Strangers in the House:  
The Legislative Press Gallery of British Columbia

By

Sarah Katherine Reeder

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Department of **Political Science**

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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This thesis explores the dynamics and complexities of the press-politician relationship in the context of the British Columbia Legislature and Press Gallery. The relationship is examined from theoretical, historical/institutional, practical, and political perspectives. The evidence presented suggests that although the press-politician relationship is necessarily symbiotic, it is also characterized by conflict and attempts by both press and politicians to achieve independence of each other. As such, the relationship is most accurately described as one of "adversarial symbiosis." The sources of strain and the constructive elements of the relationship work in tandem to move the province closer to the ideals of legislative democracy as the relationship evolves over time.

Provincial press galleries are notoriously under-documented, both through independent research and through their own administration. To date, there has not been a comprehensive study of the British Columbia Press Gallery as an institution of the Legislature. As a result, this thesis relies heavily on oral history, provided through semi-structured interviews with current and former members of the Press Gallery, and published biographies of B.C. journalists and politicians. This thesis was also informed by a review of the existing literature on the Canadian, Australian and British Parliamentary Press Galleries, archival research at the B.C. Legislative Library and Press Gallery offices and personal observation and analysis afforded by the author's six-month Legislative Internship in the B.C. Legislature.
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I would like to extend warm thanks to the current and former members of the B.C. Press Gallery who generously provided access to their records, photographs, correspondence, and most importantly, shared their experiences, observations and insights so that they could be recorded in this project. I appreciated their enthusiasm for the subject and frankness in interviews, and only hope that this project will in turn do them a service in preserving a part of the collective memory of the Press Gallery.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Donald Blake, whose insight and advice was integral to the final draft of this thesis, to Dr. Paul Tennant, who was the second reader and provided encouragement in the early stages of research as director of the B.C. Legislative Internship Program in which I participated, and Dr. Kenneth Reeder, my father, who proof read the first draft. I appreciate the generous contributions of the aforementioned people to this thesis; any errors or omissions are mine alone.
Introduction: The Press Gallery and Political Culture of British Columbia

The British Columbia Legislative Press Gallery is reputed to be the most cynical and conflict driven gallery in the country. This is partly a function of the political culture in B.C., which has been characterized by polarized politics since the CCF/NDP arrived on the political scene in 1933 prompting the Liberal-Conservative coalition of 1941-52, and the post-1974 Social Credit coalition. As Norman J. Ruff explains, much of the political history of British Columbia this century can be described as “coming to terms with the socialists” which has fueled an ongoing ideological debate and political battle between the forces of private enterprise and those of social democracy.¹

With the exception of a few periods in the province’s recent history, for example, when the Liberal party underwent a leadership crisis in 1993, there has been a strong opposition presence in the Legislature, thus the adversarial nature of the system of legislative democracy has flourished. The passionate politics of B.C. is reflected in an equally passionate Press Gallery.

In contrast the neighbouring province of Alberta has essentially been a one party province since the 1970’s, and right-leaning since the 1950’s, which has produced a different political culture altogether: the debate is narrower, more proscribed. The Alberta Press Gallery reporter has had less leverage with governments who did not need prominent media exposure to keep a strong opposition at bay, thus forcing the Press Gallery into a subservient relationship with governments who could provide or deny

access to information at will.\(^2\) The ideologically polarized political arena in B.C., on the other hand, has created a culture of open conflict which has permeated not only interactions between political parties, but also between press and politicians.

Provincial press galleries in Canada, independently of political culture, share the characteristic of relative informality in press-politician relations as compared to the federal Press Gallery.\(^3\) This applies particularly to the British Columbia Press Gallery because of the relatively small number of full-time journalists and the insular social environment of Victoria. As Frederick Fletcher notes, however, the very informality that provides increased access to provincial politicians can inspire hostility and pressure in response to critical analysis on the part of journalists.\(^4\) There have been numerous examples of this informality-hostility syndrome in B.C.: Premiers Vander Zalm and Harcourt in particular had good off-the-record relations with the press which eventually culminated in feelings of betrayal by the end of their respective administrations.

The press-politician relationship in British Columbia can be characterized as falling somewhere between the British model, in which a deferential mainstream press sees itself as part of the ruling elite with strong ties to the political establishment\(^5\) and the U.S. model, in which populist media, protected by strong historical legislation\(^6\), and

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\(^2\) Miro Cernetig. Personal Interview. 27 November, 1996. Currently the Vancouver Bureau Chief of the *Globe and Mail*, Mr. Cernetig was a member of the Alberta Press Gallery after working for Canadian Press in the B.C. Press Gallery.


\(^4\) Ibid.


\(^6\) The First Amendment to the US Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech or of the press."
influenced by the post-Watergate syndrome of adversarial press relations, sees itself as an independent institution.

The ties between press and politicians in B.C. are influenced by the unique geographical situation of the isolation of Victoria, an idyllic British expatriate city on Vancouver Island, far removed from the editors, producers and publishers of the predominantly Vancouver-based media outlets. The isolation of the provincial legislature produces a fishbowl mentality, in which political events are sometimes magnified disproportionately. According to *Vancouver Sun* columnist Vaughn Palmer, the Press Gallery is further isolated by the fact that what is understood to be important news to Press Gallery journalists in Victoria can differ from what is seen to be important to Vancouver-based editors once the information has been fed over the water. This isolation also creates an insular social environment in which the already close proximity in the Legislature of politicians and members of the Press Gallery is compounded. The small pool of political/journalistic expertise in B.C. has also led to an historical situation of members of the Press Gallery springboarding into government communications and press-aide positions, as well as the reverse situation of former politicians entering the field of political journalism, most notably as open-line radio hosts. Additionally, since 1890, the institutional reality of a Press Gallery in the B.C. Legislature in the tradition of Westminster, has given historical legitimacy to the idea that the political press have an auxiliary relationship with politicians as an associated body of the Legislature.

Ties between press and politicians in B.C. are reinforced by the geographic isolation of Victoria, the insular social environment, close physical proximity in the

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workplace, the inter-changeability of their professions, as well as the historical longevity of their relationship in the Legislature. The independence of press and politicians in B.C., on the other hand, is influenced by a non-partisan, increasingly professionalized press which has evolved following the demise of the party-press in the 1930’s and 1940’s. A second contributing factor is an increasing suspicion of institutions in this province and the feeling that it is the responsibility of the press to keep governments in check. B.C. Press Gallery member Keith Baldrey feels there is a general public backlash against big government in B.C., perhaps as a function of the arrival of the populist, right-wing Reform Party in the federal arena. This backlash is why government patronage for “friends and insiders” has been an important theme in political reporting in B.C. in the 1990’s. A related phenomenon in B.C. is the tendency for governments to attempt to centralize external communications with top-down news management strategies. As governments attempt to centralize, control and shape communications policy and the delivery of announcements, the press is less involved in the information delivery process, and therefore tend to adopt a different role. In B.C. this manifests itself as a critical, adversarial one. Finally, the aforementioned polarization of politics in the province has produced an equally passionate press-politician relationship, fueled by pitched battles and sometimes intense acrimony. In such a conflict-driven political culture, members of the Press Gallery can become embroiled in the controversy rather than remaining dispassionate observers.

Regardless of whether the press associate or distance themselves from politicians, an inherent feature of the press-politician relationship in British Columbia is that it is

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characterized by inter-dependence. Because the Press Gallery is the vital link between legislative events and the democratic franchise, politicians are at its mercy to communicate their message to the public. Similarly, the Press Gallery is at the mercy of politicians who have the power to provide or deny access to the information and interviews which provide the basis for their journalistic work. This mutual dependence provides a counterpoint to the often conflicting motivations of the press galleries and politicians. Political journalists are motivated to extract all of the political news which is in the public’s interest to know, while politicians are motivated to divulge only that information which is in their best interest to disclose.

This thesis examines the complex and constantly evolving relationship between politicians and the press from four perspectives: theoretical, historical/institutional, practical, and political.

In chapter one, the theoretical context of modern parliamentary democracy frames the discussion of the role of the Press Gallery as the critical connection between government and the public to which it is accountable. The chapter contends that the principal role of the media is to facilitate the creation of a free market of ideas within which the public can effectively exercise its democratic franchise. Discussion focuses on the impediments and aids to such an endeavor in British Columbia’s media and political environments.

In chapter two, an overview of the evolution of the parliamentary institution of the Press Gallery from its origins in the British Parliament to its development in British
Columbia provides an historical/institutional context from which to explore the central question concerning the modern relationship of press and politicians in B.C.

Chapter three investigates the practical issues of developments in media technology and impacts of legislative reform in terms of their effects on the working relationship of press and politicians. The chapter analyzes the differing mandates and capacities of broadcast and print media in relation to each other, in relation to legislative processes, and in terms of the accessibility of information conducive to each medium.

In Chapter four, a survey of press relations of government administrations from 1972 to 1996 points to the political importance of press relations and its impact on the press-politician relationship. The power struggle surrounding the question of who controls the information delivery process and the news agenda is highlighted by government efforts at controlling the delivery of information and resistance on the part of the press.
Chapter 1: The Role of Journalists in Modern Parliamentary Democracy

The role of the Press Gallery and of the media in general is both complex and somewhat contested. How the political press fit into the democratic processes of the legislature and whether they have an inherent obligation to the people as a function of their proximity to those processes is a question that merits examination. If the membership of the Press Gallery do indeed have a democratic obligation, the precise nature of this obligation, what its defining parameters are, and its limits, if any, give rise to heated debate. The underlying question of whether members of the media create political realities according to their own agendas, or are merely interpreters of political realities that exist independently, adds fuel to the fire of the debate over democratic obligations of the political press.9

There is no question that political media, press galleries in particular, have tremendous power and influence in the system of legislative democracy. In Britain, circa 1834, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay made the archetypal declaration about the power wielded by the Press Gallery when he pronounced in Westminster that: "(t)here are three estates in Parliament, but in the Reporters Gallery yonder, there sits a fourth estate more important than them all."10 Sir Winston Churchill called the press "colleagues in our parliamentary life"11 and Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King described the press as an "adjunct of parliament."12 The Canadian Royal Commission on Newspapers

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9 Unless specified, the term "political press" should be understood to comprise all forms of modern media, electronic and print.
12 C.J. Lloyd: p.255.
which reported in 1981 concluded that the press was “the most important instrument of political communication in the country.”  

Despite the *de facto* power and influence of the political press which stems from its proximity to government and virtual hegemony over the channels of information exchange between politicians and the publics to whom they are accountable, there are limits to its authority in a democratic system. And what *de facto* power the political press has, should be subject to a number of attendant obligations to the people. The interpretation of the role of the political journalist in legislative democracy that informs this thesis is delineated in the thought of J.G. Willison, who wrote, in 1901, that:

> The function of journalism in a democracy - and true journalism can exist only under democracy - is to inform and not to rule the people. This is not its sole function. It may warn. It may advise. It may agitate. But to inform is its first great privilege and its first great obligation. This means that it should be many-sided. It should give any honest cause a hearing. It should be an open forum for public discussion. It should lay bare all the facts, and argue upon the facts for the judgment of the people.

The Press Gallery of the British Columbia Legislature defines its role quite narrowly:

> In the fullest spirit of press freedom and journalistic professionalism, the objective of the B.C. Press Gallery is to ensure the dissemination of parliamentary and government news in a fair and accurate manner.

The self-defined constitutional role of the Press Gallery can be described as a sort of mission statement consisting of four separate assumptions. First, it assumes that freedom of the press exists in British Columbia such that it can be used to its “full extent.” Second, it refers to “journalistic professionalism” as a given attribute of the

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modern Parliamentary reporter. Third, the statement dictates a duty to report on both the subject matter of the daily affairs of government, and the affairs of the parliament or legislative assembly as a whole, which includes the opposition. Finally, the obligations of fairness and accuracy in reporting are codified here, to the exclusion of a variety of other possible journalistic attributes such as independence or objectivity.

The Press Gallery constitution is primarily a symbolic rather than a legal document; however, the statement of objectives of the membership of the Press Gallery of British Columbia is worth examining as a starting point to exploring the question: What is the role of the political journalist in British Columbia’s modern parliamentary democracy?

There are two central issues that relate to the question: one concerns the organization of the political system, the other the organization of the media industry. The idea of parliamentary democracy in B.C. depends on a system of representative democracy (a body of politicians democratically elected to represent the interests of citizens in government) and a Legislative Assembly based on an adversarial model in which an Official Opposition keeps the government in check. In addition to democratic government, the idea of parliamentary democracy also incorporates the assumption of the free flow of information to the electorate from which it can make informed decisions when exercising its democratic franchise. This points to the importance of the media’s role as the dominant channel of information flow between the government and opposition MLAs and the electorate. In order for the system to be effective, there needs to be a
minimum standard of freedom of the press and political independence of media as information sources.

I-A The Press Gallery and the Legislative System

A role of the Press Gallery in the legislative system, among other things, is to act as a communications channel between politicians and the public in order to aid in the process of democratic government. This role can be described as one of educating and informing the public and encouraging the free flow of accurate information and informed opinion. While much of the information is simply factual, the information needs to be contextualized and presented in a way that makes it relevant and meaningful to the audience. This is a condition of the modern communications environment: people are deluged with so much information that in order for a news item to have meaning and penetrate the public consciousness, it needs to be framed in such a way as to create interest and meaning for the audience. There is a question, however, as to whether it is possible to contextualize a story without engendering political bias of some sort. Intentionally or not, media broadcasts and newspaper reports have the effect of setting priorities for, and creating expectations in, their audience. Such subtle indicators as the amount of time or space devoted to the issue can determine for the voter the relative importance of an issue or the esteem in which a particular politician is held.\(^\text{16}\)

Stuart Keate, former publisher of the Victoria Times and the Vancouver Sun, writes that the goals of the news media are “to dig for the truth; to write it in language people can understand; and to resist all impediments to its publication.”\(^\text{17}\) This idea of


political journalists as disinterested truth-seekers performing a public service is regularly challenged as part of the public skepticism and skepticism on the part of B.C. politicians that has become increasingly pervasive in this province. The media is assumed to be inherently biased because, as the complexity of government increases, the media has more and more of an “interpretive” role, which effectively precludes objectivity. This is precisely the mandate of newspaper columnists whose role it is to express opinion.

Respected Vancouver Sun columnist Vaughn Palmer feels he is under no obligation to present both sides of an argument, but feels a responsibility to be fair in his assessments. He subscribes to what he sees as the common outlook among B.C. journalists that the role of the press is “to adopt a critical attitude of the government of the day” and to “try to be skeptical of the partisan critics.”

Anthony Westell of Carleton University, one of the most prolific and authoritative students of political journalism in this country, refers to the current tendency of media to interpret, analyze and offer opinion as the “New Journalism.” Although he does not lament its arrival, he expresses disappointment that instead of supplementing “Old Journalism” which was based on the factual, objective reporting of events, “New journalism” has supplanted it.

In The New Society, he writes:

The style of political reporting has changed from reporting to interpretation and analysis. Reporters are no longer satisfied to record the facts; they now seek to put them in context, explain their significance, and suggest what impact they could have - or perhaps should have on events. It is in many ways a superior form of reporting, but it is also open to abuse and raises questions about the role of journalists in the political process.”

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18 Vaughn Palmer. Personal interview. 20 July, 1994
In the final analysis, the only way to eliminate the threat of journalistic bias and influence would be to publish verbatim debates of the Legislature, and fill television news broadcasts with live speeches by politicians. Realistically, journalists must be selective in their reporting because of time and space restrictions, as well as be sensitive to the need of the public to receive as much relevant political news as possible.

