THE STATE CAPITOL POLITICAL REPORTER: A STUDY IN ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

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By

Albert Kaufman

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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by Albert Kaufman

Body of Abstract

This paper is a study of Michigan State Capitol political reporters and how they attempt to influence the legislative process of Michigan. It is descriptive in nature, exploring how such reporters behave and why they behave the way they do. It is their story culled from open-ended interviews based on structural questions and the "collapsing categories" technique. However imprecise and provisional, it supports the major hypothesis beyond any reasonable doubt that the majority of these reporters attempt to influence the legislative process in varying degrees because they consider themselves part of it. The findings take on added significance because when Michigan findings are compared to those relating to Washington political reporters and the national legislative process, it is clearly evident that behavior is strikingly similar, thus establishing a correlation pattern between government and press on a state as well as national level.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is traditional for authors to give recognition and thanks to those assisting with the development and formal presentation of manuscripts. Regrettably, the list is too long to acknowledge here because this thesis is more than a formal application for a graduate degree. It represents fulfillment of a goal for a university education upon which the author embarked at age 40 and which was encouraged by scores of friends, including my employers, my former newspaper colleagues and distinguished members of Michigan State University's faculty. All are entitled to share in my happiness but none as much as my dearest wife, Mamie, to whom I respectfully dedicate this paper.

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CHAPTER 1

1... Some perceive political reporters as deadly microbes, undermining the integrity of government. Others view them as vital agents sustaining a complex political system. How these organisms perceive themselves has long interested scholars but only in recent years has there been a systematic development of substantive knowledge.[1] Leo C. Roster made a major contribution in 1937.[2] Political scientists have published significant findings starting in the '60's, but the most provocative treatment is seen through Douglass Cater, a former Washington correspondent and currently a member of President Lyndon Johnson's staff. In 1959, Cater wrote a book describing the reporter's role in Washington.[3] It was Cater's thesis that the Washington political reporter is not just the fellow standing on the sidelines, jotting down what he saw and heard. Cater described him as heavily involved in the business of America's

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[1] The paucity of such research was pointed out in Walter Lippman's Public Opinion (New York: MacMillan Company, 1949), p. 320.

[2] L. C. Rosten, The Washington Correspondents (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937).

[3] Douglass Cater, The Fourth Branch of Government (Boston; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959).

government. He saw the reporter operating in a system where power is divided and where the reporter, as much as anyone, but more than a great many, helped to shape the course of government. Cater called the Washington reporter an "indispensable broker and middleman" among the subgovernment of Washington, choosing which event to describe and which to ignore; illuminating policy and giving it clarity; prematurely exposing policy and, not infrequently, causing its destruction. Cater said that at the reporter's worst, he could become an agent of disorder and confusion; at best, he exerted a creative influence on politics.

Cater's study motivated this writer in 1959 to explore the state capitol reporter's role in Michigan government because first, he was a member of that select body and could examine himself while studying his colleagues; secondly, he was a political science student attempting to make a contribution to the discipline. The inquiry was pursued from the hypothesis that newspaper reporters covering the state capitol in Michigan attempted to influence public policy, particularly in the legislative process, because they were directly involved in the process. Open-ended interviews were conducted with every member of the daily capitol press corps and former state capitol reporters whose cumula-

tive experience exceeded fifty years. Legislators, state employees and state executives were asked to comment. The findings were submitted to the Michigan State University Political Science Department, in 1959.[4] They indicated that every member of the press corps assigned to the state capitol directly or indirectly attempted to shape public policy. Like their Washington counterparts, Lansing reporters did not stand around recording processes of state government. They admitted direct and indirect participation in the decision-making process. The data indicated that while techniques differed and results varied, depending upon the reporter and his role perception, Lansing's reporters attempted to shape public policy because they considered themselves part of it.

It must be emphasized that such role perception was not then, nor it it now considered improper. As one reporter stated in 1959:[5]

> "Influence is a natural function of newspapermen. It was expected by my employer and I am convinced it was expected by my readers. Of course, this kind of influence was for better government, better laws, and better officials. The mere fact reporters sit in on legislative sessions constitutes influence in my opinion. Imagine, if you can, what would

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[4]Albert Kaufman, "A Study in State Capitol Reporter Role Perception" (Unpublished term paper, Michigan State University, December, 1959).

[5]Ibid., p. 16 (interview schedule).

> happen around here if sessions were closed to the public and the press.
>
> "Do not forget many legislators and state officials want to be influenced. Many have not had previous experience, and they don't know their way around. Many would much rather be cued in on legislation by newspapermen than lobbyists.
>
> "After 30 years around these parts, I could write a book on the subject, past and present, but don't let anyone kid you as there is influence of all kinds from the press. It will never disappear as long as we are dealing with human beings."

This reaction was not surprising under prevailing conditions. Lansing reporters had unlimited access to the legislative decision-making process.[6] They moved freely in the House and Senate chambers, before, after, and during legislative sessions. They conferred with lawmakers before votes on important issues. When they considered that legislators were playing to the galleries or speaking purely for publicity reasons, reporters frequently left the chambers while the legislator was speaking. Unfortunately, the 1959 study lacked scientific structure. There was emphasis on the dependent variable -- reporter activity in the decision-making process. But only casual treatment

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[6]This contrasts the Washington scene where newspapermen have general run of the House lobby and press association reporters are permitted on the floor itself, although similar privileges are not granted in the Senate. See the Thomas Stokes article, "Coverage Today," Dateline Washington, (Cabell Phillips, et al., New York, Garden City, 1949).

was afforded such independent variables as reporter's background, professional experience, techniques of influence, number of years assignment to the state capitol beat and extent of physical access to the decision-makers. However, the study provided data, previously unpublished. It aroused interest among political scientists. It served as a working model for this thesis. Hopefully, it will stimulate more research because scientific knowledge is limited in this area and the impact of communications in our political process is vast. For example, two daily newspapers have abandoned publication in Michigan since the 1959 study. Students of political science and communication would benefit if it could be scientifically demonstrated that the democratic process is strengthened or weakened by the absence or presence of newspapers.

Since 1959: (1) the personnel of the Lansing press corps has changed almost completely; (2) reporters' movements in legislative chambers have been restricted; (3) reporters must have identification cards; (4) reporters must be officially accredited before gaining floor privileges; (5) control of the executive branch has also changed for the first time in 14 years.

We cannot know without disciplined investigation whether these factors have had any impact on Lansing

reporters' attitudes, techniques and influence on decision-makers. Crucial to this inquiry is whether these changes will affect the central hypothesis in the face of changing relationships between Lansing reporters and political decision-makers, i.e., new reporters and new legislators.

Harold D. Lasswell has said: "The study of politics is the study of influence and the influential."[7] Thus, to understand the political process we must look not only at groups which attempt to exercise influence, but also at the agent of the group and his behavior within the decision-making process. In this study, newspapers are treated as a group and reporters as group agents.

DeVries said that the Michigan lobbyist possesses power in the role he occupies, representing the organized interest group, helping to formulate organization policies, directing techniques and tactics for interpreting this policy to decision-makers.[8] The Lansing reporter can be studied in the same context because the 1959 study showed

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[7]Harold D. Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), p. 1.

[8]Walter DeVries, The Michigan Lobbyist: A Study In The Bases and Perceptions of Effectiveness (PhD Dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1960).

that he:

(1) perceived himself as representing the vast unorganized interest group variously described as "the public:" (2) perceived himself as the unofficial spokesman for that group; (3) devised techniques for interpreting an amorphous policy to decision-makers, hypothesizing that as ears and eyes of this public, the reporter knows what is best for it.

This is a study of the reporter's role perception in the legislative and decision-making process. It attempts to relate and determine the role effectiveness of Lansing reporters. It is concerned with reporter role-taking in the legislative process because the power and leadership political reporters exercise is continuing and substantive.[9] Just as in Washington, Michigan reporters articulate those governmental events which they and their editors deem worthy. Reporters' strength stems from their ability to select -- to define what is news and what is not news. They have

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[9]There is excellent treatment of this phenomenon by: Alan Barth, "The Press As Censor of Government," (Journalism Quarterly, Winter 1963); Joseph and Stewart Alsop, The Reporter's Trade (New York, 1958); Cabell Phillips, "Autocrats of The Breakfast Table," (Dateline Washington, New York, Garden City, 1949); Cf., Rosten, Washington Correspondents, p. 4.; Donald L. Matthews, U.S. Senators And Their Worlds (New York: Knopf-Random House, 1960), p. 206; Dan D. Nimmo, Newsgathering in Washington (New York: Atherton Press, 1964), p. 3.

access to the decision-making process, executive as well as legislative. At gubernatorial press conferences, they may determine by questions which matters shall be brought to the Governor's attention and in what way. They serve as a general channel of communication between the legislature and the Chief Executive, continuing to function when others have broken off. They enjoy an intimacy with legislative leaders few members of the Executive office ever share. As each legislative issue reaches its crisis, one is made sharply aware of the pervasive influence of news and newsmen. We need to know more about this interaction; its weakness and strength; its psychological and philosophical impact on the democratic process.

