

HOW THE ROLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS IN FOUR CITIES
AFFECTED NEWS TRANSMISSION TO THE
WHOLE NATION

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ABSTRACT

HOW THE ROLE OF THE GATEKEEPERS IN FOUR CITIES
AFFECTED NEWS TRANSMISSION TO THE WHOLE NATION

By

Rene Emile Pelissier

This study is an investigation of the extent the nation was informed of the details of Vice-President Spiro T. Agnew's visits to four cities in September, 1970. The cities were Saginaw and Grand Rapids in Michigan, Louisville, Kentucky, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Editions of newspapers from twenty cities were read to obtain a broad sample of what was published. The newspapers all relied on the Associated Press and the United Press International for their material with a few exceptions of newspapers that published stories from their staff correspondents. In each case newspapers from the cities that Agnew visited were used as the basis of the criterion of the information that was available for distribution on a wider basis.

This study was approached from the point of view that the individuals making the vital decisions on the facts included in stories and what areas in the nation should receive the stories were gatekeepers. The decision-

making power of the gatekeeper was first defined by Kurt Lewin, a social scientist.

David Manning White, a journalism professor, later made a study of a specific gatekeeper, a telegraph editor. This study concentrates primarily on the gatekeeping role as it affected the transmission of news about Vice-President Agnew reported from four cities. The study also analyzes individual gatekeeping decisions. Gatekeepers were interviewed for the study. As city editor of the Grand Rapids Press in Michigan, the author is also a gatekeeper. He has been a telegraph editor.

The study concluded that the nation was not informed adequately of the details of Agnew's visits to the four cities, particularly of the demonstrations against the vice-president in all of the cities. No evidence could be found in the twenty newspapers studied that the nation was aware that seven hundred persons protested Agnew's visit to Milwaukee, and eight college students were arrested downtown after there was widespread property damage. The nation was not told that many of the Milwaukee protesters were older individuals and members of ethnic groups, including Father James Groppi, but who did not participate in the obscenities directed against the vice-president or in the vandalism.

The nation was not informed of protest demonstrations against Agnew in Louisville involving the right to dissent. It did not know of the use of police dogs in crowd control at Grand Rapids, or the arrest of youths charged with obscenities. Details were lacking in the nation's press of the situation at Saginaw where there were no arrests for obscenities despite the fact they were shouted in unison against Agnew and Mrs. Lenore Romney, Republican candidate for the United States Senate seat held by Philip A. Hart, a Democrat.

The study found that in all the four cities there were gatekeeping decisions that halted the flow of adequate information to other areas. Even when minimal stories were transmitted on advance texts of the vice-president's speeches, they were not published in some cases because of gatekeeping-decisions made by individual newspapers.

The author concluded that the restricted flow of information on Vice-President Agnew's trips to the four cities was not an isolated case, but part of a continuing pattern of gatekeeping decisions that goes back many decades. As a possible improvement he advocates a widespread emphasis on the role of the gatekeeper as a guardian of the public interest.

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This study is in a way a culmination of all the graduate level courses in the School of Journalism at Michigan State University and their analytical stress on what newspapers actually do rather than what they hope to do. The skillful guidance of Dr. W. Cameron Meyers was an asset.

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INTRODUCTION

"Red, White and Blue Is Back," reads the slogan on the lapel buttons of men in the lobby of the hotel where the vice-president of the United States is expected momentarily. The marching band of the South Christian High School solemnly plays "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" as Spiro T. Agnew, the vice-president of the United States, leaves the Kent County Airport in the ten-car motorcade to ride thirteen miles to the Pantlind Hotel in downtown Grand Rapids, his final stop of his day in Michigan. It is 1:45 P.M., Wednesday, September 16, 1970.

A woman telephones police headquarters. Her brother, a discharged marine veteran, has left home. He says he plans to kill Agnew, she reports. He is carrying a pistol. Secret Service men and local police are tense. The veteran is picked up by police near the Pantlind Hotel. He has a knife and a starter pistol loaded with blanks.

Long distance telephone calls come into switchboards at police headquarters and at the Grand Rapids Press from newspapers all across the nation. The callers want to know about the man who threatened to kill Agnew. The police are irritated. They say the man is a mental patient

and probably will be released. Besides, they are busy trying to provide protection for the vice-president and attempting to solve the murder of a Grand Rapids bride a few days earlier.

Parlor B of the Pantlind Hotel is jammed with news reporters at 5:00 P.M. The press corps traveling with the vice-president is given advance copies of his talk scheduled the same night before an \$100-a-plate Republican dinner for Representative Gerald R. Ford of Grand Rapids, the minority leader of the United States House of Representatives. The newspaper reporters begin to write stories for the next day's issues of their newspapers.

A small, youthful crowd of 125 jeers the 1,000 paid guests arriving at the Civic Auditorium for the dinner. One youth blows soap bubbles in Ford's face. "Think of the poor people you could help with \$100," a young woman cires. "Dumdums for dumdums," the crowd chants. Some signs carried by pickets say, "America, Paradise for the Rich, A Dilemma for the Poor."¹

The dinner starts with an invocation by a minister. This writer, seated at one of the three tables for the press, is startled to hear an instrumental trio open with "Somewhere

¹Steve Hensch, "Demonstrators Needle Agnew Dinner Guests," Grand Rapids Press, Sept. 17, 1970, sec. C, p. 1.

My Love," the theme song of the motion picture Doctor Zhivago, a story of the Russian Revolution. The crowd cheers many times as the vice-president verbally attacks the Democratic party. Nearly all of the reporters at the press tables remain seated as the crowd rises to honor Vice-President Agnew, Governor William G. Milliken, Ford and other Republican notables.

William Gill, a vice-president of a Grand Rapids bank, in charge of arrangements for the reporters at the dinner, sits down at the press table. He groans. "The police are using dogs on the crowd outside,"² he says, quietly. The crowd sings "God Bless America" to end the dinner. The youthful pickets are still outside the Civic Auditorium near the hotel as the crowd leaves. Four are arrested on charges of using profanity or inciting to riot. Parlor B of the Pantlind Hotel is empty of reporters after the dinner.

The Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI), both national news-gathering agencies, serviced their member newspapers and clients with stories about the Republican fund-raising dinner addressed by Vice-President Agnew in Grand Rapids. The Grand Rapids Press published several pages of stories and photographs. The Detroit Free Press, the Detroit News, and other large

²Gill's remark was addressed only to the writer and John Bankston, publisher of the Grand Rapids Times, a weekly newspaper for blacks in the inner city.

newspapers published stories written by their own correspondents who attended the dinner. There were significant differences and omissions in the published material about the same event. There are indications that these differences and omissions are portents of a problem far overshadowing any one event and the publication of stories about that one event. Vice-President Agnew's trip to Grand Rapids was one of many speeches he gave at Republican fundraising events from coast to coast during September and October, 1970.

All the separate stories on Agnew's trip around the nation helped to form for newspaper readers an image of the vice-president and the goals and ideals he represents. If procedures, decisions, routines, methods of reporters, or problems in publication of material are having a significant effect on the formation of the image, the reader is entitled to be made aware of variable facts that in their totality and context comprise the event. It is a situation that not only affects what is published about Vice-President Agnew but would affect the country's awareness of any person or event depending on transmission through a system of "gatekeepers."

Who are the gatekeepers? The late Kurt Lewin, a social scientist, used the term in the late 1940s in the process of discussing social changes in such matters as changing the food habits of a population. He expanded

his concept to include the movements of goods, the progress of students through a university, and more importantly for this study, the progress of a news item. He defined a "gate":

The constellation of the forces before and after the gate region is decisively different in a such a way that the passing or not passing of the unit through the whole channel depends to a high degree upon what happens in the gate region. This holds not only for channels but also for the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels . . . Gate sections are governed either by impartial rules or by "gatekeepers." In the latter case an individual or group is "in power" for making the decision between "in" and "out." Understanding the functioning of the gate becomes equivalent then to understanding the factors which determine the decisions of the gatekeepers and changing the social process means influencing or replacing the gatekeeper.³

This study will concentrate specifically on visits in the fall of 1970 by Vice-President Agnew to Saginaw and Grand Rapids on September 16, Louisville, Kentucky, on September 22, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 25, in terms of how the role of specific gatekeepers in those cities affected the transmission of news of the visit to the nation. The study is based on the premise that an analysis of the gatekeeper in contemporary specific situations can illuminate many problems facing daily newspapers in the 1970s in reflecting the social stresses of the time.

³Kurt Lewin, "Channels of Group Life: Social Planning and Action Research," Human Relations, I (1947-1948), p. 145.

Twenty newspapers are analyzed in this study. Six of these newspapers were selected because they provided original source material on the cities that Agnew had visited. These newspapers are the Saginaw News, Grand Rapids Press, Courier-Journal (Louisville), Milwaukee Journal, Memphis Press-Scimitar, and Commercial Appeal (Memphis). Six more newspapers were included because they are members of Booth Newspapers, Incorporated, as are the Saginaw News and Grand Rapids Press, have access to the same reports of the Lansing and Washington bureaus of Booth Newspapers, and reflect a cross-section of Michigan cities. These newspapers are the Ann Arbor News, Bay City Times, Flint Journal, Jackson Citizen Patriot, Kalamazoo Gazette and Muskegon Chronicle.

The New York Times is included because of its unique national reputation and because its columns frequently publish stories not to be found in other newspapers. The Washington Post, located in the nation's capital, would be expected to give intensive attention to the fund-raising trips of Vice-President Agnew. The Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press have their own Lansing and Washington bureaus, publish state editions, and send reporters to all parts of the state for stories. The State Journal (Lansing), located in the capital of the state of Michigan, must be considered influential to some extent. The Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times, located in a city only ninety-one

miles from Milwaukee, and 184 miles from Grand Rapids, might reasonably be expected to have some interest in events in those cities. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch was added to get the perspective of a large metropolitan daily in another area.

All the newspapers examined in this study, with the exceptions of the Memphis Press-Scimitar and the Commercial Appeal (Memphis), were read in either the newspaper reading rooms at the Michigan State University Library in East Lansing, the Grand Rapids Press Library in Grand Rapids or the Ryerson Public Library in Grand Rapids. In every case, with the exception of the state edition of the Detroit Free Press, the newspapers examined were the final editions for the days examined.

CHAPTER I

THE AGNEW EPISODES IN GRAND RAPIDS AND SAGINAW

Surprising differences turned up in the publication of stories about Vice-President Agnew's campaign trip in Michigan that included stops in Saginaw and Grand Rapids, on September 16, 1970.

"Vote GOP, Agnew Tells Workers,"¹ said a page-one headline in the Detroit Free Press above a story with a Grand Rapids dateline. The story by Robert S. Boyd, chief of the Washington bureau of the Free Press, was obviously written from the advance text of the vice-president's speech and filed before the 6:00 P.M. deadline of the state edition that carried the story to readers in central and western Michigan. Agnew did not begin speaking until 8:30 P.M. There was no mention of a significant deviation by Agnew from his prepared text.

The story, totaling fifteen column-inches, did not mention that four youths were arrested at the Civic Auditorium where police, using dogs restrained on leashes, had

¹Detroit Free Press, Sept. 17, 1970, p. 1.

a confrontation with a crowd of about 125 demonstrators protesting the vice-president's appearance in Grand Rapids.

"Agnew and Hecklers Spar at Lenore Rally," said the page-one story with a Saginaw dateline in the Free Press adjacent to the Grand Rapids story. The Saginaw speech at the airport drew several hundred demonstrators who had shouted obscenities at the vice-president and Mrs. Lenore Romney, Republican candidate for the United States Senate seat of Senator Philip A. Hart. The reader who completed the thirty-five column inches of the Saginaw story found in the account, continued on page 12, that a former marine was arrested carrying a blank pistol and a knife near the Pantlind Hotel in Grand Rapids. Another paragraph from Grand Rapids, inserted in the Saginaw story, mentioned that protesters also jeered Agnew at the airport in Grand Rapids.

The Detroit Free Press published a total of ninety column inches, including pictures, on Agnew's visits to Saginaw and Grand Rapids. This is more than four standard-length news columns. In this case the gatekeepers obviously did their best to reflect that the elected holder of the second highest office in the nation was in their state and merited intensive attention.