Another reality in the age of the independent press is that, with the exception of the CBC, the predominant media outlets are private, commercial enterprises driven by profit-motives. Because of this commercial reality, media outlets are audience-driven, and there is a strong argument to be made that they respond to market desires for certain types of news rather than impose their own news mandates. As Vancouver Bureau Chief of the Globe and Mail, Miro Cernetig, comments, the press is a “reflection of what is going on in society and politics;” the press plays a role in the “clarification loop” as information is communicated from and to governments. Only “enterprise reporters get ahead of the public,” but most of the news is simply a reflection of the public sentiment and appetite because newspapers are “money-making organizations for the most part.”

Columnist Vaughn Palmer concurs that the press has little opportunity to set its own agenda: “What we write about are not our own issues, but the issues that are important to the government and opposition. There is always a feedback loop between the public, the media and political parties.”

There exists a delicate balance then, between the competing forces of market desire and democratic obligation of the press to provide access to information. The

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restraints posed by limited media resources devoted to political news in response to market forces have the effect of curtailing media's ability to perform this function. Given the diminishing "news holes" in media, the increased complexity of government and the sheer amount of information the electorate receives and is expected to digest from a variety of communications channels every day, interpretive journalism is a necessity if the public is to benefit in any way from the political information it receives through the media.

The idea that the press has a civic obligation, or public trust as a channel for the free flow of information is reinforced by the fact that press galleries enjoy a number of special benefits as part of their role in the legislative system. Not only does the B.C. Press Gallery receive indirect subsidization by government in the form of free parking, office space and communications services (fax, phone, and mail services for example) members of the Press Gallery also enjoy the benefits of a radio room and press theatre with television feed and taping facilities. Most importantly, the Press Gallery has special access to politicians as they enter and leave the House through the Speaker's corridor, and preferential access to government information. The press receives "embargoed" copies of announcements, major speeches, and government budgets before they are tabled in the House for example, and have the privilege of a five-hour "budget lock-up" during which they can pose questions to senior civil servants and ministers to clarify aspects of the budget. Members of the Press Gallery also receive special protection from the Speaker to whom they are beholden in the Legislature: they cannot be served with any legal paper within the confines of the House without the Speaker's consent. These traditional benefits
strengthen the notion that the Press Gallery has reciprocal duties in parliamentary democracy, such as a responsibility to perform the public service of education and responsible social criticism.

In Frederick J. Fletcher’s research paper for the 1981 *Royal Commission on Newspapers*, he points to four criteria which make up the inherent civic obligation which the political press has as a result of its central role in the democratic process. First, the political press has a duty to be fair and accurate in its reporting; second, the press has an obligation to represent diverse social outlooks; third, the press should guard the public against abuses of power by government and offer an insightful evaluation of major political issues; and finally, the press has a duty to contribute to the integration and identity of the political community.23

The political press in B.C. are often accused of focusing too much on the “guarding against abuses of power” criterion, of being the “unofficial opposition” to government. This self-appointed “watch dog” role can be criticized on the grounds that this is the role of opposition parties in the Legislature, and that the task of the journalist is to report on the exchanges between government and opposition fairly and in a balanced manner. By assuming the role of “unofficial opposition” members of the Press Gallery are seen to be actively engaging in the political debate and usurping the legislative role of the elected opposition who are in the Legislature with the explicit consent of the citizens of British Columbia. Members of the press argue that they are forced into this role because of the shortcomings of the legislative system. Effectively, the Official Opposition is

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powerless in the Legislature because a majority government can pass any legislation it wishes through the weight of its voting power alone (because of party discipline in legislative voting.) The power of the Opposition is limited to stalling the passing of legislation by debating the bill indefinitely at each reading in the Legislature. The press, however, has a direct communication link with the electorate, and can therefore provide the facts to members of the electorate and let them decide whether to oppose the government on a particular issue by exerting public pressure. Governments do not worry about offending the Official Opposition: in fact it is expected that government and opposition will disagree on most points (to fuel democratic debate in the Legislature if nothing else) but public opinion is another matter since the public has the power to vote a government out of power. In effect, then, some members of the press see their role as a corrective measure to further democratize the legislative system of government. Anthony Westell has written extensively on what he sees as a marked tendency in Canadian political journalism, following the demise of the party-press, to shift from “establishment-oriented posturing” toward an adversarial role. This trend is borne out in the British Columbia Press Gallery’s attempt to equalize the balance of power in the Legislature.

While the B.C. Press Gallery has the power to actively oppose government, it has no legislated authority to do so, and this lack of democratic accountability creates an acrimonious rift in press-politician relationships. Elected politicians are directly accountable to the public who have the power to vote them in or out of power, but the press is accountable to no one but the news agencies and media corporations which employ them; this difference in accountability often leads politicians to voice the concern

that the media feel they are beyond reproach. The counter-argument however, is that journalists are in effect accountable to the public who, through their purchasing power, have the ability to determine the fate of a private news organization by buying or refusing to buy its product in a competitive media environment.

In addition to the conditions inherent in the legislative system of government which may determine, to some extent, the role of the Press Gallery in providing the information needed to nurture the public debate, there are several conditions inherent in the media industry itself which may determine the content and nature of the information also. One basic condition for the facilitation of democratic discourse in society is a free press, unhampered by government controls and restrictive regulatory bodies. If the media is to perform its democratic function as a communications link, it must be seen to be free in order to merit the benefit of public trust.

I-B British Columbia Media: Competition and Freedom of the Press

Media cynics might take issue with the appeal in the Press Gallery’s constitution to “the fullest spirit of press freedom” pointing out that ownership concentration on the media sector (especially in British Columbia) can often define, and in some case confine the parameters of the political debate that finds its way into our newspapers and radio and television broadcasts: that free market choice is merely an illusion, and that the owners and managers of the media are the real arbiters of the debate by means of circumscription.

It is often argued that ownership concentration of newspapers can lead to lack of competition and a synthesis of viewpoints and focus such that the variety of opinions available to the electorate is seriously limited. Moreover, the opinions of the publishing
and business elites can more easily become the dominant opinions given the opportunities provided by such a media monopoly. In British Columbia, both print and electronic media are characterized by concentrated ownership. Two of the province’s major daily newspapers, the Vancouver Sun and the Province are part of the media empire of the Southam family. Media giant Conrad Black’s Hollinger Inc., which currently owns forty-three percent of the country’s newspaper circulation, became the controlling shareholder in 1996. BCTV, whose nightly news hour attracts 635,000 viewers, giving it the second-highest viewership of any television news outlet in North America, and CKNW Radio whose open-line political radio show hosted by former MLA Rafe Mair which currently reaches 285,500 listeners a week, are both owned by the private broadcaster Western International Communications (WIC.)

The Royal Commission on Newspapers attempted, among other things, to discover whether ownership concentration and declining competition is detrimental to the vitality of democratic debate. To answer this question, researchers used a number of case studies including that of the merger between B.C.’s oldest newspapers, the Victoria Times and the Colonist in 1980 to form the Victoria Times-Colonist. The two newspapers had been jointly published by the Victoria Press, but remained editorially autonomous. When Thompson Newspapers acquired the two papers and completed the merger, sixty-one employees were laid-off among them twenty-nine editorial workers. In his analysis of the ensuing changes in terms of plurality of opinion, Walter Stewart laments that “the

26 Frederick J. Fletcher. The Newspaper and Public Affairs, op cit.: p.4.
greatest loss the community faces is the loss of disparate voices;” however, he concludes that “(d)espite bitter complaints, both public and private, made against the Thompson interests, no journalist cited any cases of stories killed because they might affect those interests, or for fear of offending advertisers.”28 However, in his research for the same Royal Commission, Frederick J. Fletcher finds that plurality of opinion was affected by the reduction of staff: “the merger of the two Victoria papers clearly reduced the diversity of perspective, since the two correspondents had each represented a distinct viewpoint. After the merger, the government-oriented reporter-columnist remained to serve both papers and the left-leaning correspondent was gone.”29

Two of the general conclusions of the researchers involved in the Royal Commission studies were that there was no correlation between chain ownership and editorial performance, and that journalistic tradition and community norms were more influential than biases or ideological preferences of owners. Commissioners did acknowledge the lack of plurality of opinion and diversity in parliamentary and legislative coverage at the national level, however, they did not see this as a function of ownership concentration: in fact, they suggested that ownership concentration may allow journalists to comment and educate the reader more freely:

As far as public affairs are concerned, more journalistic competition at all levels would undoubtedly help to maintain and improve coverage and commentary. Commercial competition likely would not, since the quest for consumer-readers might not be compatible with service to citizen readers.30

28 Ibid.: pp.76-77.
In the final analysis, Fletcher concedes that competition in the newspaper industry has both advantages and disadvantages; it provides incentive for investigative journalism and aids in resisting pressures to suppress news, but, competition can increase the tendency to dramatize news in order to increase circulation and to spend so much time “matching” that analysis suffers.\(^{31}\)

Prominent Canadian journalist Robert Fulford has written that Canada needs a permanent Davey Committee (which held senate hearings on the media in the 1970’s) to monitor and take account of media monopolies and inter locking media directorship in this country.\(^{32}\)

The B.C. journalists interviewed for this project downplayed the effects or influence of concentrated ownership, as well as the force of editorial power. Most found it difficult to recall a situation in which they had been at the mercy of an editor who had let his or her ideological leanings, or those of the publisher, influence coverage decisions. Some journalists felt that the ownership-concentration issue has been misconstrued as an ideological issue, when it is essentially a question of cost savings. Large newspaper chains can syndicate columns and reports across large territories and thus save substantial amounts in labour costs. However, editorial freedom may still be challenged by this new era of ownership concentration, precisely because of the down-sizing of staff such as that which occurred at the Times-Colonist. The following statement made by David Radler, president of Hollinger Inc., demonstrates the truth of the dictum that editorial freedom is seldom wider than a publisher’s stride:

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\(^{31}\) Ibid.: p.40.
I don't audit each newspaper's editorials day by day, but if it should come
to a matter of principle, I am ultimately the publisher of all these papers,
and if editors disagree with us, they should disagree with us when they are
no longer in our employ... I am responsible for meeting the payroll;
therefore, I will ultimately determine what the papers say and how they're
going to be run.33

Dave Barrett, one-time leader of the B.C. New Democratic Party and Premier of
British Columbia from 1972-1975, was notorious for challenging the “press barons.” He
once referred to the editors of the Vancouver Sun as the “tea-cup Liberals of West
Vancouver” who engaged in purposeful misrepresentation and red-baiting by capitalizing
the word “socialist” in editorial references to the NDP.34 Former NDP Premier Mike
Harcourt shares the view that the news media as a whole is essentially used as a
propaganda-mill for right-wing business interests, that ownership concentration has
allowed for the monopolization of the public interest and the eradication of a varied and
balanced environment of political ideas within which the public may make informed
decisions at election time. Harcourt also directs animosity toward the two Southam
newspapers (the Vancouver Sun and the Province) under the control of Conrad Black’s
Hollinger Inc., characterizing them as operating in tandem to subvert the social
democratic ideology of the NDP. Harcourt comments in his memoirs, that “(t)he two
papers share the same building, breath the same partisan air and follow the same right-
wing line.”35

p.68.
34 Carol Gamey. “Government-Media Relations: Bennett-Barrett-Bennett. B.C. Project Working
Kim Emerson, legislative reporter for CKNW Radio, claims that there has always been a tendency for B.C. premiers, most notably Bill Vander Zalm and Glen Clark, to aim their animosity toward the editorialists and media bosses, rather than the “working media” i.e. legislative reporters. Presumably, by aiming their hostility at a subject once-removed from their daily work and needs, politicians demonstrate their recognition of the importance of preserving a mutually beneficial relationship with members of the Press Gallery.

The issue of ideological and class differentials between journalists and their superiors gives rise to suspicions of self-serving motives of media owners, editors and managers who attempt, through editorial power, to influence the message communicated to the electorate through the various news sources. Although this influence is difficult to document, major B.C. daily newspapers, though officially politically independent and far removed from the blatant partisanship that once drove their editorial content, still endorse political parties at election time and often publish a less-than-objective editorial on the day of elections. Keith Baldrey, former Press Gallery Bureau Chief for the Vancouver Sun, maintains that while journalists have a great amount of freedom from editorial bias in their day to day reporting, there have been circumstances in which class differentials and/or political biases did appear to give impetus to news focus during the NDP’s 1992-1996 government:

The prime example of this was the property surtax in Glen Clark’s second budget. The tax only affected home owners in upper-middle and upper class neighbourhoods on the West side of Vancouver. This also happened to be the area where all of the Sun’s editors lived. Reporters lived on the East side of Vancouver and resented the editorial staff’s insistence on coverage. They felt that a 2000-person demonstration over the tax didn’t

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merit the press coverage they were pressured to give it. They felt there were other taxes with more wide-reaching effects that deserved attention. The editors contended that this was a pivotal story -- that it was about to precipitate a tax revolt. This brought out class and ideological divisions between reporters and their editors.\textsuperscript{37}

The property surtax was eventually withdrawn. Another case in which editorial bias exerted pressure on journalist’s story coverage came at the end of Gordon Wilson’s term as Liberal leader during which time he was embroiled in controversy with regard to his relationship with Judi Tyabji, a Liberal MLA. Keith Baldrey contends that there was almost a mandate from \textit{Sun} editors at this time not to devote column space to the political moves of Wilson’s Opposition unless it was absolutely warranted. A final example of ideological pressure in B.C. media as related by former CKNW Radio reporter Ian Jessop, involved CBC Television shortly before the 1992 election. The Social Credit government called a press conference to announce that if the NDP came to power, it would increase the public debt by thirteen billion dollars. In Jessop’s opinion, the CBC wanted a new government and was prepared to discredit the Social Credit party by refusing to report its rationale for making this statement. Jessop challenged the CBC’s legislative correspondent on this point, arguing that the public, not the CBC, has a mandate to decide if there should be a new government.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{1-C Conclusions}

The preceding examples highlight the democratic obligation of the press to contribute to a free-market of information by giving, as stated in the quote from Willison at the beginning of this chapter, “any honest cause a hearing.” The power of the press to

influence public opinion through its selection of news must be balanced by its duty to inform, not to rule, the people. Although the B.C. Press Gallery can be accused of being adversarial toward government, this is not necessarily an abuse of its public trust to provide responsible social criticism. The ongoing battle between opposition and government in the Legislature is an empty exercise without the press who report it, and the fact that the press gives opposition a voice beyond the Legislature, and perhaps holds the government in check itself, has the effect of leveling the playing field somewhat, so that a variety of viewpoints are available for the scrutiny of the public.

If the Press Gallery is to perform a role as the communications channel between elected representatives and their constituents, it must enjoy a minimum standard of freedom of the press. The effects of concentrated media ownership in B.C. have so far been difficult to measure, but if the trend toward monopoly continues, the resulting concentration of power could be harmful to the political system if it had the effect of circumscribing the democratic debate. Whether their concerns are justified or not, perceptions of media bias on the part of politicians and the public could have similar effects.

Assessments about the role of the press in modern parliamentary democracy are often informed by history, tradition and convention. The situation of the press in relation to parliament and politicians has evolved dramatically over the past two centuries. The following chapter traces the evolution of the institution of the Press Gallery from its inception in Britain’s Westminster, to the modern manifestation of the Legislative Press Gallery in British Columbia. Central to the evolution of the institution, has been the
increasing independence and professionalization of political journalists and news organizations. This phenomenon has thrown into relief the question of the proper relationship between press and politicians in parliamentary democracy.
Chapter 2: The Press Gallery as Parliamentary Institution

As a general definition of the term Press Gallery, applicable to that in any parliament or Legislature based on the Westminster model, Lloyd's definition is most comprehensive: the "Gallery" or "Press Gallery" denotes "a formal institution recognized by the Legislature and including as members those who report on its proceedings and engage in political journalism within the parliamentary framework."\(^{39}\)

In the context of British Columbia parliamentary tradition, the Press Gallery, in the original and literal sense, is the elevated gallery behind the chair of the Speaker of the B.C. Legislature. The Gallery, or Press Gallery has also come to include the press room on the third floor of the legislative building, accessible only through the Speaker's corridor, which is a working area for journalists. In its most comprehensive application, the term "Press Gallery" refers to the self-governing body of journalists accredited to cover legislative sessions, and by extension, to the membership itself.

