News dissemination in a state capital

Francis Eugene Walsh

The University of Montana

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NEWS DISSEMINATION IN A STATE CAPITAL

by

Francis E. Walsh


Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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[Signatures]

Date

[Signatures]
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While many studies analyze how the press operates in reporting the activities of the national government, only a few articles explore press and state government relations. News Dissemination In A State Capital explores the relations of the press and state government institutions as they existed in Helena, Montana, during 1971.

The study uses evidence collected from two primary sources:

— Twelve interviews representing a selected sample of official news sources in Helena. These were public information personnel or, if the agency did not have such, whoever was responsible for the information function.

— Interviews with all of the reporters who cover the capital full or part time. Nine of these interviews were conducted.

With the permission of the respondents, the interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. The questions used in the interviews were basically the same as those used by Dan Nimmo in his Washington, D.C., study. Such a parallel helped establish a foundation for comparison of state and national government relations with the press.

Evidence gathered in the interviews indicates that, with few exceptions, state agencies in Helena do not place a high priority on informing the public. Most agencies do not allocate sufficient personnel or resources to the publicity function.

Several of the major agencies in the state are among those that do not employ public information personnel. Part-time public information officers do not have the time or the training to do an adequate job of informing the public. Evidence also suggests that most of the public information officers do not have a good understanding of the various communications tools.

With the creation of the Lee Newspapers capital bureau in 1961, the press corps in Helena provides a strong coverage of state government activities. The capital bureaus of the four Lee Newspapers, the Great Falls Tribune, the Associated Press and the United Press International have eight full-time reporters covering the capital.

Stronger coverage of the capital could be made by weekly and small daily newspapers in the state. Such coverage would be possible if a number of the smaller newspapers shared the expenses of a reporter who would cover the capital for their papers.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of persons assisted me in the preparation of this thesis. The assistance came in the form of patience, editing, encouragement and typing. Among these persons are my wife, Donna; Dean Warren Brier, Professor Robert McGiffert, Professor Gardner Cromwell and Mrs. Barbara Jette. I also owe much to the reporters and public information officers in Helena. Without their comments, the thesis would not have been possible. Thank you all.

Francis E. Walsh
The press is no substitute for institutions. It is like a beam of a search light that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision. Men cannot do the work of the world by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents, and eruptions. It is only when they work by a steady light of their own, that the press, when it is turned upon them, reveals a situation intelligible enough for a popular decision.\(^1\)

This quotation by Walter Lippmann illustrates the limits of a free press in a modern, democratic society. The quote also focuses attention on the responsibility of institutions, in particular governmental institutions, to create an information light of their own. "Popular decision" needs the balance and depth of information that only the light of both the press and institutions can provide.

How brightly and clearly the public sees the activities of government depends on the relations of institutions as sources and on reporters as channels of information. During times of routine activities as well as crisis, each depends on the other. The newspaper article, the radio newscast or television evening news evolve from these relations.

A democracy, based on criteria of popular control and consultation, poses its particular ticklish questions of the manner and means by which political ideas, opinions and issues are transmitted throughout the body politic. In the United States, such communication is carried on primarily through the news media. Newsmen and their sources of news interact to form a set of relationships crucial in the linkage of citizen and officials.2

The relations of the federal government and the press continue to receive considerable attention as they have during the past few decades. Douglass Cater's The Fourth Branch of Government describes the relations from a historical, comparative and governmental structure point of view. Joseph and Stewart Alsop add personal observations to the relations in The Reporter's Trade. Dan D. Nimmo in Newsgathering In Washington presents a social scientist's approach in his analysis of the "source-reporter relationship." These and many other books and numerous periodicals provide significant evidence about how the press operates in reporting the activities of national government.

In contrast to the evidence compiled about the relations of the press and national government, only a few articles explore press and state government relations. News Dissemination In A State Capital explores the relations of the press and institutions as they existed in state government during 1971--in this case, Montana with the capital in

Helena. Also, the study describes these relations just before a time of possible major change in Montana government: executive reorganization, passed by the state legislature in 1971, will change state structure and constitution convention delegates will present the people of the state with a new constitution in 1972.