Working under the 6:00 P.M. deadline for the state edition, the chief of the Washington bureau of the Free

Press was able only to write a story based on the advance copy of the vice-president's speech. It would not be unreasonable to expect that a followup story in the state edition the following day might include a reference to the four arrested in Grand Rapids for shouting obscenities or inciting to riot. There was no followup story. No mention was made of the fact that the former marine with the starter pistol received a jail term of thirty days. The Free Press quietly discontinued its bureau in Grand Rapids several years ago. The last bureau chief of the Free Press in Grand Rapids, Mrs. Doris M. Jarrell, went to work as a reporter for WOOD, a Grand Rapids television station. It is probable that a separate bureau of the Free Press in Grand Rapids would have provided a followup story after the Washington bureau chief of the Free Press left the city to continue on tour with the vice-president.

"Agnew Has Words For His Hecklers,"² said the headline on page one of the Thursday afternoon Detroit News the day after Agnew's speech Wednesday night in Grand Rapids. The story, with a Grand Rapids dateline, summarized Agnew's visit of the previous day, including the confrontation with the crowd shouting obscenities at Saginaw Airport. The lead of the story pointed out that Agnew departed from the text of his Grand Rapids speech to praise Mrs. Romney for

²Detroit News, Sept. 17, 1970, pp. 1, 15.

courageously enduring earlier in the day at Saginaw "the most rude, crude, lewd heckling imaginable."

The story, by Al Sanders of the News Lansing bureau, said that the pickets in Grand Rapids behaved with restraint. No mention was made of the four youths arrested in Grand Rapids for shouting obscenities, or of the ex-marine who was sentenced to serve thirty days in jail. The News reporter in Grand Rapids may have made a decision to omit the obscenity arrests and the story about the ex-marine for reasons of saving space. It is more likely that he did not know about the arrests that night because of his comment that the pickets outside the auditorium had behaved with restraint.

How much material was available for publication from the AP and the UPI on details of the obscenity arrests in Grand Rapids and the sentencing of the ex-marine? Edward Lexin, assistant bureau manager of the Michigan UPI, said a separate story from the Agnew speech, totaling 150 words, moved on both the state and national wires on September 17 reporting the jail term for the ex-marine.³ Another 450-word story, summarizing Agnew talks in Michigan cities, moved on the state and national wires on September 17 with a reference to several arrests of protesters in Grand Rapids. He said details on the arrests and the total

³Interview, Grand Rapids to Lansing, Oct. 22, 1970.

involved were not known when this story was transmitted at 5:40 A.M. No details on the Grand Rapids situation were added during the day.

Piet Bennett, AP bureau chief for West Michigan, reported that a 175-word story he sent the Detroit office about the sentencing of the former marine who threatened Agnew was transmitted on the state wire on September 17.⁴ This story, including a mention of the four protesters arrested for obscenities outside the Civic Auditorium, was not transmitted outside the state of Michigan, Bennett said.

With more time to process its copy, the Detroit News combination of the Saginaw and Grand Rapids stories appeared more effective than the separate stories in the Free Press, although its total of forty-six column inches was about half the total in the Free Press. Newspapers tend to lose interest in a story sharply the following day after competitors are first with publication. The News pointed out that Agnew told the protesters in Saginaw that he had listened to four-letter arguments and was not persuaded:

The vice-president also won applause when he led one of the obscene chants, waving his hand like an orchestra conductor, and then smiling, shaking his head and saying: "You're pathetic."⁵

⁴Interview, Grand Rapids, Sept. 21, 1970.

⁵Detroit News, Sept. 17, 1970, p. 15.

The fact that the vice-president made such a point of the obscenities in both Saginaw and Grand Rapids would appear to make it all the more revelant for the Free Press and the News to discuss in some way the obscenity arrests in Grand Rapids.

"Agnew Is Heckled at Campaign Stop," said the headline in the morning New York Times.⁶ The story, totaling seventeen column-inches, was special to the Times with a Grand Rapids dateline. It also combined Agnew's day in Michigan, including the confrontation at the Saginaw Airport. The story on the Grand Rapids speech by Agnew was obviously written before the speech was given. There was no mention of the protesters at the Civic Auditorium where Agnew spoke, the obscenity arrests, or the arrest of the ex-marine. The arrest of the ex-marine on a charge of threatening Agnew was reported on both the national and state wires of the AP and UPI on September 16 and his jail term on the national wires of the UPI on September 17.⁷ The departure by Agnew from his text to mention the obscenities in Saginaw was not included in the story, written by the Times reporter.

In approaching the problem of how to report the obscenities, the Free Press either just mentioned the word

⁶New York Times, Sept. 17, 1970, p. 29.

⁷Both AP and UPI stories on the arrest of the ex-marine were found in some of the newspapers analyzed.

"obscenities," or settled for the one of one long dash as in "Same old ——" or "——Lenore, we don't want your war." The Grand Rapids Press and the Detroit News made no attempt to bring out the nature of the obscenities. The Times used a different method: "One-two-three-four, we don't want your (obscenity) war."⁸

The New York Times story did not mention Agnew's deviation from the text at the start of his speech in Grand Rapids. By the next day Agnew was in New York and his Michigan visit was history so far as the Times was concerned. There was no mention of it. The Times, the closest the United States has to offer in the way of a national newspaper of record, had its hands full the next day to find space to keep up with the spot news of that day. In this respect the Times is not any different from the other newspapers surveyed in this study.

The Chicago Tribune, a newspaper that in the past has conducted circulation drives in Grand Rapids, published nine column-inches about Agnew's clash with the protesters in Saginaw. The Tribune story mentioned "intermittent obscenities."⁹ On the Thursday and Friday following the Wednesday night speech of Agnew in Grand Rapids, there was no mention of it in the Tribune or other matters concerning the visit, including the obscenity arrests and that of the

⁸New York Times, Sept. 17, 1970, p. 29.

⁹Chicago Tribune, Sept. 17, 1970, p. 4.

ex-marine. The Tribune's lead story on Thursday was the visit by President Richard M. Nixon to Chicago.

The Chicago Sun-Times of September 17 published on page one a story on the arrest September 16 of the former marine in Grand Rapids: "Armed Man Seized Before Agnew Grand Rapids Visit." The UPI story did not say why Agnew was in Grand Rapids. This same edition of the Sun-Times, a five-column, tabloid-size newspaper, on the following day, totaling 128 pages, did not contain a followup story on the ex-marine. As previously reported, the UPI provided a story on the jail term on its national wires on September 17. Some of the Sun-Times readers conceivably may have been looking for another story on the ex-marine. If the followup story from the UPI was mislaid, why did not one of the gatekeepers pick up the telephone and call the UPI or the Grand Rapids Press?

"Agnew Berates Cursing Hecklers as Pathetic, Intellectually Stagnant," said a page-one headline in the Washington Post on Thursday, September 17. The story, datelined Saginaw, Michigan, was written by William Chapman, a staff writer of the Post. The story combined Agnew's speech in Grand Rapids with the protest at Saginaw. The Grand Rapids part of the story quoted from Agnew's prepared speech. No mention was made of any protests in Grand Rapids or arrests for obscenities. There was one sentence on the arrest of the ex-marine. The Post used short dashes for

obscenities: "Same old s---" "One, Two, Three, four, we don't want your f----- war."

On Friday, September 18, the Post published a news analysis of Agnew's trip, the only newspaper of those surveyed to do so. The Saginaw demonstration was mentioned but there was no followup on the obscenity arrests in Grand Rapids or the jailing of the ex-marine who reportedly had threatened to kill Agnew.

The Post also published on September 18 a detailed story of a visit by Agnew the day before the Wall Street in New York where he addressed a luncheon of more than sixty financial executives in a search for campaign funds for Republican congressional candidates. The New York Times published on September 18 a story with a Washington, September 17, dateline to the effect that the vice-president flew to New York "to meet with unidentified Wall Street executives."¹⁰ The Times apparently decided against publishing a story about the visit by the vice-president to its own city when it had plenty of time to do so because the event was at noon. It was satisfied to publish a Washington story reporting that Agnew was en route to New York, and let it go at that. Wonders never cease in trying to analyze the gatekeeper function as it can operate

¹⁰New York Times, Sept. 18, 1970, p. 24.

on American newspapers. It raises doubts about the function of the New York Times and other publications as newspapers of record.

The Milwaukee Journal, a subscriber to the Washington Post News Service, published exactly the same story on September 17 as appeared in the Post on Agnew's tour of Michigan. The only deviation was that one long dash instead of short dashes replaced the obscenities. Either way, the average reader undoubtedly got the point.

"Democrats Inciting Taunts, Agnew Says," was the headline in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.¹¹ The story carried a Grand Rapids dateline, was reported by the AP and totaled twenty column inches. It included an account of the Saginaw Airport confrontation as well as Agnew's departure from his text in the Grand Rapids speech to voice his dismay at the obscenities shouted at Mrs. Romney. There was no mention of the four obscenity arrests in the city or the arrest of the former marine. Periods were used in a sentence to show the obscenities in Saginaw.

An analysis of the State Journal (Lansing) turned up some of the most surprising inconsistencies in applications of the gatekeeper function of any newspaper in this study. The Journal nameplate points out that it receives

¹¹St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Sept. 17, 1970, p. 2.

the services of the Associated Press, United Press International, the New York Times, and Los Angeles Times—Washington Post News Service.

The Journal home edition of Thursday, September 17, 1970, published an UPI story, with a Grand Rapids dateline, about Agnew's visit on the day before to Michigan. The story quoted from the text of Agnew's speech delivered Wednesday night in Grand Rapids. There was no mention of protesters in the page-one story that was continued on page two. Nothing was reported about the uproar at Saginaw where obscenities were hurled at Agnew and Mrs. Romney. The same edition of the Journal carried another UPI story with a Grand Rapids dateline on the arrest of the former marine.

The following day, Friday, September 18, the Journal did not publish the followup story provided for newspapers in Michigan by both the AP and the UPI on the thirty-day jail sentence given the ex-marine.¹² Surprisingly, this

¹²Both the AP and UPI stories on the sentencing of the former marine who allegedly threatened to kill Agnew moved on the Michigan state wires of both organizations about 12:45 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17, 1970. This was too late to meet the deadlines of most of the Michigan afternoon newspapers. The Journal story on the Sept. 16 arrest of the ex-marine was not published until Sept. 17, the day he was sentenced. Logically, the followup should have been published Sept. 18.

same edition of the Journal carried on page six, section A, a UPI story from Detroit, quoting United States Senator Philip A. Hart about the obscenities hurled against Agnew and Mrs. Romney in Saginaw on September 16. Senator Hart criticized the hecklers. This was the first time that the Journal readers were aware of the Saginaw demonstration, two days after the event.

An analysis of publication of stories in Michigan and other states of the talks in Saginaw and Grand Rapids by Vice-President Agnew makes it clear that the many omissions reflect gatekeeping approaches that for one reason or another have served to stem the flow of information from the point of origin to newspaper readers in other areas away from where the events occurred.

CHAPTER II

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GATEKEEPERS IN GRAND RAPIDS AND SAGINAW?

Piet Bennett, the AP correspondent in western Michigan with headquarters in Grand Rapids, was present at the Agnew dinner in the Civic Auditorium. He did not leave the auditorium during the vice-president's speech, nor did he file any copy to the AP that night about the four obscenity arrests. He did not mention in his story about the use of police dogs in controlling the protesters outside the auditorium. It is possible that the use of leashed dogs might have aroused interest in other sections of the nation. Millions of Americans watched on television the police use of dogs during the 1960s against blacks in the South.

Bennett is a representative of one of the most important type of gatekeepers in the whole chain of news transmission. Normally a decision by a reporter or editor acting as a gatekeeper on a local newspaper would affect only that immediate area in which the newspaper is published. A gatekeeping decision by Bennett affects the information

provided to the 1,260 AP member newspapers in the nation.¹ Other gatekeepers, serving as telegraph editors on the member newspapers, are able to delete from all wire stories material they do not believe to be essential, revelant, or germane to the day's flow of wire news. They can not put back in facts they are not aware have been omitted.

Bennett is a pleasant, easygoing man in his late twenties. He has short, crewcut hair. He was born in the East, but was reared in the South and would like to return to work there. He has a request pending for a transfer to an AP bureau in Florida. His wife is a southern girl from Birmingham, Alabama.

The writer mentioned to Bennett during the Agnew dinner that the police were using dogs in controlling the protesters outside the Civic Auditorium. The following day the Grand Rapids Press reported the incident in great detail, pointing out that it was the first time in Grand Rapids that dogs were introduced in crowd-control in the city.² Two photographs of the dogs in front of the protesters were also published in the Press. Tensions in the

¹Interview with Theodore Boyle, promotion manager of AP, Grand Rapids to New York, Oct. 26, 1970. Boyle also said that as of Sept. 30, 1970, the AP had 3,270 radio and television members in the U.S.

