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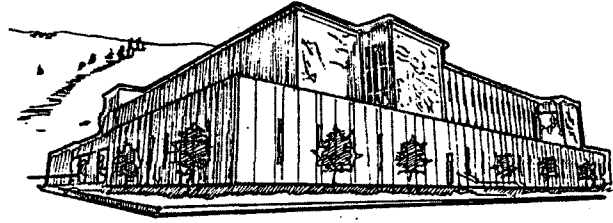
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University of
Montana

BREAKING THE COPPER COLLAR:
THE SALE OF THE ANACONDA NEWSPAPERS
AND THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF JOURNALISM IN MONTANA

By

John Thomas McNay, Jr.

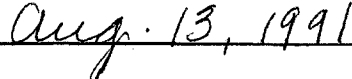
B.A., University of Montana, 1980

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for the degree of
Master of Arts
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1991

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History

Breaking the Copper Collar: The Sale of the Anaconda Newspapers and the Professionalization of Journalism in Montana. (124 pp.)

Director: Michael S. Mayer 

When Lee Enterprises purchased seven Montana newspapers from the Anaconda Company in June 1959 for \$5.2 million, it was a turning point for the history of Montana and the history of its newspapers and journalists. In the early 1880s and 1890s, Montana journalism was characterized by virulent political battles over elections and the site of the capital. While most newspapers were owned by mining interests and reflected their owners' point of view, no expense was spared in putting out the best newspapers possible. The objectivity important today was not yet identified in the pre-1900 era as an essential principle of professional journalism. The active commentary and interplay of newspapers in Montana began to change in the 1920s when Anaconda began purchasing newspapers in the state. Anaconda acquired eight newspapers by the late 1920s. The newspapers were The Anaconda Standard, The Butte Daily Post, The Montana Standard, The Billings Gazette, The Missoulian, The Missoula Sentinel, The Helena Independent Record, and the Livingston Enterprise.

Montana was following the national trend toward professionalization of journalism in the early part of the century, as evidenced by the early flowering of newspapers and, in 1914, the founding of a School of Journalism at the University of Montana. The criteria for professional status has been defined in this paper and applied to the profession of journalism in Montana. Under Anaconda's ownership, professionalization of journalism was blocked. The journalists were not allowed to exercise the professional skills developed through their education or their experience in making key news decisions.

Don Anderson negotiated the sale for Lee and directed the newspapers for years afterward. He died in 1978 but left a collection of his correspondence that has been the central focus of this thesis. A native Montanan, a journalist, an author, and the publisher of Lee's flagship, The Wisconsin State Journal in Madison, Anderson played a major role in returning the Montana press to respectability after its years of vassalage to the Anaconda Company. Anderson restored the professional attributes to the Montana journalists that Anaconda had taken away. In doing so, he established a never before seen degree of professionalism and independence at Montana's newspapers whose, professed goal was to serve the public, not a private interest.

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Introduction

"A whole lot of fresh air"

When Lee Enterprises announced its purchase of the
Anaconda Company newspapers in Montana on June 1, 1959, a
wave of excitement swept through the state. From the plains
of eastern Montana to the mountains in the west, subscribers
in Butte, Billings, Helena, Missoula, Anaconda and
Livingston read a greeting printed on the front page of
their newspapers from this unfamiliar new corporation based
in Davenport, Iowa. About halfway through the announcement a
key paragraph appeared: "Each publisher and editor calls the
turns as they see them; there is no such thing as dictated
editorial policy. We serve only one interest - the public.
There are no strings attached to the sale of these
newspapers. Our only obligations are to our subscribers and
our communities."¹

Although the paragraph did not mention the Anaconda
Company, Montanans knew that it referred to the copper
mining company's practice of muzzling the press and
manipulating it for its own ends. Under Anaconda's
ownership, the press served the public when it was
convenient but, when called upon, the papers served the

¹ The Billings Gazette, June 2, 1959.

desires of the Anaconda Company.

Several newspaper groups, including Cowles Media, the Ridder Corporation, Federated Newspapers, and the Scripps League eagerly sought to purchase the Anaconda papers.² What may have given Lee, a small midwestern chain, the edge in the competition was Don Anderson, journalist, author, and native born Montanan who was then publisher of Lee's flagship, The Wisconsin State Journal in Madison. Anderson's greatest input, however, came after the sale. His knowledge of Montana and his personal interest in providing real newspapers with an independent voice to the state marked a profound change in Montana's history. Those involved at the time recognized the significance of Anderson's contribution. When Anderson died April 27, 1978, the Helena Independent Record called him "the Abraham Lincoln of Montana journalism," a clear reference to his efforts in freeing the state's journalists from slavery to Anaconda Copper.³ Paul Driscoll, the editor of the University of Montana's student daily, the Montana Kaimin, maintained at Anderson's death: "Montana journalism is infinitely more open and responsive to the public than it was in 1959, and much of the credit goes to Don Anderson."

² Ruth James Towe, "The Lee Newspapers of Montana: The First Three Years, 1959-1962" M.A. thesis, University of Montana, School of Journalism, 1969), p. 213.

³ Helena Independent Record, April 27, 1978.

To understand Anderson's achievements, it is necessary to examine the history of newspapers in Montana from the early days through the Anaconda ownership and through Anderson's management. Journalists in the newsrooms across the state benefitted most directly from the Lee purchase. During an early flowering of journalistic excellence, Montana's journalists began following the national trends toward professionalization of the occupation of news gathering. With the opening of the University of Montana journalism school in 1914, it appeared that Montana was at the forefront of the transformation of journalism to professional status. However, when Anaconda completed acquisition of the newspapers it wanted by the late 1920s, the company effectively halted the full professionalizing process in part because it denied its journalists the right to make important decisions based on their own news judgement developed through their education and experience. Accountants, miners, lawyers, and engineers, rather than journalists made news decisions for the company press.

Exactly what constitutes a profession is a subject of some debate. Roughly seven general factors can be used to distinguish a profession from an occupation. First, professionals attain, after lengthy education, a certain body of knowledge not available to the general public. Second, professionals claim an orientation toward service for the greater good of society. A third factor is

admittance into a "community" of fellow professionals where all are recognized equally for their expertise. Fourth, society accepts the professional's status and expertise. Fifth, professionals impose self-regulation on other members of their group. Sixth, professionals are granted by the public greater status in the community than those involved in occupations. The seventh factor is a commitment to objectivity in employing acquired skills.⁴

Not all professions fit this model perfectly and journalism is no exception. Nevertheless, journalism shares many characteristics of recognized professions. It has always been possible for an individual to gain a position in a newsroom without formal journalism training. Yet, that is becoming less and less possible. A college degree is essential, and it is almost always a journalism degree. Advanced degrees, particularly in newsrooms of larger newspapers, are becoming common, if not a absolute requirement. Most professions, like physicians and lawyers, are able to claim some type of esoteric knowledge that the general public cannot obtain without years of education and

⁴ These professional criteria are consolidated from several sources. See Burton Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1976); Mary O. Furner, Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science, 1865-1905 (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1975); Joseph S. Himes, The Study of Sociology: An Introduction (Atlanta; Scott, Foresman & Co., 1968); Everett C. Hughes, The Sociological Eye, (Chicago, Aldine-Atherton, 1971); George A. Lindberg et al., Sociology (New York, Harper and Row, 1968), and Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York, Hill and Wang, 1967).

experience. Journalists can make a similar claim because of a sythesis of various areas that in total create a body of knowledge arguably unique to a journalist. News writing is a highly specialized exercise with its own conventions.


Besides learning the particular and essential techniques of news writing, a journalist combines a liberal arts education, close and sometimes intimate knowledge of a community, enough law to avoid a libel suit, interpersonal skills to be a good interviewer, and detailed knowledge in a particular area of coverage, such as the courts, business, agriculture, or the sciences. Journalism schools also strive to instill in their students the idea that news work is not simply putting in your eight hours and going home. One needs dedication to the ideals of keeping the public informed. After years of education and experience, a journalist is able to develop a sense of news judgment used to determine what will appear in the newspaper. Many factors can go into what constitutes a news item and, ideally, the journalist is able to bring his experience and education to bear on making a decision.

Contrary to the common practice of newspapers today,
objectivity has not always been a goal of journalists.
Partisanship and advocacy among journalists has a much longer tradition. Colonial newspapers, for example, usually served as organs for a particular party or politician. Newspapers in the late 19th century were frequently the

property of big business, as was the case in Montana. The movement toward objectivity is a indication of growing professionalism. Physicians, for example, are trained to isolate their personal sentiments about a medical case and make a decision in the best interest of a patient based on the facts of a case. Lawyers strive to maintain a disinterested neutrality in cases they argue or in negotiations on behalf of their client. Because of the professional's knowledge and objectivity, clients are expected to trust a professional to make the best decision for them. Similarly, news reporters and editors are expected to use their judgement to provide a clear objective story as close to the "truth" as possible without any of their own biases included.

The strongly partisan version of journalism flowered fully in Montana with the founding of The Anaconda Standard in September 1889 by Marcus Daly, one of the fabulously wealthy Copper Kings. Daly spared no expense in building a newspaper that was without peer in the intermountain west.

"Conceived in anger, nurtured in strife and extravagance,"

 Time magazine observed in 1931, "as the personal organ of the late famed copper tycoon Marcus Daly, the Standard stood at the turn of the century among the best edited dailies in the U.S."⁵ Daly hired John H. Durston, formerly of the

⁵ Time, July 27, 1931, p. 26.

Syracuse, N.Y., Standard and a doctor of philology, to be his editor, and Durston assembled a marvelous staff from the major eastern newspapers. Possibly his most important asset was Charles Eggleston, who, as managing editor, would make the Standard's pages sing. There was little beyond the Standard's reach. When color comics became the rage in New York City's newspapers, Daly saw that three of the highest paid newspaper artists in Manhattan were hired and brought to Anaconda to produce the Standard's own colored comic supplement.⁶ "It was," Time said, "a metropolitan gem set in a mountain wasteland."

In 1913, the Anaconda Company purchased the Standard from the Daly estate and began a gradual effort to purchase other newspapers in Montana. At the same time, a growing professional attitude among journalists began to sweep the country. Central to this new view of the journalist was objectivity and autonomy. At the very time The New York Times was leading the way in this new approach to journalism, many Montana newspapers fell under the control of Anaconda, one of the world's largest corporations. As the rest of the country's newspapers moved toward independence and objectivity, Anaconda's papers did not even engage in open partisanship. Controversial issues were simply ignored.

Anaconda stubbornly held on to the newspapers and would

⁶ Ibid.

not even confess to owning the press. Positive proof of Anaconda's ownership did not become public until 1951, when Anaconda tried to purchase a radio station in Great Falls, the only major Montana community where it did not own the newspaper. In documents submitted to the FCC, Anaconda presented a roll call of newspapers it owned. Although company ownership of various newspapers was at least suspected if not substantiated, the list still shocked many. The newspapers included were The Montana Standard in Butte, the Butte Post, the Billings Gazette, the Missoulian, the Missoula Sentinel, The Anaconda Standard, and the Livingston Enterprise. Anaconda also owned 33 percent of the stock of the Western News at Libby.

Anaconda's approach to controlling the news gradually took hold in the 1930s. It was a general rule to avoid controversies. An easy way to do that was to write as little as possible about local issues and the newspapers did precisely that. The company press became silent about state and local issues. A study done of July 1958, during Anaconda ownership, shows only 2.9 percent of the space for editorial comment was used for state issues. Local issues were accorded only .34 percent of the total. No editorial comment appeared on controversial state or local topics. In contrast, under Lee ownership in July 1961, a significant change took place. State topics accounted for 27.5 percent of the total space for editorials and local topics jumped to

8.9 percent.⁷ The Lee newspapers also quickly moved to stress local news. In the first two weeks of May, 1959, Anaconda's front pages carried 2,247 column inches of local news, 5,546 inches of national news, 2,599 inches of international news, and 1,146 inches of state news. By May 1-15, 1960, Lee's front pages carried 4,583 inches of local news and by May 1-15, 1962, the state news figure had risen to 1,641. Another indication of the emphasis on local news is the number wire service stories used by Anaconda, May 1-15, 1959, is almost double the number used by Lee, May 1-15, 1962. Lee even expanded the "news hole," the space available for news.⁸

While Lee may have been a company unknown to Montanans, the company had a long history in the midwest and a tradition of allowing their newspapers to operate independently without receiving editorial direction from a central office. A.W. Lee and two partners started the chain in April 1890 with the purchase of the Ottumwa (Iowa) Courier. After Lee's death in 1907, his frugal approach to newspapering was adopted by the corporation that survived him. Lee's technique created papers with a strong enough financial base to remain independent editorially. The chain

⁷ Ruth James Towe, "The Lee Newspapers of Montana: The First Three Years, 1959-1962" M.A. thesis, p. 63.

⁸ Towe, "The Lee Newspapers" pp. 110-112.

grew steadily and surely through the midwest. By 1959, Lee Enterprises owned a nine-newspaper empire scattered over the midwest as well as several radio stations. Its flagship newspaper was The Wisconsin State Journal in Madison where Anderson had risen to publisher.

An accomplished and highly professionalized journalist, Anderson carefully but purposefully directed the Montana newspapers back toward a professional orientation of reporting the news. He not only allowed journalists to fulfill their professional responsibilities but insisted they do so. Anderson revitalized the drive toward professionalism of journalism in Montana.

The journalists recognized the enormous change he was making in their lives. On Anderson's death, a columnist for the Billings Gazette, Addison Bragg, reviewed Anderson's impact on Montana journalism: "All I can say is that once he came out here ... a whole lot of fresh air started blowing through city rooms in Helena, Livingston, Butte, Missoula, and Billings ... Don Anderson was never one to let a fair wind go to waste ... We grew in it, we moved in it - and we all, as a profession, profited by it."⁹

⁹ The Billings Gazette, April 29, 1978.

Chapter I

"Silence is copper-plated"

The main complaints lodged against the Anaconda chain in the 1950s were not that the papers editorialized harshly against groups and individuals opposing the company. Rather, critics argued the Anaconda papers simply would not offer any comment, pro or con, on important issues. Before Anaconda muffled it, the press in Montana had a tradition of loud and boisterous partisan coverage and commentary. A change in policy occurred, gradually, before taking firm hold in the early 1930s. By then it had become policy to avoid comment on controversial issues and, in effect, silence dissent to company actions.

Knowledge of Anaconda's ownership of the state's major newspapers remained an open secret for many years. As Alfred M. Lee wrote in 1937: "The history of the Anaconda chain is shrouded in mystery; it is one of the kind which Editor & Publisher does not list in its annual compilation."¹⁰ The copper company kept the exact truth to itself for decades, although some analysts closely guessed the actual ownership by Anaconda of certain newspapers.

¹⁰ Alfred M. Lee, The Daily Newspaper in America: The Evolution of a Social Instrument (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937), p. 220.

Upton Sinclair, in The Brass Check (1920), wrote "the extent to which outright ownership of newspapers and magazines has been acquired by our financial autocracy would cause astonishment if it were set forth in figures." If one took a paint brush, Sinclair wrote, and made "smudges" of color over regions where special interests owned the press, only one entire state would be completely colored - Montana. Briefly reviewing how the corporate ownership of Montana's press began in the territorial days with Copper Kings Marcus Daly and W.A. Clark, Sinclair argued "now the giant Anaconda has swallowed them both and there are only two newspapers in Montana which are not owned or controlled by copper."¹¹

While the outright ownership of newspapers by the Anaconda Company never reached the extent described by Sinclair, the company had purchased all the newspapers it felt necessary to silence dissent by 1929. It is unclear exactly how and when Anaconda acquired some of the newspapers. The Montana Standard was created in 1928 with the consolidation of The Anaconda Standard, founded by Marcus Daly in 1889, and the Butte Daily Post, founded by W.A. Clark in 1876. Ruth James Towe, in research for her thesis in 1969, developed some rough dates for Anaconda's acquisition of the papers. The Billings Gazette fell prey to Anaconda in 1916 when a local politician owed the company

¹¹ Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism. (Pasadena, Published by the author, 1920), p. 241.

money and presented his interest in the Gazette as payment. The company purchased the Missoulian in 1926 from some Chicago businessmen. A veteran journalist from the Anaconda Standard was installed as editor and publisher. Anaconda gained the Helena Independent in about 1923 after the company loaned owner W.A. Campbell money that he could not pay back. In about 1928, Anaconda purchased the Helena Record Herald and some 15 years later combined the two Helena newspapers into the Independent Record.¹²

Determining the exact ownership is difficult because of the extreme secrecy by Anaconda. John Gunther observed in 1947: "Anaconda is probably the most secretive of the great American corporations."¹³ Not until 1951 did the true extent of the company's ownership become clear. Fairmont Corporation, Anaconda's newspaper subsidiary, applied to the Federal Communications Commission for a permit to purchase a major interest in a radio station, KFBB in Great Falls, and was required to report its media ownership in documents filed with the FCC. Anaconda never admitted ownership in the columns of its own papers. The roll call of newspapers wearing the "copper collar" shocked many: Billings Gazette

¹² Ruth James Towe, "The Lee Newspapers of Montana: The First Three Years, 1959-1962," (M.A. thesis, University of Montana, 1969), p. 14.

¹³ John Gunther, Inside U.S.A. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 167.

(circ. 36,002), The Montana Standard (Butte-Anaconda) (circ. 19,248), Butte Daily Post (circ. 9,345), Missoulian (circ. 7,708), and Livingston Enterprise (circ. 2,740).