Examination of the Literature

This writer brings twenty-six years reportorial experience to this study, including fifteen years as a working member of the Lansing press corps. He has been a role-taker and role-observer in the legislative and executive decision-making process. Like others, he has been aware of his role in the power structure of state government. Yet, beyond social discussions and casual intra-fraternity conversation, he and his former colleagues seldom analyzed their roles. It is an interesting phenomenon that while political scientists have been fascinated with the role

of political reporters in Michigan, interaction generally has been brief, informal and without substantive results. A notable exception was the DeVries lobbyist study[10] which brought the Michigan state capitol reporter into focus, but only as a corollary phenomenon.

Cater's work was informative but not structured in the scientific method.[11] Matthews devoted a chapter to "Senators and Reporters."[12] Nimmo's work was more extensive but dwelled principally on the inter-actions of Washington newsmen and governmental public information officers.[13]

There are references in magazine articles, journalism school text-books and quarterlies. Washington correspondents have written around the proposition in anecdotal books. Source material is also available through public opinion literatures and autobiographies of former governmental officials and lobbyists.[14] But few, including political

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[10]Cf., DeVries, Michigan Lobbyists.

[11]Cf., Cater, The Fourth Branch of Government.

[12]Cf., Matthews, U.S. Senators And Their Worlds.

[13]Cf., Nimmo, Newsgathering in Washington.

[14]Sources are too lengthy to footnote, but generally there is some reference to the subject matter in every item listed in the articles, periodicals and unpublished material of this papers' bibliography.

scientists, have come to grips with the subject in great detail.

In Michigan, this paper is the first of its kind.

The absence of such material may be related to the reporter's reluctance to discuss his role. Personal experience indicates that few are ready to discuss trade secrets. Personal experience indicates, too, that few are ready to discuss openly the objectivity of newspapermen, especially political reporters. They tend to believe that any penetrating inquiry relating to impartiality may weaken their image with editors, news sources and readers.

Statement of the Problem

Since evidence is substantial that the political reporter is in a position to influence public policy, it is essential to know if, in fact, he attempts to influence public policy; how he is effective and why. Such knowledge is crucial because while all political reporters are private citizens working for private employers, they assume quasi-official prerogative through occupational status.

This study will examine the Lansing reporter and his job technique. It will examine the reporter's perception of role in the legislative decision-making process; the relationship between reporters and legislators as perceived by the

correspondents; the extent of influence exerted by reporters for wire services and reporters for individual papers. Another facet of this study will be the political reporter's perception of his colleagues and the impact of this relationship with legislators to the legislative process. Because more knowledge is needed about "objectivity" in relation to political news, this study will inquire into this phenomenon and how it relates to Lansing reporters.

Based on findings in the 1959 study and this writer's personal experience as a Lansing political reporter, this thesis hypothesizes that the Lansing reporter attempts to play a role in the legislative decision-making process and attempts to influence legislators; that such attempts at influence are related to role perception, physical access and personal relationships; that personal background and experience are related to reporters' role perception and interaction with legislators; that reporters "make news" and thus tend to influence legislators; that reporters for press associations attempt to influence least of all. This thesis also inquires into the relationship between tenure and influence; i.e., whether the reporter attempts to influence legislators. Finally, discussion is invited on "objectivity" in the news and whether it exists at all in the face of argument that value judgments are always present in policitcal reporting.

Hypotheses and Definition of Terms:

1. What is meant by "influence?".

   a). Overt personal activity in behalf of or in opposition to proposals under legislative consideration.

   b). Initiating policy proposals through legislative access.

   c). Covert "lobbying" through 'editorializing' in reporting legislative deliberations and actions.

2. How can reporters exert influence?

   a). Unusual access to legislative, administrative and political leadership.

   b). Because reporters are popularly believed to be "unsuspect" in this respect, they can function at a different level and through different channels than lobbyists and self-appointed spokesmen for the public or particular publics.

   This "unsuspect" aura and generally superficial noncommitment of reporters to particular points of view or political programs, permits reporters to act as a feeder of intelligence to policy makers from not only legislative, executive, administrative and political leaders, but also government departments. As a two-way street, reporters also feed intelligence to departments.

   c). As recognized agents of the peoples right-to-know, reporters need not observe rituals of political and governmental communication. They can demand -- although it may not always be granted -- entry to deliberations and discussions that would be closed to many lobbyists and leaders.

   d). The reporter in doing his job can attempt to define the area of battle; seek to delineate issues and alternatives in such

fashion as to limit areas of choice open to policy makers.

Chapter 11

Research Methodology

The research in this study was exploratory by nature. The approach was along lines suggested by Selltiz[1] and reiterated by Nimmo:[2] "to gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it, often in order to formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypotheses." Unquestionably, sophistication is lacking and conclusions reached previously and presently are subject to retesting because the political process, as well as its participants, is not static. However, a study of this nature can develop statements of causal relationships and generalizations which are significant to political scientists. In effect, what appears in this study can be treated as a snapshot rather than a studio portrait on the assumption that the small lens result is better than no picture at all. Because of its nature and the limited number of actors involved, statistical accuracy and traditional tools of

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[1] Claire Selltiz et al., Research Methods in Social Relations (rev. ed.; New York: Holt, 1959), p. 50.

[2] Dan D. Nimmo, Newsgathering in Washington (New York: Atherton Press, 1964), p. 237.

testing are not present in this work. In selecting newsmen, the following experience criteria was used. The individual had to be a member of the Lansing press corps (capitol beat) for at least two years. He had to be regularly assigned. By this is meant that the reporter was based in Lansing full-time, or covered legislative sessions on a full-time basis. Radio and television reporters were not included, although this area affords a golden research opportunity to the communication political scientist student. Of interviews conducted with newsmen (N-13), the breakdown included correspondents for the two major wire services (Associated Press and United Press International) as well as daily newspapers. It would have served this investigator better, and perhaps added to the findings, if respondents could have been categorized as "straight reporters,""interpretive reporters," "columnists" and the like. However, the scope of the survey was too small for such a breakdown. Second, the actors, themselves, preferred to be treated as "reporters," not specialists. Third, a breakdown would have tended to identify these individuals, produced less candid answers and in all probability imposed restrictions making this study worthless.

The data sought was basically attitudinal; the procedure used was the personal interview. Interviews were conducted in Detroit, Lansing, East Lansing and Howell

between March, 1964 and October, 1964. They were arranged by letter and or telephone. All respondents were furnished in advance with an extensive outline of the proposed work and the role he was expected to play.

The mobile nature of the newsman's job created considerable difficulty. In two instances, reporters had been transferred from Michigan and interviews had to be conducted by telephone and by mail. One person was omitted from this study because of his assignment to the 1964 presidential election campaign and information that his return was indefinite. With two exceptions, every individual co-operated fully. Answers were candid and in depth when requested. With those exceptions noted, none hesitated to answer even those questions which admittedly dealt with personal behavior and attitudes. It should be pointed out that the so-called "exceptions" answered all questions although their responses were sometimes guarded and evasive. How the respondents would have re-acted to an academic person, rather than a former colleague, is conjectural, but it was evident that a rapport existed and in several instances the respondents volunteered that only a newspaperman could effectively

interpret their answers.[3] The integrity of the Lansing press corps is not at issue here because, essentially, they are considered by the profession to be among the best in the nation. They take their job seriously and their effectiveness and ability as newspapermen has been demonstrated time and again.

The clinical data was assembled through open-ended interviews based on structural questions and the "collapsing categories" technique. It became evident early in this study, that forced choice answers, i.e., "always," "frequently," etc., were only clues and had to be measured against detailed discussion. This presented problems in evaluating the "frequent" or "occasional" answer but considering the nature of this work, the problems were not considered insurmountable for persons trained for this type of inquiry. The portable tape recorder technique was considered and abandoned because it could create an element of "mistrust," a judgment later confirmed in discussions with the respondents. Interviews were written by

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[3]It would be presumptuous to imply that only former colleagues could have access. The fact is that Lansing reporters have been generous in their co-operation with academic persons. However, the reporters' role in the legislative process has largely been articulated through hearsay and not too infrequently, bias. Reporters are generally concerned lest their employers misinterpret free discussion of so-called "trade secrets" and reportorial techniques.

hand. Pencil and paper were explosed only when considered necessary. This technique may cause alarm but 26 years of newspaper background provided skills in recording interviews based on the premise that most persons are more relaxed and more candid when not subjected to the psychological pressure of recording apparatus.

Interviews occupied from ninety minutes to three hours, depending on the respondents' time availability. They were conducted in offices, restaurants, private clubs and in two instances, over a lengthy dinner meeting. As noted earlier, respondents not infrequently objected to forced choice of answers.

For statistical purposes, respondents answered as directed by the categories but it was obvious they preferred a modified form of the non-directed interview.[4] This technique permits the respondent to take advantage of his personal cognitive structure of topics discussed and his own interpretation of the basic questions posed and thus promote a relaxed point of view. As noted by Nimmo, such free expression promotes a rambling type of interview but develops data consistent with the scope of inquiry, if

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[4]Cf., Selltiz et al., Research Methods In Social Relations. p. 267.

not statistical.[5] Here, the skill and experience of the interviewer comes into sharp focus, albeit "tests of significance" are missing, however desirable. Yet, such an approach is not without some virtue.[6]

Nimmo encountered similar problems in his study and comments extensively on "tests of significance."[7] However, he notes that their absence is no indication of despair in exploratory studies and asserts that "although inferences drawn from the survey data apply validly only to the samples involved, such inferences in the form of hypotheses can be extended to the broader universe of informational and newsgathering activity." Hence, he points out, that despite the lack of "tests of significance" to prove that patterns of concensus and variation of attitudes uncovered are typical of all official news sources and newsmen or are the "norms" of all explanatory and newsgathering behavior,

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[5]Cf., Nimmo, Newsgathering in Washington, p. 246.