The Press Gallery has undergone a fascinating evolution from an intrusion into, to an institution of, the Legislature. As the B.C. Legislature is modeled after the British Parliament and adheres in large part to its rules and procedures, a brief look at the beginnings of the Westminster Press Gallery is instructive.

2-A The inception of the Parliamentary Press Gallery: Westminster

The British Press struggled long and hard to report on the debates of Westminster. Charles II forbade all parliamentary reporting and made the publication of parliamentary reports "a serious breach of privilege and therefore liable to condign punishment."\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) C.J. Lloyd. op cit.: p.3.
\(^{40}\) Ibid.: p.8.
Some accounts of the proceedings were published anonymously by such literary figures as Ben Jonson and the philosopher, John Locke. Most reports were surreptitiously obtained from observers in the public gallery or from door keepers and messengers. Even after the House of Commons tacitly permitted the publication of debates, the reporter's task was seriously constrained. Reporters would be ejected or held in contempt if detected taking notes, and, according to tradition, the Gallery could be cleared by any parliamentarian who detected "strangers in the house."\textsuperscript{41} When permitted to stay, journalists were confined to the back row of the gallery in the company of "bankrupts, lottery-office keepers, footmen and decayed tradesmen."\textsuperscript{42} By 1803, a specific bench was set aside for reporters and by the late 1800's they were provided with writing rooms.\textsuperscript{43}

Among the most distinguished members of the Westminster Press Gallery, notable for his accurate and rapid short-hand, was Charles Dickens, who recalls the conditions of work and the perceived status and role of the political journalist during this era:

I have worn my knees by writing on them in the old back row of the Gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous position in the House of Lords, where we used to be huddled, like so many sheep kept waiting until the old wool sack might want restuffing.\textsuperscript{44}

By the middle of the nineteenth century a tradition of parliamentary reporting in England was firmly established, although it lacked a constitutional basis. In addition to the Press Gallery, a second journalistic institution, the Lobby, was established in 1844:

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.: p.17.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.: pp.14-15.
the parliament sealed off an area outside the House of Commons and confined admission to journalists and political agents (who have since come to be known as lobbyists.) The Lobby acquired its own framework of conventions, independent of Gallery reporting, and as both institutions evolved, politicians began to recognize their utility and established loyalties and links with members of the press.45

2-B The Evolution of the B.C. Press Gallery

Most of the traditions of the B.C. Press Gallery are borrowed from its British predecessor. For example, legislative reporters traditionally sit in an area where the Speaker of the House cannot see them, thus upholding their traditional status as “strangers” in the House. Sometime before the Second World War, Sandham Graves characterized the B.C. Press Gallery in a column for Victoria’s Colonist newspaper as “the place that is never mentioned,”46 referring to its unique status in the Legislature. As a one time member of the Press Gallery during the Vander Zalm administration phrased it, the members of the press are “officially tolerated but not officially recognized.”47 According to parliamentary tradition, therefore, members of the Press Gallery are not required to stand with MLAs, legislative officials and members of the public when the Speaker or the Lieutenant Governor enters or exits the Legislative Chamber.

The press are beholden to the Speaker of the House who grants them access to the Legislative corridors and has the authority to impose dress codes and rules of conduct on the Press Gallery, such as forbidding them to call out to MLAs or comment audibly on

debates from the Press Gallery. The Speaker’s office also works as a liaison between press and politicians, facilitating press conferences and press access.

While the same unofficial relationship of the press and the Legislature existed in British Columbia, because of the British precedent, the B.C. Press Gallery did not have to work as hard as the British press had to establish their legitimacy as a parliamentary institution. The physical manifestation of a Press Gallery within the Legislature, however, was not a matter of course.

The Press Gallery in B.C.’s Legislative Chamber was built in 1900 at a cost of $749.00 according to the Annual Report on Public Works for that year. When the new Legislative Chamber was inaugurated in 1898 there had been no provision for a Press Gallery, and in 1899 the press were obliged to sit behind the Members of the Legislative Assembly on the floor of the House. The absence of a Press Gallery was met with great consternation by the newspapers of the day, one of which reported, under the headline “The All Important Press,” that “(t)o construct a Parliamentary building and leave out the Press Gallery would seem an impossibility. But it was done under the Turner regime.”

When the Gallery was finally installed in January of 1900, the Victoria Colonist reported the following:

The new Press Gallery constructed to the left and right of Mr. Speaker’s throne during the sessional recess, had its first practical trial on opening day and proved fairly acceptable on the whole - although consultation prior to its building with gentlemen who are to make use of it would have enabled several glaring errors to have been solved, as for example sloping desks and stationary seats which can never be satisfactory to people doing much writing.

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48 Vancouver News-Advertiser, January 7, 1900.
49 Victoria Colonist, January 6, 1900.
2-B-i Press Gallery Authority and Regulation

The contemporary B.C. Press Gallery is accepted as an informal, self-governed parliamentary institution with its own constitution and powers of accreditation. Although there is no formal system of accreditation for Press Gallery journalists in Canada, the B.C. Press Gallery reserves the right, through its constitution, to selectively grant, and charge for memberships. At any given time, the Press Gallery normally has two dozen Active members and anywhere from one dozen to two dozen Associate, Honourary and Life members. Members of the Press Gallery maintain that it is necessary for the Gallery to limit accreditation because there is too much competition for Gallery memberships. While there is no finite limit to the number of memberships held at a given time, and no formal guarantees of membership, (except that Pacific Press, which operates the Vancouver Sun and the Province newspapers, is granted five permanent seats in the Press Gallery) criteria for membership are delineated in the Press Gallery Constitution.

There are four categories of membership in the Press Gallery: Active, Associate, Honourary and Life. Membership is granted, after a formal application, by the Gallery Executive, or under special circumstances, by a majority vote of the bona fide membership. Active membership is generally granted to “journalists whose principal occupation is reporting, interpreting, editing, photographing, filming or videotaping Legislative or Provincial Government news.” Active memberships are transferable if a new journalist is assigned to the position by the employer; thus memberships are technically granted to media organizations rather than individuals. Journalists who

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qualify as having a “principal occupation” in the Press Gallery are those assigned to the Legislature “on an ongoing basis” and “who require the use of Gallery facilities to fulfill their functions for more than 150 calendar days per year.” Associate members are granted all the privileges of Gallery membership, but as they do not necessarily fill the above criteria, are not assigned permanent desk space or seats in the Press Gallery in the Chamber. Honourary membership may be granted to a maximum of five journalists who have held a membership in the Press Gallery for a continuous period of ten years, and Life membership to those who are no longer eligible for Active membership, but have served in the Gallery for twenty or more years.51

Press Galleries have traditionally been seen as “old boy’s clubs” which has been materially true in British Columbia for the better part of the institution’s existence. Women and visible minorities have been, and still are, under-represented in the Gallery. Surprisingly, the under-representation of women in the Press Gallery has not been a result of a traditional lack of representation of women in the newspaper industry; in fact, some of the most influential family-owned newspapers of the early twentieth century in British Columbia, such as The World of Vancouver, were headed by women.52 However, in pre-suffrage days, women were not traditionally encouraged to enter the field of political journalism, opting instead for the “softer” reporting of the social pages which was considered to be within their realm of experience.53 The first woman to become an accredited member of the B.C. Press Gallery was Nancy Brown, who was assigned to the

51 Ibid.: Article III (d-i).
53 Ibid. pp. 6-7.
Legislature in the early 1960's by the former Daily Colonist of Victoria. While some of the veterans of the B.C. Press Gallery have been women, such as the late Marjorie Nichols and the Province's Barbara McLintock, these women are the exception to the rule. In 1996 there were six female Gallery members in a total membership of forty-five. This is a slight improvement over 1974 when there were four female members. Although the numbers of women in the gallery are slowly increasing, the traditional under-representation of women and visible minorities in the Press Gallery membership is further perpetuated by the conservative membership rules which honour longevity.

The types of publications, news services, and radio and television broadcasters which may be granted Gallery memberships are limited to those whose “primary purpose” is “the dissemination of news and opinion” and excludes those with “significant corporate, financial, or operating connection with the Province of British Columbia, any political party, or polling service.”

The grounds for accreditation in the Press Gallery have been challenged on several occasions. For example, the Active membership of the periodical Forest Planning Canada was challenged by Gallery member and Victoria Times-Colonist columnist Jim Hume on the grounds that it represented only one sector of government policy, and was therefore better suited to an Associate membership. A committee was struck by the Gallery executive to re-examine membership qualifications, but two constitutional amendments which would have imposed restrictions to memberships of “specialist” media were defeated. On the other hand, the NDP’s own publication The

54 Jim Hume, Personal interview. December 9, 1996.
Democrat was denied membership because it was funded by and represented the interests of only one political party, which is explicitly forbidden in the Constitution.

However unlikely, the self-appointed authority of the Press Gallery as the media gatekeeper in the Legislature could, if misused, lead to undemocratic restrictions to freedom of the press. If parliamentary democracy depends on a variety of viewpoints being communicated through the media, then the question of which media should receive special access to government information as members in the Press Gallery becomes important. While it would be inappropriate to give governments the authority to select membership as this would inevitably destroy the political independence of the Gallery, the executive of the Press Gallery does not have the legal authority either. The informal authority it does have however, by virtue of having an elected executive, argues Keith Baldrey, actually works to protect freedom of the press because governments may be “less inclined to try to pressure or intimidate or limit access for individuals if it sees us as a large institution rather than a fragmented, disorganized group.”

Whether the Press Gallery should become more formalized, perhaps introducing incentives to correct the imbalance of representation of women and visible minorities, for example, or liberalize its membership rules to encourage memberships for non-political special interest publications, is an important point of debate. The arguments for expanding the variety of viewpoints represented in the Gallery are closely associated with the idea that parliamentary democracy depends on the notion of accessibility of disparate voices in the political press. As government institutions become more complex,

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there are also strong arguments in favour of encouraging membership for specialist media, as the expertise of the generalist Press Gallery journalist is often stretched to capacity. The quality of reporting would no doubt be improved by such a reform. However, the realities of limited budgets for legislative bureaus of media outlets, and the current advantages provided by a relatively small Gallery in terms of accessibility to government, in combination with the forces of tradition still dominate the accreditation process of the B.C. Press Gallery.

2-B-ii The Press Gallery Constitution and Traditions

The constitution of the Press Gallery has come under scrutiny at several junctures in recent B.C. political history. It is not a “legal” constitution in the sense that the Press Gallery itself is not a legal entity because of the unique historical position it holds in relation to the Legislature. According to legal experts, the Press Gallery of British Columbia cannot incorporate under the Societies Act without sacrificing the special relationship of professional independence it currently enjoys in relation to the Legislature.\(^{58}\)

Although the Press Gallery is a self-governing body, a precedent was set by the Gallery executive during the Margo Sinclair - Bud Smith affair during the summer of 1990 which severely limits the authority of the Press Gallery Constitution and of its elected executive. In this situation, the Gallery executive decided that even though the Constitution provides for the formation of an ethics committee with the authority to rescind the membership of a journalist who is determined to have compromised the

journalistic integrity of the Gallery, they would not form such a committee. Kim Emerson, vice-president of the Gallery at that time and CKNW Radio reporter, resigned from his executive position over what he saw as the failure of the executive to follow the dictates of the Constitution. Former Vancouver Sun Bureau Chief Keith Baldrey, then President of the Press Gallery, characterizes the Press Gallery as "a loosely organized group of competitors" and was thus not comfortable with endowing its executive with the authority to issue penalties or disciplinary measures. In addition to the factor of competition between members, he reasoned that the Press Gallery should not have this authority, since each reporter is independently employed by a media organization which already has the authority to penalize as an employer. Therefore, the authority of the Press Gallery Executive and its Constitution is primarily symbolic rather than practical.

Vancouver Sun columnist Vaughn Palmer remarks that because the Press Gallery is not a legal entity, in essence it is nothing more than a physical space. The Gallery only has the authority to grant access to the legislative corridors to its members because the speaker of the House permits this. Moreover, the Gallery has only been able to deny access to publications like The Democrat because no one has challenged this practice before the courts. In Palmer's opinion, if news media were to become a self-regulating professional body, the press would not be as free as it is today. The informal self-regulation that currently exists is beneficial because restricting the size of the Gallery through selective granting of memberships increases longevity of membership in the Gallery and increases familiarity between press and politicians. Longevity of

membership also has the advantage of lengthening the Press Gallery’s collective political memory so that journalism can be informed by historical perspective. A related advantage is that duration of experience in political reporting is more likely than not to lead to more informed analysis of political events. A final argument in favour of preserving the current system of quasi-institutionalism is the danger that further bureaucratizing the Press Gallery system would lead to a kind of institutional group-think.

The B.C. Gallery is notorious for its colourful, outspoken membership who are as likely to challenge each other’s actions as they are the politicians they report on. Because of the current lack of regulation, the Press Gallery has the opportunity to test the limits of convention, bringing many new issues into the public forum of debate. The grey areas of the limits to parliamentary privilege, for example, or the limitations to journalists’ involvement in the political process have several times been brought to the fore by alleged media transgressions, and as these issues are hashed out between politicians and journalists there is the chance that positive developments will be made toward the improvement of legislative democracy.

Still, many politicians would like to see the Press Gallery subjected to the same critical scrutiny it imposes on governments and political parties, perhaps through a more powerful professional regulatory body than the existing B.C. Press Council. The Press Council is a voluntary organization to which most B.C. newspapers belong, and though it cannot impose disciplinary measures, its member newspapers are under contractual obligation to print the findings of any of its investigations in which they are implicated, be they positive or negative. 61 The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunication

61 Barbara McLintock and Gerry Kristianson.op cit.: p.139.
Commission, (CRTC) the federal agency which regulates broadcast media, has the capacity to revoke a broadcaster's license should it repeatedly demonstrate ethical misconduct. However, politicians are loath to follow through with threats to issue complaints to these agencies or impose regulation of the Press Gallery, partly because of a recognition that the relations of journalists and politicians are so symbiotic that any restrictions on the power of the press would likely have an equally strong impact on the power of politicians, and partly because of the fact that long-term press relations are more important than any short-term battle of will with a journalist or media outlet.

While many questions still exist concerning the limits to the power and authority of the Press Gallery, its longevity and rich set of traditions give it some measure of historical and traditional legitimacy, if not legal legitimacy as a legislative institution. The common privileges of membership, shared facilities, and perhaps a feeling of exclusivity contribute to the collegial atmosphere of the B.C. Press Gallery. This is particularly apparent as one climbs the stair case to the Press Gallery off the Speaker's corridor which is lined with group photographs of the Gallery membership throughout the century.

Some of the traditions of the Press Gallery function to engender trust between the Gallery and politicians, thus facilitating their working relationship. For example, informal conversations between Gallery members and politicians are considered “off the record,” as are Gallery-sponsored events such as the annual Press Gallery dinner. The legislative dining room and the Press Gallery offices are neutral areas where discussions can take place without censure due to the threat of attribution in print. Members of the Press Gallery also have an informal agreement not to divulge the content of press releases to

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62 Ibid.
anyone but Gallery members, thus making sure the information is not released to opposing MLA’s or interest groups. Members of the Press Gallery voluntarily follow these guidelines, or traditional rules, as a method of protecting the trustworthiness and integrity of the Gallery.