Determining where the company's influence in the Montana press stopped presented a difficult problem. Although some referred to the Great Falls Tribune as the leading light during the dark years of Anaconda ownership, the Nation noted in 1930 "great friends of the Company" owned the paper and, while it was not "wholly subservient to the Company, ... there is general agreement that they are extremely well disposed to the supergovernment of the state and to the Montana Power Company (sister company created by Anaconda) which they oblige by doing much of its job printing work, amounting to many thousands of dollars a year." Clearly, if the Tribune had been a true alternative to the company press there would have been less need for the Montana Free Press, established in several communities by W.A. Clark, Jr., in 1928, or the People's Voice, established in Helena in the 1940s. Both ventures in independent press were short-lived and strangled by a lack of advertising revenue. Clark may well have had some hidden motives, but both attempts offered a greater alternative than did the Tribune. The Montana Free Press, for example, carried a list of the papers owned by the company on its front page. The Nation continued with a list of newspapers in Bozeman, Kalispell and Havre not outrightly owned by the company but

cooperative with Anaconda objectives. Only the Miles City Star, the magazine reported, seemed truly independent, but it had apparently been cowed by a threat that Anaconda would establish a rival daily in the community if criticism continued.¹⁴

Uncertainty surrounds the extent to which Anaconda controlled each of its editors. More unity of opinion certainly existed than can be explained by coincidence. Perhaps, however, direct contacts with the infamous sixth floor of the Hennessy Building, where Anaconda had its headquarters, were rare. Editors may have only waited to see what the Butte papers did with a particular issue to know what was the policy.

J.T. Finlen, Anaconda's legal counsel, said in 1956 that each newspaper determined its policies locally, subject only to "several general policy considerations." Those considerations, in brief, centered on avoiding "yellow journalism." Finlen maintained that "news slants or editorials are never pipelined from management of either Anaconda or Fairmont" to the papers.¹⁵ The Anaconda Standard provided an example of the dynamics of company ownership. Marcus Daly discovered the huge deposits of

¹⁴ Oswald Garrison Villard, "The Press Today: Montana and the Company," Nation, 131:40-41 (July 9, 1930)

¹⁵ Richard T. Ruetten, "Anaconda Journalism: The End of an Era," Journalism Quarterly, Winter 1960, p. 5.

copper in Butte in 1879. By the late 1880s, Daly's arch-rival Copper King, W.A. Clark, and others were furiously exploiting what became known as "The Richest Hill on Earth." Because of the lack of water in the immediate Butte vicinity, Daly built the world's largest copper smelter in a secluded mountain valley 26 miles to the west and simultaneously founded the city of Anaconda.¹⁶

By 1889, with the local economy booming on the seemingly endless supply of copper, Daly decided he needed a mouthpiece to promote his economic policies and to boost Anaconda as the capital of the new state of Montana. Daly spared no cost in building his newspaper. By fortunate coincidence, he met John H. Durston, former editor and co-owner of the Syracuse (New York) Standard at the Montana Hotel in Anaconda. A former professor at Syracuse University, Durston held a doctorate in philology from Germany's Heidleburg University. His chance encounter with Daly would alter the course of the state's history.¹⁷

¹⁶ Information on Marcus Daly, W.A. Clark, development of Butte and Anaconda, and The Anaconda Standard. See Michael Malone, The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); C.B. Glasscock, The War of the Copper Kings: Builders of Butte and Wolves of Wall Street, (New York, Gosset and Dunlap), 1935; Ralph H. Wanamaker, "Eggleston of The Anaconda Standard," M.A. thesis, University of Montana, 1978.

¹⁷ John Palmer Fought. "John Hurst Durston, Editor: The Anaconda Standard in the Clark-Daly Feud." (M.A. thesis, University of Montana, 1959) p. 11.

Daly convinced Durston of his seriousness about spending enormous amounts of money to develop a metropolitan-style newspaper in the middle of virtual wilderness, and Durston finally consented to lead the project. He returned to Syracuse to recruit some assistants, notably Charles H. Eggleston, who would polish the pages of the Anaconda Standard. At Eggleston's death in 1933, the Miles City Star termed Eggleston's move to Anaconda "the beginning of a new era in the newspaper business of the state" because of the high standards of coverage, writing and typography the newspaper brought to Montana.¹⁸

The first edition of the Standard appeared on Sept. 4, 1889. By all accounts, the newspaper enjoyed phenomenal growth in its early years. As the Standard engaged in vicious political battles, the colorful and contrasting styles of Durston and Eggleston became known throughout the state. As one student of the Standard put it, "Durston cannonaded the enemy, while Eggleston pricked it with a long needle. Durston ws a slugger, throwing haymaker after haymaker, while Eggleston was a classy boxer, bobbing, weaving, dancing, and jabbing at his opponents. Durston was the Standard's frontal attack, Eggleston was its flank. Durston's writing was direct, to the point, Eggleston's was

¹⁸ Wanamaker, "Eggleston of The Anaconda Standard," p. 7.

ornate."¹⁹

The era of the "great Anaconda Standard" began in 1899. Walter Nelson, editor of The Montana Standard from 1954 to 1969, noted that, "The great Anaconda Standard was when top lithographers from New York and the top cartoonists in the United States and men like Eggleston, Durston, and (Butte bureau editor Warren) Walsworth were working with the major metropolitan newspaper people of that day who were brought here from New York."²⁰

By October 1901, the Standard masthead boasted offices in New York, Chicago, and Washington. It also listed where the paper could be purchased in Chicago, Salt Lake City, Denver, and San Francisco. Daly purchased the finest equipment, and, in the early days of the linotype machine, the Standard had more of them at work than any Manhattan daily. Daly was estimated to have spent about \$5 million on the project up to 1899.

The "news coverage, style, quality, and typography," of the Standard equaled that "of any of the metropolitan newspapers of the country," according to the trade magazine, Editor & Publisher. Time magazine observed that "Its news section thoroughly covered the state, the nation, and the world. Every intermountain town of importance had its

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 228.

Anaconda Standard bureau. It was like a metropolitan gem set in a mountain wasteland."²¹

In the newspapers's early days, Daly took some enjoyment in passing on an occasional tip to a reporter, but he maintained a curious distance between himself and the newspaper. He rarely submitted to interviews, and a short piece he wrote about the rise of the Anaconda Company was the only article attributed to him that ever appeared in the Standard. He said he would never make the mistake again. Certainly, he must have come to agreements with Durston and Eggleston about general editorial direction, but from that point it seems he left editorial discretion up to the journalists.²²

Shortly before his death in 1899, Daly sold the Anaconda Company to Standard Oil, and it became known as Amalgamated Copper. Although Daly remained involved in management, it was the Standard Oil men who began to tighten

²¹ "Anaconda sells 12 Montana newspapers to Lee Group," Editor & Publisher, 92:56 (June 6, 1959). See also, "Anaconda's Ghost," Time, (July 27, 1931) p. 26.

²² Billed as the "only published reminiscence of Marcus Daly," the story appeared in The Anaconda Standard, November 3, 1895, p. 1. Perhaps the finest brief description of Daly by reporter Ed Kemmick appeared in The Montana Standard's special Anaconda centennial edition on June 25, 1983. "Daly was a miner, prospector, industrialist and builder, and he was in all likelihood the most interesting man in the history of Montana. He was a visionary with calloused hands, a dreamer who did something first and dreamed of something better, a proud man but not quite vain, a friendly and generous man who could nurse a grudge to the end of his life."

control over the newspaper. After Daly died, the newspaper did maintain some independence until about 1913 when Mrs. Daly sold her interest. The brilliant sunset of Montana journalism was soon replaced by the "great grey blanket" the Anaconda Company's domination.²³

Standard Oil edged Durston out as editor of the Standard by 1924 and reassigned him to the Butte Daily Post. His insistence on journalistic principles made him a nuisance to the corporation. Many thought Durston, then in his 80s, was in his dotage; but he had a vivid mind and was still a brilliant writer.²⁴

One day the Post's business manager walked into the newsroom and, ignoring Durston, tossed art work and copy on the city editor's desk with the statement "this goes on page one." The piece, an attack on Governor Joseph Dixon, an opponent of the Anaconda Company, constituted a reversal of editorial policy. Durston left his office and walked around the city desk a few times. "What was that?" he asked. "The city editor, who had been instructed to ignore the old gentleman, told him, then complied with his request to call the business manager. The latter bluntly told Durston his

²³ Wanamaker, "Eggleston of The Anaconda Standard," p. 228.

²⁴ A Century of Montana Journalism. Warren J. Brier, Nathan Blumberg, eds., Missoula, Mountain, 1971, p. 179-181.

opinions or judgement did not count."²⁵

Durstun called the Anaconda Company headquarters in the Hennessy building but got no satisfaction. He tried to contact C.F. Kelley, the Anaconda Company president in New York, but could not reach him. He talked of going to New York but gave up. "It was not long before he was confined to his room and died," noted Fred Martin, editor and owner of the Park County News.²⁶

In 1928, Wellington D. Rankin, brother of former Rep. Jeannette Rankin, ran for governor of Montana. Rankin had promised that, if elected, he would reduce state expenses by removing the private phone line between the state house and company offices. The existence of the private line was often alleged by never proven. Rankin most likely was making a point that he hoped to eliminate what he saw as undue influence on state government by the company. It must have sounded ominous to the Anaconda Company.²⁷ On election

²⁵ Ibid. One of the most frequent critics of Anaconda was Fred J. Martin, editor and owner of the Park County News, a weekly in Livingston. In testimony before a U.S. Senate antitrust and monopoly subcommittee in 1967, Martin recalled what he saw during Anaconda's efforts to muffle the press and its treatment of that old warrior, Durstun. Martin's job, as a cub reporter, was to type and attempt to decipher the "old Maestro's" penciled hand-written editorials. Durstun was called the "Maestro" because of his musical talent.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ruetten, "Anaconda Journalism," p. 6-7.

eve, The Anaconda Standard unloaded on Rankin in an editorial: "[Rankin] has all the dignity of a baboon, all the self-restraint and poise of a tomcat, all the calm deliberation and judicial discretion of a jackass, all the finer emotions and sentiments of a yellow dog, all the nobility and character of a snake." Rankin lost badly.²⁸

The attack on Rankin was one of the last hurrahs of a loud and biased Anaconda Company press. From this time on, the company chain became increasingly quiet on Montana politics. Symbolized in Durston's humiliation, the movement of editorial judgement from journalist to business manager slowly took place, turning colorful, opinionated, involved newspapers into drab, non-committal, newspapers actively engaged in "Afghanistanism" (a term that referred to writing about distant places because it was safer to discuss them than what is going on across town). "With their heavy artillery spiked, Anaconda papers became monuments of indifference," a critic noted, adding that "when they talk about Montana, Anaconda Company papers never get more involved than the desire for shade trees on Central Avenue."²⁹

The company's position largely disappeared from the state's newspapers, and the company's opponents got the

²⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

silent treatment. United States Representative Jerry J. O'Connell's campaign for re-election to Congress in 1938 offered a good example. The company press ignored him, overlooked his speeches, and enforced a veritable news blackout throughout 1938. According to one observer, "a persistent voter could discover that O'Connell was in the race only by reading the addresses of his opponent."³⁰

While in Congress, O'Connell had challenged the Anaconda Company and thereby earned the ire of the company. Even non-Anaconda papers paid little attention to O'Connell. When O'Connell spoke in Missoula, the Western News of Libby noted local papers "blanketed the fact with silence." For example, between October 1 and November 8, 1938, The Montana Standard devoted 440 column inches to Jacob Thorkelson. More than half appeared on page one. O'Connell received a total of five inches and all of those on inside pages. Thorkelson won the election. A reactionary Republican, Thorkelson was later associated with anti-Semitic and pro-Fascist groups.³¹

The "great grey blanket" continued through the years to muffle dissent. The British magazine, the Economist commented in 1957 on the ability of Anaconda to exercise a "dampening effect on controversial issues through control of

³⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

³¹ "The Chain of Copper," Time, (June 1, 1959), p. 68.

newspapers with more than half the total circulation in the state. Their policy is to avoid taking sides; the effect has been to leave Montana's newspaper readers worse informed about their own affairs than the inhabitants of almost any other state. As a local wit has put it, silence is copper plated."³² The magazine felt that eventually economic diversity in Montana would lead to "cracks in the political monolith."

Anaconda came to the conclusion in the late 1950s that it could do without the papers. Pressure had been building from many sides against Anaconda's ownership of the newspapers. A proliferation of articles around the country, even internationally, about the unusual situation in Montana damaged Anaconda's image, an image the company had done much to improve in the post-war era. The growth of radio and television also made it more difficult for Anaconda to control information.

When the sale of the copper chain to the Lee syndicate was announced in June 1959, many and agreed with the trade magazine, Editor & Publisher: "Anaconda is to be complimented for getting out of the newspaper business where it never belonged."³³

³² "Anaconda Country," Economist, (Sept. 7, 1959), p. 765-766.

³³ "Montana's Free Press," Editor & Publisher, (July 13, 1959), p. 6.

Chapter II

"From the Midwest to the Mountains"

Whatever the evils of its ownership of the state's newspapers, at least the Anaconda Company was well known to Montanans. The Lee Syndicate, however, was an unknown commodity with little identity outside of a few midwestern Mississippi River towns in 1959. Initially, it was a matter of much speculation why Lee would be interested in the Montana papers. The reason for the interest quickly became apparent in the announcements of the purchase, in subsequent news stories, and in visits to the state by Lee executives. The driving force behind the purchase and subsequent organization of the newspapers was a native of Montana, Don Anderson, the distinguished-looking publisher of Lee's flagship paper, the Wisconsin State Journal at Madison.

The style of management Lee brought to Montana combined with Anderson's high journalistic standards and uncommon concern for the state to create an environment where journalists could once again lay claim to professional responsibilities. The environment enabled the long-smothered Anaconda press to bloom and grow into newspapers with independent voices able to comment on issues important to Montana. Even formerly impossible positions opposing and criticizing policies and practices of the Anaconda Company

eventually became a reality, much to the copper giant's dismay.

While the history of the Lee chain lacks the excitement and international significance of the rise of the Anaconda Company, it was still indicative of the solid professionalism and determination for growth and success the Davenport, Iowa-based, corporation brought to the West. Montana's new newspaper corporation had developed its own reputation and traditions through its achievements in building a small newspaper empire.

Unfortunately, the only sources available on the history of the Lee chain are three corporate-generated reports, "The Lee Papers: A saga of Midwestern Journalism," published in 1947, and "The Lee Group: Mid-America to the Mountains," published in 1960, and "Lee's Legacy of Leadership," published in 1990. Despite self-laudatory material, it is still possible to pick out the important events and themes that are the core of the Lee story.³⁴

³⁴ While Lee has generally kept the self-laudatory material in its private company publications, Anaconda did not resist opportunities to fill its news columns with stories praising Anaconda or Montana Power officials. During the Federap Power Commission hearings in Butte in March 1944, The Montana Standard reported in referring to company officials: "All the petty questions and suspicions as to what was in the minds of the men who organized the great power possibilities and potentialities of Montana were answered today by C.F. Kelley in the hearing before the examiner for the federal power commission over the Montana Power Company's accounting methods. There wasn't any sordid or petty thought in the minds of these men. These men realized that they were dealing with tremendous resources, that they were laying the foundation of a great service to mankind..."

A.W. Lee founded the Lee Syndicate. His connection to newspapers began with his sister Anna's marriage in 1864 to John Mahin, owner and publisher of the Muscatine Journal in Iowa. Along with providing him with an introduction to the newspaper business, Lee's connection with the Journal began a pattern of interconnected family relationships that have always been prominent in Lee.³⁵

Because of Mahin's importance to the eventual establishment of the Lee chain, the coporate history written in 1947 dubbed him "The Ancestor."³⁶ He was known for his strong convictions and, living in a "dry" community, he was a fearless foe of the liquor traffic. He apparently made some bitter enemies. Mahin's home was bombed during the night of May 11, 1893. Mahin is said to have stuck, soberly, to his guns.³⁷

Mahin employed A.W. Lee's father, John, as a bookkeeper for the Journal and A.W. eventually succeeded him in that position. The Lee Syndicate was actually formed in 1890 when Lee, James F. Powell, and E.P. Adler, purchased the Ottumwa Courier. Gradually the Lee chain began to grow. The group

³⁵ The Lee Papers: A Saga of Midwestern Journalism. (Kewanee, Ill.: Lee Syndicate publication, 1947) p. 18.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

purchased the Davenport, Iowa, Times in 1899 and acquired the Muscatine Journal from Mahin in 1903. The syndicate added the Hannibal, Missouri, Courier-Post and La Crosse, Wisconsin, Tribune in 1907. Lee's work in establishing this core of newspapers earned him the title of "The Founder" in the corporate histories.³⁸

A.W. Lee was something of an enigma. The corporate histories contain little detail of his life, although the accounts indicate it was full and busy. The man had some charisma that made him tremendously popular with his employees. There are stories of his employees turning down opportunities of making substantially more money in order to have the opportunity of working for him. Lee kept a small booklet that he had filled with inspirational epigrams from various sources, such as this one attributed to Benjamin Franklin: "Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."³⁹ Lee underlined "without" for emphasis. Among several life goals he listed in the book was: "To publish the best newspaper that can be successfully produced in a similar field."⁴⁰ Later, after the purchase of the Davenport Times, he restated and clarified this

³⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

theme in the columns of the newspaper: "The Times will be subservient to no faction or clique, nor will it depend upon political favor or influence ... We believe that a newspaper is a commercial enterprise and should be conducted on strictly business principles, seeking patronage solely on its merits. We pledge the best newspaper that can be published at a profit."⁴¹ The corporate history of 1947 stresses the objective of editorial freedom through financial strength. "It was this recognition that newspapers not only must print the news but must be maintained in position where, if necessary, they could look any man or corporation or institution in the face and tell that man or corporation or institution to go to hell, that early became a distinguishing mark of Lee small-town newspaper operation."⁴²

Making money was a key component to Lee's concept of press freedom. This put making money in an almost moralistic light because profit would create newspapers that could stand independently for the common good. But Lee did appear to have held genuine concerns about the function of the newspaper beyond making a profit. Lee continually told his reporters and editors: "You can have the freedom to publish accounts of almost anything under the sun, as long as it is

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 77.