²Ed Kotlar, "Five Men Arrested During Agnew Visit," Grand Rapids Press, Sept. 17, 1970, sec. C, p. 1.

inner city have been so high in Grand Rapids that there is every reason to doubt that the police would call out the dogs in confrontations with black crowds.

Asked by the writer why he did not relay the police dog information to the AP, Bennett replied that he had decided, since the dogs did not actually go into action against the protesters, he did not think it important enough to include in his story.³ Bennett made the decision, as so many are made by reporters, wire service correspondents, and newspaper editors, in an off-the-cuff manner on the spot. His decision not to transmit the information meant that there was no way the remainder of the nation outside of Grand Rapids would be aware of the use of the police dogs in crowd-control despite the intensive publication of the facts in the Grand Rapids Press.

Bennett was not aware that night of the four youths arrested outside the Civic Auditorium for shouting obscenities. In fact, it was not until late in the night after the Agnew speech at the dinner that the two Press reporters assigned to cover the protesters were able to get their stories on paper for the following day's editions of the Press. All the twenty-four reporters assigned to tour with the vice-president by various newspapers and

³Interview with Piet Bennett, AP correspondent in western Michigan, Sept. 18, 1970.

wire services had been traveling all day and were tired. The only way they could have provided complete coverage of the story was to have spent a few additional hours checking the arrests at the police station, or going over to the city newsroom of the Press to find out if Press reporters had information they could use.

Not one of the twenty-four reporters assigned to the Agnew press caravan made this effort. It is understandable. Traveling with a vice-presidential candidate who has visited cities across the state in a single day can turn into a twenty-four-hour-a-day job. This group was winding up a six-day journey with Agnew. The two Grand Rapids Press reporters assigned to cover the demonstrators outside the auditorium where Agnew was speaking, started their work at 6:30 P.M. and did not finish until 2:00 A.M. The same problem of long hours and the inability to be in two places at the same time would face any individual reporter traveling with Agnew to other cities.

Bennett, the AP man based in Grand Rapids, was at the dinner, but the main story was handled by Walter Mears of the Washington bureau of the AP. Bennett filed two short paragraphs the following day on the four obscenity arrests and the thirty-day sentence given the ex-marine. Bennett told the writer that the information on the obscenity

arrests, and the sentencing of the ex-marine with the gun was not relayed by the AP outside of Michigan.⁴

Clement Brossier, bureau chief of the Michigan AP, said the sentencing story should have been filed on the national "A" wire of the AP as a followup story to a 550-word story written by Mears of the Washington bureau on Agnew's day in Michigan. The story by Mears, with a Grand Rapids dateline, moved on both the national and state wires the night of September 16, Brossier said. He was unable to determine whether the sentencing story of the ex-marine, that included a report of the obscenity arrests in Grand Rapids, was offered to New York for transmission on the national wire after it was phoned into Detroit by the AP correspondent in Grand Rapids, Piet Bennett, shortly before 1 P.M. the following day, September 17. "We might have relayed it to New York where it got lost in the shuffle because the wire was crowded there," Brossier said.⁵ The story was moved on the Michigan AP state wire at 12:45 P.M. on September 17, Brossier said.

Stewart Alsop, a columnist for Newsweek magazine, was the only one of the press contingent traveling with Agnew

⁴The Detroit AP "B" wire is also called the state wire. Stories on the "B" wire go to the 43 AP members in Michigan only. The Detroit office relays to the New York AP stories it believes should go on the national "A" wire to all the 1,260 member AP newspapers in the U.S. Other state bureaus do the same. The UPI wire setup is organized the same way.

⁵Interview, Grand Rapids to Detroit, Oct. 27, 1970.

who made an effort to talk with the protesters outside the Civic Auditorium. After the dinner, Parlor B at the Pantlind Hotel, the press room for the Agnew reporters that had been a scene of frantic activity late in the afternoon, was empty and quiet. All the stories had been sent to individual newspapers and wire services.

The UPI correspondent in Grand Rapids, George Zarafonetis, was asked by the writer why the UPI did not report on the four obscenity arrests, or the use of police dogs to control the crowd. Zarafonetis, in his sixties, is a veteran newsman who retains an enthusiastic attitude and who ordinarily prefers to err on the side of reporting controversial or delicate subjects rather than abstaining. Zarafonetis was hospitalized for a foot infection at the time of the Agnew dinner. Parts of the Agnew speech in Grand Rapids were included in a roundup story on Agnew's activities. Although a followup story by the UPI on the sentencing of the ex-marine moved over the state and national wires of the UPI, no additional details on the obscenity arrests or the police dogs were offered to UPI clients about the arrests in Grand Rapids.⁶

The frequent haphazard nature of gatekeeping decisions is illustrated by the way in which the UPI had

⁶Interview with George Zarafoneitis, UPI correspondent for western Michigan, Sept. 21, 1970.

to rely on reporting the Agnew dinner in Grand Rapids. Robert Berg, manager of the Lansing bureau of the agency, drove to Grand Rapids to cover the vice-president's speech, because of the illness of Zarafoneitis. Asked several weeks later why his story did not include any reports of the four protesters who had been arrested during the visit of Agnew, he replied, "Were there any arrests in Grand Rapids?"⁷ This was the first that Berg knew about the arrests. He explained that since Agnew was taken from the Pantlind Hotel to the Civic Auditorium via a tunnel, was not confronted directly by protesters, and there was no violence he did not see any necessity to look for additional details. "These things are so common now you will have a news story when there aren't demonstrations," Berg said. This is Berg's individual opinion and may be shared by other gatekeepers, but neither the AP nor the UPI has put out guidelines to its correspondents to ignore protest demonstrations because they "are so common."⁸ It may well be that newsmen, as well as the public, are becoming tired of protest demonstrations. Is the record being distorted when protest demonstrations

⁷Interview, Grand Rapids to Lansing, Oct. 20, 1970.

⁸Interview with Piet Bennett, AP correspondent in western Michigan, Oct. 26, 1970. Bennett, assigned to cover some of the campaign activities of U.S. Sen. Philip A. Hart, a Democrat, and his Republican opponent, Mrs. Lenore Romney, in the fall of 1970, said he received practically no specific instructions.

are not reported? But if all the verifiable facts about an event—especially one in which the second highest elected official of the United States plays a role—are not included in a report of the event when it enters the free flow of news essential to the free state, several questions arise: Has the record become distorted because one gatekeeper makes a judgment that the antisocial behavior of a small but specific public towards its vice-president is "so common" as to be not newsworthy? Has the people's right to know been lessened? The UPI had thirty-three newspaper clients in Michigan as of September 30, 1970 and 1,200 in the United States, according to an executive in the New York Office.⁹ The decision by one man in Grand Rapids restricted the flow to all these clients.

Walter Mears of the Washington AP bureau traveled with the Agnew press party and wrote the story on Agnew's speech in Grand Rapids. Mears said that at times on a long tour, such as the one with Agnew, there is no time for the traveling correspondent to file a story.¹⁰ He gives it to someone in the nearest bureau of the AP. The day that concluded for Mears in Grand Rapids started at 6:00 A.M.

⁹Interview with Kenneth Smith, UPI Promotion Department executive secretary, Grand Rapids to New York, Oct. 26, 1970. Smith said that the UPI also had 3,126 radio and television clients.

¹⁰Interview, Grand Rapids to Washington, Oct. 20, 1970.

in Albuquerque, New Mexico, from where the Agnew party flew to Michigan. Mears pointed out that it is not possible for a correspondent to cover all aspects of a story while trying to get in and out of cities. He stressed the role of the local AP correspondent in the city. Asked about the situation if there was no local correspondent, Mears said the AP policy was to assign a staff correspondent to stay behind and clean up any loose ends of the story.

All the newspapers analyzed in this study were checked for followup stories after the events in Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Louisville, and Milwaukee. If the AP provided any followup stories, not one of the papers published them. There is every indication that there were no followup stories. Mears did not cite any specific guidelines from the AP on demonstrations but said "the rule of thumb is that there must be some proximity to Agnew involving him."¹¹ In Saginaw the demonstrators were directly involved with Agnew. In Grand Rapids, and Milwaukee there were no direct confrontations such as in Saginaw, and to a minor extent in Louisville, but issues arose in connection with demonstrations that may be just as significant.

In retrospect it can be observed that the two gatekeepers of the wire services in Grand Rapids did not, for one reason or another, open the gates on all the significant

¹¹Ibid.

details concerning Agnew's visit to Grand Rapids. The point could be argued from many aspects. Daily morning newspapers could rightly prefer to having published an advance copy of a speech than not having anything at all. All stories are competitive for space with all other stories on any given day. Still, the analysis of what happened to the Agnew speech coverage in Grand Rapids and Saginaw raises serious questions about the gatekeepers who are responsible for starting information through communications channels.

Grand Rapids happens to be the center for both the AP and UPI offices in western Michigan. What happens when gatekeepers function in smaller cities where there are no national news-gathering offices and a traveling press contingent is not on hand? This means that the wire services must rely for their information from gatekeepers on the local AP newspapers. Is it possible that civic pride in certain cases may restrict the flow of information about what is considered damaging to the prestige of an area? Despite the fact the obscenities uttered in Saginaw were shouted directly at Agnew and Mrs. Romney, there were no arrests. In Grand Rapids, the obscenity arrests took place outside the press entrance of the Civic Auditorium while Agnew was speaking. The protesters shouted obscenities in concert as did the group at the Saginaw Airport earlier in the day. The situation on the face of it would merit

attention in the light of the current national interest in legal considerations dealing with obscenity and pornography, and Agnew's repeated attacks on permissiveness in United States society.

It would be difficult to place the Saginaw obscenity story in any kind of perspective without reference to the Saginaw News of Thursday, September 17, 1970. The Saginaw News pointed out in a story on page six that the only arrest at the rally was that of a twenty-year-old Bay City college graduate for profanity at a state policeman. No attempt was made, unlike the incidents in Grand Rapids, to make arrests for profanity involving the vice-president. The Saginaw News did not publish anything about the demonstrations against Agnew in Grand Rapids. Its story on the Saginaw protests on page six quoted an unidentified June 1970 graduate of Central Michigan University who said there "were many students at the rally." This unidentified source pointed out "what he termed the anarchists and the socialists in the group of CMU students," according to the Saginaw News. There was no elaboration. The newspaper did not go into specifics on the obscenities but referred to "obscene taunts from the rear of the crowd."

No information came out of Saginaw on the nature of the crowd that hurled obscenities at Mrs. Romney and Vice-President Agnew. The quoting of one unidentified college student in the light of the absence of any details on the

crowd does not rule out the possibility that the protesters included older persons and more moderate groups that opposed Agnew but did not indulge in obscenities. Saginaw does not have a resident AP correspondent as in Grand Rapids. It would be up to the Saginaw News, a member of the AP, to telephone the AP bureau in Detroit with revelant information. The Detroit AP would then make the decision whether to move additional information on the state wire to Michigan AP members and also whether to relay it to the New York AP for possible inclusion on the national wire.

In practice this system can have many flaws. The Saginaw News, and other member AP newspapers, can simply forget to protect the AP. This happens in many areas at times as the AP Logs of its activities remind member newspapers.¹² The member newspaper might telephone too late for that day's editions. By the next day the whole event is forgotten in the scramble to keep up with the current news.

The UPI news transmission setup may have even more loopholes. Unlike the cooperative arrangement of the AP, in which member newspapers are obligated to furnish news to the AP, the UPI subscriber newspapers are considered

¹²The AP Logs usually come weekly to member newspapers with an emphasis on how stories of interest were handled. They consist of three or four stapled sheets. Member newspapers may be praised for cooperation or lapses in certain areas may be cited.

clients of the UPI Association. The obligation is on the organization to service its clients—subscribers that are not obligated to provide news.

When the UPI reporter in Grand Rapids was unable to cover the Agnew dinner because of illness, there was no automatic provision for a replacement. When the AP reporter in Grand Rapids is ill or on vacation, the Grand Rapids Press assumes the obligation of providing news to the organization.