*News Dissemination In A State Capital* uses evidence collected from two primary sources:

--I interviewed a selected sample of official news sources in Helena. These were public information personnel or, if the agency did not have such, whoever was responsible for the information function. I conducted twelve of these interviews.

--I also interviewed all reporters who cover the capital full or part time. I conducted nine of these interviews.3

With the permission of the respondents, I taped and transcribed the interviews verbatim. The appendix includes the interview questions.

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3The question for the interviews are basically the same as those used by Dan Nimmo in his Washington, D.C., study. Such a parallel establishes a foundation for comparison of state and federal relations.
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CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CAPITAL NEWSGATHERING

STATE AND FEDERAL

Theoretically, newsgathering in a state capital and the national capital is based on the same democratic concepts. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom . . . of the press . . . ."¹ Since the United States Supreme Court decision in Gitlow vs. New York in 1925, this guarantee has applied to the states.² Montana recognizes the same freedom of the press concept in its constitution: "... every person shall be free to speak, write, or publish whatever he will on any subject, being responsible for all abuse of that liberty . . . ."³

The premise of press freedom rests on the need for a maximum flow of information to enable knowledgeable popular

¹U.S., Constitution, Amendment I


decision. Both reporters and news sources recognize this premise. One reporter expressed his agreement by stating "... a democracy is a government by the people and if the people don't know what their government is doing, it's not going to be by the people." News sources also related press freedom to the public's decision-making process. "In order to decide intelligently on the issues, people have to be informed on the issues," a typical news source said.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS AS NEWS SOURCES

One group of news sources devoted to providing information to the public consists of public information officers. These persons either work full time at this job or include it as a part of additional duties. PIOs exist to tell the citizen what government does or plans to do. However, their messages have "political consequences in the activation, shaping, and articulating of public opinion. Messages of governmental publicity serve both as information and justification; they fulfill information requirements of the citizen and compete with rival explanations for the support of public opinion."

4Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

5Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

The largest number of public information officers in the nation is employed by the federal government in Washington, D.C. The number varies from as few as 120 to as many as 3,000 depending on the exact definition of public information officer.7 Both the political scientist and the politician have expressed interest about the growth of public information activities in the federal government. These observers generally reflect three opinions, summarized from writings on the subject, which explain the growth of information staffs and the purpose of their existence.

Under one concept, an agency has the responsibility to explain policy to the citizen, and public information staffs have grown as agency responsibility has grown. Under a second, departments and agencies need to promote their interests. This job requires special skills and, therefore, specialized staffs. Under the third concept public information officers act as links between the agency and the news media. The important quality of the PIO acting in this capacity is the ability to speak the technical language of the bureaucrat and of the newsman, who wants to simplify the information for the general public.8

Of the 60 federal departments or agencies surveyed by the Moss Committee in 1955, 57 employed public information officers.

7Ibid., pp. 8-9.
8Ibid., pp. 10-12.
In Montana, 31 state agencies and offices of elected officials and 16 federal agencies with operating staffs received surveys asking how many employed information personnel. No federal agency employed information personnel in Helena; only seven state agencies or elected officials employed information personnel. (See appendix for agencies surveyed within Montana.)

Despite the small number of public information personnel in Montana government, the growth in recent years appears significant. Of the seven agencies employing

**TABLE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Montana Agencies With Information Personnel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of the State Superintendent</td>
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<tr>
<td>of Public Instruction*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission on Aging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Resources Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highway Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fish and Game Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana Highway Patrol</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*The development of information jobs with this elective office involves the evolutionary responsibilities of the department. The governor's office, because information jobs change radically with administrations, was not included.