⁴² Ibid., p. 20.

news, is reported fairly and objectively, and can be fully supported by facts that you have compiled before you even set pen to paper."⁴³

The official corporate biography in 1947 maintains that A.W. Lee learned one cardinal principle in his first job as bookkeeper: "No newspaper could be an independent newspaper, no newspaper could be a good newspaper, unless it was a self-sustaining and self-supporting newspaper."⁴⁴ The recognition of the need to make a profit led Lee to embrace further frugality, which passed along to the Lee Syndicate. By 1947, for example, the Lee Syndicate, although expanding steadily, had only once, and only briefly, borrowed money that it could not promptly repay from current operations.⁴⁵ The Lee histories are somewhat vague about when and why the corporation first borrowed money. It could have been in 1907 when Lee died while on a trip to England. The future of the chain was left in some doubt. There was a dispute over which side of the family should control the newspapers. Lee had asked his wife to be certain operation of the chain went to Adler and Powell. A.W. Lee's family, long accustomed to

⁴³ Lee's Legacy of Leadership: This History of Lee Enterprises, Incorporated (Essex, Conn.: Greenwich Publishing Group, 1990), p. 8.

⁴⁴ The Lee Papers, p. 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

leadership by Mrs. John Mahin and John Lee Mahin, were inclined to question Mrs. Lee's decision to follow her husband's last word about management of the papers. To resolve the deadlock, Mrs. Lee sought to have Adler and Powell arrange purchase her husband's family's share of the business. There is indication that individual employees borrowed the money personally with the corporation guaranteeing the loans. The estrangement of the families was not a pleasant chapter in the Lee corporate history. "Against the background of emotion and sorrow, things were said and done which brought a definite rift between Mrs. Lee and a large part of her husband's family," reports the corporate history of 1947.⁴⁶

Perhaps the Lee corporation has preferred not to stress the family split that left many of the Lees and Mahins out of the corporation because of concern that it would reflect poorly on the company. Whatever the reason, this history of 1947 may have been too close in time to the dispute to ignore it but attempted to put the controversy in a context favorable to the corporation. The histories of 1960 and 1990 fail to mention the clash.

When the dust cleared from the family battle, Adler, by then publisher of the Capitol Times in Davenport, Iowa, became president of the Lee Syndicate, and significant

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

growth of the chain took place under his stewardship. In 1915, Lee purchased the Davenport Democrat and in 1919 the Wisconsin State Journal. By 1926, the Star-Courier in Kewanee, Illinois, joined the fold followed by the Star in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1930. Adler died in 1949 after some 40 years at the helm of the chain.⁴⁷

Following Adler's death, Lee Loomis, who had been hired by A.W. Lee and was a friend of Adler, became president of Lee. The chain began to diversify into television and radio with the purchase of WTAD in Quincy, Illinois, in 1944. By 1958, Lee also owned radio and television stations in several other communities in Wisconsin, Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa.

As the Lee chain expanded through the Midwest, it developed another important corporate characteristic in addition to its frugality. Editorial comment was determined locally and not by an edict issued from the corporate headquarters in Muscatine or later in Davenport. Individual editors had responsibility for news coverage and opinion.

A.M. Brayton, publisher of the Wisconsin State Journal when Adler presided over Lee, said that during his 37 years as a publisher Adler never once offered a recommendation regarding support of a certain candidate or party. That included a time when the La Crosse Tribune supported William

⁴⁷ The Lee Group: Mid-America to the Mountains (n.p.: Lee Enterprises, 1960), p. 10.

Jennings Bryan for the presidency while Adler was a member of the Iowa Republican State Central Committee.

Thus, when Lee purchased the Anaconda papers in 1959, the chain brought two traditions with it to Montana: a determination to make a profit and a commitment to allow the papers to operate independent newsrooms. Into that formula of success stepped a peculiar Montana ingredient, Don Anderson.

As president of Lee Newspapers of Montana, Anderson's first order to his staffs was to "cover the news." He never let them forget it, mostly by encouragement and frequently by example. Anderson happened to be in the Billings Gazette newsroom when the earthquake struck the Madison Canyon in 1959. He pitched in to help answer phone calls from people frantic to learn the extent of the damage and death toll. The publisher-president then turned reporter to give his home paper in Madison on-the-scene coverage of the tragedy. To have a supervisor not only capable but willing to pitch in to cover the news must have stunned journalists accustomed to the old Anaconda days when supervisors were engineers, accountants, or lawyers.

A native of Gallatin County, Anderson attended schools in Bozeman and began his newspaper career as editor of Montana State College's student newspaper, the Exponent. He left Bozeman in 1922 for Madison to attend the University of Wisconsin School of Journalism. While never completing his

undergraduate journalism studies at Wisconsin, he started work as a reporter at the Wisconsin State Journal. He began a steady climb up the corporate ladder at the newspaper. Within a year, he was promoted to city editor. He became Sunday editor and later, managing editor. Anderson was made business manager and assistant publisher in 1933 and publisher in 1942.

Anderson considered his involvement in the purchase of the Montana papers to be the highlight of his career. The details of the negotiations, however, are not revealed in the correspondence contained in the Anderson Papers in the University of Montana Archives. Anderson did not include any pre-sale correspondence in the materials he gave to the Montana School of Journalism. What is missing would have indicated the issues discussed and concerns on both sides of the sale.

It does seem clear from the available correspondence, particularly with the Anaconda Company, that the Anaconda officials were favorably impressed with Anderson. It seems Anderson was able to establish a personal rapport with the company men and convince them he was the sort of responsible newsman to whom they would be willing to surrender the newspapers. After all, Anaconda was not necessarily looking for the highest bidder. The newspapers constituted only a very small part of the Anaconda empire and did not regularly make money. In fact, only the Billings Gazette was in the

black when the sale took place in 1959. The Montana Standard, for example, lost \$149,000 in 1959. The losses were miniscule compared to Anaconda's revenues and a small price to pay for controlling public comment. But for Lee, the losses were a concern, and there was some discussion that Anaconda might help Lee financially if losses became too great. Anderson never revealed the exact purchase price because of promises to Anaconda. However, Lee's latest corporate history revealed the price to be \$5.2 million, a tremendous bargain for seven newspapers.⁴⁸

Anderson told the Gazette that he heard the Anaconda papers were for sale on Jan. 2, 1959. After confirming the rumor, he conferred with his colleagues in the Lee Group and urged that they try to buy the Montana papers. A letter he wrote to his fellow publishers revealed something about his feelings: "Montana is on the way up. It's showing the fastest growth of any of the mountain states. It has a high per capita income, good cities, good climate, good people. And if any of you think I'm urging this just so I can get out there more often - then you are entirely right."⁴⁹

In February, four Lee executives made a personal inspection of the newspaper plants and visited resident executives. At the end of the tour, the enthusiasm of the

⁴⁸ Lee's Legacy, p. 78.

⁴⁹ The Billings Gazette, June 7, 1959.

others apparently matched that of Anderson, who had by then "developed into Montana's best press agent."⁵⁰

The Lee corporation early on addressed what was surely the number one change in the operation of the newspapers in a news release, likely written by Anderson, that appeared on the day the sale was announced. Carried on the front page of each of the seven newspapers was a long explanation including the statement: "Each publisher and editor calls the turns and they seem them; there is no such thing as a dictated editorial policy. We serve only one interest - the public." The Anaconda Company was tastefully not mentioned but then Montanans did not have to be told what a revolutionary change this was.⁵¹

In an interview later, Anderson elaborated on this concept. "Each individual city is entitled to a community newspaper with a color and flavor of its own, and we shall encourage that," he said. "While all Montana cities share some common interests no two of these Montana cities are alike in quality and character and we think a newspaper should reflect the personality of its home city," Anderson said. Each social segment of the community deserves a chance to tell its story, he said, and added that this did not mean Lee's management agreed with everything that would be

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ The Butte Daily Post, June 2, 1959.

published in the newspaper. "When we do not we'll say so ... we hope to give all degrees of opinion a place to be expressed," Anderson said.⁵²

In an interview with Editor & Publisher, the trade magazine, Anderson said he viewed the main problem with the Anaconda papers was that they were not operated by professional journalists. "They were owned and operated by mining men, accountants, lawyers, and engineers. The result was an ineffective and impotent press. It takes a newspaperman to run a newspaper," Anderson said.⁵³

Lee's intention to turn the company organs into genuine newspapers that would serve as a forum of ideas cannot be over-emphasized. For Montana and its major newspapers, it was a tremendously significant event and created a torrent of enthusiasm on the news staffs and great public interest.

⁵² The Billings Gazette, June 7, 1959.

⁵³ Editor & Publisher, Feb. 13, 1961, p. 12.

Chapter III

"We want to be statesmen not mere politicians"

The direction toward editorial independence taken by the Lee newspapers after the purchase from Anaconda was largely the responsibility of Don Anderson. His personality and his approach to journalism had an enormous impact on the Montana papers. Fortunately, Anderson left behind "a sort of autobiography" (his title), designed for his family. Numerous newspaper and magazine articles covered his life at the time of the purchase and again at his death. Friends and family have described him in fond detail. However, Anderson's personality and how he personally influenced the Montana newspapers is most clearly shown through the several years of correspondence in the Anderson Papers.⁵⁴ Anderson approached journalism from at least two levels, one personal and the other professional. Time and again through his career, Anderson went out of his way to treat his employees and colleagues humanely and decently. Yet, at the same time, through advice, internships, and training, Anderson encouraged adoption of a set of professional standards that encouraged accuracy, objectivity, integrity

⁵⁴ Donald W. Anderson Papers, University of Montana Archives, Mansfield Library, Missoula, Montana.

and independence. Anderson's efforts enabled journalists in Montana to use their professional news judgement to produce papers designed to serve the public rather than a special interest, such as the Anaconda Company.

Anderson corresponded most frequently with Richard E. Morrison, the general manager of Lee Newspapers of Montana. Anderson often revealed his sentiments as he sought to bring Morrison, as well as the new Montana properties, to a more enlightened outlook. Anderson hired Morrison to head Lee's interests in Montana a few months after the purchase. Morrison's duties included supervision of the business policies of the daily papers in Anaconda, Billings, Butte, Helena, Missoula, and Livingston. Morrison, who had been with the Missoula publications since 1930, came from Council Bluffs, Iowa. He started newspaper work in Omaha, came to Missoula as advertising manager of the Missoulian and Sentinel, and was appointed business manager in 1943.⁵⁵

Morrison had strong conservative sentiments and some rough personality traits that brought him into conflict with a number of people, including Anderson at times. Morrison believed that his true worth went unrecognized, and Anderson regularly had to reassure him of appreciation for his efforts. At times, Morrison seemed to verge on manic depression. At one point, Morrison received an urgent letter

⁵⁵ Undated clipping, Box 4-6, Anderson Papers.

from Anderson: "I didn't like the sound of your voice last night. You sounded depressed and worried." Anderson urged Morrison to see a physician about his health.⁵⁶ Morrison was incapable of handling criticism. He tended to make snap decisions about an individual's opinion based solely on the person's background, and had a particular bias against academics.⁵⁷

An example of Morrison's thoughtless reactions came when district judge from Helena, Lester Loble, wrote to Anderson to express his appreciation for an editorial written by the Helena paper and his hope that the Lee papers would provide more assistance in the future for his favorite project - reducing juvenile delinquency. Morrison wrote: "I didn't like Mr. Loble's letter to you very much. He doesn't come quite out and say our newspapers have been negligent in the juvenile delinquency matter but he comes pretty close to it and this is definitely not true ... There are many people in Montana who insist Loble's interest in the juvenile problem is prompted by his desire for publicity. I do not know him well enough to know if this is true." Rather than praising Loble for working on the problem for "7 or 8

⁵⁶ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, September 19, 1960, Box 4-9, Anderson Papers.

⁵⁷ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, March 15, 1963, Box 6-5, Anderson Papers.

years," Morrison pointed out that Loble had received "reams and reams of publicity as a result." He continued on at length trying to denigrate Loble's motives. Noting that Loble had suggested that if the Legislature's appropriations committee was not going to fund housing for the delinquents then the members should be willing to take the children into their homes. Apparently missing the sarcasm because of his defensiveness, Morrison said, "That in my opinion is a silly statement and the judge can't expect people to take that sort of thing seriously." Morrison closed the letter with the complaint that people were going over his head to Anderson.⁵⁸

Anderson's reply still smokes with indignation over Morrison's innuendo, arrogance, and vast lack of understanding. "Outside of buying time on TV and putting advertising in the paper, I don't know how I can tell everybody in Montana they should not write me letters. And when they write me I'm going to answer them," Anderson wrote. Noting he did not solicit the letter from Loble, Anderson explained to Morrison that he told Loble to appeal directly to the editors of the various newspapers, "since each of our editors sets his own policy." About Loble's intentions, Anderson said, "you read something between the lines that I didn't see." Loble was grateful for the

⁵⁸ Richard E. Morrison to Don Anderson, April 2, 1962, Box 5-7, Anderson Papers.

editorial and hinted he would like the same from the other newspapers. Anderson further said he was impressed with Loble's description of Montana's juvenile correction institutions. "If his account is accurate then they're pretty damned primitive and might possibly provide the reason for so many repeaters in the state's crime statistics. If Loble is trying to change that picture, then he needs a lot of publicity and I was pleased he thought enough of the papers' influence out there to write me about it." Anderson commented on another editorial that had been written: "Guy Mooney's editorial (in Butte) on the subject was captious and infantile. I'd rather have him be wrong than ignorant[,] and the editorial sounded to me as though he knew nothing about what he was writing."⁵⁹

Anderson clearly had strong feelings about the social responsibility of newspapers and believed that petty jealousies should not stand in the way. He once said, "Unless a newspaper studies its community, reports in depth on community problems, and tries to offer imaginative leadership to the people who are trying to do something about these problems, then it isn't living up to its

⁵⁹ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, April 7, 1962, Box 5-7, Anderson Papers. If it were not for these clashes over editorial policy, the Anderson Papers would not provide such a good view into Anderson's beliefs about the best conduct of a newspaper.

responsibilities."⁶⁰ Anderson often resorted to this kind of lecturing style when Morrison would fire off an unwarranted salvo at some individual or group.

Anderson obviously did not select Morrison for his liberal thinking. Rather, Anderson selected him because Morrison was a hard businessman who was at his best in a confrontational situation. Morrison did not conduct his job to make friends. The bottom line was his main goal, so much so that he and Anderson clashed from time to time. Anderson wanted to spend money to improve the newspapers and to provide better pay for journalists. Morrison would go to great lengths to show that proposed improvements were too radical to consider. For example, at Anderson's request, the chief photographer of the Wisconsin State Journal reviewed the photography practices and capabilities of the Montana newspapers. The photo chief reported widespread problems and maintained that his evaluation was "significant because it reflects a lack of knowledge and investment in photography by Lee in Montana."⁶¹ Clearly not wanting to be bothered, Morrison replied that he agreed with "practically everything

⁶⁰ Billings Gazette, June 7, 1959.

⁶¹ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, June 29, 1962, Box 6-1, Anderson Papers.

he has to say but we just can't go overboard on this."⁶²

Yet Anderson put up with Morrison's sometimes obstructionist positions because he shared Morrison's commitment to making the newspapers profitable. Anderson contended that only a profitable press could maintain its independence. "A newspaper that isn't solvent is going to be independent or effective for very long. The same rules of economics that apply to any business or professional institution also apply to newspapers."⁶³ Accordingly, Anderson was joyous that the Lee papers turned a profit within a year. Even Butte, which lost \$149,000 in 1959, was in the black in 1960. Anderson wrote to Morrison: "A polite congratulations doesn't seem adequate but you have it anyway. I just talked to [chief executive officer] Phil [Adler] with the figures you gave me this morning and he is delighted."⁶⁴ Overall gross profit before taxes in 1960 was more than \$700,000.⁶⁵ Things were going so well financially by January 1965 that Phil Adler, president of Lee, wrote C.

⁶² Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, June 19, 1962, Box 6-1, Anderson Papers.

⁶³ Billings Gazette, June 7, 1959.

⁶⁴ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, July 6, 1960, Box 4-9, Anderson Papers.

⁶⁵ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, December 30, 1960, Box 4-10, Anderson Papers.

