apparently some staff friction on this point, and one of the anchormen left CBC because of the lack of freedom. The public affairs portion of the news hour hired a prominent journalist from one of the papers to do interviewing for its show with the hopes that their ratings would subsequently improve.

The basic policy of CBC is, however, against the presentation of the news as entertainment, and this to some extent affects program activities. In fact, the CBC has just used its policy of not turning the news program into entertainment as justification for its poor showing against the opposition whose ratings were higher.

Other television news programs, however, have emphasized personalities in an attempt to attract an audience. The CTV national network hired the CBC national anchorman for a reputed \$100,000 a year in an attempt to increase its audience ratings. Similarly, an American network hired

Barbara Walters as a reputed \$1 million a year to read its news.

The brevity of news items and their organization, the use of light items and kibbitzing, and the focus on personalities are all strategies not only for producing the news show, but, more importantly, for producing it successfully. Such techniques are used to attract a loyal following and gain high audience ratings, and to increase therefore the commercial value of the station's time.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONTINGENT CHARACTER OF NEWS

One of the main areas to be explored in the fieldwork is the process through which some news stories or items become news on the news or public affairs program while others do not. Discussions and decisions about which stories were to be covered continued throughout the day in the news room, but focussed on the assignment editor in the early morning period.

Four main areas are to be explored in this chapter: the newsmen's conception of news; the role of objectivity; sources of news and the news community; and finally, the contingent character of news, the organizational basis on which some news stories are selected, and others are rejected.

What is News?

The most striking result of asking news reporters "What is news?" is their lack of clarity as to what constitutes the news. This study makes no attempt to rigorously determine in a quantitative manner the percentage of reporters who hold various conceptions of the news. Rather, the following breakdown is the result of discussions with reporters over the course of the fieldwork.

The only definition that seemed at all specific was a temporal one. News is something that involves immediacy, sensationalism and drama. Those who suggested such a definition most often simply listed such newsworthy events as fires, bank robberies, drug raids and murders. Such definitions have a long tradition in news reporting, and are linked to the 'stop the press' impressions of the news media held by much of the public, and cherished in public and professional lore. The immediacy and sensationalism of these events is exciting to the reporters who cover them, but, more importantly, stimulating to the public-and thus attracts a large audience. Newspaper empires such as the Hearst empire, and, more recently, the Australian-based Murdoch empire, gained widespread popularity and commercial success through a strong emphasis on sensationalism and gossip.

It is interesting to note that news reporters do not consider themselves to be really covering a story when they go out on items like the fishboat story, another on religious charity, or one on insects, for example. These are seen as features. During the fieldwork period, there was only one news story of this preferred nature, a bank robbery. I arrived after a team had been sent out to cover this event; this was the only time that anyone mentioned to me that I had missed out on a story of some interest. Several times, members of the news department mentioned that they hoped I would be around when one of these stories came in.

For other reporters, the definition of news is empirical. News is what people are interested in hearing about. This definition, of course, makes it entirely unclear how a reporter or assignment editor knows what

the public is interested in hearing. Experience is most often cited as the basis on which judgment is based. Ultimately, program ratings confirm the success of this judgment. Implicit in the empirical definition is a belief in the neutrality of television news. News simply responds to people's interests by reflecting back to them sections of social reality in which they are interested. Little thought is given to the way the media, mainly through omission, shapes the interests of the public, nor to the ultimate commercial basis of news production.

Another common definition of the news is organizational. News is 'what the assignment editor says it is'. Such a definition recognizes the contingent character of news and the organizational mediation of the social world. However, the organizational definition of news tended to be described cynically by those who felt that organizational demands were intruding upon news coverage as defined in the previous two definitions.

Several features of news gathering operations in newsrooms such as the one under study encourage and make desirable such vagueness.

New reporters in the news room and interviewers in the public affairs department are consciously not seen as experts, and are discouraged from acquiring any in-depth knowledge which might put them out of reach of the general public. With the exception of the legislative reporter, they are neither assigned specific beats, nor have specific areas for which they are responsible and over which they exercise news judgment. The reasons for this are threefold.

First, television news rooms, unlike their newspaper counterparts, invariably have small news staffs. As will be discussed later in this chapter,

they are dependent on other media as sources of news stories. While a newspaper might have many specialists who exercise news judgment, subject of course to editorial decisions, television depends on a handful of generalists. News programs are important for attracting an audience, or for fulfilling public responsibilities in order to retain licenses, but they must nevertheless compete for both time and money with entertainment and sports programs which comprise the greater part of the television schedule.

Second, news reporters and interviewers are viewed by producers as representatives of ordinary people, who will ask questions that ordinary people will want to know about. and who will receive answers that ordinary people can understand. Both the producers, and many reporters, felt that becoming an expert would lead to discussions between the interviewer and the interviewee that would go beyond the understanding of most of the audience. This would result in audience loss.

Epstein¹⁵ points out that gaining expert knowledge in an area means both that a reporter has gained some independence from the producer in terms of news judgment, and also that he is more likely to have a point of view on a subject that he will want to express. This is precisely what the networks want to avoid. Epstein shows how the American networks select their news reporters to ensure that they have no opinions that might affect 'objective' news reporting.¹⁶ Reporters are selected from journalism schools or liberal art programs where they have a general background and social understanding. CBC has recently begun to recruit its reporters and interviewers from precisely this milieu. The result is an interviewing procedure which emphasizes surface phenomena, and does not probe for the structural causes of an event.

It also results in a neglect of more complicated issues in favour of those which are more easily presented. and particularly those which have visual activity.

Third, television, unlike the newspaper, is unable to continually expand coverage. It must, however, cover enough 'significant' events to maintain an audience. The small amount of time allocated to television news, in contrast to sports and entertainment, results in a very small amount of time being allotted to any single news item. Only in very exceptional circumstances is a story allotted more than the average one to three minutes. As a result, only the very surface of any news item is covered. This short period of time is harmonious with the generalist notion of news reporters and their lack of in-depth knowledge. But also, many of those news items defined for their immediacy and sensationalism are for the most part simple phenomena which can be adequately described by film and a brief who, what, where, why and when description.

As already pointed out, the brief period of time allocated to any single news item is understood by the producers and the reporters as a way of maintaining an audience by providing short items with lots of action to hold the viewer's attention.¹⁷ It is for this reason that each individual news item is organized as an individual piece of drama. (see the section on the social reconstruction of reality).

In summary, the organizational features of news-gathering which affect the definition of news and the actual collection of news items are based on the necessity of attracting and maintaining an audience over the entire network schedule. These features include: a limited allocation of

time to news, which in turn limits the amount of attention each news item receives; a minimal financial expenditure on news programs, which assures skeleton staffs dependent on other media for their news; and a general approach to any news item which will not force audiences beyond their existing level of understanding and therefore discourage their viewing. These organizational arrangements coincide with a recruitment policy which selects reporters and interviewers with little personal commitment to or understanding of the major issues they will be covering. These, coupled with the historical emphasis on the immediate and sensational as news, and the visual demands of television, are the primary factors affecting the kind of news coverage that is on television. It is important to understand that these separate decisions are not necessarily consciously made, but reflect the limitations imposed on the social production of news when news is regarded as a marketable commodity.

The brevity of news items makes it easier to avoid any controversy that might affect certain segments of the audience, or which might tread upon the ambiguous standards of fair coverage that are outlined in the Broadcasting Act. This is particularly helpful for the CBC because it enables it to avoid controversial questions that might result in its being accused by Parliament of taking sides. The CBC in its position as a public corporation particularly emphasizes the objectivity, neutrality and impartiality ethic which is the ideological basis for all the mass media. This ideological stance avoids conscious perception of the effect of market relations and the subsequent social organization of news production, while emphasizing the ethical character of news production.

Objectivity, Neutrality and Impartiality

On a day-to-day basis, news reporters do not talk about their activities in covering the news in a way which makes explicit the relationship between short news items and audience attraction. Although there is a conscious recognition of the limits imposed by such short items, and some frustration with it, they are more inclined to discuss their approach to news in an ethical manner. Reporters must be objective, impartial and neutral. Indeed these prerequisites for the job are written into the policy manual of the CBC.

The manual states under a section on objectivity that:

The CBC expects from its news and information programmers an objectivity which is optimal rather than absolute. The objectivity of a reporter will not be the same as a commentator. The reporter is obliged to strive for a maximum subjective detachment from the events and opinions of the people which constitute the news. He can report and he can analyze but he must not express his personal opinion. To maintain his credibility the reporter must avoid publicly identifying himself with partisan statements or actions on public issues. . . .

Objectivity in handling controversial subjects consists in the choice of subjects and the approach taken to them, the choice of participants to deal with them, and the time allotted for the purpose.

The interviewer or host has a vital role to play in these matters. He must give equal consideration to all participants in a discussion.

pants

The impartiality of a host or interviewer will be put to the test in the minds of the public if they take different attitudes toward their guests, being critical and demanding with some, even to the point of challenging the validity of their positions, while being conciliatory and sympathetic to others to the point of letting them express their views unopposed.

The CBC demands and expects of its production staff that they show the utmost fairness toward all guests on its programs. The very image of the CBC's objectivity in the public mind is at stake.

This position is given emphasis in the CBC Stylebook handed out to all employees in preparing material for the air. In the introduction to this booklet, the following is written under "Principles of CBC News":

Integrity

The policy which guides the operations of CBC News is based on the primary conception that the service is in the nature of a public trust; to present by radio and television all the significant news of the day's happenings in Canada and abroad, factually and in a clear and unambiguous style.

It is the responsibility of CBC News Management to see that this policy is followed without deviation. Operationally, it devolves on the individual editors and reporters who prepare CBC News programs. It is realized that if channels were opened to exert pressure on editors to include or exclude certain news, modify it in any way, or give it special emphasis, then the integrity of the news service would be lost immediately.

With that in mind, we must at all times appraise and present the news strictly on the basis of its news value.

Impartiality

All news must be treated impartially. Our listeners and viewers look to the CBC News for a straight-forward, balanced presentation of the news.

Both sides of an issue must be given equal consideration as they become available. CBC editors and reporters do not express personal opinions, speculate or predict in their presentation of the news. Neither political predilection, personal friendship nor any other consideration must be permitted to affect in the slightest degree the fairness of our news program.

Th The objectivity ethic permits the news to be presented in such a way that no one is offended, no sides are taken, while clarity or insight suffers. It does, however, serve the purpose of providing information to large numbers of people with different interests and political positions in such a way as to maintain their allegiance to the program.

In the case of the CBC, there is the additional importance of appearing neutral to the members of Parliament. This is the body that controls the future of the CBC, and especially the granting of funds. The regional director of the CBC news indicated that he was acutely aware of the number of MPs who watch the CBC national news or the regional news programs when they are in their home ridings.

In practical terms, the CBC demands that each news story be developed as an individual drama, while at the same time arguing that the story should be neutral. Obviously, the construction of each news item reflects an orientation to the story. What usually happens in most news items is that contrasting points of view are presented, if there is any controversy at all. The most common approach on this station was to have the news reporter end the news item by summarizing the contrasting viewpoints that were presented, and remarking that the truth is probably 'somewhere in between.' This allows the reporter to maintain his distance from the respective sides, while at the same time acknowledging that both have something useful to contribute, and both have reasonable points to make.

In order to accomplish this, the news reporters and the news editors must develop the news program based on an acceptance of the status quo. Only a clear and sustained analysis of the events of the world from a clearly developed perspective would allow news audiences to seriously assess these events in terms other than those of the prevailing liberal pluralistic model. Thus objectivity is used as a justification to mask a continually present perspective in news programs.

This perspective can be identified by its lack of analysis of the major world events and any attempt to present a link between them, leaving the audience to accept them as a series of isolated phenomena. Another aspect of this approach is its ahistoricism. Events are continually presented in the present tense, with little, usually no, attempt to place them in an historical context. Thus world or local events appear to just happen, with no source in the past, and no predictable consequences in the future.

Objective news casts, then, seek to highlight conflict within each news item to heighten interest in the news program, while at the same time, news editors seek to resolve and contain the conflict by the end of the news item, usually by suggesting that there are many different aspects to this hydra-headed problem. Often the news reporter will suggest, explicitly or implicitly, that the problem can be solved if people of good will and reason would rationally work out a solution, always, of course, within the established framework.

The overall result of this constant bombardment of individual and isolated news items is an empirical accounting of events of the world, entirely contained within a political perspective which is never made explicit, and which has the effect of leaving audiences disoriented and confused as to the real meaning of world affairs.

Thus, while putting forward the middle ground in any given news item, the reporter is not only maintaining audiences by alienating as few as possible, but also finding in the notion of objectivity an appropriate explanation for

his own conduct. On one level, this is reinforced by the necessity of the reporter having to get along with everyone in order to maintain access to them for future programs.

An example of this problem recently emerged in the coverage given to a labour convention, when the labour reporter for one of the newspapers very clearly took sides in the election of its chief executive officer. Reporters from all the media covering the convention agreed that this was unwise. They surmised that if the incumbent were re-elected, this labour reporter would have a great deal of difficulty getting first-hand stories from him. This was, in fact, confirmed by those close to the labour leader.

On another level, this middle of the road position is an expression of the news reporters' own class interests. Television news reporters have traditionally been recruited from newspapers and radios. There has been a great deal of opportunity for upward mobility. The recruitment policy for news reporters on this network has recently changed to hiring university graduates with liberal arts degrees. Both in terms of salary, or more precisely salary potential, and their social groups, reporters tend to be petit bourgeoisie. This is also the case for cameramen who operate as self-incorporated businesses.

The practical result of the various strategies that are used to achieve impartiality and neutrality is to reinforce the existing status quo. Some of the strategies adopted include giving time to representatives of credible institutions, giving both sides of an issue or all the speakers on an issue equal time, or in proportion to the strength of their organization, and giving all issues approximately equal time on the news cast.

The policy of the CBC is to give the Prime Minister, the Premiers, Members of the Cabinet, and leaders of the Opposition high priority for receiving coverage. Indeed, the Prime Minister, and in certain circumstances the Premiers, can ask for and receive air time to make a major speech. Other leaders of major organizations such as churches, business organizations and central labour unions can expect to get coverage. This coverage is based on the existing power relations in society, and an empirical definition of the support that varying groups have.

As a result, any conflict is on the basis of accepting the basic premises of society, such as that of parliamentary democracy. Coverage of conflict situations that question the very basis of institutional order and liberalism pluralism are more cautiously provided. As mentioned before, a good example for the CBC of this is its failure to provide thorough coverage of the War Measures Act crisis. In the United States, Epstein points out that the networks have banned certain individuals and groups from the air because they consider them to be dangerous.²⁰

Elections are a good example of how balance is achieved. The major parties are allocated free time on television according to a formula which reflects their existing strength in Parliament. The news director, in discussing a municipal election, commented that it would not have been fair to give each candidate five minutes because "they were not comparable in organization and money".²¹

Another strategy for accomplishing objectivity is to give each of the representatives of a debate approximately equal time in the news story, thus giving the impression that their viewpoints are all equally valuable. As the previous quote from the CBC Policy Manual points out, interviewers

and newsmen are not able to force the responses of the interviewees to the point where the nature of the differences and their magnitude is clarified. Nor is it possible to make judgments as to what is a correct position. The television audience, particularly for news programs, receives only a statement of two or more positions with a concluding summary from the reporter. The juxtaposition of conflicting statements not only provides objectivity, but also heightens the dramatic impact of the news by having a point of conflict which will generate viewer interest. The irony is that this impact must be ameliorated by the reporter's commentary at the end.

A third strategy used on the news program to give some impression of neutrality follows from the previous discussion concerning the brevity of each individual news item. Within a news program most items receive the same amount of time, regardless of whether the event is a local fire or, for example, a major event of world importance. This applies also to the difference between the serious items in the news broadcast, and the lighter item which ends the program on an upbeat note. The effect of this strategy is to give all news items equal importance, and to blur the greater significance of some events over others.