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9 House Committee on Government Operations, Special Subcommittee on Government Information, Replies from Federal Agencies to Questionnaire Submitted by the Special Subcommittee on Government Information, Committee Print, 84th Congress, 1st Session. (1955)
public information staffs or a single information person, five positions were created during the past three years; the other two date from 13 to 25 years.\textsuperscript{10}

In these agencies, the number of persons who devote most of their time to public information ranges from one to 11-member staffs. The Water Resources Board, the Department of Agriculture and Employment Securities Commission each employed one person for this function. The Commission on Aging and State Superintendent's Office each employed two persons. The Highway Commission employed four; Highway Patrol, six, and the Fish and Game Commission, 11. The Fish and Game Commission staff includes seven district information officers in other cities.\textsuperscript{11}

The University System of Montana, with six units, employed the largest information staff of any state institution. However, since no university unit exists in Helena and each operates independent information activities, the study does not include them. The information staffs of the university units do not regard the capital press corps as a primary channel for their information. However, the study does include the Executive Secretary of the Montana University System since the secretary and his staff work in Helena. Although capital reporters do not confer with each university

\textsuperscript{10}Replies from state and federal agencies to questionnaire submitted by author, 1971.

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid}. 
unit regularly, they do seek information from the Executive Secretary's office regarding the entire system.\textsuperscript{12}

Three additional factors appear important to an understanding of newsgathering in Helena: An analysis of which agencies employ information staffs; the amount of time personnel devote to public information activities, and the public information skills of these persons.

Montana state government includes more than 100 boards and agencies. Many of the smaller agencies have limited responsibilities--The State Board of Morticians and Board of Barber Examiners, along with many other examining boards and several advisory committees such as the Wool Laboratory Advisory Committee, the State Mosquito Advisory Commission and the Fire Prevention Advisory Commission.\textsuperscript{13}

Among the larger institutions, the Department of Institutions, with 11 facilities in the state as well as a staff in Helena, did not employ a full-time public information person. Its director states, "I don't think we could justify a full-time public information officer ... the job just isn't that big. We rely on the superintendents."\textsuperscript{14} The Department of Welfare, another large agency, also functions without a

\textsuperscript{12}William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

\textsuperscript{13}Many of these agencies and boards will either be eliminated or combined under executive reorganization.

\textsuperscript{14}Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
public information position. Its administrator states "welfare in general has not presented its case to the public in terms of accomplishments, in terms of importance of assistance and as a result of that failure, we have been getting the indictment that welfare is a failure." He adds if the department had the money he would hire a full-time public information officer; however, employment of a public information officer would not receive top priority.

The Railroad and Public Service Commission, the Department of Health and the State Board of Equalization perform important public responsibilities but did not employ public information personnel. In contrast, considering size of staff and general public responsibility, the Department of Agriculture and the Commission on Aging have added public information personnel. The illustrations indicate no consensus exists among agencies to answer the question why one agency employs a public information staff and another does not. The illustrations also suggest the value or priority of public information in Montana government agencies seriously lags behind the value placed on such activities in Washington, D.C. That disparity will be discussed in a later chapter.

Part-time or "when-necessary" public information officers abound in Helena because only a few state agencies

employ public information personnel. Every agency designates one or more persons to be responsible for this function. Of the agencies not employing public information personnel, more than 50 per cent place this responsibility with the top executive officer or commissioner. The State Board of Equalization, State Controller's Office, Department of Welfare and the Department of Institutions are examples.

Other agencies distribute the responsibility among personnel considered authorities on the subject in question at any specific time. The State Board of Health, the Railroad and Public Service Commission and the Department of Planning and Economic Development are examples.16

Every part-time public information officer interviewed indicated the assignment played a "minor" role in his job. One respondent said: "I think it's a tremendously important part of my job, but I have to reduce it to the amount of time I devote to it."17 However, when asked to comment on the quality of public information jobs their agencies performed, slightly more than half thought they did a good job of informing the public without the aid of a full-time public information officer. Those agencies that thought they could do a better job if they employed a full-time

16Replies from state and federal agencies to questionnaire submitted by author, 1971.

17Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
public information person cited a lack of money for not having the position.

Because of the limited time part-time public information personnel devote to this part of their job, their knowledge, insight, practical application of public information tools and understanding of the operations of the news media may also appear limited, at least compared with their full-time, specialist counterpart. Using informational tools as an example, many of the part-time PIOs use the news release as the primary tool of informing the public. They see no particular need for interviews, news conferences, or background conferences; many of the part-time public information officers had never used any tool except the press release. Descriptions of the reporter's function include "to drop in periodically to advertise the state,"\(^1\) or as "nothing more than the dissemination of news,"\(^2\) according to their definition of news.