Jay Parkinson, Anaconda president, about the results. "We've had a tremendous year in Lee Newspapers of Montana," Adler said. He noted the 1964 annual report for Lee, which Parkinson had also received, did not contain financial figures broken out for Montana because "that would only promote problems with unions and curious advertisers." Referring to author John Steinbeck's tribute to Montana in a recent book, Adler said "We are as proud of the part we're playing in the state as we are of the profits the Montana papers continue to generate." Adler had reason to be proud. The figures, all before tax earnings, showed revenues to be \$898,227 in 1963. That jumped to more than \$1.1 million in 1964. Billings generated the most revenue in 1963 at \$493,942 and surged to \$587,362 in 1964. "Of course, the Billings Gazette did well, but that was the main moneymaker of the Montana group for years. Missoula and Butte continue to surprise us, and Helena is proving a profitable property ... We know you don't measure a newspaper's standing in a community by profits alone. Circulation is another yardstick of newspaper acceptance. The Billings Gazette in '64 came up to 50,000 daily and Sunday to drop the Great Falls Tribune into second place in Montana. Missoula is moving toward 23,000 circulation now and has been steadily edging out Great Falls, Spokane, and Kalispell in surrounding territory. Butte has recouped circulation and Helena is approaching 9,000." After reviewing several other areas,

Adler concluded "overall, we're happy with the way things are moving and we'd like you to know it."⁶⁶

With financial stability assured, Anderson was able to focus on his main objective - bolstering the professional status of the journalists by allowing them to exercise the skills they had spent years developing through education and experience. As one observer noted: "He believes in hiring first class men and women and then giving them their head."⁶⁷ Anderson worked to change how Montana journalists viewed their newspapers and their profession in a number of subtle ways. But he was also behind specific projects to improve the nature of journalism in Montana. Among his efforts were the establishment of a capital bureau in Helena and his support for new laws on libel and on keeping meetings of government bodies open to the public.

Before December 1960, only the Great Falls Tribune of the state's major newspapers had a reporter in Helena specifically to cover state government. Anderson wrote to

⁶⁶ Philip Adler to C. Jay Parkinson, January 11, 1965, Box 7-8, Anderson Papers. While there is no detailed explanation of how Lee gained its financial success in Montana, there are a few obvious reasons. Lee suspended publication of the Butte Daily Post and the Missoula Sentinel. Lee instituted stricter business procedures that included aggressive sale of advertising. Competitive circulation practices were also began that lead to circulation growth by all the newspapers.

⁶⁷ Undated clipping provided from files of John and Sue Talbot, son-in-law and daughter of Don Anderson. John Talbot was editor of the Missoulian from 1970-1980.

Morrison that opening a Lee State bureau "is more than just a selfish newspaper prestige proposition. One of the reasons Montana is in the doldrums is because of what the former legislatures have done to the state. We now have the leadership and some of the legislative manpower to straighten some of those things out and that can best be done by letting the people know just what the hell is going on in the Legislature. They have never really been told before."⁶⁸

Anderson then discussed some of the requirements for the new position that revealed some of his journalistic values. He said one of the candidates for the job had just written a very "wishy-washy" endorsement of John F. Kennedy for president and Donald Nutter for governor. "It didn't put the paper on record at all," he complained, "If this session is as rough as I think it is going to be then that sort of timidity won't work." Anderson had a clear idea of the sort of reporter he wanted for the job. "It is going to require a fast moving reporter who knows how to dig out the news both in the halls of legislation and in the entertainment parlors of the Placer Hotel and who isn't afraid to spit in the eye of the labor crowd, the Farmers' Union, or the Montana Power Company lobby. In other words, I'd like to put us in the

⁶⁸ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, November 10, 1960, Box 4-10, Anderson Papers.

position of being statesmen, not mere politicians."⁶⁹

By mid-December 1960, Matt Himsl, the first state bureau reporter, was on the job. Morrison wrote about him to Anderson, carefully saying what he thought Anderson would want to hear. "He doesn't seem to be a bit scared of anybody or at all impressed by our state dignitaries...I think he will do a good sound objective job for us and that his material will plug a big hole that has existed in our state coverage and give us additional prestige and power." Morrison said he did not want the Independent Record to monopolize the new reporter just because he would be located in Helena. Himsl was informed that the Helena newspaper was one of his responsibilities, but that he was not working only for the Independent Record.⁷⁰

While the state bureau certainly improved coverage of state government for the Lee newspapers, it has never operated quite as well as Anderson had hoped. Each of the newspapers has quite different interests and wants different things from the bureau. For example, mining issues interest Butte, where there is little enthusiasm for the lumber concerns so prominent in Missoula. Billings, where energy and agriculture are kings, cares little about the

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, December 15, 1960, Box 4-10, Anderson Papers.

bureaucratic shuffling that is Helena's lifeblood. As a result of these differences, bureau reporters face constant criticism by one newspaper or another for not meeting its needs. Hence, some newspapers use their work and others do not. An additional problem is that the Associated Press bureau, which feeds all the Lee papers, covers many of the major stories from Helena. The quasi-competitive situation with the AP discourages the Lee bureau reporters from covering the big stories to avoid duplication and sends them looking for different angles, sometimes fruitlessly. Different types of management have been tried, such as a committee of editors or a rotating bureau chief, but nothing has really eliminated the lack of direction.⁷¹

Some of these problems became apparent early on. Morrison reported several months after the bureau's establishment that "it has been working pretty well, nothing sensational yet, but we have had several stories of statewide significance that the Tribune did not have and

⁷¹ Information regarding the Lee state bureau is drawn from the author's ten years of newspaper work in Montana, including eight years at The Montana Standard. It is interesting to note that the two current reporters of the highly-respected Great Falls Tribune state bureau were former Lee state bureau reporters. Charles Johnson, probably the state's premiere journalist, was fired by Lee. Steve Shirley left in frustration. The latest word, however, is that Gannett Corporation, the new owner of the Tribune, is reducing the bureau's staff to one and moving Shirley to Great Falls. The Lee bureau currently has two reporters. Perhaps, Gannett has less concern for maintaining the quality of the Tribune's state coverage than its previous owners, the Cowles Corporation.

that the wire services treated lightly."⁷² By December 1962, Himsl was gone, replaced by another reporter, who also failed to keep everyone happy. Anderson wrote: "I have gathered the opinion that it is pretty much a pedestrian effort ... Do you think we ought to figure out some way to give him a shot in the arm?"⁷³ Morrison replied, "Part of the reason, I think, for our disappointment in the bureau is the lack of initiation [of story ideas] on the part of Billings and Missoula." Only The Montana Standard in Butte, Morrison said, was always seeking stories. Always the cost cutter, Morrison even suggested eliminating the bureau. Anderson replied that he had no intention of eliminating it. He said he felt the bureau could do a better job of meeting the newspapers' needs and that he would ask Walter Nelson, Montana Standard editor, to have a discussion of the bureau put on the agenda of an upcoming Lee journalist conference.

A second area which claimed Anderson's attention involved Montana's open meeting law, which was particularly weak in the pre-Lee days. Anaconda had no interest in keeping government meetings open to the public because it did not intend to report them anyway. Morrison wrote Anderson that preliminary work had been started on an open

⁷² Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, Oct. 2, 1961, Box 5-5, Anderson Papers.

⁷³ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, December 18, 1962, Box 6-3, Anderson Papers.

meeting law in July 1962. "As you know," Morrison wrote, "this is a perennial problem and this past year particularly several state agencies have been operating behind closed doors." While Lee was the impetus to the legislation, Morrison said, the plan called for the corporation to take a low profile. In a classic demonstration of Morrison's lack of understanding, he observed, "Perhaps this isn't terribly important but it certainly would make the newspaper business, particularly state departmental coverage, much, much simpler. We've got nothing to lose."⁷⁴ Of course, a press that cannot gain access to public meetings has everything to lose. As Anderson observed, "A good open meeting law would be helpful to every newspaper in Montana." He noted that an open meeting law he had helped institute in Wisconsin several years earlier had been helpful to the newspapers there. "It has given us access to a lot of news we didn't get formerly. Or, to be more correct, it has given us access to a more correct coverage of the news than we were able to do formerly."⁷⁵ Once again, with Anderson's tutelage, Morrison came around. After considering Anderson's comments, he replied, "The open meeting law will turn out to be a good one and I am optimistic that we can put it

⁷⁴ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, July 23, 1962, Box 6-2, Anderson Papers.

⁷⁵ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, July 7, 1962, Box 6-2, Anderson Papers.

across."⁷⁶ The open meeting bill became law after the 1963 legislative session. While Morrison conceded the law was not so strict as Anderson would have liked, he said it nevertheless should "serve as evidence of interest in open meetings and perhaps have a salutary effect."⁷⁷

A third concern that emerged after Lee took over the Montana newspapers was a plague of nuisance libel suits, 18 of them in the first few months of ownership. Anderson explained it had become the custom for some people to sue the Anaconda papers because the lawyers in control had a policy of quick settlements.⁷⁸ At Anderson's urging, Lee began to take the cases to court and, at the same time, sought a libel law that would better protect newspapers against nuisance suits. Morrison informed Anderson in January 1961 that the new law was working its way through the Legislature. The print media, however, had not aligned itself with the broadcast media in order to keep the bill simpler. The broadcast media were demanding to be placed

⁷⁶ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, July 30, 1962, Box 6-2, Anderson Papers.

⁷⁷ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, March 8, 1963, Box 6-5, Anderson Papers.

⁷⁸ Editor & Publisher, "News and Spunk Pay Off for Lee," Sept. 26, 1962, p. 11.

under the protection of the bill, Morrison wrote.⁷⁹ In April 1961 Morrison wrote that "I think we came out of the legislative session smelling like a rose. We got our libel bill, even though it was amended to include the broadcast media, and that was our big project."⁸⁰ The new law contained two important new clauses. One was that any party intending to sue for libel must give written notice to the publisher of the alleged libel. The second clause maintained that the publisher may escape punitive damages by publishing a proper retraction or correction.⁸¹

Anderson's statement in his "Autobiography" of how important his involvement with the Montana papers was could easily serve as his epitaph. The result of the purchase, Anderson contended, "has probably been my major contribution to the social order." While being a profitable Lee unit, the Montana newspapers, more importantly have "been a strong voice in bringing Montana into the 20th Century. Through them there has been a strong move toward better civic and governmental life. We have demonstrated to Montana that

⁷⁹ Morrison to Anderson, January 20, 1961, Box 5-1, Anderson Papers.

⁸⁰ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, April 5, 1961, Box 5-2, Anderson Papers.

⁸¹ Dean Rea, "Montana Press Law," A Century of Montana Journalism (Missoula, Mountain, 1971), p. 152.

politics not only should be honest but can be honest.⁸²

Anderson's efforts enhanced the profession of journalism, not only at the Lee newspapers, but for all the state's journalists. Establishing a state bureau was crucial if the Lee newspapers were going to be taken seriously for their statewide influence. Anderson's work on the open meeting and libel laws was vital in providing professional journalists with the tools and protection to do the work for which they had been trained.

⁸² Donald W. Anderson, "Autobiography." Manuscript in possession of family.

Chapter IV

"Magic Words"

Before discussing some of the news events by which the Lee newspapers demonstrated their new found press freedom, it is useful to see them against a backdrop of one of the Anaconda Company's worst performances. In May 1950, Montana Governor John Bonner, a great friend of the Anaconda Company, traveled to Biloxi, Mississippi, to speak to a meeting of the interstate oil commission. When the story broke on May 6 that Bonner had apparently been arrested in a night spot in New Orleans' Latin Quarter, most Montanans might well have never read about it in their daily newspapers. Among the state's major dailies, only the Great Falls Tribune printed the story initially. Even the Tribune deserved only limited credit. It carried only two brief Associated Press wire stories about the incident and ran them on page four. The total length was not quite six inches of copy. At no time in the ensuing several days did the Tribune or the Anaconda dailies make an attempt to contact New Orleans and do their own story. As usual, even the Great Falls newspaper was not entirely unfriendly to Anaconda interests. A story under a Biloxi dateline read: "Gov. John Bonner of Montana said today [May 5] he 'was not' the man

arrested in New Orleans last night on a drunkenness charge. New Orleans police had reported that a man giving the name of Bonner and saying he was the governor of Montana was picked up last night...and jailed for six hours...Bonner insisted he was not the man. He said he was in New Orleans for awhile yesterday and then came on here this morning. 'It's all a mystery to me,' he said when informed of the New Orleans incident." A second story with a dateline from Helena reported: "Gov. John W. Bonner said today news stories about the arrest of a 'John Bonner' in New Orleans were 'grossly exaggerated' and he believes the case is a 'practical joke.' Bonner would say no more in a telephone call to the Associated Press about a statement from New Orleans Police Capt. Joseph Guillot that a man held for six hours on an intoxication charge had papers identifying him as the Montana governor."⁸³

For its entertainment value alone, the story deserved better play than the Tribune gave it. The next day, May 7, the Anaconda papers were apparently shamed into running something and performed in lockstep. Virtually the same, inch and a half, three paragraph summary appeared at the back of their first sections. In the Missoulian, the story ran on page nine along side the movie listings and the election of officers to the Montana Hotel Association. The

⁸³ Great Falls Tribune, May 6, 1950.

Billings Gazette placed the story on page fifteen, along with the opening of a Knights of Columbus convention and an even briefer story about how rain was bringing Christmas to a North Dakota town.⁸⁴

In New Orleans, The Times-Picayune provided much more information for its readers about the incident in a story carried prominently on page four.⁸⁵ There was even a photo of a smiling Bonner getting into a car outside the police station. The story said Bonner had been "helped in" to jail the night before and booked as "a simple drunk." A desk sergeant who booked Bonner said "He cussed me some but I didn't pay any attention to him. He said he was the governor of Montana and pulled out letters and cards and papers to prove it. I read them. They all identified him as the governor, all right." According to the story, a cab driver, Phillip Bollinger, offered Bonner a ride outside a bus depot on Canal Street. Bonner said he had to take a bus because he needed to get to Biloxi to make a speech in the morning. The cabbie said he told Bonner he was too drunk to be allowed on the bus. At that point, the man told the cabbie he was the governor of Montana. Bollinger then offered to drive Bonner to Biloxi for \$50. Bonner and the cabbie then went to

⁸⁴ Billings Gazette, May 7, 1950; Missoulain, May 7, 1950; Helena Independent Record, May 7, 1950; The Montana Standard, May 7, 1950.

⁸⁵ New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 6, 1950.

several bars to try to cash a check but had no luck. "The governor was a pretty nice fellow so I got some credit at the bar [Bienville Bar] and bought him a few rounds of drinks." The police later arrested Bonner at the Bienville Bar. The story does not indicate exactly why the police were summoned. The Times-Picayune said that Bonner, contacted in Biloxi, denied the whole incident. Then Bonner said: "It didn't happen like they said it had ... It's so damn ridiculous - that's what they do to a fellow in politics. It's beyond imagination. The rest will probably come out later."⁸⁶

The cabbie said Bonner owed him \$9 for cab fare but he was willing to forget the drinks.⁸⁷

The New York Times ran a longer Associated Press version of the story than did the Great Falls Tribune with a headline that read: "Montana's Governor Confused on Arrest." The Times carried the story on page 15, its first big national news page, and provided much more information than the Tribune, particularly about what Bonner did after his release from jail. Bonner called the Associated Press bureau in New Orleans after he arrived by bus in Biloxi. He inquired about "the incident last night in New Orleans" but

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

refused to elaborate on police reports.⁸⁸ Later, Bonner made a phone call to the Helena bureau of the Associated Press where he said the story was "grossly exaggerated." Between the calls, Bonner told a reporter in Biloxi that "there's a lot of things about the whole incident that ought to be said" but he declined to explain.

Despite the fact that none of the Montana papers would chase the story to find out the details of what happened or at least to get better confirmation, the story did not end there. On May 9, an Associated Press story from New Orleans appeared in the Tribune buried halfway down page eight. The mayor of New Orleans, de Lesseps Morrison, offered an apology to the governor. Morrison's carefully worded statement never once hinted that the governor had not been arrested. Perhaps the mayor was a little piqued about Bonner's implications that the New Orleans police did not know whom they had arrested. The apology wired to Bonner said: "We profoundly regret any embarrassment that may have been caused over an incident of little consequence. We of New Orleans would be happy to have you accept our apologies for this unfortunate occurrence. Thus, I hope the matter will be forgotten and the incident closed."⁸⁹ None of the Anaconda papers ran the mayor's apology or the governor's

⁸⁸ New York Times, May 6, 1950.

⁸⁹ Great Falls Tribune, May 9, 1950.

further comments. The Times-Picayune ran the apology on page one.⁹⁰ Clearly, the mayor seemed to confirm, while apologizing for, the governor's arrest; and the governor sounded as though he could not, or chose not to, remember the evening very vividly. Officials of the Anaconda-run newspapers apparently opted for loyalty to Anaconda's friend, Governor Bonner, rather than to fulfill their responsibilities to readers. Miners and accountants made decisions that should have been left to journalists.⁹¹

It did not take long for the journalists to have an opportunity to try out their new freedom. Lee Newspapers of Montana, the new division created to handle the Montana newspapers, set up headquarters in Butte shortly after the purchase in 1959. Butte was chosen for several reasons. The city was centrally located. The Montana Standard and Butte Daily Post had the second highest circulation among the papers the Lee corporation bought (only the Billings Gazette was larger). Moreover, Butte contained the headquarters of

⁹⁰ New Orleans Times-Picayune, May 8, 1950.