A detailed analysis of the structure of the news items will take place in a later chapter. Having discussed the newsmen's definitions of news and some of the general factors which affect news coverage, it is important now to investigate the actual sources of news stories.

Sources of News Stories

The assignment editor is responsible on a day-to-day basis for assigning the news stories that get covered. The sources on which he and

the news department depend for news items are the wire services, newspapers, radio stations, police radio broadcasts, press releases and the general public, who phone in news items, or ask for coverage for events in which they are participating. In the public affairs room, the newspapers and press releases are major features of news stories.

In neither department are many original news stories generated. Neither has a research capacity with which to do original investigative reporting. Background information comes either from the wire services, the newspapers or the personality profile clipping files that are kept in the news room. According to Epstein²², this is not a situation peculiar to this news room. He reports that few original stories were generated by the three American network news departments, and none had a research section. He points out that the networks were basing their investment on news production on studies they had commissioned which showed that money spent on news programs did not increase audience ratings.

The news department has easy access to more resources than does the public affairs department when it comes to sources of news. However, it must be remembered that the public affairs staff would often go to the news room to look over the teletype, or news room staff would often inform them of anything interesting. As has already been mentioned, the news room has four teletype machines, one that keeps in touch with the rest of the national network, the Associated Press in the United States, a picture service which is also based in the United States, and the Canadian Press Service. There is also the national syndication from Toronto. The national syndication depends on its foreign correspondents as well as on the national networks in the United States for its international news. National news is

collected from affiliate stations across the country, edited in Toronto, and then sent back across the country. It is on these resources that the local station depends for the national and international news.

For the assignment editor the police radio was a key source of spot news stories, enabling him to assign reporters to an event while it was still taking place. This was seen to be particularly important for visual material. Prompt action allowed the cameraman to arrive while an event was still happening, or at least soon enough to get some 'crowd shots' or other material allowing a partial reconstruction of the event. While this source did not generate as many news stories as the newspaper or radio, it was regarded as a most important news source. It was in this area, that is, sensational news, where the competition between the two networks and the other media was keenest to provide the fastest coverage. Such news stories took precedence over most other, and, as examples in this chapter show, could result in a reporter being assigned.

This station was somewhat hampered in airing spot news items quickly because it lacked on-site developing facilities. The opposition, however, was able to move film directly from their developing room to the air without editing, if necessary.

The radio was another important source of news items. The assignment editor always had his radio tuned to one of the local radio stations, widely considered to have the largest news team and the best news coverage. The reporters for this station once complained to the fieldworker that much of the non-print news in Vancouver was simply a re-write of their material. The radio was a source not only of news stories but also for updating stories.

This news room tapes all the news casts from this station, and would occasionally use information straight from the tape, re-arranging it grammatically before putting it on the air.

Both in the news room and the public affairs room, the staff read the newspapers a good deal, and so come up with many of the news stories or feature stories that are later covered. News reporters use the newspapers to keep themselves generally informed, and to generate ideas. However, because of the different time deadlines, many newspaper articles in both the morning and afternoon paper would be dated before the planning of the news show. The public affairs staff were much more dependent upon newspapers as a source, not only of program ideas and background information, but also of relevant individuals and experts who would be interviewed on their program. This was so much the case that one of the interviewers in the public affairs office was heard to lament that there was no news because the newspapers were on strike and his car radio was broken.

It was standard practice in the public affairs room to scan the papers first thing in the morning and then put forward any ideas gleaned from them for future programs at the morning staff meeting. Often, when an idea was accepted, the production assistant would go back to the article and get the pertinent information, underline any names that were mentioned in the article, etcetera. These names were then contacted as possible sources for interviews for the program. It often happens, then, that the same sources cited in the newspaper would be interviewed for the television program and often the same questions asked that had been covered in the newspaper story. This was particularly the case when no one in the public affairs room had a

contact or knew anybody connected with the issue being presented.

Without the resources of the two major daily papers, the staff in both the public affairs and news departments improvised by reading local and neighbourhood papers, often bringing into the office local papers that had been delivered to their homes. On one story, one of the cameramen came in with a district weekly paper which pointed out that many men were to be laid off because there was no work; that cameramen was then told to go and get some pictures of the place. One of the reporters phoned the company to confirm the information that was in the paper, and used it for the 'voice over' on the 'wild reel' that the photographer took. (A wild reel is footage without sound taken by the cameraman so that sound can later be dubbed in over it.)

One of the reasons for public affairs' more extensive use of the newspaper was the greater latitude they had on temporal topicality. It was not nearly as important for the public affairs department to cover an event on the same day it occurred. In fact, it was seldom that public affairs features were so located.

Both the news room and the public affairs room receive a constant stream of press releases and exhortations from individuals, groups and organizations to have their events covered. The press releases are heavily weighted in favour of those who have some on-going professional experience with the media: politicians, businesses, and large-scale organizations. Many of these have paid public affairs agents who are skilled at getting television coverage for their clients. The most skilled of these agents know the most convenient time of day to hold a press conference, to assure

that it coincides with the various media deadlines, thus increasing the possibility of maximum coverage. Convenient location, proper facilities for cameramen, telephones, and refreshments will all increase the chances of an event being covered. Candidates for political party leadership are very much aware of the necessity of attracting media coverage, and providing very elaborate facilities for the use of the press. This was well demonstrated in the 1975 Conservative leadership campaign.

Thus the organized activity of people outside the media has an important effect on what gets to be defined as news and subsequently receives news coverage on television. Rather than news being a reflection of society, it becomes a response to those best able to organize to capture the media's attention. This is another way in which news coverage follows the dominant power patterns of our society, which are reflected in the resources available to get news coverage. In both the news room and public affairs office, there was a great deal of contempt for public relations men, while at the same time an angry recognition of their mutual dependence. It should be noted that businesses and, more recently, but much more extensively, politicians, recruit public relations people from the news media. This assures that those who understand their public relations have an understanding of the media.

There is increasing criticism of the dependence of the media on press releases. Pierre Berton, in an article entitled "We Need a Revolution To Abolish Hand-Out Journalism" says that:

Handout journalism is television's meat. The prepared statement, the set-piece address gobble up most of the film. The lights wink off and the TV men escape before the hard follow-up questions are asked.

But he points out that handout journalism is inevitable when it is so much cheaper to respond to handouts than it is to do investigative journalism.

The press releases and personal contacts serve to establish a list of future events which might be covered if nothing more important were to come up on those days. These events, most of which could be described, using Boorstein's term, as 'pseudo events'²⁴, permit a certain degree of advance planning and knowledge as to what was going to constitute news in the days ahead..

Although serving the same function, small, poor or amateur organizations approach media coverage much more off-handedly. A typical non-professional approach is contained in the following extraction from the transcripts of recorded conversations taken during the fieldwork:

(S-someone who appeared in the building on other business and wandered into the public affairs office)

S: Which of you do I talk to about an interview you might be interested in ? (Secretary points to Al)

S: (To Al) This is through the Unitarian Church, he was on the policy making with Martin Luther King.

Although not researched thoroughly, it certainly appears that the effect of these interventions depends upon the already existing power and credibility of the group. For newsmen, a sign of the increasing maturity of such an organizations was their sophistication in preparing and circulating press releases and organizing news events.

Occasionally, the news and public affairs departments co-operate in covering a story. If they are both interested in an item, the two producers will get together and decide who will cover the story. Occasionally, the

news department will cover a story that is also of interest to public affairs. At such a time, public affairs will ask the news department to 'shoot long', meaning to take more film than they would if they were simply going to cover it for a news story. Similarly, public affairs personnel might do a story which turns out to be of some interest to the news department. In this case, the news department will edit out whatever they want and use it for the news cast. If both departments plan to use an item on the same newshour, the news cast will be hooked on as a 'teaser' for the more lengthy item to follow on the public affairs portion of the program, and the announcer will do a 'promo' for the latter part of the program.

It can be seen from the above that there is some overlap in items covered by the two departments, and overlap in the kind of material in which they are interested. There are two main differences, however, between the two departments. The first is that public affairs covers fewer items at greater depth than does the news department. The second is that the temporal range of topicality is more restricted for news items than it is for public affairs items.

A rough schema of the temporal differences between the two might be:

Short Temporal Span: items that have to be presented as soon as the material is gathered. This would include most of the news items and those few public affairs items demanding immediate presentation.

Intermediate Temporal Span: items that can be held for intermediate periods of up to one week. This includes nearly everything else the news department does, and a great deal of the public affairs department material.

Long Temporal Span: items that are in some sense timeless in that they do not have to be presented within the narrower frame of reference presented above. These are all presented by the public affairs department of the program.

As can be seen, television news reporting in this station is basically dependent upon other media as a source of news stories and background information. Furthermore, evidence from other researchers such as Epstein and Halberstam, as well as material gathered during the fieldwork, indicates that this is more or less common to television news programs, and many radio news programs also. This interdependence of members of the news media upon each other as a source of material constitutes a 'News Community'.

The News Community

The interlocking of the various media in Canada extends from the highest corporate level, through co-operation in wire services and the day-to-day contact of reporters in the process of carrying out their daily routine of news gathering.

As the first section of this study has documented, there is extensive concentration of media ownership in Canada. Ownership is not only within one media or one region of the country, but extends both across media and throughout the country. Concomitant with these chains (which include television networks, radio networks, newspapers and periodical publishing), the media has been economically rationalized to expand profits, while at the same time the number of sources of news items has been reduced.

Corporate media empires extend into the mainstream of the economy, and share with other businessmen a concern with maintaining corporate profits.

Internationally, only a few wire services dominate the field of international news. These, plus a handful of news correspondent, and contractual links with American television networks, are the major source of

Canadian news. At the local level, news reporters shift between the various media, and indeed occasionally work for several at the same time. For example, two of the most prominent columnists in the major Vancouver newspaper each work as interviewers on one of the three Vancouver television stations. This is also common at the national level.

Reporters are in regular contact with each other and aware of each other's work. This is especially true of those who work a specific news beat, such as the legislature. In such instances, not only is there constant interaction between the reporters but also constant assessment of their news gathering operations.

A libel case between a reporter for one of the newspapers and the Pacific Regional Manager of the CBC was triggered around the question of the appropriateness of CBC's legislative coverage. The reporter criticized the fact that CBC provided only one reporter (who, when ill, was replaced by a moonlighting reporter from another media) and that the station depended upon re-writing wire services for its legislative coverage. This case resulted in a substantial reorganization of the CBC Pacific region, and the news operation in particular.

Not only are the reporters in regular contact with each other while they are covering stories, they work for various media which feed off each other. Thus, one of the ways in which the assignment editor of the CBC news department decides which stories to cover is on the basis of 'current themes'. These themes are issues receiving a lot of attention from other media, perhaps locally, or even nationally or internationally. Examples of such themes are pollution, abortion, inflation. These themes

are not necessarily created by the media, but are usually the result of very complicated interactions within the larger society. The role of political action in initiating such issues, and the role of the media in independently raising them, is a much too complicated one to explore here.

It is an interesting sidelight here to compare the ease with which the radio reporter can get his material on air, to the much longer editing process involved for television news stories. There was always a trace of envy, as well as superiority, whenever television reporters would mention radio news. Halberstam, in his history of CBS²²⁵, compares the ease with which radio correspondents could get their material on CBS radio virtually live; but those same correspondents, when they were working for CBS television, gradually had more and more editorial control exercised over their copy.

The function of news production became more and more a social process as television became more powerful and more profitable. Halberstam claims that CBS, and by implication the other networks, could no longer risk their FCC granted licenses, nor the possibility of offending advertisers.²⁶ The freedom of radio news reporters arises largely from radio's more fragmented audience, in which there are not the huge audiences who listen to and watch the relatively limited television stations. But for radio, there is no longer the access to airtime for extended commentary such as that available to Edward R. Murrow and his crew of foreign reporters during the second World War. Even the so-called spontaneous CBC network information programs, such as "As It Happens" are rehearsed and put on the air from tape.

The Contingent Character of News

Budget requirements, the availability of staff, the visual appeal of the story, competing news stories, and the need for light items are all determinants of what gets to be a news story.

Budget Allocations

As has already been mentioned the news and public affairs departments have budgets which are established nationally. These are supposed to reflect the CBC's priority on information services, but there is a strong feeling among the news staff that policy priorities and budget priorities are not synonymous. Budget allocations are seen to be established through politicizing and getting the support of various bureaucrats. The news director felt that news received insufficient funding because there were no newsmen in the administration, and the importance of news to the prestige of a television station was not recognized. He argued that such prestige would attract audiences who would then stay to watch the 'plastic shows' (American serials", and thus increase the advertising revenue.

A chronic complaint was that the opposition television station had more reporters and cameramen, and was able to cover a larger number of stories, and include more film in the news cast. The news director claimed that the ratings for the two news casts, where they overlapped, was close, with the CBC beating the opposition on most days. The other news program began one half hour earlier, so only the last half of the opposition (the public affairs portion), and the first half hour of the CBC news hour overlapped. In the earlier half hour, the private network was substantially ahead of the CBC program that it opposed.

The opposition news program considered its news hour to be the 'flagship' of the station. According to the CBC news director, they understood the value of the news program in building an audience. They were able to sell twelve minutes of commercials in their news hour, at \$640 per minute; or sometimes less, depending upon package discounts. This works out to approximately \$2 million income in a year, and out of this, they paid a staff of fifty people who were involved in the news program. The commitment was not to news itself, but to the news program as a profitable way to build an audience.

Recently, the national news director of the opposition network resigned because this station had refused to carry the Quebec election program, and did only a one-half hour summary of the Conservative convention. He complained that programs such as "I Love Lucy" were aired instead. He also complained, as did the CBC newsmen, that programs were dropped, or switched to less convenient times, because of specials or hockey telecasts. Recently, in fact, the CBC news hour was shortened to make room for an evening variety show.

Budget allocations significantly affected the use of film in the news program, both the amount of film to be shot by its own cameramen, and the amount of film that could be bought from free-lancers throughout the province. Film costs approximately 12 cents a foot to buy, and 13 cents a foot to develop in 1976. It was expected that the ratio of film used on the program to shot film would be about one to four; in other words, the cameramen had to be very careful how they used film. This led to 'stock shot' that both assured that a minimum number of items would be included in the film, such as locational markers, and also assured a standard

format. Tuchman²⁷ discusses cameramen's use of stock shots (that is, the same speed of film, the same horizon, the same vantage point) as a way of maintaining cinematic objectivity. This study never investigated this particular point, beyond noting that the standard format was consciously viewed as a way of saving film. A typical format, for example, was called the 'stand-up', a situation in which the reporter summarized the news story from the legislature, for example, so that the backdrop for the film was seen to be representative of the news story, that is, the legislative buildings, or city hall.

Staff Availability

Budget allocations for the news program also affected the number of news reporters or cameramen that were available, and the amount of travelling that reporters could do.

CBC cameramen, at the time of this fieldwork, were paid on the basis of each story they filmed. There was only enough money in the budget for each cameramen to film one story a day, with a certain amount of latitude for setting aside stories for the weekend news, or the need to cover special events. As a result, therefore, it was necessary for each cameraman to produce a film for the news program, regardless of whether or not the event turned out as expected. A later chapter on the Social Reconstruction of Social Occasions discusses some of the ways the cameramen and reporters had to stretch a news story in order to make it usable.

Not only did each story have to be usable, but also, since there were only four cameramen, it was only possible to cover four or five filmed stories each day, apart from those from the national feed. Therefore, a story was chosen keeping in mind not only the small number of news items that could go onto the news program, but the even smaller number of news items that

could be put on film.