Not all of the traditions of the Press Gallery are currently upheld: their practice depends to some extent on the current state of government-press relations. During the Dave Barrett and Bill Bennett administrations, for example, relations were so strained that members of the Gallery did not bother to follow the traditional ritual of “throwing the members words back at them” at prorogation of the legislative session in the form of piles of newspaper and copies of Hansard scattered over the floor of the Chamber. Similarly, although Bill Vander Zalm cultivated some friendships within the Gallery, he began to feel he had been betrayed by the press and canceled the annual Press Gallery dinner and traditional basketball game, as had other Premiers before him.63

Inevitably, however, the close proximity of journalists and politicians in the B.C. Legislature, as well as the symbiotic nature of their needs, leads to a unique sociology of friendships, contacts, loyalties and trusts. Still, many of the working traditions of the Press Gallery have been suppressed with the professionalization of journalism and the increasing competition and political independence of the press.

2-C The History of Political Patronage in the British Columbia Press Gallery

During its early history in the first half of the 20th Century, the B.C. Press Gallery functioned under substantially different conditions than it does today. Reporters, and the newspapers which employed them, were openly partisan. The major dailies were

ideologically segregated along the lines of the dominant political parties in B.C.: the
Vancouver Sun was an openly Liberal paper, as was the Daily Colonist of Victoria, and
the Vancouver Province and the Victoria Times were affiliated with the Tories.

Russell R. Walker, a member of the B.C. Press Gallery for ten consecutive
sessions beginning in 1919, recalls in his biography the influence of partisan affiliation on
working conditions as well as several other marked differences between today’s Press
Gallery and that of the 1920’s and 1930’s. First, there was a lack of competition between
media sources. Newspapers today, he notes, are constrained by the technologies of radio
and television because their dominance as new sources has conditioned audiences’
expectations of content, length and efficiency in news reporting. Unconstrained by market
competition between different types of media, newspaper reporters of the 1920’s and
1930’s were at liberty to devote multiple columns of newsprint (one column consisted of
1000 words) to a major speech given by a politician -- in fact, it was expected.64 A second
notable difference was the anonymity of the position of legislative reporters. Whereas the
current membership of the Press Gallery consists of names and faces familiar to most
politically aware British Columbians, the reporters of Walker’s day were rarely credited
with a by line when their reports went to print. 65 Undoubtedly, this reduced the modern
tendency to personalize news reports and may have reduced competition between
reporters.

As a result of the aforementioned characteristics of the Press Gallery (the partisan
positions of the newspapers, the lack of competition from other news sources, the

p.82.
65 ibid. p.83.
attendant responsibility of the reporter to cover legislative events more thoroughly for the record, and the anonymity of reporters) a practice of “trading copy” took place regularly. Walker describes how the legislative reporters for the two major Tory dailies, the Province and the Times had a working agreement to trade copy:

No one reporter could sit in the Press Gallery and take notes of everything that transpired...McDougal and Hodges alternated at times, with one watching proceedings in the House, and the other making copy of the notes he had taken. The carbon copy of one’s story was acceptable to the newspaper of the other, and thus the long hours of work might be materially reduced.66

Long hours of work and poor remuneration from employers led many reporters to supplement their earnings by writing stories in a deliberate attempt to influence political events in exchange for monetary compensation from the interested party. “Gifts” of money were also accepted regularly by journalists, such as the unofficial “Sergeant at Arms Pot” contributed to by all MLA’s, and the treasurer of the Liberal Party’s $100 “annual remembrance” for reporters of the Tory dailies.67 As a reporter, Walker estimates that his $50 per week salary was supplemented by $500 per session with gratuities from government ministers, and politicians readily solicited speeches written by reporters for a fee of $20-$50.68

A good example of the extent to which partisan work was a tradition of parliamentary reporting in British Columbia is Russell R. Walker’s experience as a reporter for the Province. In preparation for the 1924 election, Walker offered his

66 Ibid: p.84.
67 Ibid. p.87.
66 Ibid. p92.
lobbying efforts, or "parliamentary agency" to Bowser's Conservatives in the form of "plaster(ing) British Columbia with Conservative Party propaganda" for a monthly fee of $250 from party coffers. Bowser refused his offer, prompting Walker to approach the Liberal Minister of Public Works with the same proposal. Once the deal was accepted, Walker delivered, free of charge to forty-five rural B.C. newspapers, three weekly reports: one unbiased piece of political news, one story mildly partial to the Liberal Party, and a third report which was unabashedly supportive of Premier John Oliver's Liberal administration.

A second incident which demonstrates Walker's direct intervention in the political process was his campaign to defeat the proposed "Hours of Work" bill which would legislate an eight hour day and forty hour work week. An influential group of business lobbyists requested his assistance, and he accepted with a proposal which involved a $500 retainer for expenses (primarily the entertainment of politicians in his suite at the Empress Hotel) and a further $900 stipend if the bill was defeated in the House, which it eventually was by a narrow margin of two votes. The requests for Walker's "parliamentary agency" work in campaigns to speed-up, slow down or defeat proposed legislation became quite regular as interested parties began to realize the influence of the press.

Not all journalists of the era were as eager to engage directly in the political process, however. Bruce Hutchison, who came to Victoria at the age of twenty-five and

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69 Ibid. p.102.
70 Ibid. p.103.
became one of B.C.’s pre-eminent and most respected political reporters, recalled in his memoirs the reaction to his refusal to accept such remuneration:

...I also declined the funds freely distributed by the lobbyists of business. My attitude was considered unfair and uppity, if not subversive. Such rewards, nowadays unthinkable, were taken as a matter of course by honest men who were to be trusted absolutely in private affairs.72

These “traditional subsidies” dwindled over the years as the Newspaper Guild increased salaries for reporters affording them the privilege of rejecting politicians’ partisan offerings.73 Moreover, increased advertising revenues and circulation meant that newspapers could officially disassociate themselves from the political parties which had formerly provided patronage. Bruce Hutchison recalled the transition to an independent press:

Since the Liberal politicians had long regarded the Sun as their unfailing ally, our independence seemed almost treasonable to them. They got used to it after a while and began to understand that a word of approval from a non-partisan paper was worth more than a hundred from the voice of a party, a word of censure more dangerous.74

Despite the demise of the “party press,” the tradition of journalists supplementing their salaries with partisan work lingered under the Social Credit administration of W.A.C. Bennett in the 1960’s and 1970’s, during which time it was estimated that two-thirds of the Gallery’s membership was on the government payroll in some capacity -- making government documentaries, writing speeches or constituency letters, for example. Veteran Province reporter Barbara McLintock recalls that as recently as 1972 “MLAs wandered into the Gallery every Friday with the appropriate cheques.”75 More recently,

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74 Bruce Hutchison, op cit.: p. 328.
members of the press have increased their vigilance with respect to situations which could potentially cause conflict of interest. When the NDP took power in 1972, the system of patronage died out as the new government had no established ties to members of the Gallery. However, even during the recent Social Credit term under Bill Vander Zalm, the president of the Press Gallery was forced to resign after editing an Ombudsman report which he was assigned to cover for a newspaper,\textsuperscript{76} and freelance journalist John Pifer was condemned by the Press Gallery for accepting payment from Cabinet Ministers for interviews on cable television.\textsuperscript{77} It is now more usual for journalists to use their experience and influence as Press Gallery journalists as a springboard to lucrative government communications or press secretary jobs, than to combine the two roles.

The Press Gallery constitution now specifically forbids partisan writing for personal profit by stating that:

\begin{quote}
Any active or associate member may not, for remuneration, offer their services to any government or Legislature, provincial crown corporation, political party, polling service or other organization which may in the opinion of the Executive compromise the integrity of the Gallery.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

Increased journalistic credentials, higher wages, and the end of the “party press” have all contributed to the gradual professionalization of the Press Gallery in B.C. and have vastly changed the working conditions of political journalists. The formalized delineation of political versus journalistic work in the Press Gallery constitution helps to draw boundaries that keep the Press Gallery independent and maintain the spirit of a free press in British Columbia. Formerly as Honourary member of the Press Gallery, Bruce

\textsuperscript{76} Wayne Williams. Personal Interview. March 01, 1993.
Hutchison, remarked on the professionalization which has taken place since his days in the Gallery:

The better newspapermen have turned a trade into a profession and sometimes acquired more power than most statesmen. The newspapers have vastly improved in scope, quality and honesty, as anyone can see by looking over their musty files. The skills, ethics, manners and self-respect of journalism have risen with the wages. But the excitement of the game has paled since the old days.\textsuperscript{79}

The political independence of the press has had a profound impact on the role, and guiding principles of the political journalist in the Legislature. As Desbarats comments, journalism’s formerly partisan motives were transformed into a “more complex and sometimes antagonistic mixture of commercial imperatives and journalistic ideals.”\textsuperscript{80}

2-D The Modern Relationship of Press and Politics in B.C.

Although the Press Gallery constitution explicitly forbids paid partisan work, there are still grey areas in which journalistic norms are the only guiding principles forbidding or condoning involvement by members of the Press Gallery. When a journalist’s professional credibility is challenged or questioned by fellow Gallery members, politicians are quick to find out. Thus, collegial pressure for ethical practices from within the Gallery is a strong deterrent and incentive for journalists.

Because legislative institutions change and modernize, albeit slowly, as does the media industry, these journalistic norms have to be revised regularly, often by methods of trial and error. Two examples, one involving a journalist giving incriminating tape

\textsuperscript{79} Bruce Hutchison.\textit{op cit.}: p. 302.
recordings of the Attorney-General of B.C. to a member of the opposition and one involving a reporter launching a conflict of interest investigation against a politician, bring into question the professional ethical boundaries of Press Gallery journalists and the modern limits to their involvement in the political process.

The first example which demonstrates the self-regulated and subjective nature of the limits to journalist's involvement in the political system and to what extent they can, or should, influence political events, has come to be known as the "Bud Smith Tapes Affair." In the opinion of many B.C. Press Gallery journalists, this series of events, which erupted in July of 1990, represented one of the most sensational stories in recent B.C. politics and the most competitive time in media. The Press Gallery was under the glaring light of public scrutiny for an extended period of time, which prompted an unprecedented degree of reflection among Gallery members as to the nature of their role in the legislative system.

The events centred around two sets of tape recordings of telephone conversations with Social Credit Attorney-General Bud Smith. In the first set of tapes, the Attorney-General was discussing with a lawyer a private prosecution launched by the NDP against Social Credit MLA Bill Reid over his alleged mishandling of lottery funds. Smith had stated publicly that politics had not been a factor in the Crown's decision not to lay charges against his colleague and that he had received no special treatment. In the taped conversation, however, Smith responded to a nasty description of the NDP lawyer in the case by asking "How can we get that out?" implying that he did indeed intend to let politics interfere with the case. The two continued to discuss the case at length, making
references to the weaknesses of the NDP’s case and a transcript of a press conference
with NDP justice critic Moe Sihota which Smith suggests would be useful in cross-
examination. The tapes clearly demonstrated the interference of the Attorney-General in
the case involving his Social Credit colleague.

The second set of tapes record a phone conversation with a Canadian Press
correspondent in the Press Gallery, Margo Sinclair, with whom the Attorney-General was
involved in a personal relationship. Bud Smith repeated the information about the NDP
lawyer, and suggested that the lawyer “might want to answer that into a microphone
himself.” The Attorney-General further pressed the issue by suggesting that the journalist
who pursued this lead would have “the story of the year.”

The tapes were made public when Canadian Press reporter Debbie Pelletier and
Victoria freelance writer Brian Graves presented them to Moe Sihota who tabled them in
the House. Canadian Press had previously refused to accept the tapes.

Several questions of ethics are brought to light by this series of events. First, there
was the issue of whether the tape recordings were obtained by illegal means; second,
whether Pelletier and Graves should have informed Bud Smith of the tapes’ existence
before making them public; third, whether giving the tapes to the Opposition Justice
Critic constituted interference in the political system; fourth, whether Margo Sinclair was
letting her private life interfere with her public role as a journalist; and finally, whether
Canadian Press performed a disservice to the electorate by effectively suppressing the

information when it initially refused to accept the tapes. The rules surrounding these issues were unclear, and legislation did not exist at the time to provide the answers.

At the peak of the controversy, Keith Baldrey, then president of the Press Gallery called a meeting of the Gallery executive at Victoria’s Embassy Inn. Kim Emerson announced at that meeting that, in his capacity as vice-president, he had revoked Margo Sinclair’s membership in the Press Gallery and suggested that it form an ethics committee under the terms of the Press Gallery constitution to investigate the actions of Sinclair, Pelletier, Graves, and himself (for having filmed Graves with a hidden camera and microphone.) Baldrey reinstated Margo Sinclair’s membership and refused to launch an internal investigation which prompted Emerson’s resignation as vice-president.  

The constitutional clause referring to the formation of an ethics committee reads as follows:

> If any member of the Gallery is alleged to have engaged in unethical conduct or in conduct unbecoming to a member, he or she shall be liable to reprimand, suspension from membership, or expulsion from the Gallery. The Executive Committee shall strike for the occasion an Ethics Committee which shall expeditiously investigate the matter....

Many journalists at the time expressed the opinion that the press are not accountable to each other, rather, they are accountable to their employers. The boundaries and limits to their actions should be decided by the courts under the Charter right to freedom of the press, not by a committee of their peers in the Press Gallery.

Reporters agree that this was the most stressful period the Press Gallery has ever experienced. As president of the Press Gallery, Keith Baldrey remembers being grilled in

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five media scrums in a single day. The Press Gallery could not report on the matter because of its involvement, so the Vancouver and national media picked up the story. Editors were phoning Baldrey at all hours of the night asking him for copies of the tapes. Bud Smith felt that he had been targeted by the press because of his recent public statements about “Press Gallery perks” such as free use of government phone and fax service within the province and free office space which was not available to other members of the media.\footnote{Eddie Bartlett. “Striking Back at the Bully Boys.” \textit{British Columbia Report}. July 20, 1990: p.35.}

Smith stepped down as Attorney-General in July of 1990 and, in two subsequent public investigations, was cleared of charges of obstructing justice. Two years later, Smith launched a law suit on the grounds that his privacy had been violated, claiming damages from Moe Sihota, Keith Baldrey (in his capacity as Press Gallery President,) freelance journalist Brian Graves, Canadian Press reporter Debbie Pelletier and Broadcast News LTD, a wire service owned by Canadian Press.\footnote{“Sihota, Three Reporters Sued By Smith.” \textit{Vancouver Sun}. August 04, 1992: p. C13.}

In Baldrey’s opinion, the whole situation forced reporters to think carefully about “real situations.” The story raised the questions: what is the Press Gallery? What is the nature of our job here? Are we nothing more than a loosely-organized group of competitors? Do we take ourselves too seriously as a group? (Baldrey’s answer is yes.)

In previous years the Gallery had issued numerous letters of indignation or opposition to government media policy, on one occasion denouncing Premier Vander Zalm for holding exclusive press conferences for some members of the media and not others. Baldrey ran for President of the Press Gallery on a platform of no letters, no public
statements - he jokingly dubbed the Gallery Executive as the Desk Allocation Committee.
The irony of the situation is that under Baldrey’s leadership, the Press Gallery issued more public statements than in previous years combined because of the Bud Smith tapes affair.

One of the most interesting aspects of this case is that the Press Gallery did not invoke its own constitution to investigate and resolve the ethical quagmire its members had created. By abdicating responsibility, the Press Gallery also diminished its own authority, in effect suggesting that some higher authority, such as a professional regulatory body, might be more suited to the role.