REPORTERS AND NEWS MEDIA AS INFORMATION CHANNELS

Along with a description of newsgathering characteristics in Helena, a study of the relations between reporter and

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\(^{1}\)Norman J. Beaudry, executive secretary, Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

\(^{2}\)J. Morley Cooper, chairman of the board, Board of Equalization, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
government information personnel begins with some assumptions, two of which deserve attention.

Government agencies communicate with the public through the news media; however, agencies use other vehicles for informing the citizen such as political parties, interest groups and mass movements, etc. The relations among government agencies, the news media and the citizen are significant enough, however, to deserve individual attention. 20

A quite different assumption indicates that public information personnel do not, at least in practice, commit themselves to objectivity and truthfulness. Walter Lippmann said:

Were reporting the simple recovery of obvious facts, the press agent would be little more than a clerk. But since, in respect to most of the big topics of news, the facts are not simple, and not at all obvious, but subject to choice and opinion, it is natural that everyone wish to make his own choice of facts for the newspaper to print. The publicity man does that. And in doing it, he certainly saves the reporter much trouble, by presenting him a clear picture of a situation out of which he might otherwise make neither head nor tail. But it follows that the picture which the publicity man makes for the reporter is the one he wishes the public to see. He is censor and propagandist, responsible only as it accords with the employers' conception of his own interest. 21

Douglass Cater stated the same idea in a little different manner 37 years later:

21Lippmann, Public Opinion, pp. 344-345.
This analysis would have little point if the publicity system could be assumed to convey a precise image of government—if the shadows cast on the cave's wall for the citizen to see retained a rigid proportion to the reality they reflect. But this is by no means the case. As anyone who spends time in Washington surely comes to learn, the business of publicity is no more automatic nor free from artifice than the business of government itself. Indeed, there are built-in biases that all too frequently make the images of government transmitted to the public take on strange and unnatural shapes. On occasion, publicity has been known to assume a generative spirit of its own—in turn recreating the people and policies being publicized even as the Hollywood starlet is remade to fit the public stereotype.22

The assumption that public information personnel are not objective and, depending on the situation, less than truthful appears so well established reporters accept it as a condition of their work. Newsgathers realize their news sources usually put personal or organizational interests before the public's right to know. At the same time, reporters realize they need news sources within government. The size and complexities of government have grown far too fast for the reporter to remain or become competent in the many fields; the reporter needs help translating government activities into a language the public can comprehend. So the reporter depends on government news sources—public information personnel or experts within a specific field of government.

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He [the reporter] has watched politics--the stuff of his trade--explode like the now familiar mushroom cloud, engulfing economics, military strategy, and at last the worlds of nuclear and space science. He suspects darkly that somewhere along the way the essentials of a reporter's knowledge moved into a new order of magnitude. He harks back nostalgically to the time when the subjects government dealt with did not seem so alien or formidable to the gifted amateur. Now all that has changed. He feels he ought to know almost everything to report with a fair degree of accuracy about anything. Even so technical a subject as Strontium 90 can become a sudden political fact to be hurled at him. The reporter finds himself caught in an insufferable bind between the scientist and the politician and his readers.  

Recognizing their limited knowledge and the attempts of government sources to push special-interest news, reporters use two methods in their efforts to report government activities. In the first and simpler method, the reporter acts merely as a channel for government publicity. Historically the press has given government space and time for its announcements and publicity. The second method consists of the reporter obtaining news on his own or supplementing the information given to him. This method presents a challenge to the reporter and at times a source of irritation to government officials.  

In both methods, but especially the second, the reporter uses his judgment in selecting and discarding news.

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24 *Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington*, p. 6-7.
The decision to report one story and not another, or some parts of a story but not all of it, constitutes a major part of the process by which the media define news.