The assignment editor also had to balance out the number of stories that the free-lancers cover over a week, so that they each get paid approximately the same. Each type of assignment pays a different amount, which he has also to keep in mind. A silent film will cost around thirty dollars, one with sound around fifty-five, with colour film being even more expensive. By the end of the week therefore, the assignment editor is discussing with the cameraman the cheapest way of doing a story, because the budget has run out. Once when we were returning from a story early in the morning, I asked the cameraman if we would be going out again, and he replied, "No, I think Victor has spent his budget."

In the public affairs department, the producer is concerned about the overtime that he has to pay his staff, and also about dividing this up equally amongst them.

The schedule of the cameramen and the deadline of the news cast itself placed very narrow boundaries on the period of time in which a story can be covered. Cameramen were on duty only on weekdays. Except in very rare circumstances, the film had to be in to the developers by 3:30 in the afternoon. On evenings and weekends, the assignment editor had either to assign a cameraman or hire a free-lancer if there were an important story. At these times, therefore, a story had to be considered more important to merit coverage, than it would during the week.

The news report was supposed to be a provincial news report. However, there were only one reporter and cameraman responsible for covering the British Columbia legislature, Victoria and southern Vancouver Island, for both radio and television. There were stringers throughout the province,

the two most prominent being in Nanaimo and the Okanagan. Any other areas had to be covered from Vancouver by sending out a reporter and cameraman; this again was dependent upon the budget. The assignment editor knew that it was costly to send a crew out of town, and that it would involve trading-off coverage of other news stories or items elsewhere.

Because of the lack of staff on weekends, arrangements for news coverage at this time are often ad hoc, in order both to conserve funds, and to give the impression of weekend news coverage. On one occasion, one of the papers had mentioned the possibility of a motor cycle gang coming to one of the resort areas outside Vancouver. Because only one reporter was to be in the news room over the weekend, the assignment editor asked one of the cameramen to be on standby. In the meantime, one of the reporters, whose sister lived in the area, asked her to phone him if anything started to happen. Similarly, one of the cameramen had a friend who was chief of the fire department, and he was contacted, as was the owner of a boat rental outfit who had been on the program recently. These people were all given the phone number of the assignment editor to contact him if anything were to happen.

Visual Appeal

A major determinant of the acceptability (or otherwise) of a potential news item is its visual appeal. There is no doubt that both reporters and producers of the news program recognize the importance of visual appeal to the news hour. This is what justifies a television program and attracts the audience. Reporters and editors are advised in the CBC Stylebook to 'think visually' and to understand that

in the film the pictures tell a good deal of the story. The script should provide only the missing details. The words should complement the pictures and not repeat the information.

Not only are specific items judged on the basis of visual appeal, but the balance of the whole program is judged, on one level, on the amount of visual material. Thus, the assignment editor said that he rejects stories that appear to be simply an interview, if there is not enough visual in the program. On one occasion, the producer and the assignment editor were discussing the fact that "there is quite a bit of sound today". By this they meant that the announcer on the screen was just reading the news, or that it was a straight interview on film. As a result of this discussion, the two of them went over the list of possible stories for the evening to see if they could get more 'visual'.

In the case of a bank robbery, the assignment editor mentioned that he was interested in the fact that a front window had been smashed as a means of entry. This was quite an unusual way to rob a bank, and he thought it would be visually interesting. The regional news director similarly commented to me once how effective fires looked on television news. He said that they would often run a fire story, even if it was not all that important, because of its spectacular visual effects. It has since been my experience that the networks pick up many fire stories, not just from Canada, but from throughout the United States.

Visual impact, then, is one of the key factors considered by the assignment editor and producer in judging whether or not a story will be covered. It is hardly necessary to add that visual appeal and news importance, judged from the viewpoint of its impact on people's lives, are not necessarily the same. A story that would be a certainty for coverage one day might easily be rejected the next, because of the overall balance to be achieved between 'sound' and 'visual'.

'News Until'

The notion of trade-off, or 'news until', is prominent in the news office. Although the assignment editor would make up tentative lists of news stories to cover the night before, he would sometimes assign cameramen to them at this time, especially in special instances such as the visit of the Prime Minister. Usually however, it was on the next morning that he would assign stories, on the basis of radio reports, morning newspapers, press releases, knowledge of ongoing stories, and the availability of time, money and cameramen. Any of these items, however, could be reconsidered or changed throughout the day to make way for something new, such as a bank robbery. Unlike newspapers, and quite apart from budget restrictions, the television news program has a definite length. Once time has been committed for the program, new items can be added only by displacing items of lesser importance.

In the case of the bank robbery which occurred during this fieldwork, several features of the newsgathering process were illuminated. The assignment editor found out about it in the morning on the news just after he had woken up. He phoned one of the cameramen and asked him to cover the story, because he was the only one who lived in the city and thus he was closest to the incident. The cameramen, however, had another assignment which had to be re-arranged for later in the afternoon, an interview with someone who was coming through town. But no reporter was sent to cover the robbery; rather the cameraman was asked to find out what was happening, whether there were any clues, and to let the assignment editor know if it was worth sending a reporter out.

There are times when, due to a lack of personnel, stories just do

not get covered. This was the case one day when no one was available to do the stock market report. Coincidentally, this turned out to be a day when the market was active, and several viewers phoned it to complain about the lack of coverage.

'News until' is a characteristic of all television news. A news item will be covered unless something more important develops; it will get on the air unless something more important bumps it off. The assignment editor is never able to give an absolute commitment in advance that a story will be covered. This is especially true of marginal stories that public relations people or organizational representatives are lobbying to receive coverage for. The assignment editor, if he is interested, will usually say that he will try to cover it 'unless something more important comes up'.

The results of this fieldwork indicate that news is not simply a matter of reflecting a social world that exists out there and is captured on camera. What comes to be presented as news is determined by many different factors: the numbers of cameras available; the geographical distance of the story; the time the event takes place; the amount of visual material that is available; the editing process; and the cost of film. The definition of news is always contingent upon these factors, factors which in the final analysis are shaped by the existence of news as a marketable commodity functioning within normal market relations.

CHAPTER SIX

TIME AS A NEGOTIABLE COMMODITY

The daily organization and focus in the news room and public affairs office is on accomplishing the demand characteristics of the job, that is, to put the news hour on the air. The breakdown and organization of time is a crucial aspect of the day's activities. Work schedules are determined by the demands of the production schedule.

News coverage is determined by the time available, which is determined by the head office in Toronto. Within that locally non-negotiable period of time, the various sections of the news hour usually receive approximately the same period of time: twenty minutes each for news and public affairs, and four minutes each for sports and weather, ten minutes for advertising and two minutes for station breaks.

A further breakdown of time occurs within each item of the news cast as the news reporters decide how the time allotted for each item will be used in the construction of a socially recognized event.

The whole allocation of time between various elements of the program, and within each element, while fairly stable over time, is also very fluid. Every day, a new list of news items must be developed, and time allocated to them. As the day progresses, there are often shifts in the amount of time allotted to each items, or even to sections of the program. Throughout the day, then, time is negotiated in such a way as to assure that all of the time available to the program is completely and exactly used.

Staff Shifts

Staff people begin their jobs at different times throughout the day depending upon their role in the production of the program. The first to arrive, generally, are those staff people involved in the selection of stories to be covered for that day. Thus, in the news room, the assignment editor begins at 8:30 a.m. in order to check the wire services, early editions of the paper, and listen to the radio and police broadcasts. In one sense, he begins his working day immediately upon awaking, by turning on his home radio to catch the early news. On one occasion during the fieldwork, he in fact phoned a cameraman early from his home to assign him to a story on the basis of a radio news item he felt was too urgent to leave until he got to work. The assignment editor leaves the office before the final line-up is arranged, and the program goes into the control room.

A similar arrangement exists in the public affairs office, where the secretary and one production assistant begin at approximately 8:30. The production assistant's job is to scan the newspapers, to check with the news department for any possible stories, and to open the mail for any press releases for that day or future occasions.

Different news stories have different time horizons in their planning. Spot news stories are those which arise unexpectedly, and often require that the staff and equipment schedules for the day be revised so that resources are available to cover the unanticipated event. On the other hand, most stories are known or at least anticipated in advance; this permits greater latitude in allocating resources.

Press releases provide a continual list of possible stories for the future. Some stories are thus planned over several days, or perhaps even a

couple of weeks, while others necessitate instant planning. It would be impossible for the news department to function with its present organization if every story was unexpected and demanded immediate response. Indeed, the organization of the news room is based on the fact that much of the news is known in advance, and can be covered by routine organization. The 'instant' or immediate news is viewed as the exception for which special routines have to be developed.

While the staff who arrive early are primarily responsible for gathering the material on which program decisions for the day will be made, others are involved in the final decisions. In the news room, the producer and any reporters who are around, discuss the possibilities before a tentative selection is made. In the public affairs office, the staff usually hold a meeting around 11:00 a.m. to discuss program ideas, although not necessarily daily. It is easier for the public affairs people to develop program ideas over a period of time, and to reach an agreement to cover some event in the future.

Reporters and interviewers arrive between approximately 10:00 and noon, depending upon how heavy the news or interview schedule is expected to be, and how many reporters are available. On occasion, a reporter and a cameraman are assigned a story the day before, if it is assured of coverage and requires special arrangements, such as a long trip or an especially early time period.

On many days, interviewers in the public affairs room do not come in at all, preferring apparently to work on stories and track down leads at home. Interviewers are free-lancers, so they only come in to the office for special occasions, such as staff meetings. In the news room, however, the

reporters are on staff and keep regular hours, covering stories in the early part of the day, and writing their own stories and re-writing wire copy later in the day. They leave before the program is on the air, except for the evening reporter.

Cameramen, like public affairs interviewers, work on a free-lance basis. Accordingly, they are paid on a story basis, while reporters are paid a straight salary. The cameraman is usually assigned to a story before the reporter, if they are not assigned simultaneously, presumably because he requires greater time to get his equipment ready. The reporter is more flexible in that he can cover several stories, where the cameraman usually only covers one.

The line-up editor in the news room, and the second production assistant and script assistants in the public affairs office, generally start around 11:00 in the morning, and work through until the program is off the air.

Thus, there are three major different shifts within the day: first are those who do the ground-work in selecting news stories; secondly, those who got out and get the story on film and tape; and thirdly, those who actually put the show on the air.

News reporters and cameramen, having shot the film allocated to the even and completed the interview, will take the film to a private lab for processing. Usually they will both wait the twenty-five minutes for it to be developed, unless another team arrives at the same time and three of the four return to the office, leaving the fourth to wait for the film. This wait is justified by the fact that if they were to go to the office while the film was being developed, they would no sooner return than it would be time

to go back for the film.

The developed film is viewed on screen in the film editing room off the news room. Here there is a general discussion on the qualities of the film, often watched by the producer, the assistant editor, the line-up man, the film editor and anyone else who happens to be around. The decision is made as to the desired length of the film and the highlights to be kept in. The reporter times the film during the screening, both for its total length and by specific sections, usually it seems, sections covering questions the reporter has asked.

After discussion with the producer on such things as film quality and conciseness of answers and actions, as well as overall organization of the item, the reporter will tell the editor what he wants in and what should definitely be edited out, as well as the total time. While he edits the film, the reporter writes the story to accompany it. This activity can take place any time during the day, but it is obvious from staff comments concerning the crunch time of the day, that the tempo increases considerably from about 3:00 in the afternoon until after the show is on the air.

Interviews in the studio occur at all times of the day, and, on occasion, are done 'live' on the air. It is not uncommon for the public affairs people to do an interview and be unable to say when it will be on the air. For them, then, the daily increase in tempo is not as extreme as it is for the news room staff, although on individual days there might be a last minute rush to prepare an interview for the air. The only people who often seem to be rushed as the day progresses in the public affairs room are the producer, the script assistant and whichever of the production assistants is writing the introductions for various sections of the show.

In the public affairs office, a completed interview is typically dropped off at the lab, which delivers it to them later. The production assistants, and sometimes the interviewers, take the film to the editing room offices and work with one of the editors on producing the final film. Much less editing has to be done because many of the items are studio interviews taped to the exact length desired. It is the relatively greater length of public affairs items which makes this possible. The news room has to put many news items in a short period of time, while the public affairs department, if it wishes, can air only one item on a program.

Time to Production

It is a common feature of this setting that time is seen in very minute divisions, something which is noticeable immediately to someone from the outside. Time is talked of in terms of minutes and seconds, and usually in periods of less than five minutes. Walking into either the news room or the public affairs room, one immediately sees the blackboard lists of news items and stories, with their length in minutes and seconds recorded.

Early in the day, the secretary to the executive producer of the newshour phones the advertising department to determine how much advertising time has been sold. If it has not all been sold, the news department often has to fill the additional time. A common first question between the script assistant and the producer is 'how are we doing for time today?'. The answer to this is not in vague encouraging terms but rather something like '20:30'.

Mary: Hi, we've got 16:48 for public affairs (said to the producer as he walks through the door.)

Mary: Hi, it's Mary. Can we give you 21:00 today?
(phoning the producer of the news section.)

John: Hi, it's 15:31. We've clipped it even more.
(production assistant to producer after having edited a film.)

Al: How long is stocks today?

Bob: 1:25

Fred: Al, stocks are 1:27 today (to Al as he is coming into the room.)

AL: You can give news an extra 30 seconds (producer to script assistant after one of the interviewers informs him that the edited interview was shorter than expected.)

Mary: (to Al) I've told him how long for the news, by the way. I've also told them (the news room) there was no stock market today.

These comments are made throughout the day, and keep everyone in touch with the development of the total program.

The blackboards listing the daily items and their allotted times are the focus of attention throughout the day. Every time I entered either the news or public affairs rooms, I, too, would check whether any items had changed since I had last been in the office, or whether any items had been shot, edited and timed. This routine was typical for everyone in these offices. Reporters and interviewers returning from assignments would automatically check the progress of the daily program. It was not uncommon to see the producer or the script assistant, or other staff members, total these blackboard figures several times a day. Discoveries of discrepancies in time always resulted in discussions of the possibilities that existed for amending the situation.

The quote previously noted, 'give news an extra 30 seconds' indicates how the various departments of the news hour maintain contact with each other as extra time is required, or surplus time becomes available. Time, then, is constantly being negotiated throughout the day. It is often easier for the news section to use its time because the length of its program items is so much shorter. Occasionally it works the other way around, but this happened

only once during the fieldwork. On this occasion, the public affairs section had filled all their time, and had to request more from the news section.

On one occasion, the sports department asked for additional time from the news department because it was covering a world champion ski meet held in Vancouver. Another time, sports was given extra time by news to cover a news conference held to name a new hockey coach. Both these occasions were seen by the news producer, not just as expanded sports stories, but as items that were news, but which happened to be in the field of sports.

It is interesting to note that this very specific orientation to time occurred primarily in connection with the program, and only later in the day, to the time of day itself. Earlier in the day, one would hear comments such as 'the day is really dragging', or someone coming back from coffee saying 'I completely lost track of time'. Questions concerning the time would be answered by 'about 12:30' (without consulting a watch), or 'quarter to eleven', when the time could vary by five minutes one way or the other.

Toward the end of the day, as air time became closer, the answers would often become quite precise, especially from the script assistant. It was part of her responsibility to maintain a countdown of where material and personnel were relative to the approaching air time. At one point, when I was sitting in the downstairs office, the script assistant phoned to locate one of the interviewers: when told he was not there, she asked me to look for him, and tell him it was 6:28:30. In this instance, air time was 6:30, and he was the anchorman on the show. Time then becomes increasingly segmentalized as the news hour approaches. It does not do so for all people in connection

with the program, however, as some of them have finished their work for the day.

The temporal co-ordination of activities in the news room, in order to produce the news program, extends through the network facilities across the country. The Toronto office must be linked to the various regional offices, in order to receive their news items to be distributed across the country. Toronto is also linked with other national and international news services, and with its own correspondents, to co-ordinate the feeding of the national and international news to its affiliated stations across the country in time for them to select and tape items for inclusion in local news casts.