⁹¹ J.H. Dickey, an Anaconda executive, was the general manager of the Fairmont Corporation and it was he who had the closest relationship with newspapers. Ironically, if the Montana papers had dealt fairly with the news of the governor's arrest, the incident would be virtually unknown today. Instead of concealing the governor's arrest, Anaconda's actions have assured that the story of the governor's relatively minor picadillo will continue to be told to generations of Montanans as an example of the abuses of the copper press.

the Anaconda Company and Montana Power, and perhaps Anderson felt it best to have a location near the seat of corporate power in Montana. The largest percentage of correspondence in Anderson's papers concerns The Montana Standard. Richard Morrison, general manager for Lee, also served as publisher for the Butte papers. The Standard's prominence in the correspondence makes it the best example of Lee's impact on the state's journalism. The occurrence of a few major stories involving Butte also brought the Standard to center stage.

It must have been a somewhat colorful bunch that assembled for a staff meeting in January 1960 with Morrison. "This is a good crew," Morrison wrote to Anderson. "There are some rugged individualists but they are interested in making a better newspaper. We brought up the liquor problem and laid down a few regulations concerning that. I am hopeful it will eliminate some of the monkey business that has been going on."⁹²

The first big story confronting Lee in Butte was a long copper strike which was underway when Lee took possession of the papers. Immediately, Lee stepped up coverage. For weeks prior to the settlement on Feb. 12, 1960, the Standard ran a constant stream of stories about the 178-day strike. When neither the union or the company would talk, the paper covered the strike's impact on merchants or aid available to

⁹² Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, January 25, 1960, Box 4-6, Anderson Papers.

the needy. When the paper ran a story on February 3 about further company layoffs of salaried people, it prompted an angry letter from a businessman. (Under Anaconda's management, newspapers never accepted letters to the editor after the 1930s.) The anonymous letter writer complained that Don Anderson had promised Lee would work to improve the business climate. Talking about layoffs did not help matters at all. "There is enough adverse news carried in papers around the country each day without trying to drive another nail in coffin of the Butte businessman. Let's go back and read Mr. Don Anderson's acceptance speech published in your own newspaper last year and then resolve to abide by it from here on."⁹³ The criticism prompted Managing Editor Tom Mooney to provide a long reply packaged under a headline "What is a newspaper?" Mooney wrote that, after carefully studying the speeches Anderson gave around the state, he could find no mention that Lee "would avoid its responsibility to its community by printing only the news that is sweetness and light." In fact, Mooney contended, Anderson had said in Billings that Lee would "not suppress legitimate news no matter whom it affects. We have many friends but no sacred cows." Mooney added that, as long as he directed the news staff "I want you to know - and anyone else who is interested - that we are going to print all the

⁹³ The Montana Standard, February 11, 1960.

news of importance to Butte and its surrounding area whether it be good or bad. In doing so, we may step on some toes and we may print news that some would like suppressed. That may not be the way things were done in the 'Good Old Days' but that's the way they are now."⁹⁴ Mooney clearly relished the luxury of being able to exercise his journalistic responsibilities. He said that each news item would be evaluated "by our staff for its news value - and for its news value alone - before it is printed. I think we have one of the best staffs of professional [emphasis added] newsmen and women anywhere in the state." Mooney was not the only person who took exception to the Butte businessman's comments. A subscriber in Dillon wrote on February 17: "Three cheers for the rebuttal to the Butte businessman. When the time comes that we cannot take the bitter with the sweet then we have deteriorated so far mentally, spiritually, and physically, that there can be no hope for us. Keep up your good news coverage. It means so much to us who can see beyond our noses and have Montana at heart."⁹⁵

News of the strike settlement created tremendous excitement. The Standard hit the streets at mid-morning with an "extra" edition, its first since World War II. Veteran journalist William J. Clark reported: "It went like the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ The Montana Standard, February 17, 1960.

proverbial bridal cake at the wedding."⁹⁶ The newspaper carried editorials about the strike, a pair of photo pages and several additional stories about reaction to the settlement.⁹⁷ In subsequent days, it tried to delve into various side issues of the contract. For example, neither side would officially release details of wage increases. The Standard ferreted the details out.⁹⁸

The whole approach differed remarkably from the coverage of the previous major strike that lasted eight weeks in 1954. When that strike ended on October 15, the Standard was relatively subdued; it carried only one story that day on the strike and ran no photos. Editorials for such a big occasion were limited to one on Communism and another on the growing population of the United States. In sharp contrast to the heavy coverage of 1960, the paper, under Anaconda's ownership, made no mention of the strike from September 1 to September 16 and mentioned it only a few times the rest of that month. The lack of coverage was all the more striking when one considers the last paragraph of the story on the settlement of the strike, which revealed that - "about 10,000 men were idled by the strike" in Butte,

⁹⁶ The Montana Standard, February 12, 1960.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ The Montana Standard, February 14, 1960.

Anaconda, and Great Falls. About 7,000 of those idled were in Butte. Considering the impact on the community it served, the Standard's lack of coverage was remarkable.

Another example of the papers' new found independence came on March 23, 1960, when the Standard and the Missoulian reported on the pollution of the Clark Fork River. The criticism of Anaconda's actions, less than a year after the sale, was probably the first heard from the newspapers since Anaconda purchased them decades earlier. The Clark Fork's headwaters are in the mountains above Butte from which Silver Bow Creek flows. The creek meanders through abandoned mine and smelter dumps as it makes its way through the city. The river actually forms at Warm Springs, near Anaconda, where the Warm Springs, Willow, Mill, and Silver Bow creeks flow together. Also flowing into the river at that point is the outlet of the Anaconda smelter's 5,000-acre water treatment ponds, constructed in the late 1950s. Anaconda had abused the river for many years, and, as it flowed through the Deer Lodge Valley, it was not unusual during the 1960s to see brilliant colors of various heavy metals contaminating the water. By the time the pollution reached Missoula, however, pollutants had been sufficiently dispersed that they were rarely noticeable. That changed dramatically in March 1960.

During the long industry-wide copper strike of 1959-1960, Anaconda closed a treatment plant in Butte and shut

off pumps that kept the vast underground mines dewatered. When the strike appeared near conclusion on March 16, Anaconda began pumping the water as fast as it could to enable the resumption of production. The huge quantities of water overwhelmed the primitive pollution control process, and toxins poured into Silver Bow Creek and from there into the Clark Fork. The Montana Standard and the Missoulian both reported prominently on page one on March 19 that representatives of the Anaconda Company, the state Board of Health, and the Department of Fish and Game planned to meet in Butte on March 22 to discuss the problem of pollution in the Clark Fork River.⁹⁹ Taking a rather casual attitude to what must have been a massive spill and resultant fish kill, the Fish and Game told the Standard: "The Anaconda Company is endeavoring to remedy the situation and hopes to get it under control very shortly." Both newspapers again ran stories prominently on page one on March 23, when the state explained what happened. "Copper water" that had been impounded in the mines during the strike was sent through the precipitating plant where it passed over tin cans to recover copper. The process released iron from the cans, which went untreated into the creek.¹⁰⁰ The result left the Clark Fork "void of aquatic life from Bonner to a point more

⁹⁹ The Montana Standard, March 19, 1960.

¹⁰⁰ The Montana Standard, March 23, 1960.

than 20 miles downstream."¹⁰¹

Probably because the Clark Fork flows through Missoula and not Butte, and because Missoula had less economic interest in the Butte mines, an editorial in the Missoulian stated firmly: "Montana needs more adequate legislation to protect its streams from pollution. It is simple enough for any citizen to find this out by merely looking over the side of any of the Missoula bridges that cross the Clark Fork River. In a brief 24 hours, years of work, planning and money to rehabilitate the Clark Fork river for recreation and swimming 'went down the river.' If it is definitely established tht pollution comes from the settling ponds of the Anaconda Co. near Warm Springs, action must be taken that will bar any future repetition of this irresponsible situation. Injunctions to stop the pollution once it is in the streams are not enough. What is needed are laws strong enough to take care of the situation BEFORE our streams are ruined."¹⁰²

The company was quick to try to silence the press. "We had our first protest from the Sixth Floor yesterday," Morrison wrote Anderson. An official of the Anaconda Company, Bill Kirkpatrick, had telephoned Morrison and another official was dispatched to Missoula to speak with

¹⁰¹ Missoulian, March 24, 1960.

¹⁰² Missoulian, March 23, 1960.

editors at the Missoulian. "He [Kirkpatrick] felt they were being abused ... I told Bill that we welcomed any information or opinion they could give us but we felt this was a matter that was of interest to everyone and one that we could not, of course, overlook." Even Morrison, with his conservative and business background, justified standing up to Anaconda. "As a matter of fact, the Company has been getting away with polluting this stream for many years and it is time they were stopped. Never before, of course, was it possible to give the matter any publicity."¹⁰³ The "general public is most pleased and happy with the fact that this problem was finally brought out in the open and something done about it."¹⁰⁴

Anderson demonstrated a keen interest in the report from the Sixth Floor. "I have read the river pollution story, or rather edit, and grinned when I saw the crack at the Company ... Any how, if the company was at fault, I don't see how they can expect any immunity. When we made our deal we told them we would treat them just like we treated anyone else - and that's the way we'd treat anyone

¹⁰³ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, March 25, 1960, Box 4-7, Anderson Papers.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

else."¹⁰⁵ Anderson held firmly from the beginning that Anaconda would not have the ability to control the newspapers. In fact, Lee executives had decided during the sale negotiations that if Anaconda tried to put conditions on the purchase, Lee would break off the talks. "For five long months we waited for such a suggestion - and it never came," Anderson said. Lee agreed only to publish the best newspapers they could, to treat the Anaconda Company impartially, and to publish the newspapers as a unit, rather than breaking them up and selling them to the highest bidder for profit.¹⁰⁶

The newspapers' willingness to report on controversial issues involving even Anaconda illustrated a significant change from the past, when Governor Bonner's escapade in New Orleans was swept into the want ads. The Standard demonstrated the point even more clearly when it embarked on a crusade to clean up the chronically corrupt Butte court system. Lewis Poole, a veteran reporter for the Standard, investigated the courts and wrote the series. The problems had existed for some time, but only after the sale did Poole have the freedom to write about the situation. Poole once

¹⁰⁵ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, March 27, 1960, Box 4-7, Anderson Papers.

¹⁰⁶ Ruth James Towe, "The Lee Newspapers of Montana: The First Three Years, 1959-1962" (M.A. thesis, University of Montana, 1969), p. 50-51.

described working under the company's control: "Anything favorable to labor or a liberal view was taboo. No letters to the editor were published. The editor spent most of his time saying nice things about Montana and writing about Communists. They were the only things he was allowed to expound upon."¹⁰⁷

The "Ten Magic Words" was the title of the series that began at the top of page one of The Montana Standard on April 5, 1961.¹⁰⁸ Poole reported, "Anyone who can say 10 words, or have them said for him, need have no fear of being punished in Butte for drunken driving, child molestation, selling liquor to minors, or any other misdemeanor." The 10 magic words were: "I hereby serve oral notice of appeal to district court." It refers to a perfectly legal procedure of a defendant requesting that his case be considered by the higher district court, which might overturn or affirm the findings of the lower court. The defendant, Poole reported, first had to go through the formality of a police court trial in which he was found guilty and would then appeal. However, in Butte at the time, the case would never be transferred to a higher court. Poole said the loophole had been operating for a long time" and the "actions and

¹⁰⁷ Ruth James Towe, "The Lee Newspapers of Montana" p. 60.

¹⁰⁸ The Montana Standard, April 5, 1961.

attitudes of the public officials who could but won't do something about it indicate it's going to be that way from now on, as far as they are concerned." Poole then proceeded to an eyewitness account of how a man charged with drunk driving escaped sentencing. At the Butte police court trial, police officers testified the man was too drunk to walk when pulled out of his car. To an amazed judge, the man's attorney offered no defense. The judge pronounced a fine of \$150 and 10 days in jail. The defense counsel pronounced the 10 magic words. "The defendant paid no fine, served no time. He walked out of court as free as he had ever been ... His appeal was never processed. In fact, no transcript on appeal was even transmitted to district court. His \$150 cash bond was remitted. In its place, he posed a \$300 property bond. In time, that also was exonerated." Poole said the pattern had been the same in "hundreds" of cases. He wrote that city and county officials followed the pattern because they inherited it. "No one seems to know exactly when the pattern was laid or who laid it but they follow it. Asked about it, they say merely: "We just don't take up these appeals in Butte." It is difficult to see who benefitted from the system, besides the law breakers. It could have been designed to save the district court from extra work. Perhaps it was a manifestation of Butte's days as a hell roaring mining camp when an individual would have to do something much more serious than driving drunk just to get the

attention of the authorities. Any thing less than a violent crime (assault, robbery, murder, etc.) perhaps was not taken seriously.

The Standard continued the series for three more days. One story involved a child molester who had escaped punishment. "A man of 29 stood accused in the Butte police court of annoying, molesting, and frightening a nine-year-old girl by offensive conduct. The girl has not been physically molested...Testimony left no doubt with anyone who heard it that the little girl had been marked for life with memories no child should be called upon to carry." Because his lawyer uttered the ten magic words, the man avoided his \$300 fine and 90-day jail sentence.¹⁰⁹ Poole also told the story of a man with a heavy "Balkan" accent who was unable to come up with the magic words from memory after being convicted of drunken driving. "But he had come prepared. He fished in his pockets until he found a piece of paper. He uncrumpled it and read from it triumphantly" the ten magic words. Another drunk driver escaped punishment after a hit-and-run incident in which a young girl was injured.¹¹⁰ The impressive and well-written series had a great impact in Butte. Even before the series was over, Silver Bow County acted to add people to its justice court

¹⁰⁹ The Montana Standard, April 6, 1961.

¹¹⁰ The Montana Standard, April 7, 1961.

prosecution staff.¹¹¹ The city courts acted a little more slowly, claiming a lack of funds, but eventually bolstered its staff, too. Both courts began to refer appeals to district court. The Standard fielded a few letters from citizens angry over the mismanagement of the court system.

Anderson wrote Morrison that the Poole series was "tremendous. I had glanced at a couple of stories but didn't realize the full impact of them until I carefully read the whole string. My God! No wonder you were disgusted."¹¹² He told Morrison that nothing much would happen unless the Standard kept up on the issue. Anderson called for some "thundering" editorials about the situation. On April 9, the Standard took a strong stand against the Ten Magic Words in an editorial: "It has been said that to carry out the appeal would be a costly task. The processes of justice are not cheap, but who can put a dollars and cents tag on the mind of a nine-year-old girl who has been molested by a depraved person? Who can set the price for a grieving mother, or a widow, when her child or husband has been struck down by a speeding car which had a previously arrested intoxicated person at the wheel? Is cost the only criterion to be used?... We think not. We think the processes of our legal

¹¹¹ The Montana Standard, April 6, 1961.

¹¹² Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, April 13, 1961, Box 5-2, Anderson Papers.

procedures are there to protect the public, penalize the guilty, and to free the innocent. But we do not think the murmuring of the Ten Magic Words ... is sufficient to bring a premature end to hundreds of lower court cases ...

Certainly, there could be no better moment than right now to halt this thwarting of justice through the evasion of our legal system."¹¹³

The editorial impressed Anderson. "It seems to me," he wrote, "that Butte is in a transition from a roaring mining camp to a modern city. It will stay in that status, with all the bad qualities of both systems, until somebody takes the leadership of moving it up the ladder to a better way of living. Seems to me the Standard has started to point the way and that's something we can all be proud of."

¹¹³ The Montana Standard, April 9, 1961.

Chapter V

"How times have changed..."

A pair of national and international issues converged in Montana to create a bitter estrangement between the Anaconda Company and Lee's Montana newspapers in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The growing environmental movement collided with Anaconda's suddenly deteriorating financial condition because of the nationalization of its Chilean properties. The disagreements revealed a fundamental change in the Anaconda Company because it cared what the newspapers were writing about it. From another point of view, a clash between the papers and the corporation was virtually inevitable, given Anaconda's extensive involvement in Montana and the Lee newspapers editorial freedom.

Lee Enterprises did not relish the quarrel. Nevertheless, the conflict was a key turning point in the development of a free press in Montana. The position Lee papers took in the dispute proved not only Lee's ability to take a serious stand against Anaconda but also its willingness to do so. Lee news executives, and particularly Don Anderson, enjoyed good terms with one of the nation's largest corporations and agonized over damaging that relationship. Staying on civil terms with Anaconda made news

coverage of the company much easier while animosity with Anaconda could result in retaliation with uncertainty over what kind of financial trouble the company could create for Lee.

For its part, Anaconda did not enter the battle unaided or unarmed. Montana Power and Anaconda, known not very affectionately in some circles as the state's "terrible twins," were familiar allies. Anaconda had created Montana Power in 1928 by purchasing several small power companies around the state and uniting them as a subsidiary. The action provided Anaconda with a larger and more dependable power supply which it viewed as a necessity since it was by far the state's largest user of electricity. Eventually, Anaconda spun off the utility. Montana Power stood on its own but always at the elbow of the copper giant. Both the Montana Chamber of Commerce and the Montana Mining Association appeared at times to be merely mouthpieces for Anaconda.