The skilled reporter's measurement of "news" is not simply defined by what goes into the total story. It can be charted by which chunk goes into the "lead," which is buried in the tail, and which, with squirrel-like foresight is tucked away for the "overnight." The dogmas of what is "news" help determine the priorities of what is communicated to the public about its government.25

Additional factors concerning the definition of news concern the medium for which a reporter works. The domestic American press corps in Washington, D.C., falls into two main categories. The first consists of organizations that handle the wire services, the national radio and television news networks, the several news weeklies, and those few newspapers that have national circulation. The second category covers the specialized news organizations. These include opinion magazines, newsletters and news services serving special geographically defined areas or chain newspapers.26

For the past two decades Montana's capital press corps has exhibited categories similar to the Washington, D.C., press corps. But as might be expected, neither of the categories in Montana displays the breadth nor the depth present in the nation's capital.

25Cater, Fourth Branch of Government, p. 16.
Historically, one of the most significant aspects of Montana journalism dates to the ownership of four of Montana's five major daily newspapers by the Anaconda Company. One of Anaconda's newspapers served Helena, The Independent Record. The others served Missoula, Butte, Billings. J.D. Holmes, AP capital reporter and dean of the capital press corps, gave a description of the capital press corps and its coverage. During Anaconda's ownership of the four major dailies, for example 1948, The Independent Record assigned one reporter to the capital. Both AP and UPI assigned a reporter to the capital, but they also covered other assignments. The Great Falls Tribune, the only major independent daily in the state, assigned one reporter to Helena. This four-man press corps covered capital news of general interest for a state-wide audience.

A common newsgathering procedure during this time involved "carbon sharing." The Independent Record reporter gave "carbons or proofs of his stories to us [AP] which we would then condense a little for wire purposes and send out and all the papers would get it." The Anaconda papers did not work together for capital coverage except through the Independent's close cooperation with the AP. The Great Falls Tribune provided the only exclusive or specialized coverage of capital activities.\(^2\)

The direction of Montana journalism and capital press coverage began to change in 1959 when the Lee Newspaper Group of the Midwest acquired the Anaconda Company newspapers. On September 5, 1961, the Lee State Bureau started serving the four Lee Newspapers in the state on an exclusive basis. The AP and UPI continued their coverage, but by this time their reporters worked full-time on the capital beat. The Great Falls Tribune continued its

**TABLE 2**

Capital Press Corps—1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Full-Time Reporters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee State Bureau</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>G.F. Tribune Capital Bureau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Press International</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermountain Network</td>
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</table>

*The Lee State Bureau has fluctuated between two and three reporters. At the time of the interviews, the bureau had three.

**Within Montana, the UPI serves mainly broadcast outlets. Only one major daily takes UPI and it also takes AP. AP also serves broadcast stations. I have categorized news organizations according to their major use.

Replies from news organizations in Helena to questionnaire submitted by author, 1971.
specialized coverage and added another reporter. During this same time the Intermountain Network, a radio news network operating in five western states, began full-time coverage of the capital for its Montana clients.

For comparison, the two categories used to describe the Washington, D.C., press corps can be used for Montana. The two wire services and the Intermountain Network fall into the first or general news category. These organizations blanket the state with news appealing to a general audience. No regular television coverage of the state capital exists. The Intermountain Network provides voice for radio; UPI and AP provide much of the copy for local radio and television broadcasts.

The Lee Capital Bureau and the Great Falls Tribune Capital Bureau fall into the second or specialized news category. They supplement the general news organizations and provide the exclusive story. No regular syndicates, opinion journals or magazines devoted to state capital activities such as one finds in Washington, D.C., exist in Helena. On occasion, some independent radio or television newsmen travel to Helena for a story--usually during a legislative session.

Comparing the quality of coverage today with that of past decades, J.D. Holmes said:

I think you would have to say that with more people out there, that there is more coverage now. The trend in writing today, in a lot of
cases, is to be more specific or critical simply because you have more time to devote to one subject. You didn't have this years ago when you had two men doing everything. Today you have seven or eight men out there most of the time. Some of them spend three or four days on one story which we never had before. I think this produces stories that you would never read otherwise.29

REPORTER, PIO BACKGROUND

The relations of these seven or eight reporters with public information personnel provide the data for this report. Background information includes the ages and education of the press corps members and the public information personnel.