At 2:45, the national syndication comes over the monitor from Toronto, and most of the people who are in the office watch it. The line-up man and assignment editor are always there, and the producer is usually there. The national syndication is a series of national and international stories which the national news office in Toronto has picked up from international wire press, foreign correspondents or regional outlets. Toronto then takes what it considers are the most important, and 'feeds it down the line', giving a heading to the story, its source and the length of time of each item. This lasts no longer than fifteen minutes. It is seen more or less as a dress rehearsal for the evening feed, which lasts from 6:00 until 6:10.

Both of these feeds are put on video tape, but it is not until much later that decisions are made as to what will be put on the local telecast from the national. The line-up man, who is responsible for selecting items, keeps a list of each item and its time, as well as some comments on it. Often, discussions will ensue on which items are of interest, and which are 'possibles' for the evening telecast. The final decision will depend on the amount of time the local news is going to take, for the local news always takes prece-

dence over the national and international news. This is due to the fact that local money has been spent on covering these events, and must be justified in the budget by their being put on the air. As the assignment editor also explained to me, there is a national news program in the evening for anyone who is interested in the national news.

The evening's program is put together by the line-up editor. He pulls items off the wire service and the national syndication, and schedules the news items that have been covered locally, along with those sent in from Victoria and Nanaimo, or by free-lancers around the province. As items are edited, the final times are given to the line-up editor to replace the tentative times previously set for them. The line-up editor then orders the items on the news hour and writes the 'TV news reel line-up sheet', which includes the item, its length, the type of film and its source. This the editor takes with him into the control room.

In the public affairs office, the script assistant does the line-up for the public affairs portion of the show, and gives it to the producer who is in charge of that section of the show in the control room. After the program has gone off the air, the public affairs personnel, along with the news producer, often hold a meeting, at which time they discuss future program possibilities, and items to go on the air in the future.

As well as negotiation for time between different sections of the news hour, there is also competition for time within the section. The total boundary for the news section may be set, but although the time for each item is set before it is covered, there are several reasons why this might be changed. From the producer's viewpoint, the interview might be a dud; this

would result in the time allotted for it being reduced and the film edited accordingly. On one occasion, a prominent politician was interviewed on a matter of policy relating to an issue in the public eye. In the producer's opinion, the politician did not answer the questions put before him; he then said, 'I can cut it down to 1½ minutes by cutting out all that bullshit in the middle'. As a result of the extra time, another item was added to the program.

On other occasions the film might not turn out well, and the item would be cut down because the film was not technically good enough.

One time I went out with a cameraman to film some of the activities of a local charity for inclusion in a 'plug' for them. He was enthusiastic and shot more time than was called for, later arguing with the producer and assignment editor to receive a little more time for the item, although he still felt it should have been given more.

Often, staff members would suggest items they felt should be covered and argue with the rest of the staff for their inclusion. Often, such items are considered for inclusion if someone is particularly interested in them. One of the interviewers regularly tries to get more time for the people and the subjects in which he is interested, making the time a little longer than requested and then arguing for it on the basis of the quality of the interview. Because editing was seen to be a lot of work, it was suggested to me that the added length might easily therefore be overlooked.

In the news room, there are not only more items to be covered, but also more sources of information to be used. The amount of negotiation that goes on here is therefore greater. The news items to be used first are those covered by the local cameramen. It is around this core that each program is

built. When the times of these items are determined, it is decided how many of them will be used in the program. This will vary with the amount of important material coming in over the wire services and the national syndication, and the length of time over which such items will maintain their interest rather than become dated. In any pinch, local items will be given precedence because of budgetary pressures. If at the last minute, it was necessary to run any particular item, another could be dropped easily.

Throughout the hour of the news show, there are times which are seen to be more flexible, and which can be manipulated by increasing or decreasing the time allotted to them. The weather report is one such area. It is common also to instruct the host of the show to either stretch out or cut down on his commentary between segments of the show. In most evenings this can be done just before or just after the commercial breaks. The final time to be juggled with ease is at the end of the program, where the option exists to sum up the weather, to give the news headlines, or just to forget this portion of the show. The least flexible time of the program is during the film and taped section, unless a whole item is cut out, which is not very frequent. In fact, this happened only once during my experience there.

Since the total amount of time available to the program is established well in advance, it is not seen as something that is negotiable. The only difference in the amount of time available to the program as a whole is whether or not the advertising department has sold all of the possible commercial time. This can make a difference of a minute or two a day. Outside of this, the total time for the news show is inflexible, and negotiations can only be carried on within these recognized boundaries.

Because the total amount of time is restricted, news is always 'news until'. That is, it can at no point be promised to anyone that a particular item will definitely get on the air, because there is always the chance that something more important will turn up. In actual practice, this amounts to saying that one can not guarantee when a program will be aired, but, because of budget restrictions, each item taken will at some time be put on the air. The time restriction, however, does mean that some items will not get covered at all:

Brian: Are you doing anything on the Extension series? (during open house, the extension department sponsored a series of lectures at the library. Al was reading the press release.)

Al: I'd like to on S., or the guy who is doing the Ivory Tower (subject of one of the lectures) but I don't know whether I can get the air time.

Brian: What do you mean, air time?

Al: I've got so much to get on (referring to the number of shelf items left.)

This is also, then, a convenient excuse for both news and public affairs when requested to do an item on a particular event and can offer no promises of coverage:

Al: (on phone) I've already plugged it. If I can I will, if nothing more drastic comes up.

Victor: I'll try to have somebody cover it then, unless, of course, something more important turns up.

Victor: (at the end of a long phone conversation about covering an event at the local high school) You know that I can't guarantee anything, but we will try and cover it for you.

Such comments provide excuses in advance for not showing up as expected to cover some event. But 'new until' can also be used as an excuse for not covering an event at all. On one occasion, the public affairs people

had agreed to a local church's phone request to interview a minister who was coming to the city. Upon receipt of some material about him, however, the producer decided that 'the guy is a fanatic'. He told his script assistant to phone and cancel the interview, and to say that something important had come up and they did not have any one available.

Control Room

As previously mentioned, time becomes increasingly segmentalized the closer the news hour gets to air time. This process continues in the control room, where time divisions become even more minute. Appendix E is a transcript of control room talk which gives some indication of the complexity and precision of interaction necessary in the final moments of putting the program on the air.

While the news producer is responsible for the news portion of the program, the producer of the public affairs program is responsible for the rest of the news hour. Both have complete lists of all the items to appear in their respective sections, their length and source, as well as a transcript of all air comments to be made by the anchorman or interviewers. Each part of the transcript is timed so that the producer is able to maintain a constant check on the progress of the broadcast. Each item that has been previously prepared has a number of cues throughout, which have been timed, and which provide the producer with indicators of progress, or signals that some other element is to be introduced into the item, such as sound, videotape or rear slide. The producer is also responsible for inserting commercials and station identifications at the times indicated in the script. The script assistant times each item as it goes on the air, and keeps the producer informed of the

amount of time remaining.

On the floor of the studio, the production assistant serves as an extension of the control room, and he maintains the pace of the live segments of the show through a series of hand signals which indicate the amount of time remaining, or the entry or exit of film items. On television, the anchorman serves as the central point of the program, introducing its various elements, reading the news, introducing the public affairs portion, and concluding the program. Throughout this whole procedure, time is very carefully monitored and, even at this point, it might be discovered that the pace of the program is off, producing either a surplus or deficit of time.

Apart from the pace, one of the live interviews on the public affairs portion of the program might not remain within its time boundaries, or there might be a technical problem that reduces the amount of time that can be used. In these instances, the producer will instruct the weatherman to speed up or slow down his presentation; if later in the program, the anchorman will be instructed to end the program quickly, or to give a brief recap of the leading news items.

From the point of view of the producer, and others connected with the control room part of putting the program on the air, a good anchorman is one who is very aware of the timing and pace of the program, who can easily make adjustments as necessary, while keeping to his own schedule. During the fieldwork, the anchorman was replaced, despite his popularity with both staff and audience, because he would start to talk and lose track of time.

The importance of time, and the negotiations between the various elements of the news hour, then, extend throughout the time the program is being put on the air. They continue until the end of the program in order to

assure that the time allotted to the news hour is filled exactly, and that it will then be possible to shift back to the remainder of the national network on time for the rest of the evening's schedule.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEWS REPORTING AS THE CONSTRUCTION
OF A SOCIAL EVENT

Brief mention has been made in previous sections of the importance of presenting news to an audience in a format that will be both comprehensive and captivating. This must be accomplished despite news crews appearing after an event has ceased; the event being too long to be simply filmed and aired as is; or, often, despite an ambiguity in the actual event or the interpretation of its spokesman. Each news item must be pieced together from the actual events, or a simulation of actual events, in such a way as to be immediately intelligible to a television audience. This is what will be called the 'construction of a socially recognized event'.

A common criticism of television public affairs and news programs centres on their manipulation of the 'real world'. Thus, a number of researchers have undertaken content analysis of the media news in order to test the fairness, or otherwise, of their coverage of specific issues or groups. (See Chapter One.) The basis of this type of analysis is the assumption that there could somehow be unbiased news coverage that would be a direct reflection of social reality. Such an assumption ignores the necessity for every news item to be approached with a coherent story idea, and thus constructed from a particular perspective before it goes on the air.

So far in this study, news coverage has been shown to result from socially organized activities which intervene and work-up those portions of

the real world which eventually come to be presented on the news. These activities develop from the basis that news is a marketable commodity in an economic situation governed by market relations.

Hans Enzensberger has pointed out how extensive the 'working-up' of news stories is:

Manipulation-etymologically, "handling"-means technical treatment of a particular material with a particular goal in mind. When the technical intervention is of immediate social relevance, then manipulation is a political act. In the case of the media industry, that is my definition of the case.

Thus every use of the media presupposes manipulation. The most elementary processes in media production, from choice of medium itself to the shooting, cutting, synchronization, dubbing right up to the distribution, are all operations carried out on raw material. There is no such thing as unmanipulated writing, filming, or broadcasting. The question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated but who manipulates them.

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Enzensberger emphasizes the fact that media material are the products of human activity. In the case of the news program under study, such treatment is neither isolated, nor an individual moral decision, but an integral part of everyday work routines.

This chapter will examine, on the basis of fieldwork notes and extracts from transcripts, some of the ways news items are constructed. The key point around which all this work is centred is the necessity of making the news item intelligible to the television audience. This requires both various kinds of rehearsals, of which the most common is the pre-interview discussion, and also editing of material that has been shot. The material gathered here deals only with the rehearsal and actual shooting of footage, and not the editing process. This stage remains to be examined.

The event to be constructed necessitates not only an organization of the verbal parts of the film, but also of its visual portions. This is occasionally done by one person, the cameraman, when he both films a story and takes notes for it in the absence of a reporter. On these occasions, however, interviews are not conducted, and the verbal portion of the story is reconstructed at the news office by a news reporter from the cameraman's notes and the film account.

The more usual procedure is for the news reporter and a cameraman to cover a story. The news reporter will locate the interviewee, or possible interviewee, depending upon the occasion, and begin to discuss with him the content of the event and the interview. The cameraman will assess the situation from the perspective of its visual possibilities.

This section discusses the problem of entry into the situation for the news reporter and the cameraman, the development of the structure of the news item through pre-interview talk, and the construction of the final event, as well as the resolution of the technical problems associated with lighting, camera location, sound level, etcetera. The second phase of this section is the actual interview and filming of the event, and finally, the post-interview talk.

The discussion of pre-interview interview, and post-interview talk is based on an analysis of a transcript to be found in Appendix D. The transcript contains the conversations involved in the development of a story concerning a social agency active in crisis intervention. The agency had just opened a new youth section. The coverage had been solicited as part of a series of stories connected with the fund-raising campaign by the local United Way. Although this is the only story dealt with in detail

in this section, it is typical of the planned interview format of news stories. However, the chief characteristics of the 'construction of a socially recognized event' remain similar for all news stories.

Entry

Most, if not all interviews, are arranged in advance, with the exception of the few which occur spontaneously at some event. While most public affairs interviews are conducted in the studio, the news department conducts their interviews on location.

The interviewer can be seen as someone who enters a situation in which others who are present are unable to membership him either as a member, or a prospective member of that occasion. Where stories that become news items involve touchy situations, it is often important for the reporter to establish his identity immediately, rather than to be membershiped inappropriately, and consequently have to de-identify with the membership category that is offered. 30)

In conducting an interview with a hippy co-op house, for example, it was important not to be membershiped as a member of the police department. Jokes are occasionally made about times when reporters were misidentified as members of the police department, or as narcotics officers. At times it is also important not to be identified as a reporter for another media, or, in particular, for the opposition television station. On one occasion when I was out with the news team the interviewee wound up by saying that he would watch the program that night-and then mentioned the rival station.

One way the problem of identity is overcome is for the news team to immediately establish their identity when they enter the social setting, usually by introducing themselves to the first person they meet. Typical of such an introduction is the following utterance:

P.1 U.1 M: H. Hello, I'm Michael Johnson from CBC

(All quotes in this section will be from the transcript found in Appendix D. The page number (P.1) and the utterance number (U.1) are included before the quote.)

This problem may also be overcome simply by the presence of the camera equipment which identifies not only the news team, but also, by the labels on the equipment, the television station involved. Often, however, the crew does not bring in its equipment until they find out where the coverage is to take place, and exactly what will be needed. It is worth noting that on every occasion where a reporter or interviewer was present, he did the initial speaking. A possible explanation for this is that he is, in some sense, seen as the head of the crew. But he is also the one who will have the personal contact with the interviewee, and, in addition, he is the most visible member of the team, a public figure by virtue of his appearance on television.

Pre-Interview Talk

The main items discussed between the interviewer and the interviewee consist of putting the interviewee at ease; familiarizing the interviewer with the situation to be dealt with in the interview; discussing the time limitations of the interview (and, usually, explaining why the time limit has been set); and proposing questions for the actual interview (by both the interviewer and interviewee). These elements are not identical

in all pre-interview talk. The transcript from which this analysis is taken involves an interview with someone who had little experience dealing with the media. Therefore, more time was spent in developing questions and explaining why so little time was available for the interview.

Although conducting an interview is a routine matter for the interviewer, there is some recognition on his part that being interviewed is not a routine occurrence for the interviewee. One concern that the interviewer sees for the interviewee is the apparent discrepancy between the length of an interview and the amount of time, effort and equipment necessary to record it. It is felt that interviewees need an explanation for the shortness of the interview, both because they consider their information to be important, and because they are unfamiliar with the minute time divisions for television news.

The following utterance demonstrates the most common reason given, during the fieldwork, for the shortness of the interview. Based on the fieldwork experience in the news room, it can be assumed that other reasons are found to justify interview length when there is no newspaper strike.

P.1 U.14 M: Our problem, though, is we don't have too much time because of this newspaper strike.

It is important to note, however, that long interviews were still being done, regardless of the newspaper strike. Although time was important, there was still, in some sense, a priority list which gave some individuals longer interviews than others.

The central aspect of pre-interview talk is question negotiation. The following utterance shows the shift in conversation from an explanation

of the time limitation to the beginning of question negotiation.

P.1 U.16 M: It's cut down, so what I thought I'd try to do would be just, you know, a brief interview with you, perhaps, maybe just one basic question would be the types of problems, uh, that come to you from young people.

Here the interviewer offers a possible category of question to the interviewee. The question demands of the interviewee that he typify his activities, always keeping in mind that these are activities that have to be translated so that a largely undefined group, the audience, can understand them. The interviewer offers other questions that might also be asked:

P.2 U.11 M: Well, we, if we have time, I think I'll start with the types, well, roughly the ages, the ages they're calling at, types of problems; I notice depressed, loneliness, drugs. (The reporter had previously looked at the intake sheets recorded by the volunteers.)