By the early 1970s, Anaconda needed all the help it could get. The company had invested heavily in expansion after World War II. Between 1945 and 1960, it reported spending \$665 million. That expansion continued throughout the 1960s, particularly in Chile. Under three subsidiaries (Chile Exploration Company, Andes Copper Mining Company, and the Santiago Mining Company), Anaconda employed thousands of Chileans in mines and smelters. The greatest producer was

the Chuquicamata open-pit mine. With an ability to pour out about 600 million pounds of copper a year, Chuquimata accounted for about 55 percent of Anaconda's copper production in the 1960s.¹¹⁴

However, nationalization came to Chile, and Anaconda's world began to change. The Chilean government, tired of American companies exploiting its people and resources, took over the mines and smelters. Other copper companies, like Kennecott and Phelps-Dodge, had prepared themselves somewhat for the blow when it came in 1969. However, nationalization caught Anaconda off guard, and it proved a deadly blow. Chile accounted for two-thirds of Anaconda's net income by 1969. Anaconda's revenues had dropped from \$1.2 billion in 1969 to \$977.4 million in 1971. Earnings in the same period dropped from \$131.1 million to \$67.9 million.¹¹⁵

With its very existence threatened, Anaconda took several drastic actions in attempts to stave off the flood of red ink. Unlike Penn Central and Chrysler, which sought government bailouts for their financial calamities, Anaconda sought help from the private sector. It depended heavily on Chase Manhattan Bank for loans, and, as a result, the New York bank began to have a say in the operation of the mining

¹¹⁴ This is Anaconda (New York, Anaconda Company publication, 1960), p. 34.

¹¹⁵ Undated clipping, Box 2-5, Donald W. Anderson Papers, University of Montana Archives, Missoula, Montana.

company. Anaconda tried to raise cash by selling its lumber mill at Bonner and thousands of acres of timber lands in Western Montana to Champion International. Perhaps most significant to this thesis, Anaconda also began to evaluate the thousands of mining properties it owned across the state of Montana because it desperately needed copper ore in the future.

The two most promising sites were near Lincoln in western Montana and in the Stillwater Valley near Livingston. Drilling and exploration began in 1970. Almost immediately, the Missoulian and the Billings Gazette, the Lee newspapers nearest the exploration sites, began intensive press coverage of Anaconda's operations. Anaconda did not appreciate the attention.

The Gazette reported: "Anaconda exploration of the area set off a flurry of protest from environmentalists and ranchers in the area who feel mining will endanger the ecology of the Stillwater Valley." The resident geologist hesitated to speak without having his comments cleared by Anaconda because of "some of the things that have been printed." The reporter, Gary Svec, went on to question the geologist about reports that Anaconda had armed guards around the property, perhaps harking back to the days when Anaconda hired Pinkerton detectives to protect its properties in Anaconda and Butte. The geologist replied that it was, after all, private property. Svec reported seeing no

armed guards in evidence.¹¹⁶

A reporter for the Missoulian, Dale Burk, meanwhile, wrote extensive stories about Anaconda's efforts in the Lincoln area. In nominating Burk's package of stories for a prestigious national award, Missoulian publisher John Talbot wrote: "In my opinion, it was Mr. Burk's writing, more than anything else, that forced state government in Montana to demand assurances from the Anaconda Company which will protect the environment of the Lincoln area for future generations of our citizens ... The developers must now concern themselves with environmental considerations which they were apparently willing to ignore at the onset of this project."¹¹⁷

The Lee papers had become a major headache to the Anaconda Company. Nothing made this more obvious than efforts undertaken by the Montana Chamber of Commerce in the Legislative session in 1971, at least initially at the behest of Anaconda. The Montana Chamber broadly attacked all environmental legislation and then proposed a bill to tax newspapers published more than five times a week. Del Siewart, state chamber president, initially indicated Anaconda supported the newspaper taxing bill. Later, when

¹¹⁶ The Billings Gazette, Dec. 31, 1970.

¹¹⁷ John Talbot to Thomas L. Stokes Award Committee, January 6, 1971, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

Anaconda backed away from the issue, the chamber reversed its position and announced it would help fight the bill.¹¹⁸

Behind the scenes and in public, Anaconda maintained that the Lee papers were all that was keeping it from being successful in Montana. The Missoulian struck back in an editorial. After reviewing the fact that Anaconda once owned the Montana Lee papers, the Missoulian quoted James Robischon, Anaconda's counsel for Montana operations, saying the Missoula, Billings, and Helena papers had revitalized the out-dated "ogre concept" for viewing the Anaconda Company. Robischon blasted the papers for their "unfair" treatment.

A Missoulian editorial derided Robischon's accusations as childish. "We flatly challenge the company to show us where our news stories have been biased. Our editorials and some signed columns have been critical. Well they might be, for the company has not behaved well. All Anaconda has to do is to avoid violating the public interest and it will not get whacked." The Missoulian demanded that Anaconda clean up the pollution it was currently causing and that it create no new major pollution problems. It also advised Anaconda to be "honest and open" with the public "to avoid giving rise to

¹¹⁸ John Talbot to Strand Hilleboe, Gazette publisher, Feb. 11, 1971, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

suspensions that it is trying to pull a fast one."¹¹⁹

The Missoulian then explained how the company and Governor Forrest Anderson tried to get the State Land Board to grant some easements on the Lincoln project before all the board members were able to examine Anaconda's commitments. "As long as the company does things like that, and enlists its handmaidens in public office to play such games, it will hardly inspire public trust," the newspaper observed.¹²⁰

The Missoulian's editorial was one of many lashings Anaconda received from the Lee papers in Montana. As the Missoulian noted, "How times have changed over the last decade or so" since the papers "were adjuncts to the selling of copper."¹²¹

Don Anderson got involved in the conflict with Anaconda early on. Lloyd Schermer, the former publisher of the Missoulian who had moved back to headquarters at Davenport, had proposed offering to meet Anaconda's CEO and president, C. Jay Parkinson, in Montana to discuss their differences. Putting his experience to work, Anderson modified that proposal. He had grown to know Parkinson from the sale

¹¹⁹ Missoulian, September 4, 1970.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

negotiations and over the subsequent years. Anderson wrote: "The purpose of this effort is to get The Company to be better citizens; to assist the economic development of Montana within the framework of good ecology; to improve our relations with Anaconda; then there are some bugs in the footwork you suggested. I know this guy Parkinson pretty well and I think I know what makes him tick. If we bring him to Montana cold to talk to the news and editorial boards of all the papers, there will be just another confrontation. He is good-natured, but bursts into flame easily. He would be in our backyard, as our guest, and at the first critical remark he would think we had set him up as a target and nothing would be accomplished." Instead, Anderson advised that some Lee people go to New York City to see Parkinson. "They would be his [Parkinson's] guests. The onus for good behavior would be on him."¹²²

In a personal effort to try to keep the lines of communication open, Anderson spoke with Parkinson on the phone and the two men exchanged letters. Jack Corette, chairman and chief executive of Montana Power, contacted Anderson on the same issue. There is no clear evidence that Parkinson and Corette had agreed to work on Anderson together but it seems unlikely that the timing was just coincidental.

¹²² Don Anderson to Lloyd Schermer, January 5, 1971, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

Corette probably described the feeling of big business most clearly. "I am gravely concerned, Don," he wrote, "about the fact that I believe the policies of some of your newspapers in Montana are more detrimental to the future economic growth of this state than anything that has happened here in my lifetime. You, undoubtedly, still read some of your papers and if you follow the philosophies set forth in the Missoulian and the Gazette, I am sure that you understand my concern."¹²³

Anderson, however, had reached a sophisticated understanding of what was behind the environmental movement sweeping Montana at that time and his replies to Corette and Parkinson were very similar. Anderson's understanding helped keep the newspapers from bending under the considerable pressure of the "Terrible Twins." In a letter to Parkinson, he said he had done some research during a trip through Montana. He told Parkinson that much of the activism was not directed only at Anaconda. In Eastern Montana, Montana Power and Burlington Northern were targeted for their strip mining. Hoerner Waldorf came under fire in Missoula. In the Stillwater area, Johns-Manville was the focus of public criticism for its exploration practices.¹²⁴ Then Anderson

¹²³ J.E. Corette to Don Anderson, January 6, 1971, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

¹²⁴ Don Anderson to C. Jay Parkinson, undated, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

told Parkinson that "a month ago, like you, I was inclined to dismiss much of this attitude as an evangelistic youth or left wing movement. I feel differently today. Youth is in it up to the hilt and a few kooks are involved; but most of the muscle and force of the attack comes from a genuine citizen concern over the future of the state. Solid and conservative people, part of 'the establishment,' who would vote with you on most political and economic issues are saying 'to hell with them' on this question of ecology and environment. Our papers are largely reflecting, not creating, this citizen attitude."

Anderson told Parkinson that useful communication had broken down between Anaconda and Lee. "Too often when our people and your people meet both sides have a chip on their shoulder and the result is a confrontation rather than a useful conference or debate," he wrote.

In a similar letter to Corette, Anderson said: "This is not a Montana phenomenon. It is taking place all over the world, and especially in America" from citizens "who are concerned about where their world is taking them." Anderson pointed out that people were worried about Montana Power's strip mining in eastern Montana because they had seen what the process did in eastern states.¹²⁵

Corette replied that he realized the basic accuracy and

¹²⁵ Don Anderson to J.E. Corette, undated, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

validity of Anderson's explanation and claimed to "feel strongly about protecting the environment." While Montana Power was dedicated to do everything "within reason" that could be done to protect the environment, he also believed that "we must have jobs, a tax base, and the nation and the world must have many of" Montana's products. A couple of Lee's papers, however, Corette said, "have gone too far and publish material which incites the public to take such an extreme position that it is destructive of progress." He said that he had a "reasonable amount of confidence in the good sense of our legislative process" and hoped any new laws would be reasonable. Some of the Lee people, he wrote, "apparently seek an impossible utopia."¹²⁶

Anderson had less confidence in the legislative process. He commented in a letter to Lloyd Schermer, publisher of the Missoulian: "I'm afraid his (Corette's) confidence in the legislative process consists of handouts to the governor."¹²⁷

In his reply to Anderson, Parkinson wrote that he "sincerely appreciated" the "very thoughtful letter" and he welcomed the opportunity to talk the dispute out and try to

¹²⁶ J.E. Corette to Don Anderson, January 13, 1971, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

¹²⁷ Don Anderson to Lloyd Schermer, January 16, 1971, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

restore the "mutual confidence which once existed."

Parkinson then described what he thought would be the best format for a meeting. Parkinson made no mention of Anderson's evaluation of public concern in Montana and, despite the friendly tone of the letter, one phrase stands out from the rest: "We, of course, would not expect to tell the newspapers how to run their business, and I suppose they would not want to tell us how to run ours." From that phrase and from what Parkinson did not say, it can be inferred that Anaconda's position was that it did not matter what Montanans wanted and that the newspapers had no business interfering in Anaconda's development work. Such an attitude could easily come to a company fighting for its life.¹²⁸

Talbot traveled to New York in February 1971 to visit Parkinson. Talbot remembered the meeting as being "very unsatisfactory" and added that Parkinson's behavior was "beastly." The meeting took place in Anaconda's offices at 25 Broadway, which Talbot recalled, "reminded me of Louis XIV, of Versailles. The opulence of the office was something else." Talbot and the hierarchy of the Anaconda Company sat around a table and discussed some of the problems. He remembered Parkinson by his huge hands, the hands of a

¹²⁸ C. Jay Parkinson to Don Anderson, January 26, 1971, Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

miner, clasped before him on the table.¹²⁹

Parkinson took the opportunity to unload a number of the company's frustration with events in Montana. Much of his comment was that the environmental movement was impractical. He also argued that the newspapers were far from impartial reporters and had actually been leading the environmental troops into battle. Parkinson's most specific accusation was that the papers did not accurately report the position of the Anaconda Company in disputes that arose between it and the environmentalists or between the company and some arm of state government.¹³⁰

When Talbot broached the subject of Anaconda backing the chamber's attacks on the environmentalists and the newspapers, "I hardly got these words out of my mouth before Parkinson said that [the situation] had been thoroughly investigated ... and had determined no Anaconda Company official had had anything to do with these matters." Talbot wrote later he did not necessarily believe Parkinson but hoped it had done some good to point out that "some clumsy and ill-conceived campaigns were being carried out ... and it was very generally assumed that the Anaconda Company was

¹²⁹ John Talbot. February 5, 1991. Interview by John Thomas McNay. Notes in possession of the author.

¹³⁰ John Talbot to Strand Hilleboe, February 11, 1971. Box 2-5, Anderson Papers.

in sympathy with the chamber's actions."¹³¹

However, time was running out for the Anaconda Company. As a mining company, it had always been willing to look at the big picture and wait, perhaps for decades, for an investment to pay off. The Chase Manhattan bankers who operated the new Anaconda Company wanted quick financial return. In May 1971, Anaconda announced that Parkinson was surrendering the posts of president and CEO to John B. Place, vice president of Chase Manhattan. Anaconda abandoned the Lincoln project in 1971 and later sold its Stillwater interests to other investors. In 1977, the bankers sold Anaconda to Atlantic Richfield. The oil company promised investments in the mining company's properties. Instead, over the next several years, Arco closed and sold nearly all of Anaconda's properties. In 1983, with the closure and subsequent sale of the mines and concentrator in Butte, Anaconda-Arco ceased to be a major employer in Montana.

Ironically, after Arco abandoned mining, the price of copper rose from 53 cents a pound to about \$1.20 in the late 1980s. The smaller-scale and non-union mining operation in Butte reaped huge profits for its new owner, Dennis Washington of Missoula. In the Stillwater, one of only three significant platinum-palladium deposits in the world was mined with tremendous success. In the end, the newspapers in

¹³¹ Ibid.

Billings, Butte, Helena, and Missoula outlasted the Anaconda Company.

Chapter VI

"Not a Good Place for Scrupulous Men"

E. L. Godkin, founder of The Nation magazine, minced no words about the common journalists of the 1880s. The "number of honest, painstaking, scrupulous, and accurate men employed as reporters and correspondents" was "far smaller than it should be." Accuracy was not treated as an essential, he said; indeed those who were best at circulating falsehoods seemed to receive the prize promotions. Journalism, Godkin concluded, was "not a good place for scrupulous men."¹³² Talented, qualified young people avoided journalism because they did not want to be "detailed to listen behind doors or under sofas, to steal private confidential correspondence ... to dress up sensational blatherskite, ... blackguard respectable men old enough to be their grandfathers, or to have to associate with those who do these things."¹³³

Two images of the journalist stand out in the public's mind. One, influenced by the state of the profession as seen

¹³² Hazel Dicken-Garcia, Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 199.

¹³³ Ibid.

by Godkin, views reporters in the proverbial smoke-filled room, doing the bidding of political bosses or demagogic publishers. Another view regards journalists as skilled professionals battling all opposition to dedicate their lives and reputations to objective reporting and to the public interest. In recent times, this perception has received a great boost from the Watergate episode. More important, however, the second vision reflects a process of professionalization that journalists have undergone, particularly in the 20th Century.

The American press of the late 18th and early 19th centuries performed as a political arm of parties and politicians. Since it was seen as improper for candidates to campaign for office, newspapers "served as campaigners, disseminating parties' ideologies and candidates views. At times, when passions ran high about the correct course of national development, those espousing one view zealously promoted it and debunked others."¹³⁴

In colonial times, the printer was the primary, nearly the only, position on a newspaper. Besides owning the newspaper, the printer's obligations included selling advertising, writing stories, and printing the newspaper. Toward the middle of the 19th Century, there began to be more division of work on the newspapers. Rather than the

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

printer doing virutally everything, "reporters, paid correspondents, associates, assistants, and managing editors became common by 1860. For the first time, news was a full-time job as the tasks of news decisions and policy became the province of the editor."¹³⁵ American newspapers borrowed some of the organization from the English press. However, as Godkin bemoaned, professional standards still received little consideration.

Shortly after the turn of the century, however, the situation began to change. Upon the formation of a Department of Journalism at the University of Montana, the editor of the Montana Kaimin claimed: "The day of the editor who began his career at the composition box is passed ... The newspaper men of the present are trained in the colleges of the country. The trained journalists have succeeded a grotesque, fictional type of newspaper men. The Bohemian journalist has passed. The clean ... college trained man has taken his place. Fearless newspaper men with ideals can make Montana cleaner."¹³⁶

Although professions perform very different functions, they do share some common characteristics identified by sociologists. Basically, an occupation becomes a profession

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 42. See also, Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (New York: Penguin, 1986), pp. 30-31, 68-69, 72.

¹³⁶ Editorial in the Weekly Kaimin, April 3, 1913.

when society recognizes it as such. One sociologist offers a simple two part definition. A professional occupation is one "requiring prolonged specialized training to acquire a body of abstract knowledge pertinent to the role to be performed" and demanding "an orientation of the individual toward service, either to a community or an organization."¹³⁷

Starting from these two key criteria, various patterns emerge as the professional works to fit into a role that is institutionalized within the community. The education process is also one of socialization, as the would-be professional learns a new role in society.¹³⁸ Another sociologist describes the profession as as 'a community within a community.' The characteristics of this community include the following "1, its members are bound by a sense of identity; 2, Once in it few leave; 3, Its members share common values; 4, Its role definitions ... are agreed on and the same for all members; 5, the community has power over its members; 6, there is a common language understood only partially by outsiders; 7, It creates a new generation socially through its control over the selection of

¹³⁷ George Lindberg, Sociology (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 228.