[6]Based on personal experience, reporters are quick to detect flaws in structured questionnaires, and consequently, they do not hesitate to "grab the ball" from the interviewer and start interviewing him, if permitted.

[7]Cf., Nimmo, Newsgathering in Washington, p. 247.

there exists a body of knowledge that has validity and can be used as an effective tool in other exploratory research. With this thesis, I agree.

Because the character of newsmen's activity in governmental reporting has been defined as essentially political, Nimmo constructed a classification pattern based upon the consistent attitude patterns which emerged from his analysis of the interview data.[8] He developed three categories: (1) the recorder, whose discretion is limited to selection of events for reporting and while accepting some interpretation as a necessary part of the trade, never to the point of injecting his own opinions; (2) the expositor, who has more discretion than the recorder in story selection itself and who considers himself a specialist scanning the political scene for stories that may serve the purpose of giving depth to reader understanding. The expositor feels no limitation on his role because he is aware that personal judgment is involved and objectivity is virtually impossible; (3) the prescriber, who chooses his own subjects for comment and considers himself a competent commentator on a broad range of problems and who in matters of objectivity is quite content to recognize its impossibility and

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[8]Ibid., p. 49.

its undesirability.

Nimmo said that his classification closely resembles impressions of others who have attempted to specify the types of reporting in the political systems, notably Frederic E. Merwin,[9] and Richard Wilson,[10] because such reporting generally falls in the categories of press association men, special correspondents and columnists.

This study confirms on a state level (Michigan) the validity of categorizations developed by those analyzing the Washington scene and thus it is appropriate to utilize such classifications in the context of political communication. However, a cautionary note may be in order. Recorders, expositors and prescribers are well defined in the Washington arena because their sponsors (employers) spend more for such expertize. Conversely, economic implications place limitations on state political coverage and thus, Michigan reporters frequently assume the role of recorder-

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[9]Frederic E. Merwin, "The Reporting of Government News," The Press And Society, ed. George L. Bird and Frederic E. Merwin (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), pp. 214-219.

[10]Richard Wilson, "Reporting the Washington News," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCXIX (1942), pp. 128-130.

expositor-prescriber interchangeably. As a general proposition, however, press association reporters confine themselves to the role of recorder in Michigan.

Most correspondents function as expositors. Bureau chiefs act as expositor-prescriber. At least two correspondents in the Michigan study could be termed prescriber, exclusively.

Chapter 111

Role Perception

With one exception all respondents were college graduates. Nine had majored in journalism; three were English majors and two, political science majors. Two were graduate students but only one received an advanced degree, and the latter reporter, an English major, indicated the least enthusiasm for political reporting. On the average, respondents had spent 7.6 years in the newspaper business before assignment to the state capitol beat. On the average, they had spent 8.8 years as political communicators, although one had been a Lansing reporter for 25 years and another, for 30 years.

The majority said they had no pre-conceived notion of the Lansing assignment. They tended to view it generally as a "high honor," "fulfillment of a personal desire," and dealing with a major field of interest. Two with previous political reporting experience in other states looked upon Lansing as another assignment.

However, when asked whether their pre-conceived notion of the assignment had changed after two years on Lansing beat, the out-of-staters were among the majority who said "yes." One considered the subject matter more diverse; the pace more excessive and offering more major stories. The other noted different influences at work in Michigan

state government, i.e., labor and management. Generally, the majority considered the work harder, more responsible and requiring greater accuracy in the face of stiffer competition. One noted the opportunity to exercise more influence in public affairs. Another spoke of the "greater challenge," "greater satisfaction" and need for thoroughness. Two reporters (from the same publication, although interviewed at different places and at different times) made these comments:

a). "Yes, my views have changed. You soon realize the glitter doesn't continue. News sources can still lie, no matter how high they are. They try to use you and your paper and make you cynical. You form opinions and they reflect in your stories. They have to.

b). "Yes, you become more crassly political. You realize that these men in high place operate on the pork barrel level. It's give me this and I'll give you that."

Minority responses included "I'm not so awed by it because men in government are like anyone else;" "not knowing what to expect, the question cannot provide an answer;" "what is the norm?"

Objectivity

It is axiomatic among reporters to approach their assignment objectively and without bias. However, the Lansing press corps were almost divided on whether objectivity was possible, or even desirable. Generally, they

tended to agree with the great body of literature which asserts in substance that complete objectivity is impossible because objects, standards and past experiences always interpose themselves; that man is the prisoner of the sum total of his experiences;[1] that value judgments are always present.

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[1]The concept of objectivity has been examined in great detail by academic as well as non-academic persons. It is the heart of the fact-value controversy among political scientists who have produced a vast store of literature, including analyses by: Vernon VanDyke, Political Science: A Philosophical Analysis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), Part IV; APSR 57 (March, 1963, op. cit.), p. 130.; Leo Strauss, What Is Political Philosophy? (Glencoe: Free Press, 1959), p. 24.; James W. Prothro, "The Nonsense Fight Over Scientific Method: Plea for Peace, "Journal of Politics 18 (August, 1956), p. 566.; Max Weber, "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality in Sociology and Economics, " Methodology of Social Sciences, (Glencoe Free Press).; Richard Rudner, "Value Judgments in the Acceptance of Theories, in P.G. Frank (ed.) The Validation of Scientific Theories (New York: Science Library, Collier Books), p. 28.; Walter Lippman, Public Opinion (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), p. 360.; Ken Macrorie, "Objectivity, Dead or Alive," Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1959, p. 150.; Edward R. Murrow, quoted in Charles Wertenbacher, "The World On His Back," New Yorker, 29:29 (Dec. 26, 1953); Leo C. Rosten, The Washington Correspondents (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), p. 5.; Elmer Davis, "Must We Mislead The Public, "The Press In Perspective (Louisiana State University Press, 1963), p.58.; Doris Fleesson, "An Art To Be Practiced," The Press in Perspective, p. 145.

Among those Lansing reporters who write for daily newspapers, these comments were typical:

a). You cannot live with these animals six months of a year and treat your role in a strict objective manner, because the longer you are around, you know the liars and the truth-sayers.

b). Reporters strive most of the time for objectivity but true objectivity is a myth because reporters generally are an intelligent lot. Anyone in that job forms opinions and prejudices, whether he likes it or not.

c). New reporters are amenable to a "pat on the back." You make friends because you need friends and as a result, you tend to lose objectivity. Also, the competition tends to push reporters toward one politician or another; one party or another; and thus, objectivity becomes a little fractured.

One Lansing press association reporter observed:

> The vast majority of Lansing reporters are as objective as possible within humane limits but some reporters get hold of a pet project and act as informal lobbyists for that project or bill. They write stories that might influence passage or defeat of a bill.

In general, all Lansing correspondents agreed that press association reporters were "most objective" because, unlike daily correspondents who could select and discard certain news developments, press association reporters reported virtually everything that happened. It was demanded by the nature of their assignment and the mixture of their clients. For example, the Detroit correspondent might ignore a legislative development involving the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, yet the story might have front

page news implications that wire service reporters could not ignore, not without risking a complaint from the client whose politics might be Republican or Democratic party oriented.

There is a trend, as noted by Mader, from objective to interpretive reporting, particularly in the press association and network reporting enterprises. This phenomenon is explained partially by the awakening awareness to go beyond what some public official says is happening and what is actually happening.[2] As Nimmo points out, such interpretation suggests a form of policy-making which can be defended by the newsman on the grounds that he is representative of the public interest.[3]

Criteria For Selecting Assignments

Nimmo's concern assumes added significance in the light of discussions with Lansing reporters on their criteria for selecting assignments. Essentially, the majority of reporters agreed their criteria involved

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[2]Joseph H. Mader, "Government Press Bureaus and Reporting of Public Affairs," Journalism Quarterly, XXXIII (Summer, 1956), pp. 346-348.

[3]Dan D. Nimmo, Newsgathering in Washington (New York: Atherton Press, 1964), p. 59.

value judgments and their establishment of news priorities. Typical comments:

a). I try to go to top stories which I feel will have an effect newswise on both politics and the flow of government in Michigan.

b). Is it newsworthy? Is it something people will want to know about and should know about?

c). Does it interest me? Is it important to the issue and will people want to read it?

Others spoke about "good readership potential" and "headline possibilities." Among wire service reporters, the approach was standardized:

> You must cover specific areas, whether you like it or not. Even if you wanted to slant, you cannot get away with it because you are dealing with 40 or 50 editors with different views.

The Implications of Editorial Policy

The majority of Lansing reporters said that editorial policy not infrequently influenced their story selection. Some spoke of "holy cows" -- a phrase reserved for pet projects of editors which demand and receive special attention from reporters, regardless of merit or one's personal view. Others said they were inclined to give more attention and detailed coverage to a story suggested by their editor. One reporter stated:

> If you know the editor's views well, you can bathe in bylines and front-page play.