P.2 U.13 M: Um, and some have lost their virginity and are pretty upset about it.

P.2 U.1 M: Um, and if we have time, I may ask you about the kind of training that your / ~~staff members~~ / ~~staff members~~ undergo.

It can be seen in utterances 11 and 13, that not only does the interviewer pose questions, but he also offers possible answers. This is not uncommon for the interviewer to do, and my impression is that this enables the interviewer to understand what is happening in the interview. As previously mentioned, the reporters are considered by news department management, and consider themselves to be, judges of what the average person can understand.

On one occasion, the interviewee was a university theologian who was to speak on the Marxist-Christian dialogue. The reporter talked to the

interviewee for almost forty-five minutes before the interview, asking questions and trying to interpret the answers: the theologian was never able to agree with him. In the interview, the reporter ended up by asking him questions about the civil rights movement in the States, what he thought of Canada, and whether or not he had any opinions on the New English Bible.

A second possible reason, however, arises from the fact that many interviews are arranged in response to press releases or fact sheets. Because neither the public affairs office nor the news office keep files of old newspaper clippings or background information on stories, these press releases are often the only knowledge that the reporter has on the person he is interviewing. In this example, the categories that the interviewer is offering as possible questions have been taken off the press release sent out by this organization.

However, the interviewee, too, may offer possible candidates for questions or actions to be covered in the interview, as the following utterances demonstrate:

P.2 U.48 G: If you wanted to do something, we've got a volunteer in there right now, if you want to do something with the volunteers.

P.3 U.52 G: Right. You might want to, you might want to ask why we're doing this, you know, why we're even doing it, because we already have a crisis centre.

These, then, are the bare bones of pre-interview talk. It consists largely, at this stage of analysis at any rate, of introductions, and of various people, notably the reporter and the interviewee, offering candidates for possible questions to be asked and areas to be covered in the interview. Discussion of questions and answer can be seen as a rehearsal for the actual filming.

Technical Problems

A sub-section of the pre-interview conversation , involving the cameraman and the news reporter, centres on the technical problems associated with holding the event. These include: lighting; seating arrangement, so that the interviewee will be seen clearly; and sound level. In terms of content, each news story can be seen as different and yet at the same time as just another story in so far as the interviewer or reporter is concerned. So, too, the technical problems are at once unique and routine.

The following utterances taken from the transcript give some indication of the discussions that take place:

P.1 U.13 M: Well, I really don't think we're going to need that (referring to using special lighting to increase the brightness of the room)

In every new situation, the cameraman must check the lighting, and, on the basis of lighting possibilities, and in conjunction with the news reporter, establish the interviewing positions.

In this case, the news reporter establishes the time available for the cameraman at three minutes, and then asks him what kinds of physical arrangements he would like. Discussions then ensue concerning the seating arrangements of the interviewee and the news reporter. For this news story, they sat across from each other on the corner of a desk, and the film was shot over the interviewer's shoulder. Occasionally then, the television viewer would see part of the back of the interviewer's head, and the rest of the time the interviewee in full face. This was a rather typical arrangement, which allowed the cameraman to emphasize the person being interviewed, while at the same time occasionally making visible the presence of the news reporter.

The final step in solving the technical problems is usually conducted when all other arrangements have been completed, and just prior to starting the formal interview. Checking for sound level thus acts as a transition point between the pre-interview talk and the actual interview. Both the news reporter and the interviewee will say something into the microphone, in order that a sound level may be established for their voices. This is also an opportunity for people to test out their own voices, and quite often, especially for the interviewees, a chance to clear their throats.

The following dialogue is typical of such an exchange:

- P.3 U.12 M: All right. Michael Johnson giving a voice sound level. Is that going to be all right? If I talk something like that?
 U.13 B: Oh, I suppose so.
 U.14 M: Just give your address, sort of.
 U.15 G: Nelson Goodman, Crisis Centre, Nelson Goodman.
 U.16 M: That be all right?
 U.17 B: Yeah.
 U.18 M: Okay, you say when...
 U.19 B: Okay.

An interesting sidelight is that while news reporters typify locations by virtue of the stories that they cover in those locations, cameramen typify them on the basis of certain features for which technical allowances must be made. As an example, one cameramen complained, upon hearing that his assignment was to be in a specific auditorium, that it had terrible lighting conditions. On another occasion, the soundman commented that it would be difficult to record the sound because "the acoustics are so bad in that building". They were also heard to characterize certain interviewees as problems because "one time he comes on strong; the next time he comes on weak" (referring to voice level).

Interview

The 'boundary marker'³¹ between pre-interview and interview talk is very clear. The shift usually takes place on a given signal, in this case, and typically, a signal from the cameraman that the cameras are about to roll. A major difference between the pre-interview and interview situation is the increased formality and more precise sentence structure of the latter. The news reporter, contrary to the pre-interview situation, usually talks very little, always ending with a question. From the interviewer's point of view, the more he has to talk, the less successful the interview. The interviewee, on the other hand, usually speaks, and is certainly so encouraged, at greater length.

Throughout the interview contained in this transcript, the questions posed by the news reporter had all been nominated as possible questions during the pre-interview talk, either by the reporter or the interviewee. The one exception in this interview was the questions "What does NOW stand for?"

One of the reporter's concerns throughout the interview is to have the interview last precisely the length of time that has been allocated to it. If it lasts too long, it is necessary to go through the time-consuming process of editing it. If it is too short, either the reporter will have to lengthen his introduction to the item, or the extra time will have to be used by other news items on the news program, or given to other sections of the news hour.

In this case, the interview lasted two minutes, and was at least a minute short of the three minutes allotted. The interviewer, then, is trying to decide how much time he has to use in the interview, and how much time to keep for the introduction. The interviewee, who typically perceives his interest to be extending the story's coverage as much as possible, makes a

suggestion for using the extra minute. It is not uncommon for people being interviewed to suggest further questions, or other aspects to the story, when they realize that there is still time available to them. In this case, on Page 5 Utterance 11, he suggests that:

You could do, as a suggestion, you could do a volunteer on the telephone taking a call, if you'd like to do that.

The reporter's response to this question is interesting. He replies, "Faking a call?", to which the interview substitutes the word "pretend". The interviewee is obviously familiar with simulating some aspect of reality as a valid news activity. He points out that:

P.5 U.64 G: We have done this before, as long as you can somehow say that this is a simulated call, and, uh, I could just call up, and he (volunteer) could take the call and pretend that he is taking a really call. . .

The reporter accepts this suggestion as a 'wild reel', that is, as film taken without sound, over which a voice can later be superimposed. Before he makes this decision, he has to check with the cameraman to find out how much film is left, and how much is needed for their other assignment.

The room in which the volunteers normally receive phone calls is too small for the volunteer and the cameraman and his equipment, as well as being poorly lit. The head of the agency suggests they use the same room in which the interview was conducted, but "make the background different". Thus the simulated phone call not only involves a "pretend" call, but also a location different from where this business is normally conducted.

While it would perhaps be in the best interests of the agency head to have the crowded and poorly lit working conditions of their youth unit and volunteers shown on television, these very conditions make it difficult

to put on the air. The new location then, is the result of the technical demands of the media.

The cameraman introduces another problem of authenticity in the situation: when doing a program on how busy and overworked the centre is, it is contradictory for the camera to pan the room and focus on one person answering one phone.

P. 6 U. 6 B: So it's going to look kind of phony.
Here I am sitting in the crisis centre, there's one
guy on one phone, working behind . . .

In response to this problem, he later suggests a 'straight in shot' (focussing just on the volunteer's head and shoulders as he answers the phone, and thus excluding any background.)

Throughout this section of the transcript, there is also discussion of how the introduction is to be integrated into the rest of the item. The reporter must write an introduction which, in this case, is to be read as a 'stand up shot' outside the crisis centre with the building serving as a geographical indicator.

The wild reel of the phone call, just shot, is used as part of the interview with the head of the agency. The voices of the news reporter and the interviewee are super-imposed as 'voice over'. In this way, the large amount of voice in the introduction and the interview will seem less tedious, counteracting the otherwise insufficient action to maintain audience interest. This might be particularly the case if there were a number of such items in the news cast.

In the instance of this transcript, the simulated phone call is an example of the 'construction of a socially recognized event', the intent of which is to show people what actually happens. The particular activity chosen can be seen commonsensically as typical of the kinds of activities

one would expect in a crisis centre. It did not show, for instance, the coffee break discussions, or the secretary filling out forms, etc.

In another story covered by the news department, an item about a camp for boys who had been in trouble with the law, the cameraman had the head of the camp come out of his office to supervise a boy looking under the hood of a car. It was obvious from the conversation while the cameras were rolling, and from the actions of the participants, that neither of them had much experience with cars. On the same story, the cameraman also had some other young people take a herd of cows out to pasture. Later in this interview, the camp head was asked to hold a map of the area in which the additions to the school were being built, and along with the other leader and the contractor, point to various features of the map as if they were discussing the property. In the meantime, the camera would focus on them, then pan to a shot of the building and property they were talking about, and then shoot back to the group. Earlier, the cameraman had also taken some film of models of the property, but he decided to take these second shots instead, because of the action involved. When we were viewing the film later, it was agreed by those present, that the second version was much better than the first.

The last part of the transcript has the reporter soliciting information from the agency head for his introduction. As in most cases, the introduction must give enough information to both set the stage for the following news item, while at the same time explaining why it is a news item. Frequently, the reporter seeks out hard data (e.g. statistics) to balance against the soft data in the interview.

The transcript, then, gives a good understanding of some of the

aspects involved in creating a news item. Prior to the activities carried out by the news reporter and cameraman, the assignment editor and producer had to select this story from a list of possible stories. In this case, the main reason for its selection was the fact that it was part of a series done on agencies funded by the United Way, and could thus be considered part of a theme. This item, along with some of the others covered, a home for retired people and a retarded children's farm, were selected to touch as many people as possible with the range of activities of this agency. The planning was done partly at the instigation and in co-operation with the publicity staff for this campaign. On this particular day, time had to be allotted to this item in competition with the other items selected. The process just examined is the middle step in preparing a story for the air. Writing, editing, the film, and finally placing it in the context of the whole new program will follow.

Post-Interview Talk

The boundary marker between interview and post interview talk is, most often, as we see it in this utterance:

P.4 U.40 M: I'm sure it is. Thank you, Nelson, very much.
(Pause) Well, how are we?

The interviewer usually ends the interview by thanking the interviewee, where possible making some positive comment. He then turns to the cameraman, production-assistant, or whoever happens to be there, and asks 'how it went', or 'how did it look?', or 'how are we?'. These questions are directed to determining the technical quality of the film and sound in order to find out if a re-take of any part will be necessary. The 'how are we?' refers to how much time has been used.

Usually the first question the interviewee asks of the interviewer is 'was that okay?', which is always taken as a reference to his performance. The interviewer then gives support in the form of 'it went very well', 'I think that you were very good', or 'just great'. This varies a great deal, depending upon the interviewee and the location.

The news reporters and interviewers distinguish between 'the professional talker' and the fellow who 'has no experience'. The professional talker will receive much less time in terms of pre-interview talk, less rehearsal, and more direction in terms of the specifics of what is wanted in the interview. Briefer post interview talk is given to the professional spokesperson.

An inexperienced speaker will be allowed to roam around in an interview until he feels comfortable; the tape will then be edited down to whatever length is required. Some people are seen as slow starters and are allowed to ramble more in the interview, since it can always be cut down later. I once sat in on a public affairs interview that lasted just over an hour, the longest interview I had seen. The producer explained that because the interviewee was a slow starter, they could edit it down to the twenty minutes they wanted. This latitude is not available to the news department, but they can still allow additional time for people who are not experienced.

However, However, it should be noted that, in the interests of having a clear and concise interview to maintain the audience's attention, news reporters and public affairs interviewers seek out the most articulate representatives possible. This, of course, restricts the range and class of people acceptable in order to meet the demands of television in producing a good program.

Temporal Indicators

On any news program, most of the items will be temporally located, usually within the first three or four lines of the news item. Such indicators are 'as was announced today', 'he said today', 'during the weekend', and 'a demonstration today'. This will usually be done by the news anchor-man or the news reporter during the introduction. In the four days in which I checked news items for this, 75 percent of the news items had such a temporal reference.

The temporal indicators serve not only to locate the news item in time, but also to reinforce the impression of immediacy in the news cast. Where the news item is not shown on the same day, the temporal indicators are purposefully vague, or ignored altogether. An exception to this occurs when the time difference between the occurrence and its broadcast indicates the difficulty in getting material on the event. Examples would be film smuggled out of Czechoslovakia showing Russian troops moving in to quell the revolution, or film out of China concerning the series of riots over the 'Gang of Four'.

One would expect that weekend news casts would make fewer references to temporal location than would the weekday news casts. This is, in fact, the case. On one occasion, I accompanied the reporters to a story concerning a fishboat that had been built for an Indian chief and partly paid for by the Indian Affairs department under a new program. This item was viewed as one which need not need to be shown immediately to maintain its relevance. Thus, although it was shot on a Monday, it was put on the shelf until the weekend broadcast. One can, imagine, however, how ludicrous it would be were the weekend news cast to carry a news item about a bank hold-up that had occurred on Monday of the previous week.

Spatial Reference³²

Along with temporal indicators, each story has also a spatial reference which assists the viewer in determining the location of the story on the air. These take two different forms; first, there is the geographic reference point; and secondly, the organizational indicators.

The geographic reference is nearly always mentioned in the script, such as 'in Victoria', 'in Vancouver' or 'on the coast of Oregon'. In instances such as this last example, there would often also be a rearscreen slide (a slide on a screen behind the news announcer) of a map of the west coast, with the exact location mentioned pinpointed. This would most frequently happen when a location was either remote or unknown to the viewing audience.

One of the most common ways of locating a story geographically is for the cameraman to take a wide angle shot of the area in which the event occurs, and then to focus on a street sign or other locational device. It also happens the opposite way, where the film will open with a focus on the street sign, and then the shot will widen to include the setting of the story.

Apart from the geographic reference, many stories involve some group of people, or an organization. It then becomes necessary to identify this organization to which the story refers. The news media can, in this situation, be seen as experts in picking out what would be the everyday understanding of organizational identifiers. The cameraman must orient to the setting in order to be able to display those features which will be most recognizable to the news audience.

One of the most common ways of doing this is to take a wide angle shot of the building or property with which the event is associated, and

to focus in on the name or emblem, should there be one, which is representative of the groups involved. This might mean a building strongly identified with the group, a flag (in the case of a foreign ship), or an insignia or some other group emblem.

On one occasion, when covering a meeting of city council, a group was making a presentation for a tag day. The cameraman noticed that all of the members of the delegation were wearing a particular pin; he borrowed one of these and took a close-up shot of it, which was then used on the news cast that evening. On another occasion, the television station wanted to support a local religious charitable group in their fund drive. The program took place outdoors, with the group band in the background, and the interviewers for the station all wearing hats of the religious groups. The hats and uniforms of this group are very well known. This was one way of letting the audience know what the program was about without having to continually mention the group's name.

The construction of a news story so that it is a socially recognized event is highly complex. It entails interpreting a constant series of events in such a way that they will be both understandable and interesting to an audience. Usually, each story is treated as a completely separate and isolated event that is connected to the news cast of which it is a part only as it affects its balance. In most cases, balance refers to the relationship between sound and film, between national and local news, light and heavy items and other factors which are viewed as important in maintaining an audience.

The effort of the news crew in structuring socially recognized events that will be meaningful to a large and disparate audience results

in a focus on surface phenomena which serve as common-sense indicators of social events for most people. Thus follows the role of the news reporter as a judge of what people can understand, the simulation of events that have not actually occurred as indicated in order to help people visualize the item, and thus also the use of temporal and geographic locators.