Despite the impressive connotations and the reputations of the AP and UPI, the vital gatekeeping decisions may frequently depend on one man at the beginning of the news channel. If that one man is absent, as happened in Grand Rapids with the UPI during the Agnew visit, a news item may never start through the channels. If the one man does not see any news value of any particular bit of information, as did the AP reporter in Grand Rapids on the use of police dogs to keep protesters under control, then that bit of information may also be cut off. The presence of competitive news agencies is thus not necessarily a guarantee that all relevant information will emerge from any given news event.

Another example concerns Robert Longstaff, of Booth Newspapers, Incorporated, a privately funded syndicate of eight daily newspapers in Michigan with headquarters in Detroit. Longstaff covered the Agnew visit to Grand Rapids,

and he provided the Booth Newspapers with an analytical approach to Agnew's trip in Michigan. "Agnew Presents New Image in Michigan Campaign Stops," said the page-one story by Longstaff in the Kalamazoo Gazette on September 17. Longstaff perceived a more moderate approach by Agnew. Longstaff mentioned in his story the heckling encountered by Mrs. Romney and Agnew at Saginaw Airport, but there were no details of the obscenities. Although Longstaff came to the newsroom of the Grand Rapids Press, a Booth newspaper, after the Agnew speech to write his story, he obviously did not see his role as one that included the police reporting aspects. It would be a logical approach for him to assume that the AP and UPI in Grand Rapids would cover the demonstrations and arrests. The Grand Rapids Press theoretically could have provided information on the demonstrations and arrests for the other seven Booth Newspapers. This sometimes takes place between the Booth organization member newspapers. In practice this procedure may not work out too well. In the morning after an evening event the rush to meet deadlines usually results in a concentration on the immediate problems at hand. Even if the information is provided in some instances, other Booth newspapers may not consider it important enough to publish.

Many intangibles enter into gatekeeping decisions. Usually questions over the handling of news stories do not arise until some time after the event. By this time the memories of some of the gatekeepers may be fuzzy over exactly what occurred. For example, it would be plausible for any gatekeeper to cite as a defense that on the date that any given event occurred and was reported there were problems in composing room production that affected decisions made on the amount of space allotted or the placement of the report of the event.

Still, in the Agnew episodes reviewed in Saginaw and Grand Rapids, it was quite apparent that the vital gatekeeping decisions were made at the beginning of the news transmission channel by the wire service agencies rather than at the end in the newspaper city rooms or composing rooms. Pressures of deadlines and space are the two frequent defenses by newspapers in answer to their critics. Yet it would appear that decisions made by various gatekeepers along the way are just as important.

Were the Grand Rapids and Saginaw incidents involving Vice-President Agnew perhaps isolated examples? There is additional evidence to indicate they are not and that the gatekeepers are continually making decisions that leave pertinent facts out rather than in concerning trips across the nation made by Agnew.

CHAPTER III

THE AGNEW EPISODE IN LOUISVILLE

The State Journal (Lansing) published on page ten, section B, of its issue for Friday, September 18, 1970, an AP dispatch with a Louisville, Kentucky, dateline: "Anti-Agnew Protests Planned." The story reported that the city of Louisville had granted three organizations permission for a protest parade and demonstration against the appearance of Vice-President Agnew, who was scheduled to visit Louisville on Tuesday, September 22. Of twenty daily newspapers published in Michigan and other states that were examined for this study, no other newspaper could be found that published this particular story, including the New York Times, Washington Post, Detroit Free Press, Chicago Tribune, and Grand Rapids Press.

On Wednesday, September 23, the Journal published a roundup story from Memphis, Tennessee, about a campaign swing by Agnew through the South. This story, reported by UPI, included three paragraphs about Agnew's visit to Louisville during the day. The three paragraphs were from the text of Agnew's speech, attacking a member of the

Federal Communications Commission. There was no mention of any demonstration against Agnew.

What occurred in Louisville on September 22, during a visit by Vice-President Agnew? There were significant events even before Agnew arrived. The Courier-Journal (Louisville) might have been expected to give more than casual attention to Agnew's speeches in other cities before he came to Louisville. This was not the case. None of the gatekeepers, serving as wire editors of the newspapers analyzed in this study, seemed to pay any particular attention to the vice-president before or after he was in their cities. In all the cases the newspaper in the city where the vice-president was speaking was the only publication to bring out many of the relevant facts. The Courier-Journal of September 17, published on page five, section A, a story about Agnew's trip to Michigan. The story carried a Saginaw dateline, and was written by William Chapman of the Los Angeles Times-Washington Post Service. The story on the Saginaw demonstrations quoted the demonstrators: "1, 2, 3, 4, we don't want your (obscenity) war." There was only one paragraph on Agnew's speech in Grand Rapids and one paragraph on the former marine arrested on a charge of threatening the vice-president.

The next day, September 18, the first page of the Courier-Journal displayed an AP wirephoto, showing hardhat construction workers greeting President Richard M. Nixon in Chicago. On page five was a story, "Louisville to Let Foes of Agnew Hold March." The acting mayor of Louisville had issued a permit after saying he was unable to persuade three organizations to drop plans for protests during Agnew's scheduled September 22 visit to the city. He said:

It is my personal opinion that it is incumbent upon all of us, regardless of political beliefs, to be as courteous as possible to the vice-president when he is in our city.¹

He expressed a point of view reflected in letters to the editors of newspapers by Americans unhappy with what they consider discourtesies to visiting dignitaries. But can interpretations of a courteous approach raise fundamental issues on the right to dissent? The city of Louisville had been having problems with the right to dissent that have a direct bearing on the visit by Agnew and conceivably could be of interest to the citizenry of the nation. The Reverend Terrence Davis, who applied for the permit to hold a demonstration, was quoted in the above story:

If there is no demonstration against Agnew we would give the country the impression that Louisville

¹Courier-Journal (Louisville), Sept. 18, 1970, Sec. A, p. 5.

is a politically backward city—a place where no one would stand up in opposition to the Vietnam War and the repression of dissent.²

The Reverend Mr. Davis promised the demonstration would be orderly. The Kentucky Civil Liberties Union said legal action might be taken if anti-war demonstrators were harassed during Agnew's visit. The story also quoted Mrs. Suzanne K. Post, chairman of the group, as saying that during a previous visit by President Nixon to Louisville "signs carried by protesters were forcibly taken by officers."³

The morning of September 23, the day after the vice-president's visit, during which he had spoken to a group attending a \$100-a-plate Republican fund-raising luncheon, the Courier-Journal reported on page one that a crowd of 2,000 had greeted Agnew's public appearance but that some two hundred protesters had carried signs and had shouted their displeasure. Some of the protesters and the signs they carried were in a picture published on page ten. The protest had been organized by the Louisville Peace Council, the University of Louisville Committee for Survival, and the Majority for a Silent Agnew, the newspaper reported.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

The demonstration had been orderly and there had been no arrests reported in the Courier-Journal. The story on page ten explained that the Reverend Mr. Davis had told the demonstrators no funds were available for legal action if demonstrators were arrested for unseemly conduct. Mimeographed sheets handed to the marchers told them to march in pairs, obey the marshals, refrain from obscenities in speeches and signs, to refrain from arguments with hecklers, and not to participate in incidents.⁴

Newspapers in the study that published stories on Agnew's talk in Louisville made no mention of the protesters or their problems in expressing the right to dissent. These papers include the New York Times, the Washington Post, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Detroit Free Press, the Flint Journal, and the Muskegon Chronicle. The Times, the Post-Dispatch, and the Washington Post published stories reported by their own staff writers. The other newspapers either published accounts reported by the AP or UPI.

Other newspapers examined in this study published stories on September 23 of Agnew's talk in Memphis, Tennessee, after he had left Louisville, but did not include a report on Agnew's visit to Louisville, or the reaction. These papers included the Detroit News, the Jackson Citizen-Patriot, the Saginaw News, the Kalamazoo Gazette, and the

⁴Ibid., sec. A, p. 10.

Ann Arbor News. The Saginaw News, in a city where obscenities thrown at the vice-president had attracted attention the previous week, published a story quoting Edward H. McNamara, Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, who criticized the heckling of Agnew at Saginaw on September 16.⁵

When a President or vice-president makes two, three, or four speeches a day in various cities, it can bring up problems for some newspapers in making decisions on how much to publish. Some newspapers might include just one paragraph to cover the situation in a given city when more than one speech a day is involved. The Ann Arbor News, like the State Journal (Lansing), published in a university city where the local newspaper is usually a day ahead of outside publications in bringing the news to faculty and students, was the only newspaper of those surveyed to find space for the last paragraph in an AP story from Memphis. The other newspapers publishing this same story from Memphis included at least one paragraph or two on Agnew's speech in Louisville. The Ann Arbor News published nothing on the Louisville speech but included this paragraph on the Memphis speech:

Having eaten 35,000 pieces of fried chicken, the audience was entertained by hillbilly singers Tex Ritter and Roy Acuff and a choral group whose

⁵Saginaw News, Sept. 23, 1970, sec. A, p. 8.

selections were dedicated to "What's Right With America" and included a rousing "Dixie."⁶

In fact this paragraph was refreshing because nearly all the stories surveyed that were transmitted by the AP, or UPI emphasized quotations from the prepared text of Agnew's remarks with little or no local background. The details with local flavor, published only in the newspapers in the cities where Agnew visited and generally not transmitted in any of the AP and UPI national wire stories, showed Agnew usually received an enthusiastic reception from the crowds en route and drew many rounds of applause during his speeches.

The Grand Rapids Press, in a city where the vice-president had spoken the week before, published no report on the Memphis or Louisville talks by Agnew. The Milwaukee Journal, in a city where Agnew was expected on Friday, September 25, published no story on September 23 of the Memphis or Louisville speeches by Agnew. On Sunday, September 20, a page-one headline in the Milwaukee Journal had said, "City Braces for Agnew's Arrival."

It seems apparent that throughout the nation newspaper readers were unaware of the protest demonstration against Agnew in Louisville on September 22, 1970. The gatekeepers along the route, either the AP or UPI reporters

⁶ Ann Arbor News, Sept. 23, 1970, sec. c, p. 4.

on the scene, or the men in their home offices filing stories for transmission to the national wires, decided that the information on the protests was not important enough. This omission is all the more strange since the AP had moved for national transmission an advance story that protests against Agnew were planned in Louisville. The desire by the Reverend Mr. Davis to let the country know that there was opposition in Louisville to the Vietnam War and to what he said was the repression of dissent, was not communicated to the nation.

The Courier-Journal (Louisville) has a reputation as a newspaper of excellence; a newspaper that usually is to be found on lists of the best ten newspapers in the nation.⁷ The researcher or historian will find detailed information in its columns of the protests against Agnew. Still, even on a newspaper such as the Courier-Journal, it is obvious that the researcher or historian must be wary of gatekeeping decisions that leave out vital information.

In his Louisville speech Agnew criticized Nicholas Johnson, a Democratic member of the Federal Communications Commission. Johnson had challenged an Agnew contention that popular music is being misused by proponents of the drug culture to get their message across. Agnew said in

⁷Edwin Emery, The Press and America, (2nd ed., rev.; New York: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 756-57.

Louisville that Johnson's backing of rock musicians was the support of a philosophy of permissiveness that encouraged many young people to turn to narcotics addiction. Johnson issued a reply in Washington in answer to Agnew:

Perhaps it is obvious why Vice-President Agnew defends big campaign contributors who are urging our grade school children to take up cigarette smoking. After all, he was speaking at a \$100-a-place fund-raising luncheon in the heart of the tobacco country.

But I doubt his rhetoric will provide much satisfaction to the dependents who are left behind by the 300,000 Americans who will die from cigarette-related diseases this year, and I think it raises some questions about his credibility as a critic of the drug culture to take money from those who are profiting from encouraging Americans to seek solutions to all life's problems in alcohol, nicotine, and the other harmful chemical panaceas offered by corporate America.⁸

The Courier-Journal printed the above two paragraphs in its September 23 issue with the exception that it omitted the sentence about 300,000 Americans dying of cigarette-related diseases.⁹ The Washington Post published the reference to the 300,000 deaths in the reply by Johnson. Many other newspapers did not have to make a gatekeeping decision on the matter. They published nothing on the Louisville incidents. Some newspapers published Agnew's attack on Johnson but not Johnson's reply. These

⁸New York Times, Sept. 23, 1970, p. 21.

⁹Courier-Journal (Louisville), Sept. 23, 1970, sec. A, p. 22.

newspapers included the Detroit Free Press, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Flint Journal, the Muskegon Chronicle, and the Saginaw News.