During the 1992-96 NDP term under the leadership of Mike Harcourt, a situation arose involving CKNW Radio’s legislative bureau chief Kim Emerson which also demonstrates the subjective nature of the limits to a journalists involvement in the political process. In the aftermath of a series of televised “town-hall forums” in February of 1993 in which the NDP government attempted, unsuccessfully, to deliver its “good news” message directly to the electorate, questions arose concerning NOW Communications, the public relations firm which produced the forums. There were allegations that because the firm was headed by Ron Johnson, a former NDP campaign manager, NOW was receiving a disproportionate percentage of government communications contracts as a form of political patronage. Kim Emerson, assigned to cover the story for CKNW Radio, felt that he was not getting the information he needed from the NDP to permit him to investigate the issue fully, and that the quickest way to get to the truth was to launch a formal conflict of interest investigation with independent
Commissioner Ted Hughes. Harcourt was cleared in the final report, partly because it was difficult to establish linkages between Harcourt personally and the process of awarding government communications contracts.

Kim Emerson saw his actions in filing the complaint as his only recourse given the reluctance of the government to supply the information he needed for his work. He felt that the government began a damage-control campaign by releasing information to the press as soon as the investigation was underway, but that they needed the impetus of a formal investigation to do so. Premier Harcourt, on the other hand, saw Emerson’s motives as openly partisan, anti-NDP, unethical, and a breach of public trust. In Harcourt’s memoirs, he focuses on this event as one which crystallized his disenchantment with the media which was in turn a precipitating factor in his eventual resignation as Premier. In his opinion, the event represented direct participation of a journalist in the political process:

Emerson claimed he was acting as a citizen. But his request was unprecedented and, in my opinion, unethical. To the embarrassment of many of his peers, Emerson had injected himself into the governing process. He was initiating an event in which he would not only be one of the central characters, he would also report on it.

The complexity of the press-politician relationship in the context of B.C. ‘s legislative system is highlighted by the conflict of interest allegations filed by Emerson. As a citizen, he had the right to submit the request to Conflict of Interest Commissioner Ted Hughes, but whether this was a breach of public trust as Harcourt sees it, or simply a

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88 Ibid.: p.137.
journalistic research technique, is open for debate. The situation was unprecedented, but this does not make it necessarily wrong. Testing the limits of legislative democracy and the role of the press therein is likely to have positive effects simply by bringing such issues into the public debate. The situation does beg the question, however, of to what lengths journalists need to or should go in pursuit of information that they feel is in the public interest. The question was put to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, a voluntary regulatory body of the C.R.T.C., when the head of the B.C. Federation of Labour, Ken Georgetti, filed a complaint. Two years later, in February of 1997, the Council ruled that the actions of Emerson, with the support of CKNW Radio, were indeed ethically inappropriate. The penalty for such a transgression is that the radio station must broadcast the Council’s findings during peak listening hours.

In this unprecedented case, the Council’s decision did not call into question CKNW’s broadcasting or Emerson’s reporting as it usually would in such an investigation, but condemned the professional journalistic tactics used in the gathering of information. In an interview with the Vancouver Sun, Ronald Cohen, the national chair of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council framed the issue as a breach of public responsibility: “The broadcaster ought to have been seeking the truth itself and reporting the facts as it found them...In this instance, by attempting to transfer the responsibility to the commissioner, CKNW abdicated that vital societal role.”

The counter-argument, however, is that Press Gallery journalists are often at the mercy of politicians on whose goodwill they depend for access to information. If access is not forthcoming, and other

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channels of information, such as the opposition parties and the bureaucracy have been exhausted, is it not in fact in the public's interest for a journalist to pursue information in the most expedient way possible, whether unconventional or not? The more important issue raised by this case is whether Emerson purposefully and maliciously influenced political events by launching an investigation to discredit the Premier.

These two cases demonstrate that the ideal of the Press Gallery as a sanctuary from which to report political events without being directly involved in them is difficult to achieve given the proximity of press and politicians in the institution of the Legislature and the mutual dependence of their work. Collegial pressure, journalistic norms, and to some extent, mandates from editors and producers appear to have had the most influence on journalists' actions in these landmark cases. Threat of reprimand by professional regulatory bodies was nothing more than a cursory consideration, and the dictates of the Press Gallery's Constitution were largely disregarded.

While normatively as separate as Church and State, and rid of the blatant partisanship which once characterized their relationship, press and politicians in B.C. are still struggling to define the parameters and limits of their association in the Legislature. Officially independent but substantially intertwined is one way to characterize the current state of the Press Gallery-politician relationship in British Columbia.

2-E Conclusions

The association between press and politicians in the Legislature abounds in anomalies. "Press in parliament" represents the body of historical precedent, tradition and conventions which unofficially sanctions the presence of the press in the parliamentary
The end of the party press and the resulting political independence and professionalization of the Gallery represents the most jarring institutional development this century. However, the precise nature and limits to the new role of the Press Gallery are subject to constant revision as journalistic norms and legislative practices evolve.

Because of the ambiguous authority of the Press Gallery executive and constitution, Press Gallery traditions and conventions, as well as collegial pressure, continue have the strongest influence on self-regulation of the press. As demonstrated by the Kim Emerson conflict of interest allegation and the Bud Smith tapes affair, in an unofficially regulated media environment the limits to the separation of press and politics in the Legislature are subject to frequent trials and lively debate. New issues surrounding journalistic research and information gathering techniques are also highlighted by these two cases. For example, whether it was a breach of professional ethics for a journalist to launch an official conflict of interest allegation against a politician was a brand new issue introduced with the NDP legislation which made it possible. Similarly, the questionable legality of surreptitiously obtained tape-recordings of a politician by a journalist and the way in which they were made public in the House was a dramatic example of unconventional information gathering.

Changes in politics and changes in media can have an equally strong impact on the nature of the press-politician relationship. Leadership style and legislative reforms brought in under various administrations have been influential in terms of their effect on journalistic research techniques and media coverage. The openness or closedness of media relations greatly affects the information-gathering methods of the Press Gallery, as

90 C.J. Lloyd. op cit.:p.2.
do the tools provided by legislative procedure, policies, and tradition. Media itself has a strong impact on political reporting, as journalists are often constrained by their medium, be it television, radio, wire services, or print. Because the work of journalists and politicians in the Legislature is so inter-connected, changes in media technology can precipitate changes in politics, and changes in political strategy can force media to adopt complementary techniques.
Chapter 3: The B.C. Press Gallery and Access to Information

Press galleries are in the business of gathering information on behalf of the public; governments are in the business of imparting the information they want the public to know. These two motives are not always complementary, and therefore create friction and mutual suspicion between press and politicians. The information gathering techniques of the B.C. Press Gallery change with every government administration, as they are often contingent on the openness of government and the strength of the opposition. A cohesive and influential opposition with a large research budget can be an abundant, and willing source of undisclosed information about government.

Legislative reforms, such as the introduction of Hansard, oral question period, and freedom of information legislation have changed both the information gathering techniques of journalists and the nature of political reporting.

3-A Fulfilling the Media Mandate

The type of information that journalists need, its depth, comprehensiveness, and the format it comes in, depends on the news medium the journalist is working with. Radio, print and television journalists all have different mandates for information which influences where and when they find it. A reciprocal relationship often exists between politicians and journalists, however, as politicians tailor the delivery of information to meet the technological and logistical demands of different media.

3-A-i Television

In the modern political environment in which personal communication between provincial politicians and their constituents is increasingly rare, television has taken on a
populist role by exposing an unprecedented number of voters to political news. The populist aspect of television is evident in its ability not only to increase public awareness about politics, but also to give people a sense of direct participation in events by translating abstract concepts into visual images of people, places and crises. The negative component to television's populist role in democracy, however, is that it caters to a mass audience, and therefore must simplify and translate political events for the consumption of the lowest common denominator of its viewership.

Television is dependent on action, conflict and the visual aspects of news. Because of these technological and market-driven constraints, it often reports events as isolated incidents, without the contextualization of history and future implication. The type of news most conducive to the television medium are personalized, controversial or emotional stories that can be reduced to their basic elements in a short, uncomplicated format. Television is also constrained by the location of events: whereas newspapers can cover a wide range of events occurring in different locations on a given day, television journalists must be present to capture live footage. Thus the content of television coverage is subject to decisions about where film crews should be dispatched, as well as which spokespeople are available for comment.

According to the research of Frederick J. Fletcher for the Royal Commission on Newspapers, it is frequently politicians who set the agenda for media. Broadcasters are particularly vulnerable to domination by their sources because is difficult to compile a report based on live footage with a scope beyond the statements of government and the

reaction of an opposition spokesperson. For example, two of the principal events of recent B.C. election campaigns, the party leaders' tour of the province and leaders' debates, are staged primarily for television media: leaders schedule their speeches around television deadlines and deliver them in particularly telegenic locations. This can be said of non-election times also, as politicians are instructed by their media advisors to make policy announcements in relevant locations for the benefit of television. For example, the NDP's media guidelines for cabinet ministers suggest that announcements pertaining to day care for children are ideally staged at a day care centre, with children present. Not only does this cater to television journalism's need for a sense of "place and people," but also, it caters to its populist role of making information accessible and relevant to ordinary citizens. Politicians are also instructed to tailor their message to the short-clip approach of television to maximize its impact. The NDP's media pocket tips advice is to: "(k)eep comments to tight, quotable, ten-second segments using language that is precise and understandable" and "(i)f at all possible, the issue should be personalized, avoiding jargon and large numbers."

Television is also dependent on live personalities, and therefore, the politicians who make themselves readily available for commentary at the appropriate times can often ensure that their message reaches the electorate through the dinnertime television newscast.

In the opinion of the Globe and Mail's Miro Cernetig, the biggest change in media, and in politics, is not the hegemony of the supper-time newscast, but the advent of

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93 The Newspaper and Public Affairs, op cit.: p.105
the twenty-four hour news-cycle presided over by CNN, Newsworld, and internet services, because it has changed the speed with which news is processed. The twenty-four hour news cycle has created a market desire for a constant flow of news “product.” Politicians have responded by offering a repetitive barrage of “sound-bites” based on a list of “talking points” from their advisors which only provides for very shallow and cursory coverage of issues. This change has meant that telegenic politicians can exist as “sound-bite machines” which does not benefit politics or public policy. The instantaneous news cycle represents “the manipulation of politics through media’s own device.”

It is precisely the aspects of television which make it most vulnerable to manipulation by politicians which function as obstacles to comprehensive journalism. The dominant appeal of visual imagery over analysis, personalities over issues, brevity of coverage, dependency on time and location, and the transitory and fleeting nature of the medium do not provide a solid basis for substantive political reporting. On the other hand, television’s populist role has had a democratizing affect by making political news accessible to a mass audience.

3-A-ii Radio

Radio, even more than television, is characterized by an extremely fast pace of reporting, as news reports are often broadcast on an hourly basis. As a result of this constant news-hole, radio is often the first medium to break political stories. Another factor is that radio is not as technologically cumbersome as television, and this portability gives it the “capacity to achieve an acute sense of immediacy.” However, the frenetic

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95 Personal Interview. November 27, 1996.
96 Alex Shprinston. op cit.: p. 18.
pace has detrimental effects in that it is difficult to discern the significance of events immediately after they occur, and as it often happens, without all the relevant information. Radio and television are often the precipitating forces behind media-accelerated crises because of their tendency to "rush to judgment." A related aspect of the fast pace of radio is that, unlike newspapers, there is no time to make value judgments as to what constitutes news. Getting the story out becomes the first priority. While hourly deadlines often make "covering the press release" a necessity, the medium is less vulnerable to accusations of manipulating the agenda through selective reporting.

The common requirement of radio and television for fast-breaking news and live footage in a succinct and conflict driven format is captured in the following excerpt from a 1978 letter to Speaker Ed Smith from Tim Perrin of the B.C. Press Gallery executive. The purpose of the letter is to convince the Speaker to allow television cameras and direct output to tape for radio in the Press Gallery of the legislative chamber:

The ability to use tape of the actual events in the house would provide radio and television coverage with more immediacy and impact. It would give us the chance to catch a moment of high emotion or confrontation: an excalling (sic) backbencher, a waffling minister, a concise opposition question.

Tim Perrin goes on to argue in the letter that bringing radio and television into the House would have a favourable impact on attendance and decorum of MLAs, which, some journalists contend, was exactly what happened when syndication was eventually introduced in 1991.

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Radio has difficulty competing with television because television has a larger capacity for generating funds through advertising. The lack of funding for private radio can stifle journalistic initiative. However, open line political radio shows, most prominently those of veteran hosts Jack Webster, Bill Good and Rafe Mair, have enjoyed enduring popularity in B.C. despite televisions cresting wave since the 1960's.

3-A-iii Wire Services

Although wire services are not a prominent form of media in the public’s eye, they deserve a brief mention because of their symbolic importance and impact on other media, as well as the fact that wire journalists have the privilege of membership in the B.C. Press Gallery. The advent of wire services in Canada coincided with the demise of the partisan press. The B.C. Legislature is serviced by the largest national wire agency, Canadian Press and its subsidiary, Broadcast News. Their mandate is to provide comprehensive, factual news reports which are redistributed to news agencies across the province and across the country. Wire service coverage is routine, only marginally analytical, and does not provide opinion.

The significance of wire services is two-fold. Because of their non-discriminatory, comprehensive, and non-competitive mandate, they can be considered the only truly neutral news source in the Press Gallery. Secondly, because wire services are available to even the smallest of regional newspapers, they have a democratizing effect on access to information for media with less commercial influence or no Press Gallery correspondent. Major papers such as the Vancouver Sun subscribe to Canadian Press as an efficient method of ensuring that their editors are made aware of every breaking news story, and
have the option of disregarding, publishing, or rewriting wire stories. Wire services have the effect, therefore, of allowing newspaper and radio journalists the time and resources to devote to more substantial investigative reporting, analysis and opinion.

3-A-iv Newspapers

The principal advantage of newspapers over broadcast media is that they can afford to appeal to an aggregate of minorities rather than a mass audience as broadcasters do. Newspapers have the capacity to do this because their format allows readers to participate in the news selection process by choosing the articles they wish to read. Unlike news broadcasts, newspaper reports are usually clearly demarcated between editorials, opinion, analysis, and factual reporting, and divided into topic areas. Thus newspapers can build a circulation based on specialized interests without alienating their readership.98

Television and print can be viewed as complementary media with differing mandates for the dissemination of information. The advent of television, some argue, has freed the press to devote resources to more substantial investigative journalism. However, it has taken some time for this to take hold, and during the 1970’s and 1980’s, in response to the economics of mass circulation, some major newspapers attempted to recapture a mass market by adopting a more “tabloid” style of reporting. Mimicking the short-clip approach of television, stories were edited down to a maximum of four hundred words. This trend, dubbed “disco journalism,” was short-lived, however, as it caused circulations to drop,99 and newspapers began to refocus on their strengths rather than their weaknesses.

98 McLintock and Kristianson. op cit.:p.110.
as a news source. Whether newspapers have been successful at filling the void left by
television and radio’s insatiable appetite for “news” in the literal sense, by providing
intelligent, in-depth analysis of issues, is still a point of debate. The lasting importance of
newspaper columnists, however, can be interpreted as the newspaper industry’s attempt to
counter the impact of broadcast media. Like the “institutionalized subjectivity” of the
news report by-line, regular columnists compel readership through their personalization
of politics. Columnists have become, according to Tatyran, “the talking heads of print -
the personalities that newspapers (promote) to encourage the same loyalties television
viewers (attach) to their favorite hosts.”\(^\text{100}\) In the age of twenty-four hour news, in which
outlets like CNN provide a constant source of information, newspapers have been forced
to rethink traditional objectivity, and take advantage of the opportunities for analysis
offered by the medium.