A noticeable age difference exists in the two groups—reporters were considerably younger than the public information personnel. Four of the nine reporters interviewed were younger than 30. Only one newsman said he was older than 50. Of the 12 PIOs interviewed, only two were younger than 40; four were older than 40, and six were older than 50. No reporter or PIO mentioned age difference during the interviews, and a general observation offered from the experience of the interviews indicates that age difference presents no major obstacle to newsgathering in Helena.30


Most members of both groups appeared well educated. Two-thirds of the reporters and the public information personnel had been graduated from college and more than 90 per cent of each group had attended college.  

Experience in the field of communications also affects the relations between the members of the two groups. Public information personnel average 5.5 years experience in Helena. Reporters average 4.5 years experience as members of the capital press corps. About 50 per cent of each group reported five or more years of experience in Helena.  

Only one woman belonged to either of the groups. She had been a public information specialist for six months at the time of the interview.

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31 Ibid.  
32 Ibid.  
33 While questions relating to age, education, time on the job and sex were included in the interviews conducted at the national level, the findings were not reported.
CHAPTER II

FUNCTIONS OF REPORTERS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

This chapter examines the participation of public information officers and newsmen in the political or governing process. Some reporters and PIOs believe that while they deal with political subjects their work fits into a service category with little or no involvement in the political process. On the other hand, some PIOs and newsmen place significant emphasis on their political involvement. Scholars in the mass communications field also suggest that PIOs and newsmen play a significant role in the political process.

FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS

Public information officers, in general terms, exist to provide information to the general public or specific sections of the public. They may view their functions as purely service—objective assistance to the press and the public—or they may see themselves as having a promoting, advocating, public-relations function. Regardless of which
attitude a PIO expresses, evidence suggests he has an increasingly active role in the political or governing process.

Public information officers who regard their function as purely one of service are more likely to believe they have little influence in the political process. Nimmo, however, assigns these persons a political function by stating: "Service . . . is not carried on in a vacuum, and observers hasten to point out that the activities of information officers are by their very nature political in scope."¹

Cater projects the concept that the political role of PIOs has increased with the growth of government:

With the growth of big government and of modern mass techniques for communicating the news about government, there has been a parallel growth in the subtle art of manipulating the flow of information. To a remarkable extent, the public trust nowadays is afflicted with an acute public relations sense. The tendency to "manage the news" on the part of those having a particular interest in it disturbs and frequently confounds the best of reporters.²

Additional support for the idea that the PIO has a significant political role results from an analysis of his function during policy formulation. For example, almost 60 per cent of the Montana public information

¹Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 20.
²Cater, Fourth Branch of Government, p. 21.
officers interviewed felt strongly that persons in their positions should participate in policy making; some examples:

"Extremely; I don't think you can have a public-information setup without having the chief person on a management level and contributing to policy."

In order to do a good job he should be in on the ground floor.

"I feel pretty strongly about that one. That's where he belongs. I think they should be involved simply because they have a better opportunity to be tuned on the relationship with the public. They can give some advice that possibly could prevent a serious mistake as an agency relates to the public."

Even among those who didn't believe PIOs should participate in policy making, there were comments such as these: "They should give advice, but I don't think they should make policy;" "he might be able to enlighten the thoughts of those . . . in charge."

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3Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

4Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

5William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

6Norman J. Beaudry, executive secretary, Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

7Cato Butler, administrative assistant, Department of Agriculture, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
Certainly the first comments, which represent a majority of PIOs, illustrate the influence of officers in shaping policy. Policy in government is political. This may well be the same policy a PIO later attempts to communicate to the public in a service, objective and non-political manner. But to the extent he participates in policy making, information skills are policy or political skills:

The position of the information officer in such a political process can no longer be defined as that of mere servant. As a specialist in the selection of messages designed to attract reader attention, the officer is in a position of decision-making vital to the success or failure of policy; to the extent that he is successful through the manipulation of messages in harmonizing interests and adjusting controversy, he is clearly acting in a political capacity. 8

An analysis of the comments of those Montana PIOs indicating they have no policy-making function shows a split between full- and part-time public information officers. All but one full-time PIO believed they had some role in policy making; four of the seven part-time PIOs thought that particular part of their job did not involve policy making. As mentioned in Chapter I, most of the part-time PIOs work as directors of agencies, commissioners or as second in command. Though the nature of these positions involve policy making, four of these part-time

8Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 21.
PIOs thought they could separate their policy function from their information function.