The Louisville episode involving freedom of dissent, the protesters, Agnew's attack on Nicholas Johnson and Johnson's reply, all would seem to warrant interest to the nation as a whole. As has been brought out, many newspapers either did not publish any stories at all or made gatekeeping decisions that violated such elementary journalism practices as failing to tell both sides of the story. The complete story cannot even be found in the files of the Courier-Journal (Louisville).

CHAPTER IV

THE AGNEW EPISODE IN MILWAUKEE

Three days after his talk in Louisville, and nine days after his speech in Grand Rapids, Vice-President Agnew was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for a speech on Friday night, September 25. He declared in Milwaukee that he aimed to arouse the American public against permissiveness. The New York Times apparently considered Agnew's speech a significant and major address. A story by a staff writer of the Times was filed from Milwaukee and printed in its issue for September 26, beginning on page one and continuing on an inside page for a total of forty-two column inches.

The Milwaukee Journal naturally carried in-depth reporting on the vice-president's speech. The Journal also gave prominent space on page one in its issue for September 26 to report that a crowd of seven hundred demonstrators broke about forty display windows in the downtown district after marching to the Milwaukee Arena where Agnew was speaking. Six students from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, were among eight young persons arrested. One policeman was injured.

The Times did not report the demonstration or the arrests. The Washington Post published one sentence about a demonstration in its Agnew speech story by a staff writer in Milwaukee. "About one hundred silent protesters including the Rev. James Groppi, civil rights leader, marched outside the arena where Agnew spoke,"¹ the Post story said. Compared to the seven hundred demonstrators reported in the Milwaukee Journal, the forty display windows broken downtown, to eight persons arrested, and the policeman injured, the Post account was understated. As incomplete as the Post account was, it was far superior to the information transmitted by the AP and UPI gatekeepers in Milwaukee to newspapers throughout the nation. Wire service stories published in issues of the Detroit Free Press, the Flint Journal, the Kalamazoo Gazette, and the Ann Arbor News for September 26 made no mention of the disorders in Milwaukee during the Agnew speech.

The Saginaw News published only two paragraphs on Agnew's address. The Grand Rapids Press, which had published almost two pages of news and photographs on Agnew's visit nine days earlier, including details of the arrests of five persons, did not print a single line on Agnew in Milwaukee. The Muskegon Chronicle, a newspaper that carries

¹"Agnew Decries Permissiveness by Parents and College Heads," Washington Post, Sept. 26, 1970, p. 2.

the drawing of the United States flag on its page-one nameplate, did not report the Agnew story. The Jackson Citizen Patriot, a newspaper that has a drawing on its page-one nameplate of an American Revolutionary War patriot gun in hand, and the Bay City Times also did not publish any stories on the Agnew speech.

The Grand Rapids Press, the Ann Arbor News, the Bay City Times, the Flint Journal, the Jackson Citizen Patriot, the Kalamazoo Gazette, the Muskegon Chronicle, and the Saginaw News are all members of Booth Newspapers, Incorporated. There is no central editorial policy from the main office in Detroit. Each member newspaper makes its own policies on editorial matters. The fact that four of the eight Booth newspapers in Michigan could not find space for a major speech by the vice-president therefore reflects gatekeeping factors not influenced by central policy-making decisions. There is one possible explanation for what seems to be a shortage of news space in the many Michigan newspapers on Saturday. This is the day for church news in Michigan. Many newspapers publish several pages of church news.

Deadlines cannot be the explanation as to why the newspapers that published details of the Agnew speech did not make any reference to the disorders in Milwaukee. The Detroit Free Press does have a 6:00 P.M. deadline for its state edition. The Jackson Citizen Patriot has a morning

edition on Saturday only, with a deadline the preceeding night. All the other newspapers surveyed, however, with the exception of the New York Times and the Washington Post, are afternoon newspapers that have sufficient time to include revelant material on events of the night before.

Even with sufficient time all the facts cannot be included if they have not been transmitted by the wire service gatekeepers. The Washington Post, the New York Times, and the Free Press did not publish any followup stories on the demonstrations and events in Milwaukee. If deadline problems prevented the inclusion of details of the demonstrations in Milwaukee in Saturday editions, why were there no followup stories in the Sunday editions of these newspapers? Did the details fail to pass through the first gate of the wire service correspondents in Milwaukee, or the second gate at a relay point for national transmission?

Down in Louisville, where Agnew had spoken only three days before, the Courier-Journal found no space in its issue for Saturday, September 26, or the 244-page Sunday edition to publish any reports on Agnew's visit in Milwaukee. A story in the Saturday edition quoted Walter J. Hickel, secretary of the interior, as being against the "rhetoric of polarization,"² a statement seeming to put him at odds with Agnew.

²Courier-Journal (Louisville), Sept. 26, 1970, sec. A, p. 4.

Almost incredibly, the Chicago Tribune final markets and home editions of Saturday, September 26, and Sunday, September 27, were delivered in Grand Rapids without any mention that Agnew had made a major address in Milwaukee the previous Friday night. This matched the Tribune's performance of September 17 and 18 when the issues for those days made no mention of the visit September 16 by Agnew to Grand Rapids, during which five men were arrested. The Chicago Sun-Times of September 26 also made no mention of Agnew's visit to Milwaukee, only ninety-one miles north of Chicago.

The State Journal (Lansing) did not report the Agnew speech in Milwaukee in its issues for September 26 and September 27. The fifty-page Saturday edition of September 26 included two pages of church news, two pages of sports news, three pages of youth news, and one page of outdoor news. The 128-page Sunday edition was filled with feature section and entertainment category news. The lead story on page one, headlined "Nation on Brink of New Civil War," reported the plea by the President's Commission on Campus Unrest to President Nixon to lead American society from the brink of what it called a chasm so dangerous that it threatened the survival of the nation.

If the survival of the nation is at stake should not the American public be informed of significant demonstrations and events taking place round the nation? Is

there a great danger that gatekeeping decisions are restricting significant information to the areas of their origin? Is omission of facts concerning demonstrations and protests by implication bolstering an image in the national consciousness that Vice-President Agnew's political ideology is virtually unopposed in many cities of mid-America?

In its story on the Milwaukee protests during the speech by Agnew, the Milwaukee Journal reported that Police Sergeant Frank Miller had said to Father James Groppi, "Padre, how are you? It's good to see you." Sergeant Miller had been assigned in the previous several years to Groppi during open housing demonstrations and civil rights activities in Milwaukee that had made Father Groppi's name familiar around the country.

The Journal story drew a significant comparison between two separate groups protesting Agnew's visit:

The first group on the glass breaking rampage was dominated by persons of the Yippie type. A more moderate element including Fr. James Groppi and representatives of ethnic, liberal, student, and old left groups set the tone for the second group. Groppi and many others did not take part in the chanting which included: "One, two, three, four, we don't want yourwar."³

The Journal used eighteen dots to replace the obscenity. The important part about its story is that it did not equate all the anti-Agnew protesters with radical

³Milwaukee Journal, Sept. 26, 1970, p. 3.

types. How many times are gatekeepers for news of the day insisting on this accuracy? Can the lack of it give the American people by implication the idea that all the protesters against the war or the vice-president are long-hair types who battle police on the six o'clock television broadcast or burn bank buildings and bomb university research centers?

There were seven hundred demonstrators protesting in the city of Milwaukee against the vice-president of the United States. Many were average Americans who do not agree with the vice-president. The evidence seems clear that the rest of the nation was not informed of what happened in Milwaukee.

In Grand Rapids more than one hundred demonstrated against the vice-president, but the nation was not informed. The Grand Rapids protesters were all youths and did not include separate, older groups, as in Milwaukee and Louisville. Still, Grand Rapids is a conservative, western Michigan community where a demonstration of any kind against a visiting dignitary, such as a vice-president, would have been unheard of only a few years earlier. The name Grand Rapids has middle America connotations in many parts of the nation. Many of the protesters in Grand Rapids were college students. In the spring of 1970, when the campuses

of the nation were in an uproar after United States troops had invaded Cambodia, Calvin College in Grand Rapids may have been the only institution in the nation where the students asked permission of the college president to hold a protest rally.⁴

In Louisville, several hundred persons protested against the vice-president against a background of alleged oppression of dissenters during a previous visit by President Nixon. Is it not of significance any more in America when hundreds of individuals march in protest against the vice-president of the United States in American cities and some are arrested? There can be no doubt that historians and researchers will have to turn to the files of the Grand Rapids Press, the Saginaw News, the Courier-Journal (Louisville), and the Milwaukee Journal to obtain full details involving Agnew's visits to the four cities. What about the mood of the nation now, in our time and our day? When readers of the nation's daily newspapers read frequently only the words taken from the advance texts of public figures, such as Agnew, are they perhaps drawing conclusions based on inadequate information? Because of the gatekeeping decisions being made now, it is apparent that a citizen who wants to be fully informed on many types of events will

⁴Grand Rapids Press, May 7, 1970, sec. C, p. 1.

require at his disposal a public library that subscribes to many Michigan newspapers as well as to many newspapers published in cities in other states.

It is obviously not sufficient to rely on one newspaper—even the New York Times. Vice-President Agnew has been making continuing attacks on the operations of newspapers, and on television and radio stations. Are the gatekeepers becoming a little gun-shy about making "in" rather than "out" decisions involving public officials, particularly Agnew?

CHAPTER V

AN EARLY LOOK AT THE ROLE OF THE GATEKEEPER

After the death of Kurt Lewin, who first defined the role of the gatekeeper, the first study was made of a specific gatekeeper. David Manning White, a research professor of journalism at Boston University, pointed out in research published in 1950 the chain of gatekeepers from reporter to rewrite man, bureau chief, and filing editors at various press association offices as a process of choosing and discarding was taking place continually. The last gatekeeper in this chain is the wire editor who has charge of the selection of national and international news. White wrote:

In many respects he is the most important gatekeeper of all, for if he rejects a story the work of all those who preceded him in reporting and transmitting the story is negated. It is understood, of course, that the story could have "ended" (insofar as its subsequent transmission is concerned) at any of the previous "gates." But assuming the story has progressed through all the "gates," it is obvious that this wire editor is faced with an extremely complicated set of decisions to make regarding the limited number of stories he can use.¹

¹David Manning White, "The 'Gate-Keeper,' A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly, XXVII (1950), p. 384.

White studied the wire editor of a morning newspaper of approximately 30,000 circulation in an industrialized Midwest city of 100,000. The wire editor was able to use only about one-tenth of the copy provided by the AP, UPI, and International News Service. For one week this gatekeeper saved every piece of wire copy that passed through his hands. He wrote on each piece of copy the reason why he had rejected it. White concluded that the gatekeeper studied news to it consciously or unconsciously that the community will be informed only of those events that the newsman, as the representative of his culture, believes to be true. White found that the gatekeeper preferred the "conservative" approach when he had a choice of subject matter between two competing press associations. White also indicated feelings by the gatekeeper against the Catholic church, and programs such as the Townsend Plan affected his decisions.²

It would be unfair to make sweeping generalizations about the processing of wire service news on the basis of this one study made twenty years ago.³ However, it is a fact that even on a newspaper with a large copydesk force to assist the wire editor, the first selection of material must be made basically by one man each for national and

²Ibid., p. 385.

³Paul B. Snider, "'Mr. Gates' Revisited: A 1966 Version of the 1949 Case Study," Journalism Quarterly, XXXIV (1967), pp. 419-427, replicated White's original gatekeeper study with the same "Mr. Gates" and found his 1949 answers to the questions asked consistent with his 1966 answers.

world news, and one man for state news. The study by White perhaps points up the need for newspapers to be more cognizant of the problems their gatekeepers face in making selections.

How many newspaper executives would bend a receptive ear to a lower echelon wire editor who pleaded for more space on a given day because of the press of state, national, and world news? How many times are significant stories on such news personalities as Vice-President Agnew omitted or trimmed because of a shortage of space?

Dr. Walter Gieber, an associate professor of Journalism at San Francisco State College, made a study in 1956 of the telegraph editors of sixteen Wisconsin dailies.⁴ He concluded that the editors were passively accepting the incoming news without a critical examination. Writing about this study later, he said:

The most powerful factor was not the evaluative nature of news but the pressures of getting the copy into the newspaper; the telegraph editor was pre-occupied with the mechanical pressures of his work rather than the social meanings and impact of the news. His personal evaluations rarely entered into his selection process; the values of his employer were an accepted part of the newsroom environment.⁵

⁴Walter Gieber, "Across the Desk: A Study of 16 Telegraph Editors," Journalism Quarterly, XXXVII (1956), pp. 423-432.