¹³⁸ Joseph S. Himes, The Study of Sociology: An Introduction (Atlanta: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1968), p. 17-18.

professional trainees and through its training processes."¹³⁹

The nation's universities contributed greatly to the trend toward professionalization.¹⁴⁰ By the late 19th Century, increasing numbers of college graduates were taking advantage of employment opportunities in society's developing service sector. When Henry Adams asked his Harvard students in the 1870s what they would do with their education, they answered that their degrees were worth money in the city. By contrast, Adams felt his degree in an earlier day had been "rather a drawback" in the real world.¹⁴¹ Higher education in America provided the growing middle class with a way to legitimize their authority in society. Through examinations, screening of students, formalizing courses of study, and awarding degrees, "higher educators convinced the public that objective principles rather than subjective partisanship determined competence in

¹³⁹ William J. Goode, "Community Within A Community: The Professions" American Sociological Review 22 (February 1959):194-200. See also C. Turner and M.N. Hodge, "Occupations and Professions" in Professions and Professionalization, ed. J.A.Jackson, Cambridge University Press, 1970. pp. 19-50.

¹⁴⁰ Burton Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), p. 122-123.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 123.

American life. Intelligence prevailed over family inheritance as a requisite for accomplishment in society."¹⁴² In theory, a college education and professionalization of certain occupations replaced a hereditary aristocracy with one based on merit. In actuality, professionalization may have served to create status in a society that had no hereditary aristocracy. Education was also closely associated with wealth and social position, so professionalization may have only given some legitimacy to the existing social order.

Some historians and philosophers believe the development of professions is an essential part of modern civilized society.¹⁴³ The professions may be an almost inevitable outgrowth of the rise of the city and growth of technology. America's social order in the late 19th Century struggled in the turmoil of the industrial revolution. Vast social changes altered the structure of people's lives. Small towns with their slower, relatively isolated, way of life and their beliefs in "individualism, laissez-faire, progress, and a divinely ordained social system" reluctantly gave way to technology, the rise of big business, and

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁴³ Everett Cherrington Hughes, The Sociological Eye, (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton Inc., 1971), p. 365.

urbanization.¹⁴⁴ As society struggled with the changes, people strove for a new way to organize society. The new middle class included groups with strong professional aspirations in fields such as medicine, law, economics, administration, history, social work, architecture and, as is contended here, journalism. The aspiring professionals did not view the societal changes brought by the industrial revolution with trepidation. "Rather than a threat, the new order promised them release. At a minimum it provided outlets never before available for their talents. Moving near the mainstream of urban-industrial development, they welcomed it in a manner that the dissenters [of industrial development] of the eighties and nineties had found impossible."¹⁴⁵ One famous neo-Marxist believed the professions, or the "intellectuals" as he termed them, were thrown up by the capitalist order to organize society.¹⁴⁶ The professions, he believed, constituted the dominant group's "deputies" creating a "political government" and "social hegemony" based on the consent of the masses. The masses, he maintained, respected the professionals and

¹⁴⁴ Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920, (New York, Hill and Wang, 1967) p. 111.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁴⁶ Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, (New York, International Publishers, 1971), eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith, p. 6.

consented to their right to regulate society. "One can understand nothing of the collective life of the peasantry," wrote Antonio Gramsci, "if one does not take into consideration and examine concretely this effective subordination to the intellectuals."¹⁴⁷

One historian dealing with professionalization in the social sciences, Mary O. Furner, has discussed the problems of advocacy and objectivity among sociologists, economists, and political scientists during the Gilded Age, 1865-1905, when the social sciences began to organize, she argued, advocacy of certain opposing viewpoints was common. But organizers believed the frequent disagreements made the group appear much less authoritative and therefore impeded the recognition by society necessary for professional status. Those professors who energetically advocated a certain agenda either abandoned their viewpoint or "wrapped their reform intentions in a mantle of professional prerogative that shielded them from consequences of advocacy which would otherwise have been too severe to risk."¹⁴⁸ The consequences of advocacy, as some found out, included dismissal and disgrace. "With professionalization, objectivity grew more important as a scientific ideal and

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴⁸ Mary O. Furner, Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science, 1865-1905 (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1975), p. 322-323.

also as a practical necessity ... The value of objectivity was emphasized constantly in both training and professional practice, until it occupied a special place in the professional ethos."¹⁴⁹

As mentioned above, public acceptance is essential to a profession. The new professions needed to "sell" themselves to the public by demonstrating a possession of special knowledge and ability needed by society. Aspiring professions could not portray that image if members disagreed publicly over the nature and details of their special knowledge. As a result, the professions emphasized objectivity, rather than advocacy of a certain position or issue. A detached, almost disinterested, approach to their discipline minimized disagreements, at least in public.

Professionals share a common status. Entrance into a profession gained by meeting various requirements based on education and experience implied that all men who entered the group shared a special body of knowledge and a minimum level of competence. Advertising, in which one professional claimed he could better serve a client than another, detracted from the group's claim of professionalism, hence he ban on advertising among professionals.

The "essence of the professional idea and the professional claim" is that they "profess to know better than others the nature of certain matters, and to know

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

better than their clients what ails them or their affairs...The professionals claim the exclusive right to practice, as a vocation, the arts which they profess to know, and to give the kind of advice derived from their special lines of knowledge." A professional is expected to think "objectively and inquiringly about matters which may be, for laymen, subject to orthodoxy and sentiment which limit intellectual exploration."¹⁵⁰ Related to that is the demand by professionals that their clients trust them because of their special knowledge and objective treatment of a case. "The client is to trust the professional; he must tell him all secrets which bear upon the affairs in hand. He must trust his judgment and skill. In return, the professional asks protection from any unfortunate consequences of his professional actions; Only the professional can say when his colleague makes a mistake."¹⁵¹ In most instances, failure came to be viewed as the fault of the state of knowledge rather than the incompetence of a given professional.

The degree of training, usually in a formal institution, is an important factor differentiating a profession from other occupations, and the type of training is set by others in the profession. By setting certain

¹⁵⁰ Hughes, Sociological Eye, p. 365.

¹⁵¹ Everett C. Hughes, Sociological Eye, p. 376.

standards of conduct, although they may be unwritten, professions engage in self-discipline that is more stringent than any legal controls. Professions are relatively free from control by individuals outside the profession, largely because outsiders seldom have the expertise (or so the professionals claim) to evaluate and control the performance of the professionals. Thus, professionals demand a certain amount of autonomy. "Every profession considers itself the proper body to set the terms in which some aspect of society is to be thought of and to define the general lines, even the details, of public policy concerning it."¹⁵² This autonomy represents part of society's recognition of an occupation's claim to professional status.

The socialization of an individual in a profession also makes it different from simple occupations. The process indoctrinates the individuals into the profession and transmits values as well as information.¹⁵³ "In the extreme case, the professional makes little or no distinction between his professional role and his self. At the opposite extreme, the nonprofessional worker "puts in his time" on the job and then goes elsewhere for the rest of

¹⁵² Hughes, Sociological Eye, p. 376.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 371.

the day to do his living."¹⁵⁴

The development of the professional organization is a key part of the socialization process. "Since these various categories of traditional intellectuals experience through an "esprit de corp" their interrupted historical continuity and their special qualification, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group ... intellectuals think of themselves as independent, autonomous, endowed with a character of their own, etc."¹⁵⁵

Groups such as the American Bar Association, American Historical Association, American Medical Association, and the Society of Professional Journalists serve as vehicles promoting the professional status, identity, and autonomy of the respective professional communities. They also encourage communication among the professional group by disseminating professional values and news relevant to the profession. Of particular use in this matter are the professional journals published by the organizations, such as the Journal of the American Medical Association, the New England Journal of Medicine, and the American Bar Association Journal.

Conferences also enhance the status of professions and disseminate professional values, a sense of community, and the latest research and developments in the community.

¹⁵⁴ George Lindberg, Sociology, p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp. 7-8.

A fundamental professional issue is the relationship with clients, or those who apply for the services of the professional. Because of the ethical dilemmas inherent in such relations, each profession develops a set of standards to govern relations with clients. A conflict might arise for the physician when the industry for which he or she works applies pressure, for example, to certify fewer people unable to work. "The problem of acquiescence in the demands or pressures from employing agencies is universal," according to one sociologist. Yet, in some organizations, there are arrangements being developed to allow professional freedom within the controls of a large organization.¹⁵⁶

The professionalizing impulse in journalism came relatively late in the professionalizing cycle of the late nineteenth century. At the forefront of the movement toward professionalism in journalism was The New York Times. In the first 50 years of the 20th Century, it rose to be probably the world's most important newspaper, largely because of a change in its style of news coverage. The Times "had significantly changed the nature and tone of journalism, moving away from the intense partisanship and parochialism of a previous era, when papers existed only as an extension

¹⁵⁶ Hughes, The Sociological Eye, p. 371-372.

of a publisher's political or commercial will."¹⁵⁷ The Times' owner Adolph Ochs, craved respectability, and his newspaper reflected the same desire. It became a "reflection of governing-class norms, more conservative and status-quo oriented than it suspected."¹⁵⁸ The Times' careful and complete coverage of World War I began to build the paper's reputation for seriousness and accuracy.¹⁵⁹ The newspaper moved editorial comment out of straight news stories and confined it to the editorial pages. The Times became, in other words, a paper of record rather than a partisan voice. It practiced a journalism based on "unbiased" reporting rather than the strongly opinionated stories of earlier days. The paper supplied the facts and left the reader to make his or her own judgements. In the process, The Times gradually moved the center of power from the publisher to the reporter.¹⁶⁰ The process moved the journalist into a more elevated position. Newspapers all over the country began to follow the formula.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ David Hamberstam, The Powers That Be, (New York, Dell Publishing Company, 1980) p. 309.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 300.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 310.

No profession fits the model of professionalism perfectly, and journalism is no exception, in part because it is more of an emerging profession than, for example, medicine. When compared to the criteria defining a profession, however, journalism does appear to meet most of the accepted requirements for a professional. He or she goes through an educational process that includes a body of knowledge somewhat unique to a journalist, serves internships and gains a gradual acceptance into full standing in the profession through experience and demonstration of ability. Moreover, both the public and the journalists themselves seem to recognize journalism as a profession.

Higher education is a common factor in defining a profession, and its role in journalism is significant. In the first two decades of the 20th Century, it was a rarity to find a man or a woman with college training in an American newsroom. In fact, within newspapers of that time, an individual with a college degree was viewed as a dandy. Other journalists regarded their college-trained colleagues as "trained seals" rather than reporters.¹⁶² Only a few considered journalism a profession. Those who did were a few top editors and feature writers who believed their work to

¹⁶² John Hohenberg, The Professional Journalist: A Guide to the Practices and Principles of the News Media (San Francisco, Rinehart Press, 1969), p. 7.

be something more than a trade. "It was their conviction that journalism had a body of established ethics, practices, and procedures that could be transmitted to the next generation in the newsrooms."¹⁶³ While journalism in those days may have had some glamor, it did not have many of the qualities of a profession. Outside of the few stars, there was little prestige associated with the occupation, and good reporters made a pittance for their work. Most earned \$25 or \$35 a week in the 1920s.¹⁶⁴

The birth of journalism schools across the country in the middle of the second decade of the 20th Century marked the beginning of professionalization in the news business. It provided a set qualifications for entry and graduation and formalized a body of knowledge that a journalist should know. Attendance at schools of journalism also served as a rite of passage.

Most professions claim exclusive knowledge to support their claims. Journalism has some difficulty claiming possession of such a complex technical area of knowledge. A journalist's education requires a synthesis of several areas that appear to create something new. For example, in addition to the special forms and techniques of newswriting, the graphic art skills for designing a newspaper, and a

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

liberal arts college education, a court reporter needs to understand the essentials of court procedure and to know the issues and individuals involved in a story, he needs to know what the newspaper can legally print. While no one of those attributes is an exclusive branch of knowledge, the combination produces a relatively unusual body of knowledge and tools a journalist needs and can only be gained through years of education and experience. Newswriting itself, with its peculiar forms and requirements, may be considered a fairly esoteric skill. Although it remains possible for a college graduate without a journalism degree to get a job on a newspaper, it is becoming less common, and a college degree of some kind has become virtually essential.¹⁶⁵ "It is difficult today to begin reporting the news for any organization of standing, print or electronic, without a college degree. Holders of two or more degrees, in fact, are numerous."¹⁶⁶

Continuing education is a mark of a profession, and

¹⁶⁵ The Montana Standard recently hired a woman to be a police reporter who is a graduate in medieval studies. Grant Perry, a business reporter for CNN, has a B.A. in broadcasting from the University of Maryland and a law degree from American University.

¹⁶⁶ John Hohenberg, The Professional Journalist, p. 8. Hohenberg observes that it has been little more than fifty years since American editors abused Joseph Pulitzer for daring to suggest that journalists were educated and not born. Pulitzer said: "The only position that occurs to me which a man in our Republic can successfully fill by the simple fact of birth is that of an idiot."

many journalists engage in mid-career studies. Some of the major universities with journalism specialties, like Missouri, are promoting special studies programs, such as advanced fellowships in economics writing or international reporting. Harvard, of course, has its Nieman Fellowships.

A professional education only begins at school. For journalists, it continues after a journalist has joined a newspaper. The "cub" reporter goes through a process of gaining experience by starting at positions of less responsibility and then building to bigger stories and more responsible positions as he learns more of the techniques and obligations of a journalist. This is quite similar to the "Cravath system" developed by a New York law firm early this century. The idea is to hire individuals broadly educated in the law and further train them under the tutelage of a professional after they are hired.¹⁶⁷ Such a system also bears resemblance to internships and residencies in the medical profession.

Another important factor in the professionalization of journalists has been "the establishment by slow stages of a community of interest among journalists of all media."¹⁶⁸ Organizations provide an important vehicle for creating this

¹⁶⁷ Robert T. Swaine, The Cravath Firm, vol. 2, (New York: Privately published, 1946-1948), pp. 1-12.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 9.

joint interest. In some Montana communities, journalists joined together early this century to form press clubs. Helena has the Last Chance Press Club. The Butte Press Club is a venerable old organization with an interesting history that includes the assassination of one of its presidents for his views. In the days when there were several newspapers in Butte, the press club served as a professionalizing organization and even as something of a union. Journalists from the Butte Daily Post, for example, would learn that their compatriots at the Butte Miner were making more money and would approach their owners about a raise. During World War II, returning war correspondents would stop by to speak about their experiences and be treated to the club's hospitality.¹⁶⁹ The national Society of Professional Journalists, whose very name reveals its intentions, also has a Montana chapter with officers scattered around the state.

Like other professions, journalism has also experienced a proliferation of professional journals discussing major issues in journalism. Quill, for example, is the quarterly magazine of the Society of Professional Journalists. Among the plethora of other professional journalism publications are the Washington Journalism Review, the Columbia Journalism Review, Communicator (the publication of the

¹⁶⁹ Butte Press Club meeting minutes in possession of the officers at The Montana Standard, Butte, Montana.

Radio-television News Directors Association), and the Montana Journalism Review. These publications hold newspapers up for scrutiny if editorial judgement in a situation seems incorrect or hypocritical. Of recent consideration has been the performance of the media in revealing the name of the alleged victim in the William Kennedy Smith rape case.

The issue of objectivity is an important one in journalism. A journalist is expected to withdraw himself from the particular issues he is reporting on so that the story he tells in the newspaper will not be slanted by his own personal views. The goal, of course, is to get at the truth rather than the reporter's opinion. No laws enforce objectivity in the news columns of a paper. Rather, an intense peer pressure demands that each reporter to live up to established standards. Losing one's objectivity and failing to turn the story over to another reporter is one of the worst sins a journalist can commit in the professional community.¹⁷⁰ Of course, on small newspapers, reporters frequently do not have the option of turning a story over to someone else and must forge ahead doing the best objective job they can. Physicians and lawyers are asked to make the

¹⁷⁰ The value of objective news reporting has been and continues to be debated among journalists. Publishers and journalists of such alternative publications as The Missoula Independent believe in a much more subjective approach. Objective and balanced reporting, they believe, can obscure the truth in an issue.

same objective decisions for their clients. An attorney, for example, who may find a particular client's crime reprehensible is required by professional standards to provide the best objective advice possible to the client. Similarly, lawyers are expected to seek other counsel for their own legal problems because of the impossibility of objectivity. Physicians are expected not to attempt to treat their own health problems or those of their family.

The separation of news and opinion began mainly with the New York Times early this century and has been virtually completely accepted by the American press. Seldom asked is whether this development has been a good thing in all its ramifications. One result has been the narrowing of the range of opinion that is available in most of today's newspapers. The few opinion journals available are national and of small circulation, such as The Nation, The New Republic, and The National Review. A relatively small number of syndicated commentators, such as the Washington Post writers group, monopolize many of the editorial pages across the country. Most newspapers have only one editorial writer and his duties include laying out the page as well as writing the opinion.

Public recognition of journalism as a profession does not mean that the public holds journalists in admiration. A recent poll showed that journalists ranked behind plumbers

but ahead of lawyers in the public's respect.¹⁷¹ The public is the journalist's client. Each member of the public is free to judge what he or she reads in the paper, although sometimes without an understanding of why a particular story is in the paper. One of the qualities of the journalistic profession is that each day thousands of people are able to see his or her work. "For the mistakes of a reporter nobody has any leniency. Every mistake a reporter makes, is a mistake which affects hundreds, perhaps thousands of people. and every time he makes a mistake, these hundreds or thousands judge him as harshly as if he had deliberately misrepresented conditions."¹⁷² Because of the potential for widely publicized mistakes, each newspaper has its own policy on making corrections. Most newspapers have a particular place where corrections are placed. In the case of a very serious mistake, newspapers will try to run the correction in the same place that the article with the mistake appeared and to give it a similar sized headline.