Even broader than the concept of participation in policy making is the role of the PIO in the "governing process" within the state. A consensus of writings about the functions of PIOs indicates public information officers work as "political servants." Nimmo's Washington, D.C., study of public information officers working for the federal government concludes that this "is convincingly reinforced when we examine how it agrees with views held by officers themselves." In Montana, views of functions do not parallel those of the national level; PIOs in Montana would shy away from the title "political servant" and prefer something such as "public servant."

Eleven of the 12 Montana public information officers interviewed explicitly stated their purpose was to serve the public either directly or through the press. Three PIOs said:

I conceive of a PIO in the highway department as being responsible for making sure the tax-paying citizens of the state know what in the world we are doing.10

I think the main purpose is to provide information to the people through any media or means necessary on the management and the

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9Ibid., p. 21.

ecology of the resources and the relationships of these resources to other interests. We're not here just to sell the Fish & Game Department or a division or an individual or this type of thing. It's our job to furnish factual information as near as we know it to the people of Montana and any other states that are interested so that they can make up their own minds on what they want.11

I think primarily what we do around here is to try to make the public aware of what we're doing, what the problems are, what our objectives are and hope to get some understanding on that basis.12

The one PIO who expressed a different opinion linked serving the public with the interests of his agency. I suppose that their function would be largely to make the people aware of the activities of that agency with the hope that there would be a favorable response from the public and this would reflect itself through the favorable reaction in the legislature.13

Other PIOs may hold the same opinion as stated in the above quote, but they did not relate it specifically to their function. Indications that other PIOs have their agency interests in mind as well as the public's find expression in statements such as: "I have my hands full just trying to keep our people supplied with information

11Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.

12Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

13Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
on an internal basis;"¹⁴ "I think in the time of the legislature . . . most of our public information is directed toward justifying our existence in terms of funding in an attempt to justify our budget."¹⁵

Failing to see themselves as political servants, a majority of the PIOs interviewed also failed to see any direct association between their functions and the governing process in the state. Apparently some PIOs attributed political activity to the phrase "governing process" and quickly disavowed any participation of this kind: "Wouldn't you rather ask that of the PR staff of Governor Anderson . . . the public-information officer has precious little to do with the governing process";¹⁶ or "I don't think they have any governing function at this commission at all."¹⁷

A majority of the PIOs indicated an indirect connection between their function and the governing process through their efforts to educate the public. These PIOs would agree with the following:


¹⁵Theodore Carkulis, administrator, Department of Welfare, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.


¹⁷Norman J. Beaudry, executive secretary, Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
The only way that I would fit into the governing process would be indirectly in that a large part of my responsibility is preparing a quarterly newsletter which is published and distributed to the people. Through this newsletter, hopefully they will gain enough information so that they can make decisions.

I would assume that . . . the only way that they [PIOs] would fit in the governing process is through their impact on the people. Whether it be sensationalism—not necessarily a brainwashing effect—but by educating the people.18

NEWSMEN COMMENT ON PIO FUNCTIONS

Newsmen view the functions of public information officers quite differently than do PIOs. Research indicates newsmen generally think the PIO's function "should be that of 'bulletin board,' calling attention to the routine; 'traffic cop' or 'card catalogue,' telling the reporter where to go for information; or 'buffer,' providing a point of contact for the newsman and, if possible, being his ally in ferreting out the news or the officials who can provide it."19

Fewer than 50 per cent of the newsmen in Helena subscribe to the "bulletin board" view. Those who did express their agreement did so in comments like these:

A number of them are very helpful. You can make requests for background information

18Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

19Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 23.
that takes some time to prepare, they'll get it ready for you; they will watch events for you that you can't personally be present for, but still want to get posted on.  