⁵Walter Gieber, "News Is What Newspapermen Make It," in People, Society and Mass Communication, ed. by Lewis Dexter and David White (New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 175.

Dr. Gieber's stress on the mechanical pressures of the telegraph or wire editor's job would probably be accepted by the telegraph editors themselves. His statement that personal evaluations rarely entered into the selection process, however, is contrary to White's first intensive gatekeeper study. The telegraph editor almost necessarily makes personal evaluations on many of the news items, unless he has a definite list of subjects to be discarded. There are few, if any, newspapers known to make such detailed procedures.

Dr. Gieber also made a study of the processing of local civil liberties news in five California newspapers that found what is often news to a source is not news to a reporter. He concluded:

The fate of the story inevitably depends on the decisions made by a reporter. If he fails to see any news value in a situation, there will be no story. If he selects symbols not relevant to civil rights and liberties, the reader may not obtain complete information.⁶

It is difficult for the public and sometimes even for professional newspapermen to keep in mind the number of decisions that any reporter can exercise as a gatekeeper in working on any news story. General guidelines such as getting both sides of the story and the need for accuracy and fairness are only part of a nebulous area in which the reporter has almost unlimited freedom.

⁶Walter Gieber, "How the Gatekeepers View Local Civil Liberties News," Journalism Quarterly, XXXVII (1960), p. 203.

One study points out the situation of the newspaper publisher:

As owner or representative of ownership, he has the nominal right to set the paper's policy and see that staff activities are coordinated so that the policy is enforced. In actuality the problem of control is less simple, as the literature of "human relations" and informal group studies and of the professions suggests.⁷

The same study emphasizes the problem of control by higher echelon news executives who are not actually working on stories:

Executives may be ignorant of particular facts, and staffers who do the leg (and telephone) work to gather news can use their superior knowledge to subvert policy. On grounds of both personal belief and professional codes, the staffer has the option of selection at many points. He can decide when to interview and when to ignore, what questions to ask, which quotations to note, and on writing the story which items to feature (with an eye toward the headline), which to bury, and in general what tone to give the several possible elements of the story.⁸

The possibilities of gatekeeping decisions are almost endless. The city editor may, on stories that do not clearly fall into assigned beats, make a gatekeeping decision by the specific individual he selects to investigate a given situation. The city desk may discard, rewrite, or by placement in the newspaper and size of headline make significant gatekeeping decisions. The research instrument probably has not yet been devised to reflect accurately

⁷Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," Social Forces, XXXIII (1955), p. 326.

⁸Ibid., p. 333.

all the possibilities and nuances inherent in individual gatekeeping decisions in obtaining, selecting, and publishing local news items. It seems probable that the necessity for some element of speed in the news gathering process precludes making most gatekeeping decisions by any type of group process.

Newspapers may have general policies and approaches to the news. There still appears to be acres of space for the individual decision in the news channel. There is no evidence to indicate any other factor than separate individual decisions by individual reporters acting as gatekeepers or the deskmen making decisions at wire service relay points are responsible for the glaring gaps in the national public's awareness of significant demonstrations against Vice-President Agnew when he visited Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Louisville, and Milwaukee in the fall of 1970.

CHAPTER VI

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL GATEKEEPING DECISION

How does the individual gatekeeping decision take place? During the visits of Vice-President Agnew to such cities as Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Louisville, and Milwaukee, the use of obscene language and the war in Vietnam were important issues. If obscenities and the war are analyzed at a local news level from a gatekeeping point of view, it may help to give insight to some of the larger problems. Many of the important gatekeeping decisions made at the local news levels of newspapers involve the moral sensibilities of readers. The Grand Rapids Press is a standard-size, six-column and eight-column daily newspaper with a weekday afternoon circulation of 129,736, and a circulation of 131,892¹ Sunday mornings, published in Grand Rapids, a community of 193,878² situated in western Michigan. Some of the most irate telephone calls to the city desk of the

¹Audit Bureau of Circulations report for twelve months ending March 31, 1970, p. 1.

²"Grand Rapids Is Ranked 65th in U.S.," Grand Rapids Press, Sept. 11, 1970, sec. B, p. 9, based on preliminary census figures released Sept. 9, 1970, by the U.S. Census Bureau to Washington AP.

Press involve four-and five-letter words that average readers find objectionable. Gatekeeping decisions on four-letter words that bring "out" rather than "in" solutions can raise problems with reporters as well as news sources.

A reporter turned in this lead on a story to the city desk of the Press:

A University of Michigan psychology professor speaking at Fountain Street Church said some of society's brightest and in many cases more affluent students are being turned off by the formal education they receive in classrooms.

The reason why, says Dr. Elton McNeil, is that students today have built-in crap detectors "and perceive the education that's really relevant to our society today takes place outside the classroom."³

The reporter who turned in the story attached a note to it:

Before you get pencil-happy over my quote, "crap detectors," recognize that the same charge of irrelevancy and outmodedness can be thrown at newspapers, as well as education. My response is to let the quote stand. Our readers should be mature enough to accept it in a report. If not, they can read the funnies.⁴

The reporter's note was considered when the story was edited. The word "crap" was edited out on the theory that it would be offensive to many readers. The story, as published, read "students today have built-in detectors"

³Jessie Harding, "Speaker Attacks Much Formal Education Today as Irrelevant," Grand Rapids Press, Dec. 5, 1969, sec. B, p. 2.

⁴Memorandum, Jessie Harding, a Grand Rapids Press reporter, to Rene E. Pelissier, city editor of the Press, Dec. 4, 1969, in Rene E. Pelissier Papers. Hereafter cited as Pelissier Papers.

and did not have the same impact as it would have had with the use of the reporter's four-letter word. Even in the more permissive society of the 1970s, how many newspapers would allow the word to be published?

When Vice-President Agnew spoke in Grand Rapids on September 16, the Grand Rapids Press did not even consider the publication of an obscenity on a sign held by a youthful protester, "Agnew Balls His Mother." How many newspapers, if any, would have published a picture of this sign or referred to the obscenity specifically in the news story? Agnew was the main speaker in Grand Rapids at the dedication of the new City-County buildings on October 30, 1969. The story in the Press in the first edition reported that a crowd of protesters marched toward the plaza where Agnew was speaking, shouting "Screw you, Agnew."⁵ This phrase was edited out of the final edition on the theory that it might be offensive to readers, although several thousand persons who had gathered for the dedication ceremonies obviously had heard it. Was the decision to omit the phrase correct?

The Press published an item about Hell, Michigan, locating it between Lansing and Detroit, more specifically three miles south of Pinckney, and nineteen miles northwest

⁵"Nine Arrested in Dedication Ceremony Clashes," Grand Rapids Press, Oct. 1, 1969, sec. C, p. 1.

of Ann Arbor. There was a quick response from an outraged reader:

We read the paper and children read those items all the way through. It's bad advertising for the Press to print a thing like that. You may not believe in Hell, but we do. And you evidently do because you had the devil on the front page and you know the devil doesn't go to Heaven, he goes to Hell. We'd all appreciate it if you wouldn't print anything like that again.⁶

The Press frequently receives phone calls and letters from readers when the words "damn" and "hell" appear in print. This reaction from readers certainly has an effect on deskmen who must make gatekeeping decisions. This still holds true even though sex education stories and planned parenthood program stories in Grand Rapids have gone into specific details without any adverse reaction from readers.

Sometimes reporters will make a gatekeeping decision by keeping in mind what they consider the general policy of the newspaper is on good taste. One reporter was assigned to cover Dr. Eleanor Hamilton of New York City, who spoke in Grand Rapids on the subject, "Of Love, Sex and Being Human." The reporter was warned not to lean over backwards to avoid controversy and to use specific quotations made by the speaker. The reporter handed in the story with a note attached:

⁶"Pinch Hitter," Grand Rapids Press, May 21, 1970, p. 1.

You said I should be sure to quote Dr. Hamilton accurately but would you really want me to use this lead?

"The size of a man's penis does not determine his ability as a lover," said Dr. Eleanor Hamilton.⁷

A factor that frequently enters into the gatekeeping decision whether to publish certain words or phrases is the argument what was said is known anyway to many individuals. Dr. Hamilton's talk on love and sex was made to a mixed audience including hundreds of mothers and fathers, and boys and girls as young as fourteen. Persons who did not attend were protected against exposure to certain phrases to which they may have no objection at all. Still, words on a page of a newspaper carry a permanence that does not extend to speech. It may well be debated whether certain alleged obscenities are obscenities at all. However, if readers consider them obscenities this is a factor that must be weighed.

A Grand Rapids police sergeant was demoted for striking a fourteen-year-old black boy. The sergeant, as reported in the Press, said he heard the boy suggest he "participate in an oral sex act."⁸ In subsequent stories this was changed to "uttering an obscenity at him." The reporter who wrote the stories argued that the use of the

⁷Memorandum, Bernice Manciewicz, a Press reporter, to Rene E. Pelissier, Nov. 26, 1968, in Pelissier Papers.

⁸Mike Lloyd, "Appeal Case Begins for Officer Demoted for Striking Juvenile," Grand Rapids Press, Dec. 18, 1969, sec. B, p. 1.

expression, "oral sex act," was essential because it showed the provocation that caused the sergeant to strike the boy. This argument was overruled by the city desk on the grounds of good taste.

Chapters I, III, and IV on the visits by Agnew to Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Louisville, and Milwaukee brought out that varying newspapers had different policies in the use of dashes, spaced periods, and words to replace the obscenities. Not one of the newspapers published specific obscenities.

Considering the rate at which changes are taking place in today's society it may not be too improbable if newspapers of the future have no hesitation at using many of the words that are banned today. There is already some indication of this in the memoranda, not for publication, that appear on the teletype machines of national news-gathering organizations. In May, 1970, the AP bureau in Detroit sent a message to its western Michigan correspondent at Grand Rapids to get details on a shooting in the community of Colon. "Will outcheck shooting report soon as find out where Colon is," replied the Grand Rapids correspondent on the teletype. Back came the reply from Detroit: "Colon east of cecum, west of rectum."⁹ Early in September, 1970, the foreign desk of the New York

⁹Transmitted on the day report of the AP state wire, serving 43 members in Michigan, May 19, 1970.

Times apparently was exasperated with its London bureau. A short memorandum on the New York Times News Service teletype in the Grand Rapids Press office read: "Fuck you, London."¹⁰

The Gatekeeper at the Local News Level:
The War in Vietnam

It is 6:30 A.M. in front of the Federal Building in downtown Grand Rapids on a cold day in the fall. It is still dark. Young men waiting for the bus to take them to Detroit for induction into the armed services stand silently in small groups or singly. Some relatives are on hand. There are farewell kisses, a clutching of hands as the bus leaves. No band plays. It is a scene that could be repeated in many American cities as the war in Vietnam continues. Grand Rapids, in Kent County, Michigan, an area with about a population of 400,000, listed 132 deaths in Vietnam by October, 1970. The Grand Rapids Press, as have many other newspapers, published pictures of the men killed. At times when the stories and pictures are placed on pages other than page one there are irate phone calls from subscribers. The war can force difficult gatekeeping decisions. Every one of the deaths in Vietnam was followed sooner or later by a posthumous awards ceremony to the father and mother,

¹⁰Transmitted on the day report of the New York Times News Service, serving 340 clients in the U.S., Sept. 8, 1970.

or wife, in Grand Rapids. The Press routinely photographed each one of these ceremonies for years. The photographs always came out, more or less the same, with sorrowing relatives accepting posthumous awards.

The Press managing editor decided not to publish photographs of posthumous awards presentations after May 1, 1969.¹¹ The decision was not made easily. A strong argument for the continuance of publication was that the posthumous awards and the faces of the relatives in the photographs showed the impact of the war in Vietnam. Army officials in Grand Rapids protested bitterly. They persuaded a few relatives of the combat dead to telephone the newspaper and request that the photograph be taken.¹² The decision was not reversed.

It is difficult at times to persuade young reporters to telephone the relatives of the Vietnam dead. They feel that they are intruding. Almost invariably the relatives have a strong desire to have published a story about the death. In one case a veteran reporter was assigned to the task after a young trainee expressed some hesitation. The father of a marine killed in Vietnam told the reporter:

¹¹Decision made April 26, 1969, by David B. Osborne, managing editor of the Grand Rapids Press.