On the other hand, the emphasis on surface structure of events as a way of making stories meaningful to an audience, and thus maintaining viewer interests, is paralleled by a lack of concern for the deeper structure of events, those links and explanations that are not subject to easy visual presentation, but which constitute the real explanation of news items.

FOOTNOTES: PART TWO

¹Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, General Information (pamphlet), Public Relations Services, CBC Head Office, Ottawa, 1976.

²Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Program Policies, December 1975, pp. 2-3.

³Ibid., p. 2.

⁴Interview with CBC executive, CBC Vancouver.

⁵David Halberstam, "The Power and the Profits," Atlantic Monthly, January and February, 1976.

⁶Canada, House of Commons, Debates, Vol. 119, Number 28, p. 12498 (Tuesday, April 6, 1976).

⁷Interview with CBC executive, CBC Vancouver.

⁸News reports of the libel trial brought by Robert McGall, CBC Pacific Region Director, against Vancouver Sun publisher Stuart Keate and television columnist Lisa Hobbs, Vancouver Sun, February 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22 and 24, 1976.

⁹Ronald Hallam, Television News Guide (Ottawa: CBC Training Office).

¹⁰These figures were taken from a special media issue of the Financial Post, May 1, 1976: Barry Gruman, "Media Stocks: Earnings Keep Growing But Key Is Now Diversification," P. S-14; Dorothy McKimmon, "Television (1): Hollywood Plus Clutter Equals Some Disenchanted Evenings." P. S-13.

¹¹Ibid., Patricia Anderson, "Newspapers: The Front Page of the Future May Be an Index of 'Reward Units'," P. S-5.

¹²Roy Turner, "Occupational Routines: Some Demand Characteristics of Police Work," unpublished paper presented to the CSAA, Toronto, June 1969, p.4. Quoted by permission.

¹³Edward Jay Epstein, News From Nowhere: Television and the News (New York: Random House, 1973).

¹⁴Halberstam, "The Power and the Profits."

¹⁵Epstein, News From Nowhere, p. 27.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 200-239.

¹⁷William Melody, Children's Television; the Economics of Exploitation (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1973).

¹⁸CBC, Program Policies, p. 5.

¹⁹CBC, CBC News:Style Book (CBC, 1971).

²⁰Epstein, News From Nowhere, pp. 204-205.

²¹Interview with CBC executive, CBC Vancouver.

²²Epstein, News From Nowhere, p. 138.

²³Pierre Berton, "We Need a Revolution to Abolish Hand-Out Journalism," Financial Post, May 1, 1976, p. S-11.

²⁴Daniel Boorstein, The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1961).

²⁵Halberstam, "The Power and the Profits."

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Gaye Tuchmann, "The Technology of Objectivity," Urban Life and Culture, April, 1973.

²⁸CBC, CBC News, p. 20.

²⁹Hans Magnus Enzensberger, The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Politics, and the Media (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

³⁰Harvey Sacks, "Membership Categorization Devices,: Chapter 2 of an unpublished dissertation "The Search For Help: No One To Turn To."

³¹Roy Turner, "Some Formal Properties of Therapy Talk," in Papers in Interaction, ed. by David Sudnow (New York: Free Press, 1969).

³²Emmanuel Schegloff, "Member's Formations of Location," an edited tape transcript of a public lecture delivered at the Language, Society and Child Workshop, University of California, Berkeley, July 31, 1969.

SUMMARY

The research presented in this paper has two main directions; first, a review and assessment of the literature, and secondly, to present the results of three months fieldwork in a local TV news and public affairs department. Although it was necessary for clarity and ease of understanding to begin with the literature review and theoretical presentation, the actual process of the research did not so clearly distinguish between theory and fieldwork.

The original intent of this ethnography was to describe the social activity that produces 'news'. My primary orientation was not to do an exposee of the news media, but rather to understand the socially organized activities that resulted in news production. The implicit assumption was that it was possible to understand the activities of the news room by containing description and analysis within its walls. But as the fieldwork progressed, simple descriptions of these activities, while important in understanding the daily routine and activities of news production, seemed to bypass a more important need to understand the underlying mechanisms that operate in news production.

In conjunction with the more limited initial objectives, the literature review was undertaken in the field of ethnomethodology, and fieldwork was oriented to using these techniques as the basis of an ethnography. The

research, however, raised theoretical questions that could not be contained within this initial approach. This necessitated a broader review of the sociological literature on mass media, particularly of television, leading finally to an investigation of the notion of ideological hegemony. Although this study did not begin on a Marxist base, and certainly is not a thorough Marxist analysis, it nevertheless became increasingly dependent on a Marxist understanding of social reality in order to make sense of the mass media, and, in particular, the social production of news.

The relationship between the theoretical section and the fieldwork is not simply a linear one, where theory preceded and described the social reality, or contrariwise, where theory emerged from the fieldwork. The relationship was more dialectical; the results in one area necessitated a re-working and re-consideration in the other. The original approach would have limited assessment and understanding of the news room to a series of social relationships and normative expectations that emerged in the context of the newsroom and were explainable only within that context. This seemed to ignore the obvious outcome of the fieldwork. The additional reading allowed the meaning of many news room activities to be explained at a deeper level than was consciously and systematically available to those workers who were members of the news and public affairs departments. A summary of this study necessarily simplifies this process, but it should nevertheless be kept in mind.

Television is the most recent and, in many respects, the most important mass media form. Both children and adults spend over twelve hours a week watching television. The Mass Media Report indicates that it is the

most widely believed media for international news. Also, advertising revenue, which has recently begun to stabilize, has increased more rapidly in television than in any of the other media.

Examination of early mass media research demonstrates that it was based on nineteenth century economic theory, which stressed isolated individuals functioning in the marketplace. In the field of sociology this, in conjunction with the widespread disruption caused by industrialization, and the consequent shift to urban centres, resulted in a sociology which stressed the isolation of individuals and the breakdown of interpersonal relations.

These factors shaped research which was oriented to understanding the impact of media upon the individual, especially on the basis of the stimulus-response theory. As numerous writers point out, much of the later history of mass media is an elaboration of this theory. The research of Katz and Lazarsfeld coincided with the rediscovery of the group, and their concept of the two-step flow of communication is particularly significant in this regard. But, while elaborating the basic design of much of the mass media research, this did not give the research any new impulse. What these and other studies do is point to the selective impact of the media, and the way it functions within a prevailing ideological climate.

Other areas of mass media research did not substantially alter the overall direction of audience oriented research but did tend to have a more critical orientation. Content analysis sought to categorize and evaluate the actual output of the media in order to determine the fairness

or bias of the media under study. Most of those studies examined did not go beyond the surface- examining the content of the media, but not studying the production of this content. These studies did however reveal a bias in the media not just in its coverage of any particular issue, but also, as Cirno demonstrates, in the links between the various issues which were ignored or poorly covered.

Another area of sociological research sought to connect the ownership of mass media to the power structure of the larger society in an attempt to explain the bias of the media. Power structure research sought to explain the role and bias of media by showing the extensive links between those who own mass media and the major corporate powers in North America. These studies, both in Canada and the United States, showed a more or less complete integration of the mass media with the rest of the economy. Concentration in the mass media, especially TV, paralleled concentration in the rest of the economy; this was especially true internationally, where the dominance of American television- and thus ideology- reflected the international dominance of American multi-national corporations.

It was also necessary in the initial review of the literature to criticize the widely held but simplistic notions of technological determinism, which views social relationships both generally and specifically to be a result of technological development. This study holds that technology is developed in ways that reinforce existing patterns of social relations, although, at the same time, the consequences of the introduction of new technologies are not always foreseeable. Thus, the pattern of development,

or more importantly, the pattern of manufacture of radio and television has sought to reinforce prevailing economic relations, both by its basis on corporate profit, and its emphasis on a technology which stressed single senders and multiple receivers.

The second part of this study focusses on developing a theoretical framework within which the fieldwork will make sense. Central to this understanding is the twofold function that television simultaneously serves. First, television, is an independent sphere of corporate activity, subject to the same profit drives and competitive relations as other areas of the economy. But it also serves a larger function in the capitalist economy as a whole by encouraging consumption and hence the expansion of capital..

A major re-orientation is involved in understanding that television is geared to the production of audiences. The program serves only as bait to attract the audience. It is the advertisers who choose the programs which go on the air by the allocation of their advertising dollars. The audience is able only to choose from those programs that are made available to them. Audience ratings serve only indirectly to give the audience some control over their television programs; what ratings really are is an indication of the profitability of a program. Only as sponsors react to audience ratings do audiences have any control over programs.

Stations plan their overall program schedules, as well as individual programs, in order to attract the largest possible audience. Thus, documentaries are often used because they are cheap to produce, and can attract a minority audience at a time when competition is so strong that

there is little hope of winning a large audience. News can also be seen as a way of attracting audiences, while at the same time fulfilling certain public service functions on which stations licences are nominally dependent. As advertisers become more sophisticated in pinpointing their potential customers, audience rating services are able to segment the viewing audience in a manner that allows corporations not only to choose a program attracting the largest audience, but also one which draws the largest number of potential customers. As a result, programming decisions come increasingly under the control of sponsors.

The second function served by television is the maintenance of the ideological hegemony of capitalism, both through the expansion, reproduction and creation of those values which sustain the present social structure, and also by placing parameters on any debate, containing it within acceptable limits. It is not argued that the ideological function is consciously planned on any day-to-day basis, but it is the logical outcome of the operations of a profit oriented corporation. There are, however, sufficient examples to show that when the normal mechanisms of the marketplace are not functioning sufficiently to maintain television content within acceptable parameters, media owners and government agencies are prepared to step in and explicitly impose limits.

Literature on power structure research disproves the belief in the pluralist conception of power distribution, as well as the belief that there is a multiplicity of news sources. It shows that in both Canada and the U.S.A., the sources of news are increasingly diminishing, while

at the same time the major media owners are either diversifying their ownership into other areas, or the media have become part of an already expanding conglomerate that had its initial base in some other area of the economy.

The point, however, is the existence of a ruling class. This class has a set of values, norms and principles which constitute the ideological justification of its rule. It determines the ruling ideas by virtue of its command over the intellectual work force and its control of the mass media and educational systems, as well as other avenues of dissemination. This ideological hegemony would be extremely precarious if it existed simply at the intellectual level. But, as I have tried to demonstrate, this hegemony pervades the everyday work activities and social activities of the population. It is these organized and lived aspects which give it its strength, and result in this particular set of values and norms appearing natural.

The social production of news is one part of this process. News is never a mirror reflection of reality, but is at once selected from the range of events that take place, and worked up as a socially organized activity that is subject, among other limitations, to the imperatives of the commercial media, as already outlined. The fieldwork portion of this study seeks to describe and analyze the impact of these functions on the day-to-day activities in the social production of news.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted over a three month period in the news and public affairs department of a local television

station. The station is part of a trans-Canada public network subsidized by the federal government for about eighty per cent of its revenue, receiving the rest from commercial advertisements. This station and its affiliates across Canada can not accept commercial sponsorship for the news portion of the news and public affairs hour, nor for religious and children's programming. Because of its immersion in a commercial milieu both as a result of commercial sponsorship of the rest of the newshour and most other programs, and its need to compete with commercial stations for audience loyalty, this makes no difference to the organization of its news programs.

The network is centrally organized, with most budgetary decisions and policies established in the Toronto office. As far as the news program is concerned, both national and international stories are selected in Toronto and 'fed' across the country twice a day. The activities of news department employees are synchronized with other departments within the local CBC, as well as the national network, all oriented to putting on the newshour. The newshour is the time allocated by the national network for news, public affairs, sports and weather. The network depends not only on this hour being filled five days a week, but being filled in such a way as to attract an audience and contribute to the strength and commercial viability of the entire schedule. This hour must be filled not because there is an equivalent amount of important news every day that demands the use of this time, but because it is an economic imperative for the corporation. Not to fill it would result in audience loss, and the loss of

commercial revenue in the non-news portion of the newshour, and throughout the rest of the schedule.

One of the important contributions of this paper is the recognition that what constitutes an economic imperative for the employer becomes a demand characteristic for the employee. Employees must fill this time, and they must fill it successfully. To do so is not only the most visible sign of whether or not they are doing their job, but the audience ratings constitute signals as to whether or not they are doing it successfully. This demand characteristic is the centre around which the day's activities are organized, and it governs most of the activities during the day.

Several strategies have been developed by those who work in the news room in order to assure that the news hour is always exactly used. Strategies are also developed to try and attract a program audience. These strategies are not unusual to this station, but appear to be common to most news programs. There are local variations, and it is possible to trace a process of innovation and diffusion, as competitors attempt to pick up on things that appear to work for their opposition.

Forcing a story is one of the strategies adopted for filling the news hour when an item does not appear as attractive or important as anticipated. Forcing is necessitated by budgetary and time demands, and usually involve restructuring the original intent of the story. Preparing throughout the week items that are not temporally specific is a method devised to assure news items for the weekend news show, and film too, although there is only a skeleton staff on hand. The public affairs equiv-

alent strategy is the use of 'shelf' items when there are insufficient items for any program, or when budget considerations necessitate the use of previously prepared programs.

Strategies adopted to assure audience loyalty include: using short news items to give the impression of continual action; organizing each item as a small scale drama, emphasizing conflict while at the same time providing for its resolution or neutralization; using light items, particularly at the end of the newscast so that the overall impression of the news will not be too depressing; and the development of an informal atmosphere among the newscasters, particularly through kibbitzing, or the use of an individual or program areas as the focus for humour.

While there was general agreement, both implicitly and explicitly, that the news portion of the program had to be filled, there was considerable vagueness as to what constitutes the news. In retrospect this is only to be expected. Reporters develop no clear cut conception of news because its character is nearly always contingent on organizational demands. While there are procedures used to organize and predict the news in advance, these procedures are mainly passive responses to the socially organized activity of those seeking news coverage. This passivity, while present in most media news coverage today because of the cost of seeking out the news, is particularly apparent in television news, which is viewed as only one program format to attract audiences for advertisers.

As one among many, the news department has few resources with which to work, and a demand characteristic which is less flexible than for other

media. This news department depended upon other news media, particularly radio and newspapers, for keeping up with the news, and was dependent upon press releases and the contact of interested individuals and organizations for tentatively planning news items in advance.

What is actually covered as a news item is as dependent upon the organizational routines of the news and public affairs department as it is upon the importance of the news item. While some news items must be covered, such as a Prime Minister's speech, many more are decided by the time at which the event takes place, the availability of staff, the visual impact of the event, its geographic location, and, central to most of these, the budgetary situation of the department. Events occurring in the late afternoon or evening, or on weekends, in remote areas of the province, have less chance of coverage because of the budgetary limitations upon staff availability, travel money or film costs. The organization of the day around a 6:30 P.M. newscast also results in some events not being covered because they cannot meet the deadlines for film developing and editing for the program.

What constitutes news depends greatly upon the organizational considerations of producing the program. Because of the need to cover just enough events to demonstrate demonstrate fiscal responsibility and assure utilization of the news portion of the program, news is most often 'news until'.

Time plays an extremely important role in the development of the news program. The necessity of producing a program appearing on the

air at exactly the same time every day, and using exactly the amount of time allocated, results in an increasing specificity of the day's activities. Time divisions become more minute as the various departments of the news program contact each other to negotiate their time allotments. Within each section of the program, the preparation of individual news items and the transcript for the telecast as a whole, demands a continual refinement of the time allocation for each item and for the newscast as a whole. These negotiations, ongoing even during the actual broadcast, are simply another facet of producing a successful and pleasing newshour to mesh time-wise with the rest of the network schedule.