Newspapers have difficulty competing with broadcast media on fast-breaking
stories because of the time delay between the filing of the story, and the time the paper
reaches the public. Thus newspaper exclusives tend to be based on investigation and
research on the part of journalists. Despite competition from broadcast media, however,
newspapers still set the agenda and provide data for other media because of their
longevity, substance, and capacity to contextualize events.

3-B The Legislature as News Source

Barrett’s NDP administration provides an interesting case study of the dynamics
of press coverage in relation to legislative reform. The NDP implemented several
procedural reforms in the Legislature which could conceivably have given the opposition

a distinct advantage for generating press coverage. When the NDP ended the era of the
“part-time MLA” by introducing a second three-month legislative session and doubling
MLA’s salaries to $25,000 per year, it also ushered in “a full-time opposition presence,
a year-round government-in-exile” with year-round access to the Press Gallery.
Concurrently, the Vancouver Sun increased its Press Gallery contingent to cover the
extended session, and these new members had to “justify their existence” by engaging in
more in-depth analysis and research. The introduction by the NDP of an oral question
period as part of the daily procedures of the House also gave the opposition the
opportunity to influence the next day’s headlines. Oral question period is a time when the
opposition parties can pose hard questions to government, introduce new allegations in a
dramatic way, and attract the attention of the Press Gallery who are almost without
exception present for the exchange. The charged accusations and witty retorts of
politicians are very often quoted in the next day’s news reports, and the opposition’s
questions are usually followed up on by the Press Gallery in the post-question period
media scrum in the legislative corridor. Jeremy Wilson’s study of press coverage and
story focus during this period claims that the opposition received more press coverage as
a result of the longer parliamentary sessions introduced by the NDP, suggesting that the
NDP may have authored its own misfortune.

Over time, the Legislature has become a less significant source of information for
Press Gallery journalists, who are rarely present in the Chamber except for Minister’s

McIntyre, 1995: p.84.
103 Carol Gamey. op cit : p.11.
statements and Question Period. Journalists can watch the proceedings on television from the Press Gallery offices, or listen to them over the P.A. system from virtually anywhere in the Legislature. A verbatim record of the proceedings of the Legislature is produced daily in an unofficial report called “The Blues” which later becomes the official Hansard after politicians have an opportunity to challenge any transcribing mistakes.

According to Press Gallery journalists, outside Victoria there is little appetite for news based on legislative events, unless it involves a major reform such as the first all-member election, rather than government appointment, of the Speaker of the House which took place in 1993. The majority of the activity of the Legislature involves debating the government’s budget, spending estimates and bills at each stage of legislation. B.C. is the only jurisdiction in Canada which still uses the traditional, and cumbersome, supply format for ministry spending estimates. These processes do not normally make for a good news story: they are formalized, slow-paced, and sometimes tediously procedural. Journalists say that they only need to listen to the opening statements of government and opposition in a debate to know where they stand on an issue; what follows is predictable repetition which often devolves into a rehashing of past elections.

3-B-i Hansard

The introduction of Hansard, a verbatim record of the proceedings of the Legislature and select standing committees, by the NDP government in 1972 has virtually eliminated the civic responsibility if the print media to report on debates for the public record. Hansard has a readership of approximately 1,400, but since the

\[105\] Jeremy Wilson, op cit: p. 9.
introduction of the “electronic Hansard”, the live telecast of the Legislature, in 1991, the proceedings of the House have been made accessible to all British Columbians. As a result of these two legislative reforms, the volume of political reporting in newspapers has plummeted. Declining public demand, declining resources, and commercial considerations have also had an effect. Former Vancouver Sun bureau chief Keith Baldrey notes that prior to 1988 the three Sun reporters produced twelve to fourteen stories a day, most of which were devoted to debates. Prolific reporting of debates was possible because of the larger “news hole” for provincial politics furnished by a morning and an evening, or “street” edition of the paper. Declining circulation and increased competition from the BCTV dinner time news hour were factors in the Sun’s decision to become a morning only paper and reduce its permanent Press Gallery presence. Baldrey notes a shift in the paper from 1988 to 1990, away from “hard” political news. Because of competition, the paper had to broaden its appeal to a wider segment of the population, rather than a select audience of politically astute readers. According to columnist Vaughn Palmer, the Sun currently only publishes two to three stories based on debates per session. In the opinion of Jim Hume, the introduction of Hansard has been the most damaging development in the Legislature to have an effect on political reporting. The unofficial Hansard “Blues” are delivered to the Press Gallery sometimes as quickly as ten minutes after an important debate or speech. This has made reporters lazy, and reduced the amount of leg-work and time spent in the House absorbing the atmosphere of political exchanges. On the positive side, Hansard has had the effect of providing a research tool for journalists as a way of chronicling politicians’ in-House statements on issues over

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time. However, since 1983, the majority of policy announcements have been made in news conferences rather than as part of ministry spending estimates, which indicates governments' efforts to counteract the reduction of reporting on legislative activity.

3-B-ii Question Period

Since 1973, a fifteen-minute oral question period has taken place daily when the Legislature reconvenes at 2:00 p.m. Question Period, for good or for ill, is the focus of the sitting day -- for the opposition who pose questions of government, for the government who attempt to predict and counter the line of questioning, and for the media who report the allegations and revelations that characterize the exchange. Question Period is somewhat of a misnomer, as the questions posed by the opposition are better described as long-winded rhetorical speeches; government responses are less legitimate answers than rehearsed, witty retorts, designed for the consumption of the media. Under such circumstances, very little new information is brought to the fore for the benefit of the democratic system. However, the allegations raised by the opposition in Question Period sometimes amount to substantial news stories with further investigation by media. The Press Gallery then, while it does not usually report on Question Period per se, takes its cues from the opposition's line of questioning and engages in its own, unofficial question period outside the legislative chambers in the post-Question Period scrum. The news reports that are produced in this way often provide new information for the opposition to use in the next day's Question Period, leading to a perpetual feedback loop which only ends when the Press Gallery loses interest or the opposition finds a new line of attack.

Press Gallery reporters are bound by laws of libel and slander which prevent publication or broadcast of accusations without proof. MLAs are protected from lawsuits based on anything said in the Legislature as a part of parliamentary privilege. Therefore, press may use the strategy of feeding stories with insubstantial proof to members of the opposition with the hope that they will raise the issues during Question Period. Once the allegations are made in the House, they may be officially reported by the Press Gallery as long as they pay adequate heed to the government’s denial of such charges.\(^\text{108}\) These subversive strategies, however, have been less likely since the introduction of freedom of information legislation.

3-B-iii Freedom of Information Legislation

B.C.’s Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, introduced in June of 1992 by Harcourt’s NDP government, was touted as landmark legislation providing unprecedented levels of open government in British Columbia. Upon its inception, the legislation attracted attention from various jurisdictions within the country and around the world because of its innovativeness and capacity to substantially shift information power to the public. The legislation is administered by an independent commissioner of the Legislature who must weigh the competing interests of freedom of information for the public and individuals’ right to privacy. Built into the adjudication process for information requests are a “harms test” which puts the burden of proof on government to show why information (such as Cabinet confidences for example) cannot be released to the public, and a “public interest override” which requires the head of an organization to disclose information without delay if not doing so would pose significant harm to the

\(^{108}\) Barbara McLintock and Gerry Kristianson. op cit.: p. 130.
public interest (environmental, health or safety issues for example.) In practice, however, some journalists feel that freedom of information legislation has not been particularly helpful as a research tool. Information which was once readily available through contacts in government or the civil service must now be subjected to the rigorous tests of protection of privacy which often results in pages of information being blacked out on documents making them next to incomprehensible. The adjudication process is bureaucratic and can be time consuming which slows journalistic research down and gives governments time to engage in damage control. Through formalization and regulation of the process, therefore, government has actually retarded, and even impeded access to information for journalists. It could be argued, therefore, that in this context, Freedom of Information is in government’s, rather than the Press Gallery’s, interest.

3-B-iv The Media Scrum

As a result of government information and news management efforts, it is increasingly rare for politicians to participate in informal “corridor interviews.” Only slightly more formal however, media scrums are the most common method of information exchanges between politicians and journalists for both journalistic and logistical reasons. Time constraints on government ministers mean they cannot meet with journalists individually, especially those working for the less-influential media: scrums are efficient and mostly egalitarian, though some argue that they cater more to television than other media. Under current rules, journalists cannot take their cameras into the Press Gallery, so as politicians leave the House, the media scrum provides live footage, quotes, and reaction to allegations and issues raised in Question Period.

The scrum is often criticized, however, for having a snowball effect among journalists and contributing to "pack" journalism in which story focus is homogenized. The fact that scrums traditionally take place after Question Period also raises questions about lack of initiative on the part of journalists who let the opposition's line of questioning determine the focus of the scrum, and accordingly, the focus of the news. The allegation is that journalists let government and opposition party research departments do their background work for them. Politicians, though regular participants out of necessity, see scrums as a communications challenge because the atmosphere is so often confrontational and characterized by a crowd mentality.

Television journalists depend on the scrum for live footage, statements and reaction from the relevant politicians. Radio reporters also rely on scrums for live quotes, and print reporters benefit from the ability of the scrum, by virtue of its sheer size and momentum, to get closer to the truth. Though, in the words of Miro Cernetig, the "pack can be noble," it can also become misguided and have too narrow a focus. It causes less experienced journalists difficulty in getting past the obvious news story, and the conventional wisdom on it. The better journalists are those who can stand apart from the pack. Reflective and analytical journalists are less likely to miss an important news event because of the momentum of pack journalism.

3-B-v Contacts and Competition

Media have both direct and indirect access to government information, but both types of access have their limits. Direct access to Cabinet and the Premier is provided by press conferences, media scrums, and, occasionally, personal interviews. Only the most
influential journalists are generally afforded the courtesy of individual access to Ministers; however, because of the rules of Cabinet confidences, ministers rarely divulge information that is not already on the public record.

Indirect access to government information is furnished by government press releases, government communications officials, and press aides. These sources, however, are under the direct control of the ruling party and only provide factual information about government policy or announcements. The task of the journalist, then, is to "get behind the press release" and discover the motivations and undisclosed facts relating to the subject. For this they need contacts: alliances with bureaucrats, government politicians, and to some extent, the opposition party or parties.

Opposition parties normally make information that reflects negatively on government freely available to the press. However, they will sometimes withhold new information in order to reveal it in a piecemeal way during question periods, thus perpetuating the news story. High-ranking bureaucrats are less accessible, and some journalists argue they are muzzled by government or can not be trusted to be unbiased because their appointments are political. As with access to Cabinet ministers, however, the most influential journalists who have been in the Press Gallery for a substantial period of time, have established contacts who regularly supply news tips and leak information. Part of the professional code of Press Gallery journalists is not to reveal their sources.

However, governments are increasingly taking measures to protect against information leaks; for example, there has been far less breaking of stories since the advent of shredding machines for confidential documents. Ian Jessop remembers retrieving a
Cabinet submission containing sweeping changes in education from a photocopier wastepaper bin when Bill Vander Zalm was minister of education under Bill Bennett. Jessop and Eli Sopow of The Province released the information over a two day period in the newspaper and on CKNW Radio. Vander Zalm called them into his office, but, customarily, the two journalists refused to divulge their source.\textsuperscript{110}

The atmosphere of the Press Gallery is, on the surface, very collegial with regard to sources. The Press Gallery has informal rules about posting press conference announcements and press releases for the benefit of all Press Gallery members, and journalists often team up on stories and share information. However, there is still a great deal of pressure for journalists to get exclusive stories for their news outlets. As a result, there is a perpetual danger of media being co-opted since the dependence on government good will for arranging interviews can lead to collusion between top gallery reporters and government.\textsuperscript{111}

One suggestion as to how to improve direct communications between journalists and politicians is the introduction of a small "I' lobby system like the one in Westminster with rules of strict non-attribution and a tradition of intensive background briefings as a principal source of news.\textsuperscript{112} The British lobby has allowed journalists to build joint private relationships with government ministries.\textsuperscript{113} This convention is already used in a limited, uninstitutionalized way in B.C., in the 5-hour budget lock-up for journalists and finance ministry bureaucrats.

\textsuperscript{112} C.J. Lloyd. op cit.: p. 262.  
Although such a system would doubtless have a positive effect on the quality and depth of reporting, the danger of collusion between politicians and journalists through such an institution is a threat to the independence of the press. The uncompetitive nature of the lobby also points to the possibility of journalists getting co-opted by government efforts to manage the delivery of news. As Kellner comments, the lobby enables politicians “to control systematically the nature, content and timing of a great deal of political information and the way it reaches the public,”\[^{114}\] which risks a situation in which journalists are simply used by politicians as conduits for their policy trial balloons.

3-C Conclusions

Media are not a monolithic entity. Broadcast and print media share some common goals and ideas as to what is newsworthy, but each has a unique mandate, capacity, and format for news which influences how it accesses information, and what information it seeks. A division of labour between media, in which each directed resources toward the strengths of its medium, such as televisions’ populist capacity to make news relevant and understandable to the average viewer and newspapers’ ability to reflect on, and analyze issues at length, would be an ideal situation. Television’s hegemony as a news source has caused political events to be organized around the medium which often leaves print and radio journalists to follow the pack out of a sense of self-preservation. Despite the challenges posed by competition from other media, however, newspapers have managed to differentiate themselves by providing substantive analysis and opinion and have preserved their moral authority as the agenda setters within the Press Gallery.

\[^{114}\] Ibid.:p. 277.
The focus of news coverage tends to be on a narrow range of legislative activity, most predominantly, Question Period. Part of the reason is that Hansard has eliminated the responsibility of newspapers to document the political history of the provincial Legislature for the public record, and part of the reason is that news outlets feel there is little public demand for reporting of the Legislature. Additionally, the conflict-driven, quotable and short-clip nature of question period is conducive to the television medium. As Christopher Harris notes of the federal Press Gallery, "(i)t is a truism now that Question Period is so well tailored for the medium of television that debates, committees, and other parliamentary functions are eclipsed in the public eye."¹¹⁵

It is the job of any government to counteract media cynicism with openness toward press. "Open government" initiatives such as freedom of information legislation have actually worked as a deterrent to the government for releasing information through the regular channels. Some journalists feel that the formalization and bureaucratization of the process of information dissemination has in effect slowed down and controlled the process which may be beneficial to governments, but makes the journalist's job more difficult.

Because of news management on the part of governments, the odds are against the journalists trying to extract useful information. The power and momentum of the Press Gallery "pack" can help journalists get information collectively and ensure that the story is covered thoroughly. However, it is a deterrent to innovation and reflection and often leads to homogenized story-focus among media.

Improved accessibility to politicians and political information for the Press Gallery is desirable in terms of improving the depth and comprehensiveness of coverage, however, it could threaten the independence of journalists if government were given power to manage the communications process.

The symbiotic relationship between press and politicians is further highlighted in the arena of press relations. Despite their mutual dependence, both politicians and journalists attempt to assert their independent power. For politicians, this manifests itself in efforts to bypass the Press Gallery in an attempt to control and manage the message they want delivered to the electorate. For journalists, this manifests itself in efforts to subvert such centralist communications techniques through independent investigation. The often conflicting motivations and interdependence of politicians and journalists in the Legislature has been played out over the decades in a paradoxical atmosphere of collusion and power struggle.
Chapter 4: The Press Gallery and Politicians in British Columbia

There is a long history of connections between newspapers and politicians in British Columbia, and an equally long history of tumultuous press relations. Victoria's British Colonist was founded in 1858 with future Premier Amor de Cosmos as editor. He closed the paper down the next year because of a disagreement with Governor James Douglas who demanded that the newspaper post a $3000 "good behavior" bond. The bond money was raised at a public meeting shortly before De Cosmos was called before the bar of the Legislative Assembly to face charges of libeling the Speaker of the House.  