However, it is not suggested here that story selection,

motivated by editorial policy, is necessarily a negative. The editor can often better assess a public issue and its impact on the community than the reporter in Lansing. The question was raised in interviews to test the "influence factor' and the majority of reporters agreed that influence, when necessary, can be stimulated by the home office.

Some described it as a human frailty, others said it was "good Business" to share the editor's view. Most said they were "sensitive" to their offices, but not necessarily guided by them. One reporter declared:

> I found out early that anything about George Romney got good play in the paper and so I acted accordingly. Nobody told me. I just learned it by watching the paper daily.

Influence by Newspapers

There has been considerable debate on the relationship of newspapers to the legislative process and how much influence a free press should exert in the democratic decision-making arena.[4] Among Lansing reporters there is

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[4]The role of a free press in determining public opinion has not received proper attention, according to Marcus M. Wilkinson in his article, "History and Journalism Research," Journalism Research (Louisiana State University Press, 1949), p. 20. He deplores the lack of techniques in analyzing the role newspapers have played in forming public opinion and urges more attention to the influence exercised by editors and their newspapers, not merely political influence but that which tends to mold social and economic life of the times.

no disagreement on the newspapers' role. They were unanimous in their opinion that newspapers have attempted and should attempt to influence legislators regarding public policy. They differed only in degree. A reporter of many years experience declared:

> That's their purpose. It can't be any other way. The only question is whether the insistence of an editor to get a legislator to vote a certain way is detrimental to the entire state. Sometimes editors get so involved, they cannot see beyond the horizon of their own circulation area and what he attempts to do by journalistic pressure is not necessarily good for the entire state.

Another reporter said that many legislators do not know how to vote and depend on the newspapers and editorialists for guidance because they, the legislators, do not have time to research the hundreds of bills that pass through a session.

In general, the reporters contended that the American people depend on newspapers to express protests or approval and by having access to information newspapers are obligated to speak for the public.

Influence By Reporters

Having discussed the role of newspapers in Michigan and their relationship to the legislative-process, Lansing reporters were asked whether they attempted to influence legislators and if so, why and how.

The majority stated frankly that they attempted to influence in varying degrees. The minority said "never." Those who said they attempted to influence, explained their behavior thusly:

a). My paper supported a particular issue and I expressed those beliefs to my friends in the legislature, and incidentally, it is important to have important friends because you can cover the entire legislature by talking to 10 people.

b). I and others on our paper talked to legislators regarding certain issues in which we were vitally interested because we felt it was in the best interest of the public.

c). It was nothing more than conversation with certain legislators. We provided them with information that was in harmony with the party's point of view. There were no threats or promises -- just conversation.

d). I wrote a particular story which I was almost certain would be read by friends of mine in the legislature, and after they read it, we could discuss it. If you are around here long enough, you build certain friendships.

Another reporter said he went to friends in the legislature and pointed out implications of pending legislation which they said they were not aware of. Other reporters spoke of the "casual remark," "spotlighting an issue in the news column and explaining them later in conversations with legislators." Another reporter said that a certain bill had been introduced at "my urging" and was adopted, after failing once, "because of a continuous program of our paper working with the finance committees

of the House and Senate." This reporter described his influence and that of his paper as "constructive influence" because it involved a particular community project. All who admitted to influence attempts saw no harm in their activity. Without exception, they said they believed that what they were doing was in the public interest because it reflected no private gain for themselves or their paper.[5]

How Reporters Perceived Their Colleagues In Influence Roles

While a minority of Lansing reporters said they had not attempted to influence legislators, all reporters but one who declined to answer perceived their colleagues as attempting to influence. Whether the majority was pinpointing one, two, five, ten or all capitol correspondents could not be ascertained because no names were mentioned and names were not solicited. These responses were given on the subject:

a). Some reporters have attempted to influence on specific pieces of legislators.

b). I have seen reporters propose amendments to legislators and openly volunteer opinions.

c). I have seen indications which lead me to believe some reporters at some times and on certain issues did attempt to influence legislators.

d). Not too much of it going on but I am aware that reporters have to keep their shirts clean by not lobbying unless you lobby for the majority party.

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[5]How political reporters influence the decision-making process has already been footnoted in the works of Rosten, Cater, Matthews, the Alsop Brothers, Nimmo, et. al.

e). I find some newspapermen who take a personal interest in certain legislation, often they involve pet projects.

f). Most reporters spotlight their influence in their columns or conversation but a few are more deeply involved.

g). I have known reporters who because of a personal dislike for certain people and for certain legislation take a personal hand in seeing that things went their way.

h). You just have to be around and observe what goes on to know that the least attempt to influence is from the freshman reporter who doesn't know how to influence.

Legislators Attempt To Influence Reporters

Attempts to influence are not a one-way street. The majority of respondents agreed that legislators attempt to influence reporters and by techniques variously described as the "friendly leak" and "button-holing" process. As one reporter put it: somebody is always working on somebody, over drinks at bars, passing remarks, floor debates and through the "hand-out" technique (issuing prepared statements). Legislators were represented as suggesting stories, volunteering viewpoints which they hoped to see in print, and trying to be friendly with reporters. Generally, reporters agreed that the legislative process is like a market-place where someone is always buying or selling political viewpoints, and not infrequently, the sales target is the reporter.

Reporters Impact On Legislator

There is no evidence that the reporter is influenced by the legislator but is the legislator influenced by the reporter? The majority of respondents thought reporters had some impact. Only one said "never."[6]

It was the press corps concensus that if they did influence legislators proof was lacking in most instances. Reporters generally agreed that legislators are conscious of the press and the reporter's power and that all public officials desired a "good public image". However, the reporters recognized that in most instances, they are used as sounding-boards by legislators who try to determine reaction toward certain legislation before it is introduced. Reporters also recognized that legislators' "influence attempts" were directly related to their constituency and home-town newspapers.[7] Thus, legislators dependent on Saginaw press coverage were more concerned with Saginaw reporters than Detroit reporters. In this context, the Saginaw area legislator might also be more subject to influence by the Saginaw reporter than the Detroit newspaperman whose circulation has no impact upon Saginaw readers. However, there is evidence of influence by

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[6]Matthews' treatment of this phenomenon in his "Senators and Reporters" chapter is all inclusive.

[7]Ibid, p. 200.

reporters. One reporter recalled a cartoon showing "Quislings" following a certain legislator depicted as a Pied Piper. Immediately after publication of the cartoon -- and distribution around legislative chambers -- the alleged "Quislings" changed their positions on a roll call vote.

Access To Legislators

Michigan legislative reporters enjoy a physical proximity to the legislative process that is unique. The 1959 study noted that correspondents had almost "free run" in the executive office and halls of the House and Senate. They had almost unrestrained freedom on the floor before, and after, and during legislative sessions. They could and did confer with lawmakers just before votes were taken on important matters. They could and did manifest personal opinions, before and after a vote, by facial expressions or vocal outburst. There were implications and unofficial complaints to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate that certain reporters had lobbied for private interests. There were implications that such lobbying was for private gain and within confines of the legislative chambers. The alleged practice will not be examined here because while this knowledge is empirical to this writer and veteran members of the Lansing press corps; there is no official record of the complaints. However in 1957, capitol correspondents were requested by legislative

officials to sign pledges that they would not "lobby" if granted access to legislative chambers. The request created a furor in the press corps. Some reporters signed. Others would not. In effect, the request did not become official and there is no evidence the incident was recorded in legislative journals.[8]

However, by the beginning of the 1963 legislative session, House and Senate officials were issuing official press cards recommended by a special screening committee of the capitol press corps in the House and Senate, and acted upon by the chairman of the Business Committee in the Senate and the Secretary of the Senate Committee on correspondents in the House. Such cards were signed by the Speaker of the House and the Chairman of the House Committee on Correspondents.

On February 7, 1963, Allison Green, Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, sent a special memorandum to recipients of press cards which stated:

> The Speaker of the House and the Chairman of the House Press Committee urge all news reporters, expecially those who may not have past experience in the Capitol, to observe the basic customs and rules of decorum which are in addition to the standing rules of the House.

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[8]Unfortunately, there is no written record of this situation but it is undisputed among veteran Lansing reporters and of first-hand knowledge to this writer while a member of the Lansing press corps.

> Please do not use the center aisle. Do not walk in front of the Speaker's rostrum or between Members addressing each other or the body of the House; or otherwise create a distraction while the House is in session.
>
> If a number of correspondents feel it necessary to hold an 'informal press conference' with a member while the House is in session, it is suggested that it be held off the floor of the House.
>
> Please be considerate of each other. Time and limitations of present press room space make the job of thorough and accurate newsgathering difficult enough as it is.
>
> Be advised that admission to the floor of the House is provided for representatives of the press in the standing rules of the House, not by the State Constitution. Disregard for rules and respected customs by a few could mean great inconvenience for all.
>
> Be advised that any person admitted to the floor under the House rules who lobbies or is a lobbyist forfeits his right to enter the House at any time.
>
> The House Press Committee also reminds new recipients of press cards that because of severely limited facilities, issuance of credentials at this time does not carry with it any right to unassigned seats, facilities or services.[9]

Conversations with veteran correspondents disclosed that legislators unofficially urged House leaders to bar reporters from the floor during sessions. At one point, it was suggested that desks assigned to reporters on the floor

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[9]The letter has been framed and now hangs in the House Press Room at the State Capitol, Lansing, Michigan.

of the House be moved to a balcony area. Support came from several legislators who contended that certain reporters were acting "beyond" their reportorial function and that with a space shortage in chambers the move would be appropriate. Here again, the plan was abandoned after vigorous protest from the press corps. The Green memo was issued subsequently.