Each individual news item must be carefully planned as a coherent whole, as well as fitting into the balance for the entire program. If news programs were to reflect a given social reality, the cameraman would presumeably film as much as he could of whatever event might occur. This would obviously not do for a news program- items would be lengthy and probably lacking in dramatic action. Simply seeing things as they occur would not necessarily make sense. To cover stories in such a fashion would quickly result in audience loss.

News reporters, then, either construct the event, if they are in advance of it or if it is in their control (such as an interview or press conference), or reconstruct it, if they have missed the event or have to rebuild it so that it will be appropriate for the time and organizational requirements of the news program. The primary orientation is to making the news item both attractive and intelligible. To this end, the

news reporter engages in pre-interview talk with the interviewee. This discussion covers not only a rehearsal of possible questions and answers, but also, in conjunction with the cameraman, the visual presentation of the story. Visual aspects are of central importance to the producer of the program, and the story will often be built around its most important visual aspect.

The result of the pre-interview talk is to develop a format for the story, sharpen the questions and responses, tie the voice to the film, and to develop any re-enactments that will clarify the story line or add to its interest. From the cameraman's point of view, technical problems such as lighting, seating and acoustics are solved, as well as agreement on those visual features which will locate the story geographically and temporally.

This fieldwork in the news and public affairs offices shows many of the ways that the social production of a news program is shaped by economic imperatives. These operate outside of the news room, but affect its ongoing operation in such a way that 'news' is mediated to attract an audience. At the same time, because of the logic of its development, news production functions both to extend the ideological hegemony of capitalism, within which it operates, and to limit the range and complexity of issues presented in such a way as to discourage questioning of that hegemony.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

Because there were some difficulties in the fieldwork process, some comments are in order to help others avoid repeating my mistakes, and in order to clarify my own thinking. I gained entrance to the public affairs department through asking one of the production assistants if I could observe how a public affairs and news program was put together. This was on an occasion when the public affairs people were interviewing me for one of their programs. She assured me that it would be all right, but that she would check with the executive producer. After a week in which I did not hear from her, I spoke to the executive director and was informed that it would be all right to come down. Neither details of my research, time limits nor restrictions were discussed, but I was warned that the place was 'pretty Machiavellian'.

My location in the office was as indicated in Appendix B. There I would spend much of each day, going to the studio or control room later in the day when the show was being assembled for the evening. Much of the news work in this time consisted of studio interviews, or of the kind of special assignments that could not include outsides, such as those involving chartered transportation, or exclusive interviews (e.g. with a prison inmate). I did, however, accompany the news team to some dozen location stories, as well as to many studio interviews.

One of the major areas of interest was in seeing how programs were put together over time, what were the sources of program items, and on what basis decisions were made to cover specific stories. The best way to get this information was to spend as much time as I could each week, over several weeks. At first people were very friendly, and few formal introductions were made. I would meet most people when they came up to ask who I was and what I was doing. They were quite used to people wandering in and out of the building, looking for work, or trying to sell free-lance ideas.

After ten days of fieldwork, however, there was a noticeable tension about my presence. It was at this time that my field notes began to include such noted comments as:

Tom: Don't you ever go to classes?

John: How many weeks have you been here?

David: Is that tape recorder still on?

These comments were always made in a joking fashion, and were the only comments made about my presence. The two people with whom I worked the closest throughout the research said they noticed no discomfort about my presence, but that it was a slack time and everyone grew tired as the end of the year approached.

However, I was beginning to feel increasingly uncomfortable about my staying in the public affairs room, although I felt it was necessary because I was not getting at the information that I felt to be most crucial, namely the process of selecting news stories and making program decisions. A later evaluation of my fieldwork notes demonstrated to me that my fieldwork was much worse during this period than in either the first week of research or the later time spent in the news room.

Before going into this matter in more detail and making suggestions as to how such problems can be overcome, it might be useful to comment on the nature of the signals I received about my presence:

Cartoon on the wall: in a sort of line drawing, it portrayed me with wild hair and beard; two tapes about the location of the breasts; cord draped over feet and around body, going along arm to microphone; heart with 'Rah rah UBC' placed over area normally occupied by genitals; red circles for eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses.

Besides being a rather typical characterization of a university student, it is clear that certain features are highlighted which would, under ordinary circumstances, not even be present. In particular, the tape recorder was not just portrayed on a table, for example, or slung over the shoulder, but as an integral part of the researcher physically. One possible interpretation would be that it had somehow replaced the vital, human parts. I did not wish to heighten tension by asking the artist to explain the meaning of his cartoon, since I had already decided that the next day was to be the last day of full-time research in the public affairs room. It is obvious, however, that the tape recorder was seen as one of the most prominent features of my presence.

The irony is that I had, after the first week, virtually stopped tape recording because of the uneasiness it seemed to cause. Generally I took only notes, using the tape recorder only occasionally to try and tape an interview. The general impression of the cartoon, including the red-veined eyes, is that of a busy-body. I want to spell this out quite clearly, because I realize this is as much an analysis of their response to me as it is the response of a fieldworker to a rather uncomfortable fieldwork situation.

It should be pointed out, as was regularly pointed out to me by the staff, that the time of the fieldwork was not a typical one for two reasons. First, the local newspapers were on strike, and the public affairs portion of the program was shorter than usual, a decision made apparently by the executive producer in consultation with the other two producers of the news hour. Not only was it shorter, however, but it also included several items that were not regular features, in order to fill some of the gaps left by the newspapers. The public affairs section of the show, then, included regular stock-market reports, and 'About Town' features (future events at nightclubs, galleries and theatres, etc.)

The second reason was the fact that it was near to the end of the budget year, and a letter from the executive producer to the public affairs department had informed them that it was necessary for them to clear off all of the items that were on the shelf. The budget was set up in such a way that money was only officially spent when the item went on the air. Everything that had not been aired was considered a write-off and deducted from next year's budget. There were approximately eighteen such items on the shelf, most of which were ten or fifteen minutes long. As a result, the staff did not have to originate as much material as usual.

A situation existed then where the employees felt themselves to have more free time than usual, in addition to which, there was a researcher around observing their activities. One reason for the tension, therefore, was undoubtedly the observation of what to then was a non-typical period for which they could be criticized from the perspective of the usual norms of productivity.

I went subsequently to observe the news department for a week, as had previously been arranged with the news producer, with an option to continue longer if everything went all right. The newsroom proved to be a much busier place, in the sense that people were always in and out covering stories. This time, I was introduced briefly to everyone in the office, and it was explained that I was interested in news shows. My work there went relatively smoothly, and at the end of the week, I was invited to remain. Individuals also offered to introduce me to other people in the news media if I wanted to continue my research throughout the summer.

One of the things which I feel made a difference here, apart from clearly setting aside a certain amount of time for the fieldwork, was the fact that I could be of some use to them. This included such things as helping to carry equipment in and out of different story locations. On one occasion, when I went to an evening public rally with a cameraman, I was asked to take some notes and phone them into the news room. On another occasion, I held the microphone while the cameraman was taking sound-on footage. Because of this, I was able to blend into the work situation more successfully, and appeared to be a part of the daily routine.

As a result of this experience, there are several recommendations I would like to make concerning fieldwork strategy. The first is that it is probably valuable to be known to the people at the top of an organization and to acquaint them with what you are doing, even if your original means of access was through some individual at a lower level of the organization. This gives a certain amount of official support, as well as a way of being introduced to many people in the organization at the same time. This was one of the main difficulties I experienced.

Coming in through a lower level of the organization, I did not feel free to wander into other areas of the building beyond the public affairs and news rooms. I think, from a fieldworker's viewpoint, there would be more security in knowing that there was official approval. It would also facilitate giving an easy explanation for your presence, and some sort of label people could use in order to account for your presence to others.

With this backing, it would have been possible to carry out a number of interviews with CBC staff people throughout the organization, thus adding an extra dimension to the fieldwork.

I also think, in the light of my experience, that it is advisable to set a deadline, or to define the particular period of time that the fieldwork will be in the setting. Arrangements can always be revised later, if it is agreeable to everyone. This gives everyone a framework within which to work, and does not make the presence of the fieldworker seem as open-ended and never-ending as it otherwise might. It is perhaps useful to ease into a fieldwork situation by gradually expanding upon the amount of time spent in the setting, if this has been previously agreed. Occupants of the work setting have a chance, therefore to become accustomed to your presence.

The fieldworker must be aware of the difficulty experienced by occupants of a work setting in accounting to others for the fieldworker's presence. This difficulty can be seen in the following examples:

A: Have you met Brian? He works for the R.C.M.P.

B: And that's Brian, whose function I haven't determined yet.

C: This is Brian; he's a research sociologist.

As far as others are concerned, the fieldworker is in a marginal position in the fieldwork setting. It is important to arrange for others some convenient way to explain the fieldworker's presence. In the above comments, the first again shows some uneasiness at my presence, even though it was said jokingly. In the second, I was introduced last in a long stream of introductions, where it was apparent from the ordering of those introductions that I was left to the end because of the problematic character of how I was to be identified. (At the time of the introduction, we were all standing in a circle; the introductions deliberately passed over me and came back to me at the end.) The third introduction occurred in a news story location where the crew was being introduced to the interviewee. I suggest that this was a much less difficult situation in which to introduce me because of the character of the occasion. It was quite unlikely that my role would be questioned.

The most important point I had to re-evaluate in this fieldwork was the use of the tape recorder and transcripts in the analysis of a work setting. In the public affairs room, I had used one because I had been told that it would make no difference. I had expected also that public affairs people would be so familiar with the use of such equipment that they would feel quite comfortable with it. However, both the cartoon sketch and the comments already mentioned indicate an uncomfortable awareness of the tape recorder, and one which could be detrimental to the success of the fieldwork. It is possible that it was because the public affairs people were so familiar with the uses of a tape recorder that they were more suspicious of it. At least one of the interviewers, himself a news man, commented continually that

he knew how they could be used; although he accepted my explanations of its purpose, he nevertheless continually returned to the same point.

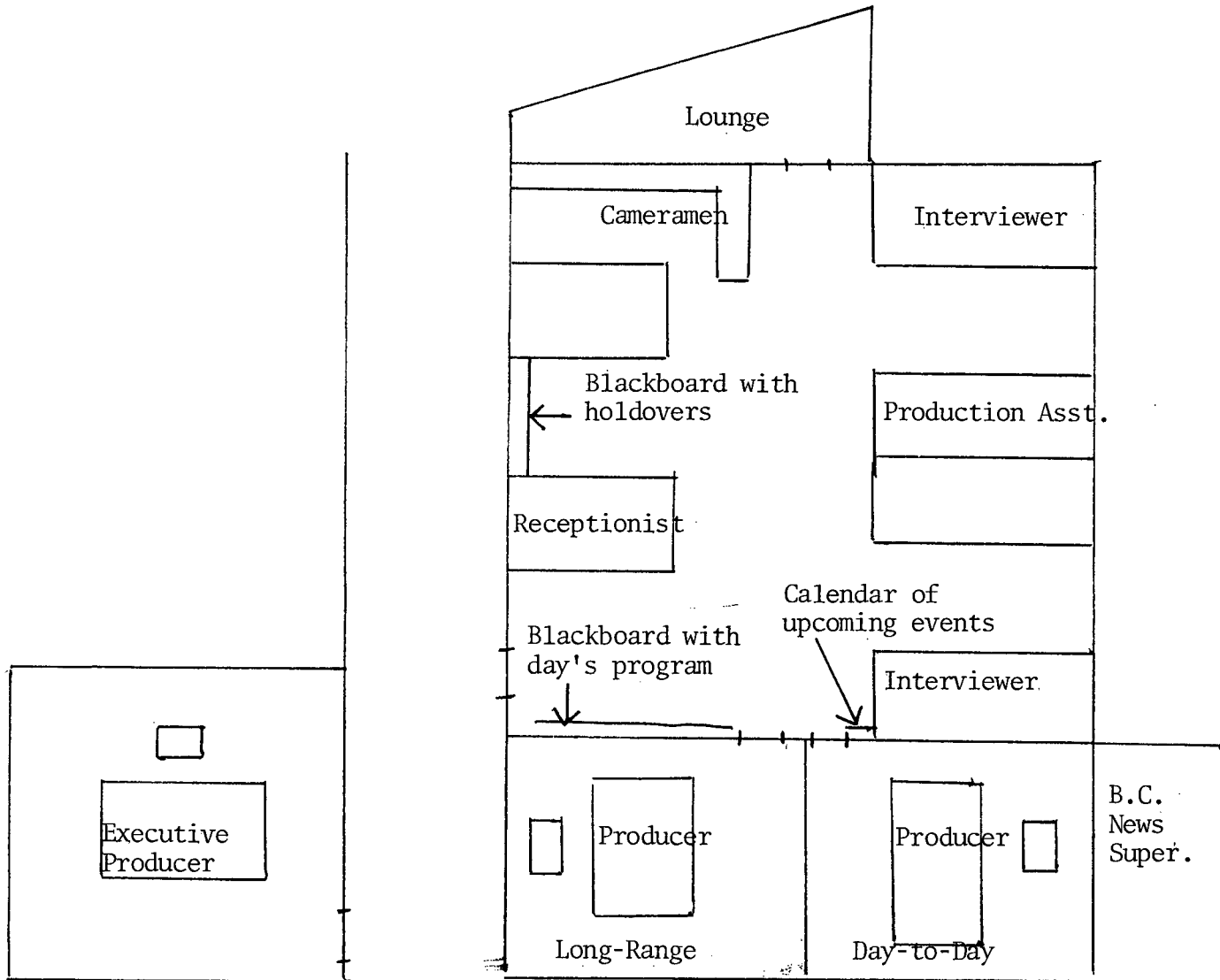
Re-evaluation of fieldwork has convinced me that I used the tape recorder too much and too soon. Perhaps it should not have been used at all at the start of the project, but only for the particular things for which I wanted more detail in later stages of the fieldwork. My tendency had been to record as much as possible. Although there are settings where tape could be used a great deal, my experience indicates that it should be used more sparingly in organizational ethnographics. It would be preferable to introduce the tape recorder late in the fieldwork procedure, and to use it only for those events of specific interest, for which the occupants of the work setting could then be asked to co-operate in getting clear tapes. From previous involvement in the setting, it would then be possible for the fieldworker to decide whether or not the tape recorder resulted in any changes in the social activities being recorded.

In certain situations, it will also be useful to explain what data you are trying to record, e.g. I am interested in the kinds of conversations that take place before interviews. Although there will not doubt be many occasions where it will not be possible to explain everything, in most cases it should be possible to include participants in the work setting as confidantes. In my case, it would probably then have been possible to tape some complete interviews, and solicit the reporter's co-operation in getting close enough to record clearly. Another occasion would have been to ask a person editing a film to talk with me about what he decides to include in the film, and what he plans to throw out, and why.