 Having won a seat in the Provincial Legislature in 1863, De Cosmos founded The Daily Standard in 1870, ostensibly to "provide a forum for his views," which consisted, according to Murray, of attempts to discredit Premier McReight and his Cabinet. Two years later, De Cosmos was appointed Premier in the wake of the collapse of the McCreight administration.

Premier Duff Pattullo had a newspaper background in Ontario and enjoyed good relations with the Legislative Press Gallery of British Columbia; however, he became disenchanted with the press while involved in an ongoing debate with his Finance Minister John Hart. In a letter to Mackenzie King, Pattullo wrote that "there has been a constant underground agitation against myself personally...this plotting has been in progress for many months, the press in constantly boosting Hart and depreciating myself (sic)." Pattullo resigned his Premiership to John Hart in 1941.

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117 Ibid.: p.31-32.
118 Ibid.: p.108.
W.A.C. Bennett presided over a centrally controlled Social Credit government in British Columbia over a twenty-year tenure beginning in 1952. His cabinet lived under his strict rule when it came to media-relations, and ministers were even known to leave interviews to consult him before answering a journalist’s question. Bennett himself was known as tactically astute in his relations with the Press Gallery, holding frequent press conferences in which he had complete control of the agenda and making time for journalists only when there was “political capital” to be made. W.A.C. Bennett once complained to Victoria Times editor Max Bell that publisher Stuart Keate and editor Bruce Hutchison should be fired because they were “menaces to good government.”

Immediately following the 1960 election, Bennett instructed the CBC not to interview Robert Strachan, leader of the CCF/NDP Opposition, when the House was not in session -- after considerable pressure, they complied. Some have charged that the Press Gallery under the Bennett regime was an arm of government in which reporters were entangled in partisan loyalties.

When the NDP took power for the first time in 1972, however, the influx of new MLA’s and journalists caused the established tacit alliances and contact networks between press and government to dissolve. This marked a new era in press relations, one which was characterized less by patronage, and more by press independence. Beginning with Premier Dave Barrett, press relations have taken on a remarkably important role in

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119 Ibid.: p.2.
120 Peter Murray.op cit.: p. 12.
121 Ibid.: p.130.
122 Carol Gamey.op cit.: pp.2-4.
B.C. politics, so much so, that it could be argued that press relations have had the power to determine the fate of government administrations.

4-A Premiers and Press Relations: Dave Barrett to Mike Harcourt

There has been a strong media focus on leadership in Canadian political journalism since the 1970's which coincided with the rise of investigative journalism. In B.C., this trend has been further strengthened by the increased political independence of the Press Gallery and the importance of television, which relies on symbolic personalities to transmit visual messages. The Premier, as government leader and symbolic figure head for the ruling party, is an efficient target for media criticism of government policy. The Premier also has the administrative power to influence press relations and, as the most sought-after subject for interviews, is “capable of setting the tone of government-media relations.”

Press relations played a particularly significant role in the successive governments of B.C. Premiers Dave Barrett, Bill Bennett, Bill Vander Zalm and Mike Harcourt who all had adversarial relationships with the Press Gallery at various times in their administrations.

A renewed interest in provincial politics was ushered in with the arrival of Dave Barrett, who lead the NDP to victory in 1972. The apathy toward legislative activity that had been engendered over the preceding twenty year Social Credit term, both in media and the public, was overthrown by this charismatic, populist leader and his New Democratic Party. Both the Province and the Vancouver Sun doubled their Press Gallery

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\(^{124}\) Peter Desbarats. op cit.: p.138.
\(^{125}\) Carol Gamey. op cit: p.9.
contingent, and Jack Webster conducted interviews with most NDP Cabinet ministers on his well-known radio show. The Press Gallery was appreciative of the open approach of the Barrett regime which stood in marked contrast to the tightly centralized press relations which had characterized the previous W.A.C. Bennett government. As with all new governments however, Barrett’s media honeymoon was short-lived. As government policy was actualized and legislation passed, the government began to have a record to defend and the Press Gallery had material to analyze, report, and, in the case of the columnists and open-line radio hosts, to pass judgment on.

Barrett’s style was very conducive to the television medium, and throughout his tenure as Premier, he never expressed disdain for television journalists. This was perhaps because of television’s unanalytical and transitory nature as a conduit of information, its relative novelty, and the fact that it was intrinsically complementary to Barrett’s populist style. The printed press, on the other hand, was often the target of Barrett’s criticism, and as Gamey explains, this was an integral element of both his politics and personality: “Barrett’s opinion of the press as an institution has been consistent throughout his political career - opposing ‘the press barons’ and fueling the conspiracy theme are part and parcel of his populist image, and an integral part of CCF/NDP rhetoric.” While Barrett’s attacks on the press were to some extent ideological, and thus once removed from practitioners in the Press Gallery, he also displayed personal disdain for members of the press. After a series of what Barrett considered misrepresentative stories and headlines, he began to publicly denounce the Vancouver Sun. He vented his frustrations

in unofficial "corridor interviews" and caused tension in the Press Gallery. As Ron Thompson, long-time member of the Press Gallery recalls, "I can always remember him coming into the Gallery with a copy of The Sun. He threw it on the floor and jumped up and down on it." Although the NDP administration tried to strengthen its position by launching a public relations drive, including numerous in-House publications on government affairs, it only created resentment among the Press Gallery who felt that the government was sponsoring its own propaganda mill and infringing on its territory. Despite such efforts get its message out by circumventing what was seen as a hostile press, a common criticism of the Barrett government was that it failed to communicate with the electorate.

The so called "Chicken and Egg war" of 1974 provides an example of how the tension between Barrett and the media escalated to unprecedented levels. The story revolved around B.C. egg producers complaints that they were not getting their fair share of quotas from the B.C. Egg Marketing Board. Liberal leader David Anderson charged that Barrett was secretly coercing the farmers by threatening to introduce legislation which would be detrimental to their cause. When Barrett denied this, Anderson accused him of lying in the House and was ejected from the Chambers on several occasions. Influential Sun columnist Marjorie Nichols picked up the story, writing that the credibility of the Premier was in question. Barrett exploded over her column and publicly condemned her in the legislative corridor. Nichols decided to report the incident, quoting the profane language the Premier had used to describe her. The story was picked up by

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129 As quoted ibid.: p.9.
130 ibid: pp27-29.
the national media, and Barrett’s reputation was severely damaged as a result. Nichols recalls the aftermath of this series of events in her memoirs:

I was not sad to leave Victoria. Life had become pretty unhappy after my run-in with Dave Barrett. The NDP made life really, really, difficult for me. When I had arrived, they identified me as the Sun’s hit woman. They were entirely wrong about that. I never tailored a story in my life, and I prided myself on the coverage, plain old-fashioned reporting. But they were extremely paranoid. They were looking for someone to blame, and they blamed me for the decline and fall of the New Democrats.\(^\text{131}\)

Barrett recalls the impact, in 1975, of acrimonious press relations on his decision to call an election:

If we hung on, there was a strong possibility that the SoCreds, with their access to unlimited funds and supportive media, could build even greater public opposition to our government. Almost every editorial writer or public commentator was a critic. Open-line radio programs, perhaps the most potent of all forms of opinion-making, were a daily conduit for attacks on our government.\(^\text{132}\)

The NDP was defeated in December of 1975 by Bill Bennett’s Social Credit government, which was to retain power for two terms. In opposition, Dave Barrett continued to demonstrate that ignorance of the press and preoccupation with it can be equally damaging and disruptive to the political process. As McNelly comments with regard to the former Premier:

It is becoming apparent that Barrett has an obsession with the print media that borders on irrationality...Over the years, the lines between the press and the NDP have been hardening, and if the NDP doesn’t watch itself, it runs a real danger of fighting the wrong opponent at election time.\(^\text{133}\)


\(^{133}\) Peter McNelly, “Barrett hits ‘Jellyfish Journalism.” Last Post. 14 April 1978 (as quoted in Carol Gamey, op cit.: p.32.)
The Social Credit government under Bill Bennett experienced an unusually long honeymoon period with the Press Gallery. Some of the factors contributing to this were the resumption of the previous political apathy that had characterized the previous Social Credit regime, a high turn-over rate in the Press Gallery and the absence of some of the veteran columnists and reporters, a demoralizing eight-month newspaper strike in 1978-79, and an attendant decline in newspaper circulation.\textsuperscript{134}

Ian Jessop, who began his career at the Legislature as a radio reporter for CKNW from 1980-1988 remarks that, in marked contrast to Dave Barrett, Bill Bennett's reaction to press criticism was \textit{laissez-faire}:

Politicians like to quibble over opinion pieces, which is a mistake...Often they don't stop to ask themselves if criticism is legitimate. It is important not to berate the media, because they always have the last word. There is also a tendency to think that the world revolves around the clipping package they read every morning. The average person doesn't have this on their breakfast table though. Bill Bennett used to pretend he didn't even read papers. Jim Hume would write a scathing column in the \textit{Times Colonist} against the SoCreds and Bennett would greet him the next morning with "Hi Jimmy, still writing for the TC?"\textsuperscript{135}

Jim Hume describes his relationship with Premier Bennett as follows:

Unlike Premiers before him, Bennett never demonstrated public anger or public praise for reporters. In the dozen years I covered him he never once said he liked what I wrote, disliked what I wrote -- or even read what I wrote. Columnists, who love political praise but thrive on political anger, hate to be ignored.\textsuperscript{136}

Despite his apparent ambivalence toward the press, Bill Bennett took measures to tightly centralize press relations. This was partly because he was uncomfortable with the

\textsuperscript{134} Carol Gamey. \textit{op cit} p.31.
\textsuperscript{136} Jim Hume. Personal interview. December 9, 1996.
media and lacked populist charisma; Peter Murray describes the former Premier as “a man forever struggling gamely to produce a smile for the cameras.” There was a mass exodus from the Press Gallery during Bennett’s second term in office, which was attributed to a feeling among journalists that politics were too bitter, and attitudes toward the press too paranoid.

In the opinion of Vancouver Sun columnist Vaughn Palmer, a new era of open government and cooperative press relations was ushered in with the Social Credit government under Bill Vander Zalm, and continued through Mike Harcourt’s subsequent NDP administration:

Vander Zalm and Harcourt pioneered an era of moderate relations. The press (wasn’t) viewed as a class enemy. This was not just an issue of freedom of information, but a new respect for openness. Under Barrett or Bennett, you’d get laughed out of the building for asking for a poll result or a background paper. The paranoid speculation is gone.

Social Credit Premier Bill Vander Zalm’s populist appeal and open communications strategy with the press had the effect of creating a co-operative relationship between media and government. However, while his open style generated abundant news coverage, it was not always good coverage, and by the end of his administration, Vander Zalm felt he had been betrayed by the Press Gallery whom he had done his best to assist in their pursuit of information.

Vander Zalm was famous for his impromptu policy announcements during regular press huddles on the back steps of the Legislature on his way into the office every

137 Peter Murray, op cit.: pp.12, 145.
139 Ibid.
morning. His willingness to make such announcements to the press lead to the bizarre situation of his own ministers making inquiries to the press concerning new policy relating to their ministries. An example of Vander Zalm’s eagerness to please the press was an unusual favour he bestowed upon Vancouver Sun reporter Keith Baldrey. Baldrey asked Vander Zalm to leak the new Cabinet line-up to him before it was announced in the House so that he could meet his 10 a.m. deadline. Vander Zalm agreed, and began writing down the names on a napkin but could not remember all the appointments. Rather than report the wrong names, Baldrey convinced the Premier to give him the whole Cabinet package. Vander Zalm suggested his wife Lillian deliver it to him in the Press Gallery, but Baldrey insisted that it should come from someone in his office: the final exchange took place behind a Smithwright dumpster in the back of the legislative building.140

The turning-point in press relations for Bill Vander Zalm was the Press Gallery’s reaction to his public anti-abortion stance. In an interview with the Sun’s Gary Mason, the Premier expressed his disappointment with his caucus’ refusal to endorse his stand against abortion funding, saying that it displayed a lack of “moxie.”141 The story precipitated a rift in caucus which was deepened by the Press Gallery’s demand that every member of caucus either publicly endorse or disassociate themselves from the Premier’s position. When a significant number of MLA’s broke with the leader’s stand, Vander Zalm contended that the press had caused a crisis in government by driving a wedge into the party.142

In Keith Baldrey’s opinion, the Press Gallery felt personally betrayed by Vander Zalm when he lied consistently on tape over the issue of ownership of his religious theme-park residence Fantasy Gardens which eventually led to the Premier’s resignation following a conflict of interest investigation. In contrast, Press Gallery member Hubert Beyer thought the Press Gallery was conducting a campaign to discredit Vander Zalm by leading the chorus of dissent rather than reporting it.\(^{143}\)

Mike Harcourt’s leadership style during the NDP’s 1992-6 term created a very different atmosphere for media relations. Harcourt had none of the populist appeal of Bill Vander Zalm and was self-admittedly not telegenic. Harcourt was often criticized for not taking a leadership role in caucus and for delegating too much responsibility to his Cabinet. Two of his top ministers, Moe Sihota and Glen Clark, often provided the focus for media stories. Even when the NDP was in opposition, these two MLA’s were regularly seen in the Press Gallery feeding stories to journalists and explaining why issues they had raised in Question Period should be reported. Moe Sihota in particular was so regularly interviewed that Bill Vander Zalm referred to him as “Media Moe,” a moniker which was picked up by the press themselves. Glen Clark was known to call press conferences on weekends or on other slow days, thus guaranteeing prominent media coverage of his issue or message. The adept press relations tactics of Clark and Sihota carried over into the NDP government administration in which both were awarded high-profile ministerial portfolios. In an interview for *Vancouver* magazine, Sihota expresses an almost paternal relationship with the press: “I like to think I’ve got a good off-the-

record relationship with (the press,) and when they need a sound-bite or two, I help them out. I've never met a microphone I didn't like.”

The media appreciated the moves by the NDP to respond to an increased public interest in fiscal issues and fiscal responsibility on the part of governments. Under previous administrations, the ministry of finance had been relatively inaccessible to the Press Gallery. For example, under Dave Barrett's government, reporters could be briefed by public servants in the ministry, but could only report the numbers, never attribute the information to a ministry official. As fiscal issues became more important to the electorate, and politics became more policy oriented and less ideological, the NDP responded by opening up the ministry:

The Ministry of Finance was made far more accessible by Clark. Clark coached his top bureaucrats on press relations. He is one of the few who understands how the press work and understands the formula that the more open you are with the press, the more sympathetic they are likely to be. Closing doors only breeds suspicion on the part of the press.

Not all media relations were smooth for the NDP, however, but in general their administration was less scandal-ridden than the previous Social Credit one in which numerous ministers, and eventually the Premier, had been forced to resign because of conflict of interest. Harcourt's was a policy-oriented government, so the negative news focus was more likely to be directed toward policy rather than particular politicians.

Although the Harcourt government pledged in opposition to form an “honest and open” government, some members of the press felt they did not go far enough, even though they introduced significant freedom of information and conflict of interest legislation. The Nanaimo Commonwealth Holdings Society scandal, which unfolded over a period of two years beginning in 1994, provides an example of how the NDP government engendered suspicion in the Press Gallery about the honesty and openness of

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their administration. In Kim Emerson's opinion, governments would be far better off if they admitted their mistakes up front and immediately took corrective measures. No matter how damaging the information, stating it in full to the press for the public record effectively puts an end to the "news" aspect of the story. The escalation of the Nanaimo Commonwealth Holdings Society scandal, dubbed "Bingogate," involving the misuse of lottery earnings by this fundraising arm of the NDP may have been contributed to by the government's efforts to control and manage the information that was revealed to the public. Eventually, the government ordered an independent forensic audit of the Society and a public inquiry was called, which effectively prevented the government from speaking publicly about the issue, and therefore removed it from the media limelight.