Many conflicts arise because the general public does not understand why the newspaper does certain things. Businessmen, for example, frequently complain that bad economic news is bad for their business, and they would

¹⁷¹ Washingtonian Magazine, 26 (November 1990):137.

¹⁷² Jack Clifford Seigle, "A Study of Dean Arthur L. Stone as a Pioneer in Journalism Education," M.A. thesis, University of Montana, 1956. P. 45.

prefer that it not be in the paper. Printing drunken driving convictions nearly always irritates friends and family of the convicted. An attempt to recount a person's life truthfully in an obituary also tends to inflame the public, or at least the bereaved family.¹⁷³ Even with all these doubts, the public often trusts journalists on an individual basis with their stories and secrets. "The average reporter carries under his hat more of the secrets of his community than does either the priest or the policeman, those legendary and traditional bearers of the confidence of a people."¹⁷⁴ The newspaper is frequently viewed as a place to seek help if a member of the public feels he is being treated unfairly by business or government. Exposing such injustices is one of the most personally satisfying things a reporter can do.

Journalists on newspapers under Anaconda Company ownership faced a professional dilemma. They were expected to abandon their journalistic principles at the demand of their employer. Journalists can only rarely work as independent practitioners. There are few opportunities

¹⁷³ When former Butte Mayor Tom Powers died, the Standard's editor deemed it necessary to include Powers' involvement in the 1970s workers compensation scandal. Many readers felt Powers' obituary was a bad time to discuss one of the popular community figure's less than shining moments.

¹⁷⁴ John Clifford Seigle, Dean Stone, p. 45.

simply to hang out a shingle. A journalist must find a newspaper with which he feels comfortable. Conflicts are inherent in the private ownership of newspapers. Owners of any business are out to gain something, usually a profit. Those objectives will not always mesh with the professional obligations a journalist feels in his work. The case of Anaconda's ownership of the press in Montana presented problems of a different magnitude. Anaconda happened to be more interested in gaining control of the messengers of dissent than in making money with the newspapers. In the end, profit also motivated Anaconda's actions because they wished to smooth the way for mining, logging and other developments in Montana. The real difference lay in Anaconda's control over the content of the papers.

The newsroom, ideally, would like to function without concern for economics. Its main concern should be the unfettered flow of information. That does not mean that there are no decisions about what will be published and what will not. Every editor and reporter makes many decisions every day about what will eventually find its way into the newspaper. The important factor is the criteria behind the decision-making process.

Other professionals face similar conflicts pitting economics against ethics. Physicians might be enticed by pressure from a hospital to use a new piece of machinery in order to help pay for it, even though it might not be

necessary for a particular client. Lawyers might be tempted to encourage a client to undertake a unwarranted legal action because, if successful, it would mean a large fee.

The decision of what to print is central to a reporter's job. His or her judgement is based on a professional's education, experience, knowledge of the community, other news happenings, and a desire to inform and entertain readers. The right to exercise that news judgement is part of the special knowledge and ability that makes a journalist a professional. The Anaconda Company, the major economic interest in the state, by its control of the press, eliminated a crucial function of the professional journalist - the ability to use his or her education and experience to edit the newspaper. Anaconda then added its own economic self-interest as a critically detrimental consideration to be used in news judgement. In effect, Anaconda stripped its journalists of a key element of their professional status. The situation was roughly analogous to a physician being ordered to make a health care decision based on economics or public relations rather than the patient's best interest.

From a journalist's point of view, there was something very disconcerting about a trained and experienced journalist being unable to put his skills to use. When Law Risken, editor emeritus for The Montana Standard fell ill, Don Anderson wrote: "I'm terribly sorry to hear about Law

Risken. There is something rather tragic about the old characters like Shorty and Fred Pierce and Law who have done their very best for years to a somewhat unappreciative corporation. The least we can do is to make a little gesture along the way if only to let people know we are different - and we are."¹⁷⁵

Anaconda's long ownership of Montana's major newspapers exerted a strong de-professionalizing influence in journalism in Montana. Ironically, in terms of education and quality journalism, Montana could be counted among the early leaders of a drive to professionalism. One early leader, Arthur L. Stone, became the first dean of the journalism school in the fall of 1914. He promptly proclaimed journalism a "profession" and endowed it with many of the characteristics that modern sociologists have attributed to professions. Stone came to Montana in the 1890s and joined the staff of The Anaconda Standard as a reporter.¹⁷⁶ The Standard was at the peak of its glory, and Stone served under two of the premiere journalists in Montana, John H. Durston and Charles Eggleston. Eggleston and Druston recognized Stone's ability and moved him to managing editor

¹⁷⁵ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, May 1, 1961, Box 5-3, Anderson Papers.

¹⁷⁶ Jack Clifford Seigle, Dean Stone, p. 12.

in 1904. He became editor of the Missoulian in 1907.¹⁷⁷ There, he imposed his professionalizing approach and values on the operation. Not until 1926 did Anaconda purchase the Missoulian and began the process of undermining professionalism in journalism in Montana.¹⁷⁸

Stone had some very clear ideas about the new professional journalist. "Those who have the supposition that newspaper life consists of only free circus tickets and a good time, must get that notion out of their heads or else quit thinking of ever participating in that work. For there is no profession [emphasis added] which demands more from its practitioners ... The newspaper worker is a power in his community. If he has the right perspective, he is a power for good."¹⁷⁹ In these comments, Stone made a case for a special body of knowledge and for public service, two of the basic claims of professional status.

Stone maintained: "A reputation for accuracy is the finest thing a reporter can possess. Accuracy implies honesty. The two go together... news is worthless if it is

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ruth James Towe, The Lee Newspapers of Montana: The First Three Years, 1959-1962, M.A. thesis, 1969, p. 12.

¹⁷⁹ Seigle, "Dean Stone," pp. 44-46.

not accurate."¹⁸⁰ This related to professionalism's claims of objectivity. While accuracy was the most important virtue, Dean Stone regarded promptness, sincerity, and loyalty as "essential principles." According to Stone, "The reporter must be prompt and punctual or his services will be valueless to his paper. If it is not sizzling hot, it is not worth anything." Stone told beginning journalists they must be sincere. "Superficiality is not to be tolerated. Hypocrisy is not to be accepted... Its possession as a quality utterly destroys the usefulness of a newswriter." Loyalty, Stone said, "is developed to a great extent in the body of newswriters who make the daily and weekly papers. Theirs is an organization which holds together under stress and strain. It is the binding force which unites and makes effective the machinery of the office...The reporter - as does the editor - sinks his individuality when he enlists in the work ... what he does is for the paper, not for himself."¹⁸¹ For Stone, public responsibility was a foundation of newspaper work. "The reporter is earning his living in his work. To that extent he is like all other workers. But he is different in this respect, that he

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

possesses a public function which does not attach to the majority of occupations."¹⁸² Here, in specific terms, Stone argued for journalism's claim to public service. Stone's pronouncements outlined professional standards for students to emulate. He also described a "community" of professionals the students would one day be eligible to join.

The program of education outlined by the journalism school at the University of Montana was broad. Journalism courses made up only a quarter of the credits needed to graduate. The rest of the classes were designed to provide a broad liberal education for the fledgling journalists and included literature, history, biology, political science, psychology, and sociology. This was not an education strictly for a craft. Rather, it was designed to provide a well-educated individual who would be able to serve the public as a member of a professional community. Reporters received training in the basic skills and the actual practice of journalism as well as a liberal arts education.¹⁸³ Further education would take place in the real world on a newspaper staff guided by professionals, similar to the Cravath system and to medical internships.

At its inception, the University of Montana journalism school was an important factor not only on a state level but

¹⁸² Seigle, "Dean Stone," p. 24.

¹⁸³ Seigle, p. 24.

also on the national level. In 1917, the Montana journalism school became a charter member of the newly-formed Association of American Schools and Departments of Journalism. One hundred and ten universities offered education in journalism but only 10 had high enough standards to be worthy of charter membership. Other charter members were Columbia, Missouri, Wisconsin, Kansas, Oregon, Ohio State, Indiana, Washington, and Texas.¹⁸⁴ In 1914, the Montana journalism school was also home to Quill, the quarterly publication of the Society of Professional Journalists (Sigma Delta Chi). In 1914, the newly-formed Western Association of Teachers of Journalism elected Stone its vice president.¹⁸⁵

In spite of its prominence, Montana's journalism school was always in dire need of funding. Its first classes were held in tents on campus.¹⁸⁶ The school later moved to a converted bicycle shed. The Kaimin chortled "The University of Montana is the only school in the United States, with the exception of Columbia University, that has a separate building for the school of journalism."¹⁸⁷ However, in the

¹⁸⁴ Seigle, p. 29.

¹⁸⁵ Seigle, p. 28.

¹⁸⁶ Missoulian, September 9, 1914.

¹⁸⁷ The Montana Kaimin, September 17, 1914.

1920s, as Anaconda ownership of the newspaper increased, the school had even greater problems getting money for buildings and programs. It is true that during the 1930s, Anaconda joined the Great Falls Tribune and other newspapers in making donations of equipment to the school. However, Anaconda's resources were vast and the donations small. Of course, it had not admitted to owning the bulk of the state's daily press, and its commitment to the journalism school never reflected its involvement in the state's media. Still, Anaconda's worst damage to Montana journalism derived simply from the ownership of the newspapers. Not only did Anaconda pay poorly but it stifled the ability of young journalists in an environment where their skills could not be honed.

As has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, it is difficult to determine the exact nature of Anaconda's control of the news content of the newspapers. In the early years of Lee ownership, a graduate student working on a master's thesis asked some journalists to describe Anaconda's control. Walter Nelson, editor of The Montana Standard, said: "Directions did not always come directly from the company, but the editors were aware that the papers were owned, either in part or entirely, by the Company. Nothing more was necessary. It was not so much a matter of Company censorship as a matter of free and open expression.

Without free expression there is no free press."¹⁸⁸ Tom Astle, a journalist from Billings said: "They didn't want to rock the boat. The bosses realized it was hard to keep on writing about the bears in Yellowstone Park year after year but that was about all we were allowed to editorialize on. The Anaconda papers were opposed to bad motherhood and cancer. We worked for them and we took orders from them. You would do the same for anyone you worked for."¹⁸⁹ Lewis Poole, a reporter from Butte, said: "The editor spent most of his time saying nice things about Montana and writing about Communists. They were the only things he was allowed to expound upon."¹⁹⁰ Nelson summed up the situation when he said, "it was a kept press - a prostitution of talent and integrity."¹⁹¹

Anderson concentrated his efforts to professionalize the staff in the newsroom of the Billings Gazette in the early years of Lee ownership. More than those in the other newsrooms, the journalists at the Gazette had more difficulty adjusting to their new freedom. Under pressure

¹⁸⁸ Towe, The Lee Newspapers of Montana, p. 57-58.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 60.

from the paper's own business office, the reporters demonstrated reluctance to break away from the influence of local business interests. Morrison and Anderson chose a new man, Doc Bowler, from the Helena Independent Record to direct the Billings journalists. With Bowler in charge of the news department, Managing Editor Hal Seipp was reassigned to only the editorial page. Anderson recognized that the change in staff might create some nervousness in Billings but "we do expect him (Bowler) to move in, organize that badly disorganized staff, create a better level of morale, and put on a better newspaper."¹⁹² In case Morrison and Anderson ran into opposition from the Gazette's staff, Morrison prepared a memo to spell out the problems and responsibilities. As things turned out, there was no voiced opposition. Morrison's unused memo noted the "administration of the Gazette's news department has not been satisfactory ... It is a basic matter that the selection and treatment of the news is to be determined by the news department of the Gazette. No newspaper can be a good newspaper if its news columns are dominated by the business office. While cooperation between departments is expected ... the decision on the selection and treatment of matter to appear in the

¹⁹² Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, February 15, 1960, Box 4-6, Anderson Papers.

news columns must rest with the managing editor."¹⁹³

Morrison's point, of course, was that news decisions should be based on a journalist's professional judgement, not on desires of the paper's accountant. In contrast to the management under the Anaconda Company, Anderson and the Lee papers placed professional responsibilities back in the hands of journalists. In doing so, they elevated the professional status of their journalists and demanded a higher level of professionalism from their news staffs.

A final aspect of Anderson's attempt to professionalize the Montana newspapers involved wages. High wages are not, of course, a pre-requisite to professional status. Academics have long been recognized as professionals, but salaries for university professors remain low. Anderson observed that if wages were not improved, the state's newspapers would continue to lose the best reporters to better paying out of state newspapers and be unable to attract the best college graduates. The result would be newsrooms staffed with mediocrity and unable to produce the interaction of professional reporters and editors that make great newspapers possible.

Paying higher wages so as not to lose top people was a familiar tactic in business, but Anderson's intentions extended beyond that limited, if important, goal. Anderson

¹⁹³ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, March 14, 1960, Box 4-6, Anderson Papers.

hoped to create a sense of professionalism among his reporters. Anderson wrote to Morrison: "Wages alone are are not the whole story. But wages are one fact of the problem at all our papers. I think you should set a goal that within a year, or two at the most, a minimum wage for newsmen should equal the scale for [unionized] printers. If the newsmen are not worth it, then we should get rid of them and hire men and women who are. This difference in scale gives every reporter and copy reader in Montana a hell of an inferiority complex and I don't blame them. We've got some men with college degrees who have worked for our papers 20 years and they don't get as much as some grade-B printer who didn't finish high school."¹⁹⁴ Anderson also recognized the lack of wage equity between men and women. "Where a woman is doing as good a job as a man, I think she should get the same scale. She would if she was running a linotype (a union job). In Billings, Kathryn Wright turns out as much work as any of the men. But because she's a gal she doesn't get as much as the man."¹⁹⁵ Besides an obvious inequity between the professionals, the discrimination against women was a situation ripe for the newspaper Guild, the journalists' union, to exploit.

¹⁹⁴ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, February 20, 1960, Box 4-6, Anderson Papers.

¹⁹⁵ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, February 20, 1960. Box 4-6, Anderson Papers.

Predictably, Morrison said he heartily endorsed Anderson's plan for improving wages. He maintained, however, that much had already been done and that the Lee reporters were currently making wages very comparable to those belonging to the Guild in Great Falls. The top scale at Great Falls was \$121.40 a week. "In Billings," reported Morrison, "we have several men in the \$115-\$120 a week bracket who have more take home pay than the top Guild men in Great Falls because they have no dues or assessments to pay." He added that several Lee reporters at the Gazette made more than the Great Falls scale.¹⁹⁶ The problem varied, however, from newspaper to newspaper. Wages in Missoula were quite low by comparison. The highest paid reporter made only \$120 a week and the bulk of reporters made substantially less. The respected and tremendously popular sports writer, Ray Rocene, made only \$111 a week. Morrison promised to raise wages at the Missoulian, but he felt some new blood on the staff was essential to providing substantial improvement in news coverage. In both Butte and Billings, Lee had raised salaries of the news staffs substantially in the several months since they had taken over. Still, Morrison agreed that further wage increases were needed at all the newspapers.

Besides better wages to improve the professional

¹⁹⁶ Richard Morrison to Don Anderson, March 10, 1960, Box 4-5, Anderson Papers.

atmosphere of the newspapers, Anderson also proposed an internship program that was instituted at the various papers in the mid-1960s. "This whole problem of getting better quality young men and women into our craft isn't a simple one. For many years the so-called excitement of newspaper work attracted a certain type of youngster to the business who was willing to slave for low pay and handle a lot of dull chores just for the sake of being a newspaper man. That condition doesn't prevail today... We can still hire the dullards ... but the bright and lively kids with creative talent, the sort we want to develop into our future editors, just will not come to us on the old terms," Anderson wrote.¹⁹⁷

Anderson also promoted many training programs among the Montana journalists. Some were held at various cities in Montana; others enabled individuals to spend time at Anderson's Wisconsin State Journal. In either case, the objective was to improve skills and abilities that might have become rusty under Anaconda's tightly controlled management. Anderson asked the organizers of one such meeting to put discussion of the problem-plagued state bureau on the agenda. Anderson wanted to know if the news professionals, with their education and experience, had some

¹⁹⁷ Don Anderson to Richard Morrison, March 10, 1960, Box 4-6, Anderson Papers.

ideas that would help the bureau better serve their needs.¹⁹⁸ As has been mentioned in a previous chapter, Anderson found no solution (nor has one been found even today) to the Lee state bureau's problems. The point remains that Anderson looked to the journalists' expertise for help. His respect for craft and for the professionalism of journalists who worked for him made a marked contrast to the approach Anaconda had taken.

Montana represented a microcosm of the changes the profession of journalism experienced nationwide. Newspapers before about 1900 were vivid representations of their owners, whether they were Marcus Daly, William Randolph Hearst, W.A. Clark, or Horace Greely. After that point, the change to an emphasis on objectivity and the aspiration to become a paper of record accompanied a tremendous lift to the professionalization of reporting. Journalism in Montana experienced that early drive towards professionalization. Beginning in the 1920s, however, that process ended in Montana, as the press came under the control of a huge corporation that wanted no discussion of anything controversial, particularly if the topic dealt with its own important role in the state. The Montana press was locked into a preprofessional model of journalism when Don Anderson and the Lee chain came on the scene, broke the copper

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

collar, and brought the majority of the state's major dailies out of the 19th Century.

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