Reporters were asked whether their physical proximity to legislators was related to a tendency to influence and the majority agreed that it was. They said that friendships were inevitable in the confining atmosphere of a session and "influence possibilities could not be eliminated." One replied: the closer you are, the more they are aware of your influence. Another said that certain legislators watched reporters' reactions at the press tables, and if reporters seemed bored or were not taking notes, the legislators shortened debates.

One reporter who said "no," explained:

> It depends upon what reporters are involved and where the legislators are from. Some out-state legislators could not care less about Detroit reporters and some of the old pros have reached the point where they know yesterday's paper is for wrapping fish.

Reporters Oppose Separation From Legislative Process

While respondents agreed their proximity was related to influence possibilities, they were unanimously opposed

to separation from the House and Senate,[10] These were typical comments:

a). I don't see why putting "the people of Michigan" in the balcony serves any purpose. If anything, it keeps them farther from an accurate picture.

b). Physical access is a way to double-check on what has happened. It protects the accuracy of statements heard and prevents misunderstanding.

c). Legislators act more circumspect by seeing reporters around. The nearness tends to indicate that 'big brother is looking over your shoulder.'

d). The good of having ready access outweighs the bad.

e). Why change? Lobbyists sit in the gallery and that doesn't reduce their effectiveness or materially change their relationship with legislators.

Rules Of The Game

One hypothesis of this study was that reporters proximity to the legislative process developed friendships and a "club atmosphere" which followed certain unwritten rules of the game, i.e., reporting some things and not others. In this context, the reporters were asked whether they felt it was improper to report "some things about

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[10]Based on personal experience, such opposition is understandable from the reporter point of view. However, the Stokes article, "Coverage Today," Dateline: Washington (New York: 1949,) p. 267, points out that while reporters generally have run of the House lobby, no newspaperman can go either into the United States Senate lobby or the floor of the Senate during sessions.

legislators." The majority said "yes." They agreed that value judgments were involved but essentially they viewed legislators' private lives to be free from public scrutiny unless public duty was effected. There were variations in the definition of "public duty," but it generally related to those concepts outside of drinking, affairs with secretaries, and moral views.[11] One reporter said:

> They are elected as legislators, not Saints. Some have girl-friends, some drink too much, others drive too fast.

Another said:

> I'm not interested about legislators showing up drunk, or with whom he sleeps, or where he goes to church. I am interested in what he does, and how he votes on issues effecting the public.

Other comments:

a). If something he does intrudes on his public role, I report it. Otherwise, no.

b). Some personal things are not public business The legislator is human. He has a right to personal privacy. If he gets to be a public spectacle, it is different.

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[11] Whatever the reason, reporters tend to be liberal in their moral views, hence a reluctance to write about "affairs" and excessive drinking except if it results in arrest. Some call it "back-scratching." Others allude to it as "unwritten rules of the game." Matthews ties the knot to the basic reason in his "Senators and Reporters" chapter with the observation that the reporter, like the legislator, needs friends to do an effective job, U.S. Senators And Their Worlds, p. 214. Rosten makes the point that "it is foolish to sacrifice a first-rate news source for a third-rate story," Washington Correspondents, p. 110.

Press association reporters said they shared generally the views of their colleagues on daily newspapers. However, the press reporters said they were obligated to report "all the news," if it became part of the public record, "including the drunks and drunk drivers." Only one reporter said he did not feel bound by any club loyalty. He declared:

> As public figures, legislators deserve public scrutiny, and frankly, they need a good kick in the pants sometimes to keep them straight.

How Legislators View Reporters

The majority of respondents agreed that while legislators tend to regard capitol reporters as part of the legislative process, reporters are viewed with suspicion and not infrequently as "political opponents." It was the consensus that new legislators are less restrained in their relations with reporters than so-called old-timers but restraint exists, nevertheless. Reporters gave these responses:

a). It is largely a matter of personality. Some legislators are impressed by us. Others are not sure whether we can or will harm them. At first all are cautious. Then they relax--but never completely.

b). It depends on the legislator. Some are "clubby" while some take pains to avoid you. Usually those who are the least effective and the least capable are the ones who avoid reporters.

c). It depends upon the position of leadership.

> Most leaders are quite candid about what's going on. Some seek you out for publicity. Others make themselves available. It is important to remember, however, that the House and Senate are run by not more than 15 men. If you know them, and enjoy their confidence, you know what is going on in the legislature.

Reporters' Political Persuasion As Related To Favoritism

Most reporters admitted definite political persuasions but the majority said such feelings did not enter into their relationships with legislators or handling of the news. One, however, pointed out that certain reporters tend to gravitate to those legislators who share similar political views.[12] Another declared:

> Let's be honest about this. Personal feelings are bound to enter to a degree because anything that offends your own view of how society should be run, would call for action and such action is generally tied to one political party or another.

Other comments:

a). Your whole political philosophy governs the way you feel about certain issues, whether you admit it or not. You try your best to balance judgments but many times, it is only a try.

b). After you are here for a while, you realize your reason for existence in this jungle is the responsibility to the people for accurate reporting. You may dislike an individual legislator and you may even dislike his political party, but you cannot beat out his brains without eventually working against yourself.

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[12] Joseph W. Alsop, Jr., Reporting Politics (New York: Reynal & Company) looks at the problem differently. He says political reporters are not eunuchs and nobody wants to be one. In his opinion, such reporters have feelings and they tend to give vent to them.

c). Only a few reporters are involved in deliberate favoritism and as a consequence, these reporters drive others to compensate by setting the record straight.

d). Such favoritism has been going on for a long time because those reporters were oriented to a party before they arrived or became so after a short time on the beat.

e). I have seen capitol reporters who personally appeared to favor one political party. This was in personal conversation and in their personal views.

f). Favoritism exists. It has changed as the press corps has changed. Generally, it is tied to personalities.

g). An accidental bias is built into everybody. You can pick out the Democratic and Republican reporters. Some tend to be liberal or conservative, based on background and it doesn't take long for truth to emerge.

Reporter Relationships With Legislators

All reporters said they had closed relationships with some legislators than others. The respondents split almost evenly on whether this relationship made "some difference" or "no difference" in their treatment of those legislators. Those who said it made "some difference" brought out that "intentionally or not, you try to avoid 'knifing friends' whenever possible";"a 'favorite adjective' might slip into a story here or there." It was generally agreed reporters were inclined to give a friendly legislator recognition and say something nice about him. The element of "protectiveness" and tending to give a friend a "little

extra break" was also introduced.[13] One reporter said "it's awfully hard to hurt a friend!" Another reporter warned:

> You can't keep up the personal or social relationship on a close basis without eventually being influenced by a twisted vision in regard to the man and his legislation, good or bad.

Those who said their personal relationship made "no difference" did not always support the statement in the discussion period. While they agreed that a reporter cannot let personal feelings enter into something, all but two said that they might have slipped on rare occasions. However, if and when they did, the latter said the slip was not intentional; nor did it affect the general approach to their story.

Throughout the interviews one fact was unassailable. Reporters are drawn into the legislative process by choice, interaction or proximity. Sooner or later, legislators come to them for advice and on this point all reporters agreed. Only one said he never gave advice because he did not think such advice carried any weight. However, the majority felt their advice did have an impact although it could not always be proven. Most felt they were being used as "trial balloons." Others said they were suspect of flatterers, although some legislators who asked on advice were sincere. These responses were typical:

a). Sometimes questions are asked to bring you into the conversation; to make you feel needed and important but you may find that the decisions made were on a set of completely different factors.

b). Many times, legislators from small areas are trying to learn of opinions in others areas. These legislators feel that reporters get around and sample opinions and thus have more knowledge on the subject.

c). In the Michigan context, the decisions of legislators are seldom free from direction of the policies of their parties, their caucus, their district interest and pre-election commitments. Who knows whether your advice has any impact?

Can Reporters Maintain Detachment From Legislators

Asked whether reporters can maintain a completely detached view in their relations with legislators, the majority said "no." Since their comments go to the heart of this thesis, the responses are treated in greater detail.

a). You can't be detached because your part of the legislative process. When a reporter has been here long enough, he should become involved in the process. Sometimes, you go overboard, become opinionated on "right" or "wrong" and you start choosing the good guys from the bad guys. But the point is that unless you have a definite interest in politics, it is no point being here and thus you find yourself in the system and trying to change it. In short, you become involved in personalities.

b). You are thrown together with lobbyists, legislators and administrators to the point where you become part of the operation. You can't be an island and live alone. You are subject to the same general pressures as the others with whom you work and at close range, too.

c). A reporter has certain feelings on major issues and I would be less than honest to say that those feelings do not permit a reporter to be completely detached in his view.

d). If you know something about a subject, you have an opinion. Prejudices are always at work. So are attitudes and feelings and you eventually find yourself rooting for or against something when the tally is being taken on a bill.

e). The longer you are here, the more you know or are supposed to know, and therefore, you cannot detach yourself. It is almost impossible, just as it is almost impossible to be objective.

f). Reporters are like other humans. They are influenced by those with whom they come in contact. If I see one legislator more than another, that influence is proportional. I find that I almost have to guard against downgrading a legislator because of his personality, mannerisms and attitudes.

g). Any reporter, however objective, is still a product of his makeup and personality. To a varying degree, some reporters try to maintain a "hands-off" policy, others try to get legislators to do his bidding.

h). You can detach yourself on some issues and with some men. But there are too many issues and too many men where detachment is impossible.