¹²Three separate telephone calls received by Rene E. Pelissier, city editor of the Grand Rapids Press, from relatives of Vietnam dead after the decision was made to discontinue photographs of posthumous awards ceremonies. Each said it had been suggested by the Army that they telephone.

It was his desire to be a marine, and we know he was a good one. His mother and I know he laid down his life for his country, and that as a Christian he was serving not only his country but was accomplishing God's will.

Those young men over there know what they are fighting for, far better than those of us who are left behind. We know that the Lord has called Tim and we accept His will. God gave him to us for a short time, and now He wanted him home.¹³

The attitude expressed by this father can not be presumed to be shared by all the other relatives of the Vietnam dead, or perhaps even by many of them. It does illustrate, however, that any preconceived notions about how news sources will react can be erroneous.

In 1969 the nation was thrilled by the escape of a Kent County soldier, Thomas H. VanPutten, after he was a prisoner in North Vietnam for fourteen months. The story received widespread attention. It was also brought out that after he arrived home his mother and father handed him a "Dear John" letter from his former fiancée who had married while he was still reported missing. The young woman's name was not used in the news story. She had a husband and was living a normal life. Why should a newspaper reporter intrude and revive what was obviously a bitter memory for all involved? The decision was made to interview the girl on the basis of the elementary theory that she should have the opportunity to present her side of

¹³Grandville Marine, 20, Loses Life in Vietnam," Grand Rapids Press, April 25, 1969, sec. A, p. 3.

the story even though her name had not been used. When the reporter telephoned her for an interview she was happy, even eager to oblige. Although her name was not used, she said that everyone knew she was the girl involved. She was being criticized for writing a "Dear John" letter to a missing serviceman. There were rumors that she was pregnant by him, she said. She wanted to give her side of the story, explaining that even before he was reported missing she had mixed emotions about him. She posed for a photograph.¹⁴

It would seem reasonable to postulate that gate-keeping decisions at the local or national levels that are made from an "in" rather than an "out" approach can be more productive. When the first "out" decision is made not to attempt to get a story, it can never start through the communications channel.

On the home front the war in Vietnam has become the focal point for many types of anti-war demonstrations. Are all the demonstrations in individual cities, or even a significant portion of them, becoming known in the states in which the cities are located, not to mention the rest of the nation? It has been shown that significant demonstrations involving the vice-president of the United States have progressed no further in the news channels than their

¹⁴"VanPutten's Ex-Financee Glad for Him," Grand Rapids Press, April 29, 1969, sec. B, p. 1.

own immediate area. Is there any reason to believe that lesser demonstrations involving not so prominent individuals have fared any better? Is it possible that lack of the dissemination of facts is contributing to what one periodical calls an appeal by President Nixon to gain the support of one segment of the population, labeled the "silent majority," instead of all Americans?

Never before in our democracy has silence had such a wide reputation. This Administration's praise and encouragement of the "silent majority" together with its campaign to silence the "vocal minority," suggest a new vision of America—as the Silent Nation.¹⁵

Are the situations that arose in Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Louisville, and Milwaukee a phenomenon unique to the 1970s in terms of gatekeeping decisions that have bottled up stories of demonstrations against Vice-President Agnew? Have these situations occurred in the past? Are they likely to be repeated in the future?

¹⁵"The Talk of the Town," New Yorker, Dec. 6, 1969, p. 51.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Is the failure of newspapers to reflect significant events in Vice-President Agnew's visits to Saginaw, Grand Rapids, Louisville, and Milwaukee an isolated phenomenon of the 1970s caused mainly by defensive reaction to criticisms of the press by Agnew? The evidence suggests that although Agnew's comments have had some effect on the gatekeepers, the problem is part of a situation in newspaper work that goes back many decades.

The first convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors convened in Washington in 1923. A story in the New York Times reported that the editors were told that a survey of opinion on what was wrong with newspapers included such faults as unintelligent handling of important news, failure to employ thoroughly trained experienced men for many important assignments, inaccuracy, the assumption of infallibility on the part of some editorial writers, and improper emphasis on crime, scandal, and other destructive news.¹ It would be difficult to deny that these

¹New York Times, April 8, 1923, p. 8.

faults still plague newspapers in the United States. Certainly many crime stories routinely explore all aspects in a way that was not done by the gatekeepers who were responsible for not informing the nation of what occurred in Saginaw, Grand Rapids, Louisville, and Milwaukee.

One of the most important stories of the 1930s was the request by President Franklin D. Roosevelt for Social Security legislation on January 17, 1935. The President said in his message to the Congress that an advisory group would complete work by March 1, 1935, on a plan for health insurance as part of the Social Security legislation. Roosevelt said that the advisory group represented the medical and dental professions, and hospital management. Health insurance was a vital issue of the 1930s, as well as in the 1970s. Letters to the editors of newspapers in the 1930s included many references to the medical problems of individuals with restricted or no incomes. No congressional action was taken on the health insurance proposal.

A study of how four Michigan daily newspapers, a national weekly news periodical, and the New York Times reported the proposed legislation revealed that none of the newspapers published the names of any members of the advisory group on health insurance, or any report on the progress of

their deliberations.² The other newspapers were the Detroit News, Detroit Free Press, Kalamazoo Gazette, and the Grand Rapids Press. Newsweek was the periodical that was examined. No news reports or editorial pieces appeared for publication after the March 1, 1935, deadline passed. The Social Security bill became law in August, 1935, without provision for the health insurance. The five newspapers and the news magazine ignored the issue. The newspapers surveyed all were members of the Associated Press or clients of the United Press, news-gathering agencies. Somewhere along the line gatekeeping decisions were made at the point of origin in Washington, where the representatives of the medical and dental professions, and hospital management were supposed to be meeting as a group, that resulted in cutting off information to the public.

It is probable that the four newspapers surveyed in Michigan, the Detroit Free Press, the Detroit News, the Kalamazoo Gazette, and the Grand Rapids Press, would have published stories on the health insurance if they were available. When the New York Times failed to report any stories, however, it can be a fair assumption that the

²Rene E. Pelissier, "The Social Security Act and Health Insurance: A Study of How Four Michigan Newspapers, One Periodical, and the New York Times Reported Proposed Legislation," (unpublished research paper prepared for W. Cameron Meyers, associate professor, School of Journalism, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1969), pp. 2-4, in the Pelissier Papers.

newspapers in Michigan were representative of all the newspapers in the nation. There had to be a failure of the wire service gatekeepers in Washington, and the Washington bureaus of the Times, the Detroit Free Press, the Detroit News, and the Booth Newspapers, of which the Grand Rapids Press and the Kalamazoo Gazette are members. Arthur J. Altmeyer, a member of the Social Security Board, three decades later revealed that the opposition of the American Medical Association had played a vital role in preventing the inclusion of health insurance provisions when the Social Security program was being debated.³ This was certainly not made known by the gatekeepers to the American public in 1935.

On July 11, 1932, when the American Dream was being tested by the Great Depression, police fired bullets and tear gas to rout 3,000 unemployed including men, women and children gathered in front of the City Hall in St. Louis, Missouri, after they had shouted for food. Four persons were shot and thirty-six were arrested.⁴ On November 21, 1932, in Cleveland, Ohio, women were among those trampled at City Hall where a squad of forty mounted policemen rode through a gathering of several hundred persons demanding

³Arthur J. Altmeyer, The Formative Years of Social Security (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 57.

⁴St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 11, 1932, p. 1.

food and fuel at the mayor's office.⁵ On the same day in Minneapolis, Minnesota, two officers were beaten and eighteen arrests made during a clash in front of the City Hall where more than a thousand men, mostly unemployed, marched to demand food, shelter or fuel.⁶

A study of press coverage of hunger riots or protests during the Depression showed that adequate details of these demonstrations could not have been transmitted from the cities involved.⁷ The New York Times editions of July 17, 1932, and November 22, 1932, published only a total of fifteen column-inches on the demonstrations in St. Louis, Minneapolis, and Cleveland, involving hundreds of persons, shootings, injuries, and many arrests.

The New York Times commented in an editorial on "the almost complete absence of even of demonstrations in the form of strikes against wage reductions"⁸ during the Great Depression. It may be speculated how many lesser demonstrations than those that occurred in St. Louis,

⁵Cleveland Plain-Dealer, Nov. 22, 1932, p. 22.

⁶Minneapolis Tribune, Nov. 22, 1932, p. 1.

⁷Rene E. Pelissier, "Hunger Riots in the United States: A Look at How Five Newspapers and One Magazine Viewed Events During the Depression," (unpublished research paper prepared for W. Cameron Meyers, associate professor, School of Journalism, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1969), pp. 4-6, in the Pelissier Papers.

⁸New York Times, July 17, 1932, sec. 2, p. 1.

Minneapolis, and Cleveland took place during the 1930s and did not get past the gatekeepers at the point of origin to the rest of the nation, even in abridged form.

From January 1, 1920 through Dec. 31, 1950 there were some 480 persons reported lynching in the United States, mostly in the South.⁹ Some of these lynchings involved large mob actions. During this period, the writer has read daily newspapers published in metropolitan areas in northern and midwestern states and can recall reading few stories about lynchings. Did the gatekeepers in southern cities and wire service bureaus not feel any obligation to transmit these stories to other states?

There is every reason to believe that for many years it has been an accepted practice for gatekeepers to make "out" rather than "in" decisions in a variety of situations. When this type of decision serves to block the American newspaper reader from the full knowledge of an event to which he is entitled, a situation can be created that does not reflect fully the mood of the people. For example, in 1970 many Republicans apparently believed that Vice-President Agnew had wide support by the electorate in the United States aside from those that lived in the

⁹"Persons Lynched, by Race: 1882 to 1956," Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington: United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1960), p. 218.

Northeast section. Kevin Phillips, author of The Emerging Republican Majority, expressed this point of view in an interview:

Forget Harvard and Columbia and the long-haired kids driving Jaguars their permissive Dads gave them; concentrate on the kid working his way through Eastern Kentucky University; he's for Nixon and social conservatism. Out there the jukeboxes don't play "New World Coming." They play "Welfare Cadillac." In the heartland it's all Agnew put to music."¹⁰

Is it "all Agnew" out in the heartland? What happened in Saginaw, Grand Rapids, Louisville, and Milwaukee suggest differently. There is at least a minority, not all composed of long-haired kids, that wants to be heard. Louisville is in the same state as Eastern Kentucky University. The Reverend Mr. Davis said, it will be recalled, that if there had been no demonstration in Louisville against Agnew the country would have the impression that Louisville is a politically backward city where no one would stand up in opposition to the Vietnam war and the repression of dissent.

As it turned out, the Reverend Mr. Davis' protest demonstration was in vain as far as the remainder of the country was concerned. No one outside of the state of Kentucky was informed by the wire service gatekeepers of the protest demonstrations in Louisville during Agnew's visit, or of

¹⁰James Boyd, "Nixon's Southern Strategy, It's All in the Charts," New York Times Magazine, May 17, 1970, p. 25.

the controversy there over the alleged repression of the freedom of dissent. The remainder of the country was not fully informed of the demonstrations in Saginaw, Grand Rapids, and Milwaukee. Are the "out" decisions by the gatekeepers contributing to the notion that it's "all Agnew" in the heartland?

The Saturday Review, a weekly magazine of commentary, predicted:

. . . the coming age of news monopoly, an era in which more than 95 per cent of all the daily newspapers in the United States will have no local print competition, where only two national news-gathering organizations will supply virtually everything broadcast over the average radio or TV station, and where a tiny handful of executives and news operators in but three networks will pretty much determine what the American electronic audience is allowed to know about the world in which it is trying to exist.¹¹

It has been shown that at times the gatekeeping decisions by a correspondent, or in a bureau office of the two national news-gathering agencies have at times served to stifle and inhibit the flow of information. The growth of television and radio has not offered any immediate solution to the problems involved in gatekeeping. At the Agnew dinner in Grand Rapids the television cameras were focused on the head table. Their crews stayed with the cameras. No attempt was made to cover events, outside the auditorium,

¹¹Richard L. Tobin, "The Coming Age of News Monopoly," Saturday Review, Oct. 10, 1970, p. 51.

involving the protesters. This type of coverage is still generally true of television. For example, on the night of October 30, 1970, national television networks broadcast film of a crowd besieging the limousine of President Nixon the previous night in San Jose, California.