Media relations had deteriorated so much by the end the NDP's term as a result of the Nanaimo Commonwealth Holdings Society scandal that, in Kim Emerson's opinion, the government felt it could not trust the Press Gallery to communicate its message fairly at election time. He suggests that the NDP conducted their 1996 election campaign by moving the entire government from Victoria to Vancouver where the reporters were less experienced at reporting provincial politics and might be less aggressive than the seasoned Press Gallery contingent.\(^{147}\)

Though press relations have differed between the government administrations examined in this chapter, be it due to changes in politics or the Press Gallery, there has been a common thread throughout: new governments generally experience a honeymoon period with the press which degenerates into acrimonious press relations by the end of their administration. This cyclical phenomena of press relations in B.C. is, according to

\(^{147}\) Kim Emerson. Personal interview. November 15, 1996.
former Canadian Press reporter Miro Cernetig, a predictable product of the legislative

term of government:

Press Galleries have a pathology to them. It’s a three act play: You
introduce (the government), they announce policy, you go into an election
and you look at them again. It’s not all introduction, and it’s much harder
the second time because you have a record to defend.\textsuperscript{148}

The cyclical nature of press relations is also a function of the press waiting for
themes to emerge in a particular administration. Governments are usually given the
benefit of the doubt to begin with, such as the “new era” beginning of the Vander Zalm
administration, but as Vaughn Palmer remarks, the media “spin” gradually emerges as
“governments begin to dig channels.”\textsuperscript{149}

That governments and premiers must engage in press relations is a given fact of
the modern political environment in B.C. A Premier who does not know how to respond
to the press is a Premier who does not know how to fulfill the mandate of the office.
Politicians are coming to the realization that they have to understand how media works in
order to deliver a coherent message to the electorate.

4-B The Centralization of Government Communications in B.C.

B.C. Governments are increasingly adopting tightly controlled, centralized
communications strategies as a way of managing and synthesizing the message delivered
to the media from government ministries and the bureaucracy. In 1981, the Social Credit
government under Bill Bennett implemented a centralized communications strategy by
creating the Government Information Programs Office under the direction of Doug Heal.
The office’s mandate was to enhance public relations and the image of government by

\textsuperscript{148} Personal interview. November 27, 1996.
\textsuperscript{149} Personal Interview. July 20, 1994.
creating “appropriate interfaces with those primarily involved in the flow of government information, including Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, the Premier’s Office, Treasury Board, Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Senior Information Officers.”¹⁵⁰ The trend continued under Social Credit Premier Bill Vander Zalm who, in 1987, tightened the reins on communications by moving a public office, GIS (Government Information Services,) into the Premiers Office. Vander Zalm relinquished control, however, after being accused of “empire building.”¹⁵¹ The Harcourt administration also adopted a centralized strategy for media relations which extended, some charge, to politicizing the bureaucracy in order to guarantee a government-friendly message. For example, the media accused the Government of creating a propaganda-arm out of a public office by hiring Evan Lloyd, a former caucus communications director and New Democrat, as the Associate Deputy Minister of the Government Communications Office in the Ministry of Government Services.

The Press Gallery generally resents moves by government to tighten and centralize their communications, not only because it limits access for journalists, but because a politicized bureaucracy is no longer seen as a legitimate source of neutral information about policy development. Additionally, such moves are seen as efforts to manipulate the news through image-mongering and agenda setting.

4-B-i Earned Versus Bought Media Exposure

There is an axiom in politics that an MLA who does not receive adequate media exposure is often a one term MLA.\(^{152}\) There are two categories of media exposure available to politicians: earned exposure and bought exposure. Earned media coverage, that is, voluntary exposure for a politician on the part of an independent media outlet, is inherently more credible in the eyes of the public and more valuable to government if the message is “good news.” A classic example of the perceived value of voluntary positive exposure by governments came to be known as the “Dirty Tricks Campaign” under Premier Dave Barrett. The Social Credit government allegedly encouraged its members to write letters to the newspapers in support and praise of the party, making it appear that the letters came from ordinary citizens. Forged letters purportedly from NDP supporter Gordon Townsend led to a police investigation, and seriously damaged the credibility of the Social Credit party.

Earned media exposure is not always positive exposure, and politicians in B.C. are turning more often to bought media as a method of getting their positive messages to the public directly, bypassing the filter of the Press Gallery. Bought media exposure generally takes the form of purchased radio or television time in which the Premier or a Cabinet Minister makes an address to the province. Recent examples include Mike Harcourt’s address on government forest policy in the wake of protests over logging in Clayoquot Sound, and Glen Clark’s address on the NDP’s underestimation of the government’s budget deficit leading into the 1996 election. Neither of these televised announcements was particularly successful as a communications strategy. There is a

\(^{152}\) Christopher Harris. “The Media and Parliament.” op cit.: p.3.
sense that there is some public resentment about the publicly borne costs of these addresses, and that the “trust” factor of leaders is challenged: the question is not the message they are delivering, but what it is that they are not saying in this controlled environment. There is also a sense that the government only needs to resort to this public relations strategy because it is in a communications crisis. “Earned” media, in the form of voluntary positive coverage from independent sources is a far more valuable and credible form of public relations.

In addition to being less credible, bought media can actually do more damage than good for the party in question. Mike Harcourt characterized a televised town hall forum on BCTV in which a randomly selected audience was invited to discuss the government’s fiscal policies with himself and Finance Minister Elizabeth Cull, as a public relations disaster. This was partly due to production problems, but also due to the loss of control caused by what Harcourt saw as a hostile audience. Harcourt acknowledged that because he did not have an affinity for the television camera, he needed a tightly managed, disciplined environment in order to get his message across: this was not it.\(^{153}\)

4-B-ii News Management

When not using bought media exposure, B.C.’s provincial politicians are relying more and more on news management techniques in order to get their messages to the electorate. News management gives politicians some measure of control in determining the information that does, or does not reach the public, and allows them to frame the information in the most positive way possible. The news conference is the classic example of a news management technique in which politicians make “good news”

\(^{153}\)Mike Harcourt and Wayne Skeene. op cit.: p.135.
announcements in a controlled environment. These events are normally chaired by a member of the Minister's staff, and are far less frenetic and confrontational than the media "scrum"s that take place in the corridors of the Legislature. The media, however, resents "staged" events and will often boycott them unless there is some element of controversy to the announcement. Government press releases get the same reaction from the Press Gallery who see them as useless - they provide basic information, but to get at the real story, journalists need independent sources.

Government-sponsored opinion polling is another method of news management. As Peter Desbarats explains, however, media are bound to feel that government polls are an encroachment upon their domain:

Many reporters felt they intruded into areas that were the rightful domain of journalism. Worse still, they brought a measure of scientific accuracy to one of the intuitive processes that had previously been part of the mystique of journalism - the divination of moods and trends among the electorate.\textsuperscript{154}

Since the 1970's, it has been permissible to publish polling results during election campaigns in British Columbia. Media outlets often commission their own polls, however, and this takes the element of control away from political parties. Some have charged that the resurgence of the B.C. Liberal party in the 1992 election was strongly connected to the favourable, and perhaps skewed results of a poll conducted by BCTV immediately following the station's televised leaders' debates prior to the election. To safeguard against manipulation of polling, the NDP implemented legislation in 1995 which requires that any agency publishing or broadcasting a poll result also disclose the sample size, exact questions posed, and the margin of error.

\textsuperscript{154} Op cit.: p.130.
Political parties and politicians in the Legislature take media relations seriously, and hire trained professionals as communications liaisons, press secretaries and public relations advisors. The NDP government under Harcourt coached top bureaucrats and politicians in media relations. For example, new MLA’s and civil servants received copies of *Pocket Tips: Working with the Media* and *Managing Surprise: An Issue Management Process* both published by the Public Affairs Bureau. These two documents provide sixty pages of statistics, policy and advice on how to get the best possible results from interaction with the print, television and radio media, and how to quickly respond to information leaks or unexpected events. The information covers everything from what to wear, how to sit, how to speak on the telephone, how to control facial expressions and mannerisms, the type of language to use, who may speak to whom and under what conditions. Apparently, the government’s hope is that media coaching will make politicians better able to present themselves in arranged interviews and when journalists catch them off-guard in situations in which they have little control.

The most important time for news management techniques is during elections. A solid platform is not enough for political parties anymore; to get elected, their parties, and especially their leaders, need to be able to master both the medium and the message. In his commentary on the media strategies used during the 1996 provincial election, John Pifer comments that all sides carefully planned the delivery of their messages. For example, the NDP affixed a telegenic sign reading “On Your Side” to every podium from
which Glen Clark spoke, and major parties ran particularly hard-hitting television advertising campaigns.  

In addition to news management techniques such as paid advertising, televised public addresses, news conferences, press releases, polling and media coaching for politicians and bureaucrats, there are several other methods that politicians use to bypass the media and communicate directly with the public.

**4-B-iii Direct Communications**

Since the spring of 1991, the Legislative sessions have been televised through a live, in-House telecast. This allows politicians to speak to their constituents more or less directly, through the unedited broadcast sometimes referred to as the "electronic Hansard." In-House television may provide an increased recognition factor for provincial politicians among the electorate, especially for back-bench and opposition MLAs who do not get much exposure otherwise. However, the broadcast is not particularly compelling for viewing audiences as the camera is focused on one speaker at a time, thus toning down the true adversarial atmosphere of legislative democracy in action. At times when the debate gets heated, MLAs speak out of order, or there is disruption from the Galleries, the camera focuses on the provincial shield behind the speakers chair. The electronic Hansard is not really a news source, however, and is better characterized as a democratic provision of freedom of information and a source of public education about the legislative process.

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Another communications technique, most often used by back-bench MLAs, is direct mail. Constituents are sent copies of an MLA's speech published in Hansard, with an accompanying letter. There is no risk of misinterpretation or decontextualization by the media, but as with most direct communications strategies, it is expensive for the politician.

A final direct communication strategy is government publications, such as “Victoria this Week” a chronology of news highlights published by the NDP government’s communications office. The number of government publications reached an all-time high during Dave Barrett’s term as NDP Premier: the Vancouver Sun counted ninety-eight government periodicals in circulation, including The Weekly Summary issued by the Premier’s office as a pseudo-news release (circulation 500,) an Orders in Council Resume issued after every Cabinet meeting, and the B.C. Government News periodical with a circulation of 60,000. Marjorie Nichols expressed the Press Gallery’s resentment with a Sun headline reading: “Barrett adopts a scheme he denounced -- government propaganda service attempts to compromise media.”

All of governments’ efforts at controlling the message delivered to the public are inevitably frustrated by the lack of credibility attendant in bought media. Media management techniques, however, do lend some element of control and preparedness for media encounters. However, when governments infringe on the territory of the Press Gallery, they are not welcomed.

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156 Carol Gamey. op cit.: pp, 23,25,27.
4-C Conclusions

Government-media relations have been a particularly important part of the post-1972 political history of British Columbia, which has been characterized by an officially independent and professionalized Press Gallery. At various points in their administrations, every government has experienced friction between press and the Premier. The universality of this phenomenon suggests that the adversarial brand of the Press Gallery is not politically motivated, rather, it is a function of legislative reporting. The press relations cycle follows the cycle of a term in office, beginning with a honeymoon period, and ending with scrutiny and evaluation of the government’s record.

The recent attempts by governments to centralize and coordinate communications point to the over-arching importance of press relations in government affairs. Even opposition parties have begun to use similar strategies to deliver a coherent message. For example, under the leadership of Gordon Wilson, the B.C. Liberal Party implemented guidelines as to whom among its staff and caucus was authorized to speak to the press. The more politicians seek to exert autonomy of the press, and attempt to control the news agenda, the more the press agitate and seek to reclaim their own mandate. Working with rather than against the press would seem to be a more effective and efficient press-relations strategy; however, neither press nor politicians wish to be, or seen to be, compromised by the needs and demands of the other.

Conclusion: The Adversarial Symbiosis of the B.C. Press Gallery and Politicians

The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that neither Press Gallery journalists nor politicians can work completely independently of each other in the B.C. Legislature due to the forces of history, tradition, practical expedience, political necessity, and the over-arching force of inter-related needs. However, the Press Gallery has attempted to exert its autonomy through political independence, professionalization, and collegial norms among its membership. For their part, governments have attempted to exert independence through centralization, news management, and direct communications. In the final analysis, however, the Press Gallery and the Legislature of British Columbia are affected by a holistic institutional environment in which changes in power, authority, procedure, and technology in either institution impact upon the other.

As a result of the competing forces of inter-dependence and of attempts at achieving independence the symbiotic relationship between press and politicians in the B.C. Legislature is most accurately described as “adversarial symbiosis.” This adversarial symbiosis is not static; it is informed by the forces of history, tradition, and convention as much as it is influenced by the modern forces of media technology and legislative reform. Nor is it uniform; it is affected by changes in government press relations strategies, political leadership, market forces in the media industry, and the political culture of British Columbia. The relationship is constantly evolving as new situations present themselves, and as both the institutions of the Press Gallery and Legislature react and adapt to changes in the other institution. The sources of strain and the forces of necessity
in this complex relationship have the effect of creating an atmosphere which is at once collusive and conflict-driven. As both institutions evolve over time, the anomalies of their interactions raise constructive questions about the relationship of press and politicians in the Legislature of British Columbia.

The role of the press in modern legislative democracy can be described as one of creating a free-market of ideas within which the electorate can effectively exercise its franchise. Politically independent, privately owned media providers are an essential ingredient of legislative democracy; however, freedom of the press entails a constant risk of concentration of power through media monopoly. The B.C. media environment is characterized by the predominance of a small number of news outlets with inter-locking ownerships and directorships. Although the current effects are difficult to measure, this environment may begin to restrict the number of viewpoints afforded a public forum through the media if ownership concentration expands and commercial considerations reduce the amount of resources devoted to provincial politics.

The B.C. Press Gallery has become increasingly independent and professionalized since the demise of the partisan press and the development of new journalistic norms which separate the work of journalists from the political process itself. However, the relationship between press and politicians is so inextricably intertwined, and rules and procedures so loosely institutionalized, that there exist many grey areas in the boundaries between the political and journalistic arenas. This points to the modern dilemma of the role of the Press Gallery since the demise of the partisan press: an independent press with no official political or ideological mandate is open to accusations of having its own
agenda. Because of market competition, the press may be fueled by corporate-commercial motivations rather than the higher goal of contributing to the education and information delivery process integral to parliamentary democracy.

The predominance of broadcast media, especially television, as a news source, has had a profound effect on both legislative procedure and other media. The increasing dominance of television as the preferred news medium for the electorate has also increased the power of politicians to use it to their own ends, demonstrating the intertwined power relationship of media and politics. Politicians are more frequently using television to their advantage by tailoring political and legislative activity to fit with the technological and commercial imperatives of the medium. Print media has had to differentiate itself from television, and rethink its mandate in the face of such intense competition in the news industry.

A common thread in relations between government and the Press Gallery throughout the last half of this century has been a cycle of collusion and adversarialism in each administration, which suggests that political ideology is not a significant factor in the press-politician relationship. A more significant indicator is openness of government toward the media. Government efforts to centralize communications and engage in news management and direct communications strategies in an effort to circumvent the Press Gallery have fueled the adversarial leanings of the media. As governments attempt to gain control over the delivery of information, they usurp the press’ traditional role as conduit of information to the electorate. As a result, the press adopt a different, and perhaps greater role, as guardians of the public interest. This entails adversarial posturing
and skeptical analysis on the part of the press, whose role becomes one of a "watchdog" against abuses of power. The irony of the situation, then, is that government efforts at reducing the power and influence of the press have actually caused it to adopt a more significant role in the democratic process.
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Appendix I: Newspaper Articles


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Appendix II: Interviews

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