Those who said complete detachment was possible said it related to objectivity and thus you could not allow yourself to become involved.[14]

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[14]The Alsop brothers support the majority view asserting that reporting offers the sense of being engaged in the political process of one's own time and the reporter who is not consciously engaged is in fact likely to be a very bad and unsuccessful reporter. Reporters Trade (New York: 1958), p. 8.

The Relationship Between Reporter Tenure And Tendency To Influence

Asked whether the longer a reporter stays on the capitol beat the greater the tendency to attempt to influence public policy, the majority replied in the affirmative. Here, too, detailed comment is crucial to the major hypothesis of this paper, and the comment is as follows:

a). I have seen it happen and it was my reason for insisting on no indefinite assignment in Lansing. There is a limit to how long you can live in a "closed society" without being captured by it.

b). This is particularly true if a reporter gets to be a prima donna type who is frequently sought out for advice, and we have them in Lansing.

c). Yes, You get kind of wooly-headed and feeling that you have seen this show so many times with new fellows going through the same tricks and making the same mistakes. It is impossible after 15 years on this beat to detach yourself from an issue or a politician.

d). The longer you have been here, the greater the opportunity, if not the tendency, to influence because you have more experience, more tenure. You know more people and you know them well. You know their prejudices and you can accommodate your approach to them in those terms.

e). Some capitol reporters tend to take the proprietary view of state government while others are able to maintain a good objective relationship.

f). Grooves of action run deep. You see freshmen in the legislature and you feel they deserve your guidance, however some reporters try to change the world the day they arrive and they never stop.

g). You consider yourself a professional and it is less than human to expect that sense of expertize to disappear. It becomes inbred in the individual. You try to swing votes. New reporters realize they cannot win much influence.

h). It depends on the employer in some cases and whether the reporter is expected to do a hatchet job. Some reporters change the longer they are on the beat; others do not.

Only one reporter balked at the question. He said it implied a tendency among reporters to influence and in his opinion, a reporter is one who reports.

Should Reporters Be Rotated

The question of rotating reporters was raised and four said they should be; four said it varied with the individual while five were against the principle of rotation.

Those favoring rotation said:

a). You shouldn't be here more than 15 years. Things move too fast and you tend to become an echo-horn. Then there is the physical side. Your legs give out and you can't move as fast as the politicians and the issues.

b). If you are not moved completely out of Lansing then you should rotate between chambers. For one thing, the longer you stay in the same place, the more you tend to identify with the chamber and the legislator, and risk becoming protective. The veteran reporter becomes weary and doesn't exert the same enthusiasm.

c). Five years in Lansing, in my opinion, was about one year to long.

Those opposed to rotation said:

a). Generally, the longer a man is stationed at the capitol, the more background and more valid

judgment he has. It takes months and years to get your feet on the ground.

b). Effectiveness increased with background and knowledge of the situation. To rotate when he is just beginning to know his way around-- and that takes considerable time-- is to minimize the paper's investment in a political reporter.

c). It can't be done because it takes too long to break in a new man.

d). Generally, it is not good business to switch manpower unless the reporter has become too involved with individual legislators or parties.

Relationship Of Reporter Attitude To Treatment Of Political News

Reporters' attitudes, stemming from personal background and experiences are related to their treatment of political news, the majority of Lansing reporters concluded.[15] Present in their answers were such comments as "every man is a political animal;" "some backgroung has to rub off subjectively in every story he writes;" "attitudes and responses are tempered unconsciously by background and what the individual has learned and not learned." A reporter of more than 10 years Lansing experience said that "all gets into the story, whether you see it or not." Wire service

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[15]The most precise statement on this point is in Lippman's Public Opinion. p. 360, wherein he states that "the more the reporter understands his own weaknesses, the more ready he is to admit that where there is no objective test, his opinion is in some vital measure constructed out of his own stereotypes, according to his own code; and by the urgency of his own interest."

reporters said they had to be "on guard" against such influence because their clients were alert to "reporting that was not straight-away." One reporter who said he was not influenced by his personal back-ground gave this answer:

> To the degree that any human being can, a trained reporter can eliminate personal judgments, but it takes training and the admission that there may be two sides to every story. However, it must be remembered always that things are not all black or white.

Another reporter declared:

> Let's face it. If you come from a poor, deprived family you will be interested in social programs and if your parents were staunch Republicans as mine were, you don't change overnight. The fact is we are all captives of our past experience. All you can do is recognize your prejudices and try to control them.

Reporters As Publicity Life-Line For Legislators

Interviews disclosed that Lansing reporters perceive themselves as the life-line of publicity for legislators, and these reporters are convinced they not only can influence the legislative process by the publicity technique but do although proof is lacking. The reporters contend the legislator is constantly aware of the communication media and the need to maintain good relationships with the press, particularly if there is only one daily newspaper in his

home town.[16] As one Lansing reporter viewed the problem and in general, it was a composite of majority reactions:

> Give them a story and front-page publicity and the legislator pushes it. He is constantly striving for a good image back home because he wants to get re-elected or move to higher office. In the case of Detroit and Wayne county legislators, competition for mention is so keen, they will do almost anything to get their names in the paper, particularly around election time.

Another reporter recalled how a Detroit legislator brought a bear into the State Senate Chambers and insisted on putting the "animal" on the rostrum. Some thought it was a live bear while the Senator insisted later it was a "bear wearing a man's costume." This Senator had a reputation for developing "gimmicks" to obtain publicity because, in his opinion, it was the only "sure way" to get his name in the paper. There is no scientific proof of the success of his methodology but, in fact, he was re-elected more times than any other legislator in Wayne county.

The"Watch-Dog" Approach By Reporters

Because publicity is a power-tool for reporters, and related to their opportunity to influence the legislative

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[16]There is a high degree of concensus among authors on this point. Pertinent observations are contained in works by: Lester W. Milbrath, The Washington Lobbyists (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1963), p. 7. Rosten, Washington Correspondents, p. 79.; Matthews, U.S. Senators And Their World, p. 214.; Nimmo, Newsgathering in Washington, p. 33.

process, they were asked whether they assume a proprietory or"watch-dog" attitude in relations with legislators. Except in degrees, all respondents replied affirmatively.[17]

Typical answers:

a). Reporters regard themselves as protectors of the public welfare. Their job is something more than a paycheck. It has to provide a certain personal satisfaction and such satisfaction is derived when you put the knife into something you know is not in the best public interest.

b). The watch-dog attitude is and should be predominant. That is the function of the press. Unless we take a hand, who is going to do it?

c). As the eyes and ears of a vast public, a reporter has this "watch-dog" responsibility. That is why he is getting a paycheck.

d). You have to watch legislators. They are news. If they are from areas where your papers circulate, this is their only contact with people. Therefore, you will watch them from the moment they are sworn in. The voters want to know all there is to know about their elected officials and if the reporter is not prepared to meet this obligation then he better get out of the business.

One reporter said that legislators expect to be watched

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[17] Alsop calls the political reporter a "most necessary party of the political process" -- in effect, he is the people's eyes and ears with the task of making the people's government the people's business; the instrument that creates an informed public opinion. The Reporters Trade, p. 10.

by the press. Some, he added, do not make a move without checking with reporters who write for the legislator's constituency. Another reporter recalled:

> This watch-dog attitude pays off. I recall a certain bill which was written to give business to a single company. Other reporters were aware of this, too. They were also aware that this company was wining and dining certain legislators. When the stories hit the papers, legislative attitudes changed-- in a hurry.

Reporters Make News

Reporters not only record newsworthy items in the legislative process, they also make news, the majority of Lansing reporters agreed. Techniques vary, but they include developing ideas for stories, and investigations and using friendly legislators to give the story an official flavor.[18] Those who support the concept of "making news" asserted:

a). The technique is good as long as it is not misdirected. It is another way of doing your job-- bringing out facts that legislators may not have or helping them to get these facts because legislators have more power than reporters.

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[18]Evidence on this point is abundant in the body of communication literature. Rosten says that political reporters have "launched congressional investigations and wrecked political machinations; "Washington Correspondents, p. 3.; Phillips' contends that "governmental programs have been materially altered to win the approval or avoid the ire of various Washington columnists;" "Autocrats of the Breakfast Table. "Dateline Washington, p. 181. In Lansing, reporters have been known to provoke legislative investigations because of personality clashes with governmental officials.

b). Newspapers have crusades. Some are interested in highways, others in mental health, grand-juries, schools or welfare rolls. There is nothing wrong in throwing more light on these subjects if it is in the public interest.

A minority of reporters frowned on this technique; sample views:

a). If you cover the beat properly, you don't have to make news. It is dishonest to color a story. It is unfair to the readers.