"The time has come to take the gloves off and speak to this kind of behavior in a forthright way,"¹² Nixon said in a statement on October 30. There were numerous statements of indignation issued by officials and office holders of both the Republican and Democratic parties after the San Jose incident. If television and the national wire service agencies had provided more information on lesser demonstrations involving the presence of Vice-President Agnew in trips he made during the fall of 1970, would the San Jose episode have seemed so much of a surprise, even if it did involve more violence than the Agnew incidents in Saginaw, Grand Rapids, Louisville, and Milwaukee? Television may at times provide film of demonstrations and live coverage of other events, but the daily comprehensive recording of what is taking place is still the function of the news reporter or newspaper acting as the gatekeeper. Television reporters and commentators provide television

¹²"Get Tough! Nixon Orders," reported by the UPI, Detroit Free Press, Oct. 31, 1970, p. 1. Nixon also made more references to the San Jose incident on a campaign trip in the West before the Nov. 3, 1970 elections in the U.S. The Republican National Committee purchased television time on the eve of the election to broadcast a film of a speech President Nixon made Oct. 31 in Phoenix, Ariz., in condemnation of the incident at San Jose.

viewers with programs that give background for the news as well as daily news coverage. However, if the national news-gathering organizations such as the AP and UPI do not get the job done for their many radio, television, and newspaper members and clients, the nation is generally not informed. The AP had 1,260 member newspapers as of September 30, 1970, in the United States, and 3,270 radio and television members in comparison to 1,200 newspapers for the UPI and 3,126 radio and television clients.¹³

On Thursday, November 13, 1969, a protest against the war in Vietnam began at dusk in Washington when the vanguard of 40,000 marchers passed the White House in single file, each intoning the name of a man killed in Vietnam or the name of a Vietnam village ruined by the war. Each marcher carried a card that bore the name he spoke. On Friday, November 14, Vice-President Agnew charged that news program producers, newscasters and commentators on the television networks are allowed to give biased news presentations. Agnew made his speech in Des Moines, Iowa, and released it in Washington at the same time. The peaceful "March Against Death" continued through Friday and into the early hours of Saturday, November 15. The three-day protest was climaxed Saturday by a mass march along

¹³Supra, n. 1, p. 21, n. 9, p. 27.

Pennsylvania Avenue to the Washington Monument. Police estimated the throng at 250,000. The New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam said 800,000 took part at one time or another.

Without dissent, it was the biggest rally in the history of the movement for peace in Vietnam. Some United States senators and representatives addressed the crowd at the Washington Monument. President Nixon commented November 16 to a visiting foreign diplomat that he had watched a televised football game rather than observe the protesters.¹⁴ Significantly there was no live television coverage of the demonstration, although the football game was televised. It is a logical conclusion that if television would ignore a demonstration involving hundreds of thousands in the capital of the United States, it can hardly be expected to pay much attention to smaller demonstrations in other cities. On November 21, 1969, in a speech to the Alabama Chamber of Commerce at Montgomery, Alabama, Agnew included newspapers in his criticisms of the news media.

There is a reasonable probability that if a reader checks at random the issues of the daily newspaper or

¹⁴"Nixon Ignores Demonstrators' March," reported by the AP, Grand Rapids Press, Nov. 16, 1969, sec. A, p. 2.

newspapers in any city that Vice-President Agnew visited in the fall of 1970, he will find in many cases that news stories published about dissenters never were transmitted over the national circuits of the wire agencies. For example, Agnew spoke in Memphis, Tennessee, the night of September 22, after talking at a noon luncheon in Louisville earlier in the day. It was brought out earlier that issues over the right of dissent in Louisville were not carried to the attention of the nation.

Nearly all the issues of twenty daily newspapers in metropolitan cities analyzed in the course of this study published either AP or UPI stories about Agnew's verbal attack in Memphis on the senior United States senator from Tennessee, Albert Gore, a Democrat. A crowd of 10,000 cheered Agnew in Memphis and a press aide of Agnew said the reception was the warmest he had received in his often heckle-ridden tour of cities in the nation.¹⁵ Not one story published in the twenty newspapers mentioned any protests in Memphis.

The Memphis Press-Scimitar, an afternoon newspaper, and the Commercial Appeal (Memphis), a morning newspaper, both reported protests by what they called small groups of demonstrators. No estimates were attempted on the size of

¹⁵"Chuckles and Frequent Applause Answer Agnew," Commercial Appeal (Memphis), Sept. 23, 1970, p. 10.

the protest crowd although it should be fairly easy to count a small group. Another story reported that a policeman taking pictures of the protesters engaged in an impromptu debate with a student who argued that "we've got a right to protest without having our pictures taken and put in a file."¹⁶ Many in the crowd leaving the Memphis Coliseum after Agnew's speech taunted the protesters, according to this story.

The stories in the Memphis newspapers also reflected a great warmth, affection, and support for Agnew on the part of his listeners who many times interrupted his speech with applause. In Saginaw, Grand Rapids, Louisville, and Milwaukee, Agnew also inspired this same type of support from his listeners, according to the newspapers in the individual cities. This support was generally not reflected in wire service stories from the cities with their condensed versions of the advance texts of speeches.

The conclusion must be drawn that even if the gate-keeping failed to record the dissent adequately, or at all, it also did not bring out sufficiently how popular the vice-president is with many Americans and the support his views may command.

¹⁶"Long-Hairs Hold a Laugh-In, Find Themselves the Target of Jeers, Questions," Memphis Press-Scimitar, Sept. 23, 1970, p. 26.

Stewart Alsop, the only correspondent traveling with Agnew to go outside the Civic Auditorium in Grand Rapids on September 16 to talk with the youthful protesters, may be an example of why the news magazines have gained circulation. Alsop is a political columnist for Newsweek, a weekly periodical of news commentary and reporting. Although both the UPI and AP gatekeepers who reported the Agnew talk in Grand Rapids said they decided that the lack of a direct confrontation between the dissenters and Vice-President Agnew ruled out the necessity of interviewing the protesters or investigation of their activities, Alsop believed differently. A Grand Rapids Press reporter who listened in as Alsop chatted with the protesters heard him point out to them that the Marxists of his youth had a system to replace the old one, but the protesters of the 1970s have not offered a plan.¹⁷ The youths thanked Alsop for talking to them.

Alsop wrote about Grand Rapids in connection with Agnew in two subsequent columns. The first commentary, less than two weeks after Agnew's speech in Grand Rapids, summarized Agnew's tour effectively and stated that his appeal to the audiences was in their eager anticipation of

¹⁷Robert Holden, "Watching the Men Who Watch Agnew," Grand Rapids Press Wonderland Magazine, Sept. 27, 1970, p. 26.

"Agnewisms."¹⁸ He defined Agnewisms as "unexpected phrases." Alsop's one line about the Agnew visit in Grand Rapids, quoting a Republican admirer, commenting that Agnew's speech was "God's own truth,"¹⁹ brought out in a way that was completely absent from AP and UPI stories the appeal that Agnew carries for many. Another story in the same issue of Newsweek, "Middle America's Mr. America,"²⁰ rounded up the details of the Agnew trip in a presentation far superior to the hit and miss tactics of the wire services and the daily newspapers. This story also brought out some of the reactions of the Agnew dissenters as well as admirers in an orderly fashion that excelled anything found in the twenty newspapers surveyed.

Nearly a month after Agnew's visit to Grand Rapids, Alsop related his own experiences there in more detail in commenting about the report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest. "I was reminded of a recent evening in Grand Rapids, Michigan, of all places," Alsop wrote in his column in Newsweek. He found it of significance that protesters turned up in Grand Rapids:

¹⁸ Stewart Alsop, "The Secret of Spiro T," Newsweek, Sept. 28, 1970, p. 104.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

They looked exactly like the kids the night before in Albuquerque, or the same day in Saginaw—the long hair, the beards, the beads, the grannie glasses and the rest are as much a uniform as the standard college costume of a generation ago.²¹

Alsop pointed out that the youthful protesters had come to shout obscenities at the vice-president. He drew a parallel between the "young revolutionaries" outside the Civic Auditorium and the Republicans at the Agnew dinner:

The people who had paid \$100 to hear him were wearing their uniform—coats and ties and permanent-press trousers, sensible dresses (no minis) and permanent waves. Most of them looked as though they belonged to the local country club, but the whole purpose of Agnew's speech was to reach out beyond the Republican country clubs to the Democratic union halls, to cement an alliance with "the working man" who is "the backbone of America" against the "highbrows and longhairs." That is the central purpose of the Nixon-devised Republican campaign strategy this year.²²

Alsop's comments may well have applied to Agnew's speeches at the Republican fund-raising dinners in Louisville and Milwaukee as well as Grand Rapids. He showed that going beyond the advance texts of speeches can give the news a flavor that makes it interesting to read as well as more meaningful. Alsop found a significance in the demonstrations during the Agnew speeches that apparently escaped the notice of the AP and UPI gatekeepers as well as some of the gatekeepers on the newspapers in the cities where Agnew had visited:

²¹Stewart Alsop, "Nixon and the Rancid Right," Newsweek, Oct. 12, 1970, p. 132.

²²Ibid.

There is no way on earth to "bring together" those hairy, obscenity-shouting young people outside the hall with the middle-aged, middle-class people inside the hall. The gulf between the two is unbridgeable, and that is the current American tragedy.²³

Even the Newsweek material cannot be relied on by the historian or researcher interested in Agnew as anything more than another piece of the jig-saw puzzle that must be put together to get a complete account. Newsweek omitted many details of the demonstrations, and ignored some events such as those that occurred in Louisville and Memphis. It does point the way, however, to a presentation that tries to take an overall point of view in a logical sequence of events. In comparison the AP and UPI stories analyzed in this survey showed that the emphasis for new leads on continuing stories such as Agnew's trip, many times resulted in significant events being dismissed in one paragraph or omitted completely.

Is there any hope for the future that the gatekeeping in the cities where events occur will take place in such a way as to produce more "in" than "out" decisions? The hope must rest mainly on the individuals who, while covering many important stories such as political events and demonstrations, are the sole representatives of the national news-gathering agencies. What has taken place in

²³Ibid.

the past seems to have occurred in many instances from a lack of awareness compounded by the pressures of deadlines and the difficulties faced by one man in reporting all aspects of a complicated story.

Newspapers must also make more demands on the national news-gathering agencies for detailed information on controversial subjects. Editors must demonstrate the absolute need to give their readers this type of information by providing adequate space for its publication. A wire service reporter who sees that his material is not published in many newspapers would have no incentive to provide more than a minimal advance story if he believes that is all that is required.

This study has tried to demonstrate that even when significant information was provided by the wire services, it frequently was not published by many newspapers. No newspaper may have the space nor may it be desirable that it use everything provided by the wire services. Few newspapers surveyed, however, would be able to defend the omission of some stories in comparison to much of the material they use.

Editor & Publisher, the weekly periodical for the newspaper industry, commented that:

Survey after survey has revealed that a large segment of the public would agree to some government control of the press for assorted reasons.

A vast lack of understanding of the meaning of the Bill of Rights is also revealed²⁴

If the press has been unable to inform fully the public while operating without restrictions, what will be its prospects if there are controls? The greatest failures of the press in the past in gatekeeping seem to have come from its own inadequacies rather than external pressures.

Can it be possible that one of the reasons the public is complacent over the idea of controls of the press is that the role of the individual reporter, or other news personnel as gatekeeper is not clearly defined within newspaper organizations and the wire services? If reporters, deskmen, and editors are unclear over the function of the gatekeeper, why should the general public have any clear image of it? The public knows that the postman is the man who must get the mail through, rain or snow. Readers, generally, have heard the show business adage, "The show must go on." Do the newspaper readers sense the same feeling of urgency from newspaper publishers and editors that they are receiving a product composed of facts that may be essential as the mail, or a stage play, or may help them preserve the very life of a free society?

²⁴Robert U. Brown, "Shop Talk at Thirty," Editor & Publisher, June 6, 1970, p. 86.

When newspaper strikes occur, is there a desire on the part of publishers to provide news to people even if it has to be done in some way that is not accompanied by revenues from advertising?

The purpose of this study was to record as factually as possible how gatekeeping decisions in four cities restricted the information provided the whole nation. The author has tried to show that this was part of a long-standing problem in newspaper work that was not unique to one period of time. He believes that if the role of the gatekeeper can be dramatized and stressed among newspaper people and the public it may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby newsroom personnel will open the gates to many news stories that in former years have never managed to survive to publication.

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