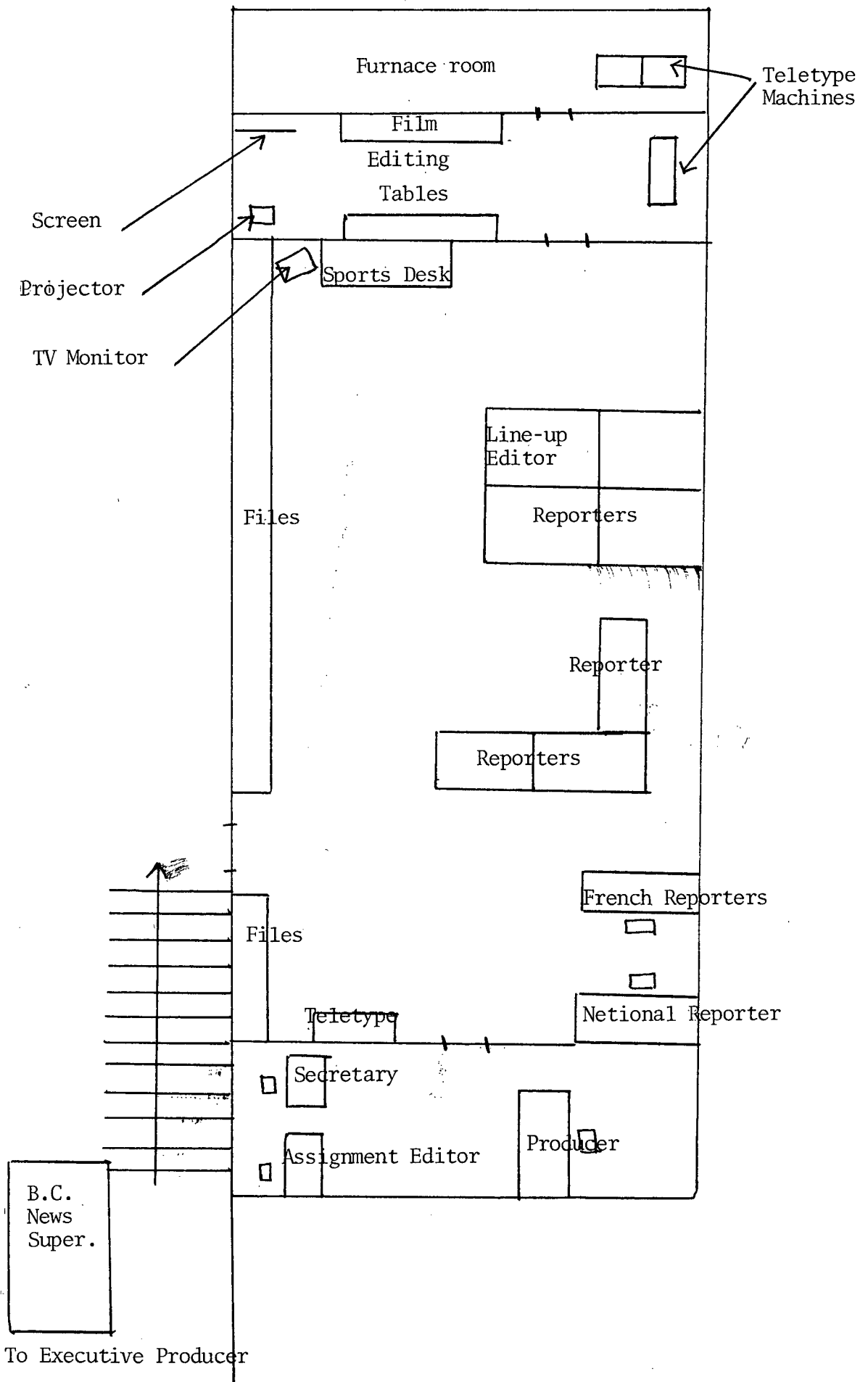
The same reservations apply to transcripts. They are useful and can

add a great source of data for looking at specific features in detail, for studying closely the mechanics that allowed for a particular occasion to come off as an occasion. But they are not useful as ends in themselves. This may be so for certain kinds of microanalysis, but I doubt that it holds true for research into work settings or social organizations. This fieldwork indicates to me at this time that taperecorders and transistors should be used only where specific information is desired, and should be focussed in that direction.

APPENDIX B: FLOORPLAN OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



APPENDIX C: FLOORPLAN OF THE NEWSROOM



APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW

- 1 M: Hello, I'm Michael Johnson from CBC.
- 2 Rec: Oh, yes. Mr. Goodman is expecting you. These are the gentlemen from CBC. This is Mr. Goodman.
- 3 M: How do you do. I'm Michael Johnson.
- 4 Mr. G: How do you do. I'm Nelson Goodman.
- 5 M: I'm going to do a brief interview with you.
- 6 Mr. G: Okay. It's pretty crowded in here.
- 7 M: This is Barry Smith.
- 8 Mr. G: Hello, Barry.
- 9 M: And this is Brian Campbell, research sociologist.
- 10 Mr. G: Hello, Brian.
- 11 B: Hi.
- 12 Mr. G: Nicholas Moore . . . Mr. Johnson.
- 13 M: Well, I don't really think we're going to need that . . .
1 (Michael is talking to the cameraman about equipment for about one minute, but it doesn't come out very quickly)
- 14 M: Our problem is though we don't have too much time because of this newspaper strike.
- 15 Mr. G: Right.
- 16 M: It's cut down, so what I thought I'd try to do would be just, you know, a brief interview with you, perhaps maybe just one basic question would be the types of problems, uh, that come to you from young people/
- 17 Mr. G: Yeah/

- 1 M: young adults/
- 2 Mr. G: Okay/
- 3 M: talk about, and then what I
may do after the interview is some kind of introduction to your
work, pointing out how the television and news . . . funds.
- 4 Mr. G: Hm, hm, hm, hm, okay.
- 5 M: Do you need volunteers as well?
- 6 Mr. G: No, no, I've got dozens of volunteers.
- 7 M: You've got volunteers.
- 8 Mr. G: Yeah.
- (Laughter)
- 9 M: But it's, it's funds and an office you need?
- 10 Mr. G: Right, yeah. (Pause) Very badly, too. You can see it yourself when
you go into, in there.
- 11 M: Well, we, if we have time, I think I'll start with the types, well,
roughly the ages, the ages they're calling at, types of problems, I
noticed depressed, loneliness, drugs.
- 12 Mr. G: Yes.
- 13 M: Um, and some have lost their virginity, and are pretty upset by it.
- 14 Mr. G: Yes.
- 15 M: Um, and if we have time, I may ask you about the kind of training
that you staff members undergo.
- 16 Mr. G: /Okay/ /Okay?/
- 17 M: And then I'll try to sit someplace quiet, and think about what we
need in the way of an introduction.
- 18 Mr. G: If you wanted to do something, we've got a volunteer in there right
now, if you want to do something with volunteers.
- 19 M: Yeah. Uh, considering our time, I think we'd better not.
- 20 Mr. G: Okay.
- 21 M: I think we've got just about three minutes. Now, how would you like
it, Barry?

1 Ba: Norm, right there, if you sit right here.

(Shuffling of chairs, conversation lost)

2 M: We're using imagination.

3 Ba: Well, it's the quickest.

4 M: Yes, it is. (Pause) And its Nelson Goodman.

5 Mr. G: Right, you might want to, you might want to ask why we're doing this, you know, why we're even doing it, because we already have a crisis centre.

6 M: Right.

7 Mr. G: I know that's something that people wonder about.

8 M: Will that be all right? (Talking to cameraman)

9 Mr. G: A little closer?

10 M: If you can, just a shade. Do you want a sound level? (Pause)
Do you want a sound level?

11 Ba: Yes, please.

12 M: All, right. Michael Johnson giving a voice sound level. Is that going to be all right, if I talk something like that.

13 Ba: Oh, I suppose so.

14 M: Just give your address, sort of.

15 Mr. G: Nelson Goodman, Crisis Centre, Nelson Goodman.

16 M: That be all right?

17 Ba: Yeah

18 M: Okay, you say when. . .

19 Ba: Okay.

20 M: Mr. Goodman, why is it the Crisis Centre has started a special program for young people?

21 Mr. G: Yeah, well, we started operation about eight months ago, and after about three months of operation, we discovered that young people weren't using the service very much. And we spent probably four or five months trying to figure out why, and, uh, I hope that we figured it out. And now we have a new line in operation, which is called NOW.

- 1 M: What does NOW stand for?
- 2 Mr. G: NOW doesn't stand for anything. It just means now. It means immediacy and it means relevancy. It means that we should always be what's needed.
- 3 M: Nelson, what's the age of the people that are using this new telephone service?
- 4 Mr. G: Uh, well, we get calls from, from younger kids, uh, eleven, twelve, right up to twenty-five.
- 5 M: And what are the kinds of problems that you hear from the other end of the telephone.
- 6 Mr. G: Pretty well anything that you can imagine. Boyfriend-girlfriend problems, drug problems, uh, sex problems, abortion, uh, pregnancies, kind of anything you can imagine.
- 7 M: What's the nature of the drug problems that you're hearing?
- 8 Mr. G: Oh, we get a whole range of things. We get, uh, we get kids phoning in that are really freaked out, that have taken some pretty bad drugs around, and really are in bad shape and need medical attention right that minute. Uh, that's one extreme. And the other extreme is, uh, uh, a younger person phoning up and saying that all my friends are smoking marijuana, and I'm wondering if I should try it too, and will it hurt me or won't it hurt me?
- 8 M: Now, the people that receive these calls, Nelson, your staff people, what kind of training do they take?
- 9 Mr. G: Well, they're all involved in a training program right now. We have seventy of them in training, and, uh, they vary in an age range from about seventeen to twenty-five, and they go through a lecture series which deals with content that's related to youth. And then they all go into small group training which utilizes techniques of psychodrama, sensitivity sensitivity and role playing. And we try to simulate the kinds of situations that might happen on the telephone, and then we discuss them and how we handle them, and that kind of thing. And, uh, we expect a high drop out rate in this, in this first training program. Already a lot of the young people have dropped out, uh, what we expected they'd be doing. And what we're actually doing here, it's sort of a different thing, and there's a lot of pressure on them, because it's really tough, it's a very tough kind of job.
- 10 M: I'm sure it is. Thank you, Nelson, very much. (Pause) Well, how are we?
- 11 B: We shot about two minutes.
- 12 M: Two minutes, eh? That means we have one minutes to go, if we want. Um, I want to, I should leave . . . (talking about proposed introduction)

- 1 Mr. G: You could do, as a suggestion, you could do a volunteer on the telephone taking a call, if you'd like to do that.
- 2 M: Uh, faking a call?
- 3 Mr. G: I mean, I mean, I could phone up and pretend/
- 4 M: No, that's what I'm saying. We could use that as a wild reel.
- 5 Ba: Yeah.
- 6 Mr. G: We've done this before, as long as you can somehow say that this is a simulated call, and, uh, I could just call up, and he could take the call, and pretend that he's handling a really call, if you wanted to get, perhaps you'd better not, I don't know. (Pause) Do you have, uh/
- 7 M: I think that wouldn't be a bad idea. But I would like to say . . . (Approximately fifteen seconds of conversation is lost)
- 8 Ba: It's about three hundred feet, you've got three hundred and thirty, and the stock market. . .
- 9 M: Oh, so we're okay?
- 10 Ba: Hm? Yeah.
- 11 M: Okay, let's do that, and I'll/
- 12 Mr. G : I'll bring him in here and he could take the call here, because the other room's too small to get into.
- 13 Ba: And its light in here too.
- 14 Mr. G: Yeah.
- 15 Ba: We can make the background different. This is going to be solo, isn't it?
- 16 M: Yes, yes, it is.
- 17 Ba: And then we can put it into the things you were saying, dissolve away from you. . . taking the call
- 18 Mr. G: Sure, sure.
- 19 M: You wouldn't want me to do the introduction as a background?
- 20 ? Mr. Johnson
- 21 Ba: You wouldn't dare, but you'd know that he's there and talking.

- 1 M: Talk with me, and then you'd pan to him.
- 2 Ba: Yeah, but you wouldn't, you wouldn't hear him. You wouldn't hear hear him, but you'd see him.
- 3 M: ?
- 4 Ba: But if, if, I don't know how high a proportion. There's more than one phone, isn't there.
- 5 Mr. G: Yeah.
- 6 Ba: So it's going to look kind of phony. Here I am, sitting in the crisis centre; there's one guy on the phone, working behind.
- 7 M: Oh.
- 8 Ba: We might even do a straight-in shot, like . . .
- 9 M: Okay.
- 10 Ba: And then just use that.
- 11 M: Yeah, okay.
- 12 Ba: Are you going to do the introduction right now?
- 13 M: No, I need to sit down and give some thought to any introduction.
- 14 Ba: Okay.
- 15 M: Obviously. However, you might do this if you'd like to now. Shall we do the telephone thing right now?
- 16 Ba: Well, if you're not going to do sound, you really don't need an actual participant at all.
- 17 M: Unless its easier for the person to sort of be listening to you talk.
- 18 Mr. G: Okay.
- 19 M: All right.
- 20 Mr. G: Do you want to go in and answer the call?
- 21 N: There's only one phone here.
- 22 ? No, there's . . .
- 23 Mr. G: Yeah, we use that for outgoing calls.
- 24 M: I can see where you're crowded.

1 Mr. G: Yeah.

2 M: I don't know. If you're sitting here, you know. . .

3 Mr. G: You see, we're at a point with the crisis centre, we just went over our stats again today, and we're up again this month. And we really need three incoming lines for some shifts. So that means. . and the same sort of thing is going to happen here, you know. Pretty soon this thing will just start going like crazy. You know, since we've been in operation, we've had maybe two night calls . . .

4 ? You start at when?

5 Mr. G: Eight, Sunday isn't a commercial day, but you know, even with it hardly being known at all, we've had it used a lot. It'll go crazy.

6 M: The number for NOW is what?

7 Mr. G: 7376

8 M: 7376

(one minute of conversation lost here) (simulated phone call, not recorded)

9 Mr.G: Hi, Nicholas

10 N: Hi, Nelson, how's it going?

11 Mr. G: Oh, not too bad. How are you?

12 N: It's busy around here.

13 Mr. G: Yeah, kind of got . . .

14 N: Did you. I hear you had a bit of a difficult night there. Okay, we'll see you.

15 Mr. G: Good.

16 N: This thing is cancelled tomorrow.

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPT OF CONTROL ROOM TALK

1 Mary 50 seconds

2 Mary End of commercial in one minute.

3 Al That first film, that's the one with the fade-up sound, okay?

4 Techn ?

5 Al Chain one. Then we'll go up chain one to chain two.

6 Al Without backing down we go straight from chain one to chain two.

7 Mary Go to CBC in thirty.

8 Tech. There's a voice over on the first one.

9 Al There's a voice over on the first one, as well as sound on. Sound on.

10 Tech. Who's the voice.

11 Al Michael Johnson

12 Mary Go to CBC in fifteen.

13 Mary End of commercial in thirty.

14 Mary CBC in ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one

15 Al Roll CBC

16 Al Stand by with chain one; telecine to cover the short one.

17 Mary Fifteen seconds to studio.

18 Al We go straight to telecine.

19 Mary In, oh, sorry, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.

20 Al Punch telecine

21 Al And put on telecine and tag up sound (film rolls).

22 A1 Is the film time in?

23 Mary Yes.

24 Mary One minute to end of film. We're going straight into another piece of film.

25 Voice over microphone: Stand by on two.

26 A1 Yeah, stand by on two. I'll be running that soon, stand by telecine.

27 Mary Count this through, and you're worrying about the other one.

28 A1 Stand by to cue Michael. Ready to take sound B.G. And take sound B.G. And up on Michael. Cue Michael.

29 Mary End of the film in thirty seconds.

30 Mary Going into another piece.

31 A1 Ready for sound-on off chain two.

32 Mary Twenty seconds.

33 A1 Stand by to roll the other one.

34 Mary In fifteen.

35 Mary In ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.

36 A1 Punch.

37 A1 Take the other one.

38 A1 Super on one, please, Hoskins.

39 Mary Three seconds to the (rest of this utterance lost)

40 A1 Ready one. This item is ten or so minutes long, if it doesn't break.

41 ? ?

42 AL J oan, can you get me a three second cue to the intrpduction to NOW.

43 Joan Yes, sir.

44 Mary Tell him you can't pick up any time for the . . (long period with little happening; skip to last minutes of tape).

45 A1 Steady on one and ready for super.

46 Mary Studio in five minutes.

- 47 Mary Studio in three minutes
- 48 Mary Studio in two minutes.
- 49 Al Super on one.
- 50 Mary One minute to end of film.
- 51 Al Goodman next on one, followed by a phone number.
- 52 Adele Thirty seconds to end of film.
- (Tape runs out. End if transcript)

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