To often, some reporters are always looking for headlines. If they think they can make a story, they will give it a boost, even though the facts do not support it. The sad part is that some reporters have personal axes to grind in state government, and if they can't find a way to get at certain people in agencies, they attempt the legislative investigation technique. It has happened all too frequently in my time around here to be mere co-incidence.

How Reporters Shape Legislative Behavior

It has been suggested that reporters shape legislative behavior because: (a) reporters define "news" and thereby influence legislators in determining the issues; (b) reporters motivate legislators into taking action because of the way reporters write a story; (c) reporters serve as an essential link between lawmakers and the outside world and as a means of communications within the legislative process. With all three hypotheses, the majority of Lansing reporters agreed, asserting generally that in the nature of things and their relationships with the legis-

lative process, it could hardly be otherwise.[19] These were typical responses:

a). Obviously reporters define news because they pick and choose from among the general run of news. The legislator who does not watch the papers to see what is getting the most space-- and interest-- is not much interested in the entire legislative process. As for communication within the legislative process, reporters served almost in the role of courier during the 1959 tax fight between Democrats and Ruplicans, trying to get the matter resolved.

b). Reporters dig into certain situations because they regard themselves as experts and when they think they have the facts, they pressure legislators to take certain actions.

c). When a legislator sees a story in pring, he is more likely to take an interest in the issue. If the story is getting a big play, the legislator knows he will get comment and mail and he knows, too, that if he plays his cards right, he will get publicity.

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[19] According to Lester W. Milbrath, The Washington Lobbyists (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1963), p.7., Washington reporters are circulating gossip-mongers who do much to link various parts of the government into a functioning political system, and so essential that if not present, they would have to be invented to make the system work; Curtis D. MacDowell, Interpretive Reporting (New York: MacMillan), p. 349., describes political reporters as a potent linkage force; Matthews, U.S. Senators And Their Worlds, p. 204 asserts that senators behave in accordance with reporters' expectations. The Dateline: Washington collection of articles covers the point from many angles.

While agreeing that reporters define "news," the minority disagreed that they "pressure" legislators into taking action, based on play of a story, asserting that editors, not reporters, determined play (location of story in paper, length of story and the headline).

One reporter suggested the questions were "badly phrased" and he declined to answer on the basis that legislative behavior was shaped by legislators, not reporters, except in isolated instances.

The Friendly Leak

While relationships between legislators and capitol reporters vary, all reporters agreed that legislators employ the "friendly leak" technique in dealings with select reporters.[20] They ascribed this practice to "friendship," "a desire to get one's name in the paper," "curry favor with the most influential paper or reporter," "to get even with other reporters who may have treated them badly," "embarass colleagues or certain administrators," "trial balloon technique." Personal relationship or a desire to get the "most play" were the most frequently mentioned reasons. One

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[20]The "friendly leak" has been described and discussed by virtually every writer on the subject of reporter-politician relationship.

reporter suggested that (1) some legislators feel the public should know what's going on; (2) many legislators trust reporters and think they should know what is going on in the legislative process.

Entertaining Legislators To Obtain Stories

Asked whether entertaining legislators was productive of stories.[21] Lansing reporters split almost evenly on the question. Those who favored the practice said:

a). In the long run, you will get the good stories that way. To do a proper job, you must "live" with a legislator and not just be a bystanding observer. Almost all of the best stories I got in Lansing came through continuing efforts to cultivate the confidence of certain legislators, and you can't cultivate such confidence within the state capitol building.

b). Many legislators don't recognize news. But if you are sitting around a saloon, they will mention things that ultimately make news.

c). Socializing is productive of news on a tip basis. In a relaxed atmosphere, a fellow is more willing to talk and discuss. In a formal interview, he is more reserved.

Those opposed said:

a). You never get news through entertainment. You get it through friendship and respect.

b). There are lobbyists to do the entertaining and

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[21]Washington reporters play the social role heavily, see Rosten, Washington Correspondents, p. 105.; Matthews, U.S. Senators And Their Worlds, p. 210.; Allen Drury, A Senate Journal, 1943-1945 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), p. 195.

they usually pick up the tab. Most newsmen don't feel the need to ply legislators with food and drink to get stories. If they do, they should be in some other business.

c). Speaking generally, the reporter who works hard and uses his head will do better than the man who spends money.

In retrospect, the question could have been improved by introducing such variables as the paper's attitude toward such expenditures; the reporter's attitude toward socializing and availability, of time and personal funds.

Miscellany

The interviews closed with a general discussion of three topics: (a) whether the respondents wanted to spend their entire professional carrer reporting politics; (b) the impact of legislative reporting in relation to the number of papers represented in Lansing; (c) what personal characteristics made Lansing reporters most effective in covering the legislative process.

In relation to a life-time of political coverage, Lansing reporters preferred such an assignment by a two-to-one majority. Those who preferred it called it "challenging," "exciting," "fascinating," "satisfying." Individual quotes:

a). It's a ball because people are funny and interesting. It's like watching a football game.

b). It's like holding a glob of mercury in your hands, or watching the Fords go by. It's fun when you pull the rug from under the phoneys.

c). It is dealing with people who have the most important impact on our lives.

d). When you dig into something, make it intelligible and then communicate with others, you can feel like you have done a good day's work for yourself and your fellow citizen.

Those who envisioned another assignment said:

a). After so many years in Lansing, there is a tendency to get stale, live in the past, forget todays problems and those of the future.

b). Enough is sometimes enough.

c). A man needs and wants a broader perspective.

d). Some reporters get anesthesized; others get ruttisized.

In general, Lansing reporters believed that the public was amply represented in newspaper coverage of the legislative process. They agreed, however, that the more papers present, the greater the competition and the professional standards. They were concerned about the disappearance of daily newspapers in Michigan and the subsequent danger of a one party press.

What makes a Lansing reporter effective?

The list is long but it generally covered these characteristics: Energy, enterprise, integrity, knowledge, background, objectivity, personality, judgment, having a big newspaper, liking people, organization and definition of job concept, articulation, talent as a writer, the ability to separate the wheat from the chaff, attitude, devotion to duty.

Final Chapter

Summary

Introductions

This work has been a study of State Capitol reporters in Michigan. Essentially, it explored the "how" and "why" of their behavior in relation to the Michigan legislative process. Underlying this study was the major hypothesis that the Lansing reporter attempts to influence the legislative decision-making process.

It was the burden of this study to demonstrate that such attempts at influence are related to role perception, physical access and personal relationships; that reporters "make news" and thus influence legislators; that reporters for daily newspapers attempt to influence legislators more than reporters for press associations.

This study pursued a correlation between tenure and influence; i.e., whether the longer a reporter remains on the State Capitol assignment in Michigan, the more he attempts to influence the legislative process. Also investigated was the concept of "objectivity" in the news.

Findings

Based on interviews with reporters regularly assigned to the State Capitol Press Corps in Michigan, indicated that in the opinion of the majority:

1. Complete objectivity in the news is non-existnet.

2. Reporters are guided by editorial policy in covering and writing political stories.

3. Newspapers should and do attempt to influence legislators regarding public polity.

4. Attempts to influence public policy are a two-way street, used by reporters upon legislators and vice-versa.

5. Press association reporters attempt to influence the legislative process less than reporters for daily newspapers.

6. Physical proximity of reporters to the legislative process tend to influence legislators, yet reporters are opposed to a lessening of that proximity.

7. There are some things reporters feel it is improper to report about legislators, i.e., personal behavior, inside and outside legislative chambers.

8. Reporters maintain closer relationships with some legislators more than others and such interaction is related to their treatment of the news affecting those legislators.

9. Legislators ask reporters for advice on public matters and such advice tends to have an impact on legislative decisions.

10. Reporters cannot maintain a completely detached view in relations with legislators and consequently, the longer a reporter stays on the capitol beat the greater

10. (continued) the tendency to attempt to influence public policy.

11. Reporter attitudes stemming from personal background and experience are related to treatment of political news and political parties.

12. Reporters assume a proprietory or "watch-dog" attitude in relations with legislators.

13. Reporters make news, i.e., develop ideas for stories, investigations and use friendly legislators to give stories an official flavor.

14. Reporters tend to shape legislative behavior by defining news and determining issues; motivate legislators into taking action because of the way stories are played in newspapers; serve as an essential link between lawmakers and the outside world and as a means of communication within the legislative process.

15. Reporters are viewed with suspicion by legislators.

16. Rotation of reporters may be desirable to avoid favoritism and bias.

17. Legislators leak stories to select reporters.

Methodology

The research in this study was exploratory in nature and, in effect, an experience survey. Because of the limited number of actors involved, statistical accuracy and traditional tools of statistical testing are not present. In selecting newsmen, an experience criteria was developed, based on a minimum number of years and full-time assignment to the State Capitol Press Corps. This criteria was established to preclude those who cover legislative sessions on infrequent occasions, including radio and television newsmen. Data sought was basically attitudinal. Procedurely, the study employed the personal interview. Interviews were conducted in various parts of the state as an accommodation rather than investigative technique because of the mobile nature of the respondents. Interviews were arranged by letter and or telephone. Before the interview, all respondents were furnished with an extensive outline of the proposed work and the role the individual was expected to play. With two exceptions, all respondents co-operated fully. Answers were candid and in depth when requested. Interviews lasted from 90 minutes to three hours, depending upon the availability of the respondents' time. They were conducted in offices, restaurants, private clubs and over lengthy dinner meetings. In two instances, the mails and telephones were used because respondents had been transferred to other states. No recording apparatus was used,

in the writer's belief that this technique would create a psychological barrier. In retrospect, this judgment was justified as evidenced by casual remarks during the interviews.

Questions were structural and open-ended. For statistical purposes, respondents were asked to choose an answer from a category but while co-operative, they frequently objected to such methodology. Answers were given as directed by categories but it was obvious the respondents preferred a modified form of the nondirected interview (Sellitz, Research Methods in Social Relations). This technique permits the respondent to take advantage of his personal cognitive structure of topics discussed and his own interpretation of the basic questions posed and thus promote a relaxed point of view. As noted by Nimmo, such free expression promotes a rambling type of interview but develops data consistent with the scope of the inquiry, if not statistical. In this study, forced choice answers and the Sellitz approach were closely correlated.

The literature in this field of inquiry is limited and has been almost exclusively developed by working newspapermen or former reporters. Whether more political scientists have accidentally overlooked this area of research or whether such inquiry presents unusual problems to the non-reporter investigator is an interesting phenomenon.

However, it is important to relate that the Lansing respondents sometimes hesitated to answer vital questions, fearful their answers would be mis-interpreted, particularly by a non-newspaperman.

Summary Statement

The study of political reporters covering the Michigan State Capitol was large--perhaps too large in the context of scientific investigation-- because each bit of evidence invited new exploration and new analysis. What was designed to measure relationships between Michigan political reporters and the Michigan legislative process soon begged for comparison between Washington political reporters and the national legislative process. As Michigan findings were over-layed on the Washington scene, it became evident that behavior was generally similar. Thus a correlation pattern was established between government and press on a state as well as national pattern. However, it would be foolhardy to suggest without further investigation that reporters in all other state capitol bureaus behave the same as Michigan reporters and all political reporters behave the same, whether state or nationally based. The evidence is conducive to further research by political scientists as well as communication specialists because the role of the press in relation to government has not yet been clearly defined.

If one purpose of political knowledge is to dispel myths regarding political behavior, then it is incumbent upon academic investigators to develop the growing body of knowledge that tends to support the hypothesis that the press and government are intertwined in our democratic

process and that the press must therefore share responsibility for government's success or failure. Need for such inquiry becomes crucial with the growing impact of television reporting in state and national affairs--a phenomenon virtually ignored in scientific study.

Students may shirk from the magnitude of the problem because it may take years of intensive and systematic work to answer questions in a reasonably scientific fashion, and thus satisfy those political theorists who favor conformity and authority. But as Van Dyke and Matthews pointed out, obstacles to making all descriptive studies scientific are very great and in the meantime, imprecise and provisional findings are better than none.

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Appendix I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE -- LANSING CAPITOL CORRESPONDENTS

Interview Number_____ Name_____

Date_____

Hour_____

Place_____ Length of Interview _____

Preliminary Statement to Respondent:

I am doing a study of Lansing state capitol reporters to learn about their jobs, how they perform their work, their backgrounds and relationships with decision-makers in the legislative process. No names will be used of individuals or organizations, nor will the information be used except for academic purposes.

I am not interested in any expose, nor am I seeking to embarrass any individual reporter or his employer. This type of study was done in 1959 by Douglass Cater in relation to Washington correspondents. I am attempting to replicate the work on a state level, realizing as a former Lansing correspondent that many problems inherent in political reporting are difficult to explain and that contributions of Lansing political reporters to the democratic process are often denigrated, rather than praised.

All information will be confidential. The original materials will be seen only by me.

1. What year were you born? _____

2. Regarding your education

   (a) College — Incomplete..... ( ) Graduate..... ( ) Degree..... ( )

   (b) Graduate work — Incomplete..... ( ) Graduate..... ( ) Degrees..... ( )

   (c) Major field of interest in college _____

   (d) Major field of interest in Graduate School _____

3. How many years did you spend in the newspaper business before assignment to the Lansing state capitol beat?

4. Did you have any preconceived notion of the assignment? Explain.

5. Is it different that you anticipated? Explain.

6. How do you now perceive your role as a Lansing reporter?

7. Are Lansing reporters "objective" in their treatment of legislative news? Objectivity is defined here as presenting the news on the basis of what somebody tells you and letting it go at that.

   Always..... ( )
   Frequently..... ( )
   Occasionally..... ( )
   Rarely..... ( )
   Never..... ( )

   Please explain your answer.

8. If you select assignment, what are your criteria?

9. If you know, what are the criteria for selection by you editor?

10. In covering and writing political stories, are you guided by editorial policy of your newspaper?

    Always..... ( )
    Frequently..... ( )
    Occasionally..... ( )
    Rarely..... ( )
    Never..... ( )

    Please explain your answer.

11. If you work for a wire service, are you guided by your client's editorial policy in covering and writing political stories?

Always.....( )
Frequently..... ( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

Explain.

12. Do you believe newspapers attempt to influence legislators regarding public policy?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK/NA.....( )

Comment invited.

13. Do you believe newspapers should attempt to influence legislators regarding public policy?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

Explain.

14. Have you attempted to influence public policy through your relations with legislators?

(a)

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

(b) If your answer was "always" or "occasionally," was this action in support of your newspaper's belief, your own belief or for other reasons?

Newspaper's belief.....( )
Own belief.....( )
Other reason.....( )
Combination of both.....( )

(c) If influence was attempted, what was the technique?

15. Have other reporters attempted to influence public policy through their relations with legislators?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK/NA.....( )

Please explain your answer.

16. Have legislators attempted to influence reporters regarding public policy?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Please explain your answer.

17. Do you think legislators are influenced by reporters?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK/NA.....( )

Please explain your answer.

18. Does your physical proximity to the legislative process tend to influence legislators?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Please explain your answer.

19. Should reporters be physically apart from the House and Senate chambers to minimize possibilities of influence?

Yes, because physical access is a factor.....( )
No, because physical access is not a factor.....( )
Such possibilities do not exist.....( )

Explain answer, if desirable.

20. Are there some things you feel it is improper to report about legislators?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

Please explain your answer.

21. Are legislators restrained in their relations with reporters:

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

Please explain your answer.

22. Does your political persuasion have any relationship to your dealings with legislators?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Explanation desirable.

23. Are there some legislators with whom you have closer relationships than others?

Yes.....( )
No.....( )
Treat them all the same.( )

24. If you do have closer social relationships with some legislators does this relationship make any difference in your treatment of the news affecting such legislator or legislators? (How)

Makes no difference.....( )
Makes big difference....( )
Makes some difference..( )

Please explain answer.

25. Do you tend to identify with one major party, both major parties, or neither?

One party.....( )
Both parties.....( )
Neither.....( )

26. Do legislators ask for your advice on public matters?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

27. Do you give it?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

28. Do you feel that advice to legislators has any impact on their decisions?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Probe.

29. Do you think reporters can maintain a completely detached view in their relations with legislators?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

Probe.

30. Do you think that the longer a reporter stays on the capitol beat the greater the tendency to attempt to influence public policy?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
DK.....( )

Probe.

31. Do you think Lansing reporters should be rotated?

(a)

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )

(b) If rotation suggested, on what basis?

32. Do you think Lansing reporters favor one political party over another?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Comment invited.

33. Do you believe that a reporter's attitudes (stemming from personal background and personal experiences) are related to his treatment of political news?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Please explain your answer.

34. Do you believe reporters can influence legislators because as reporters, they are the life-line of publicity?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Please explain your answer.

35. Do you feel that reporters assume a proprietory or "watch-dog" attitude in relations with legislators?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Probe.

36. Do you believe reporters make news, i.e., develop ideas for stories, investigations, and use friendly legislators to give an official flavor?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Probe.

37. It has been suggested that reporters shape legislative behavior in the following manner:

(a) Reporters define "news" and therefore influence legislators in determining what the issues are.

(b) Reporters "pressure" legislators into taking action because of the way reporters play a story.

(c) Reporters serve as an essential link between lawmakers and the outside world and as a means of communication within the legislative process.

Your comments are invited.

38. Do you believe legislators leak stories to select reporters:

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

(a) If stories are leaked, why?

39. Do you believe that entertaining legislators is productive of stories?

Always.....( )
Frequently.....( )
Occasionally.....( )
Rarely.....( )
Never.....( )
DK.....( )

Probe.

40. Would you want to spend your entire professional career reporting politics?

Yes.....( )
No .....( )

Why?

41. Would you say that, on the whole, legislation would work much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse if there were less newspapers represented in Lansing by regularly assigned correspondents?

(a)

Much better .....( )
Somewhat better .....( )
About the same .....( )
Somewhat worse.....( )
Much worse.....( )
DK/NA .....( )

(b) If there were more newspapers represented in Lansing by regularly assigned correspondents?

Much better.....( )
Somewhat better .....( )
About the same.....( )
Somewhat worse.....( )
Much worse .....( )
DK/NA .....( )

(c) If there were more daily newspapers in the state?

Much better.....( )
Somewhat better.....( )
About the same .....( )
Somewhat worse.....( )
Much worse .....( )
DK/NA .....( )

Explanation desirable.

42. Now, as you think over your evaluation of capitol reporters, what would you say makes a reporter effective?