... a PR man knows his own agency theoretically, knows what's going on and he can be very helpful to a newsman because he can be a source of background information that would take a newsman a long time to figure out by himself.  

A second opinion voiced by more than 50 per cent of the newsmen in Helena portrayed an element of hostility. These strong opinions inherently reflect the concept that PIOs have little, if any, function in state government. Asked what they believed the function of a PIO is, four newsmen said:

Well I think for the most part they're a waste of agency money, because few times do I, for instance, get a story through a public information man ... If something is going on I've generally found out about it long before I find out about it from the man who turns out the release for me. I think they're ... wasting their money on them. 

Very wretched. I think probably 90 to 95 per cent of the public information people should be fired and the money used elsewhere.  

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21Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.


Guarded; the information I've seen coming from these staffs, the PR people, is simply information that a certain officer wants to get out and it's generally very one sided.\(^2^4\)

On a priority basis, if there isn't a lot of money, I think there are a lot of agencies that can get along without a PR man.\(^2^5\)

**FUNCTIONS OF NEWSMEN**

Much of the present debate about the functions of newsmen concerns their political role. These debates illustrate the complicated nature of the journalist's role in the communication of political news. However, not all of the journalist's functions relate to political or controversial news and scholars in the field have assigned a much broader concept to the role of newsmen.

The concept that "the function of news is to signalize an event"\(^2^6\) includes the daily obligation of the press to disseminate information, opinion, interpretation, entertainment and advertising. Rosten provides this description of how a reporter goes about his work:

"... the journalistic function is to describe the environment-in-change. The reporter's daily routine is a


\(^2^5\) Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

kind of ethnological field trip; he meets the environment at various points, seeking to discover in it and extract from it that which is 'new,' different, startling. 27

In his description of the newsman's function, Cater involves the reporter to an even greater extent:

The reporter is the recorder of government but he is also a participant. He operates in a system in which power is divided. He as much an anyone, and more than a great many, helps to shape the course of government. He is the indispensable broker and middleman among the subgovernments of Washington. He can choose from among the myriad events that see beneath the surface of government which to describe, which to ignore. He can illumine policy and notably assist in giving it sharpness and clarity; just as easily, he can prematurely expose policy and, as with an underdeveloped film cause its destruction. 28

Within these variations of the newsman's function, two themes generally find acceptance among journalists. The first focuses on "truth-telling" for a society. The news media have this unique responsibility because of the second theme, which holds that their primary responsibility belongs to the public. Reporters and scholars see the journalist as a servant of the public. "... the ultimate test of what should be published is not the government interest, the interest of the news organization, or the


James Reston reinforced this concept:

He must know where his primary allegiance lies. He does not owe that primary allegiance to the owner of his newspaper, or to his managing editor, or his government, or to the sources of his information: he owes it to the people, and if he gives it to any of the others, then he is not, in my judgment, a thoroughly honest reporter no matter how much information he gathers, or how enterprising he is, or how well he may write.30

That the reporter commits himself to truth or that the public depends on him for truth does not make the finding of truth any easier for him than for anyone else. The search for truth involves the newsman in a political capacity. In selecting what "version of the truth" to communicate, the newsman acts in a political role similar to that of the public information officer. While the reporter commits himself to the public and truth, "the news story, the editorial, the interpretive or opinion column—all may serve as channels for persuasive messages."31

Comments of Helena reporters confirm the image of the reporters as a public servant who fulfills the information needs of the public and in doing so engages in political

29Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 32.


31Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 33.
activity. The following comments represent a consensus of Helena reporters who were asked to define their function:

Letting the people know what the government's up to. Keeping the people informed about the government so they can vote knowledgeably and put the pressures where they need to be put. In other words make the government respond to the people.32

Telling the people what is happening in state government so that they can take appropriate action either at the polls, or by contacting their representatives of government. Basically informative. Providing them [citizens] information so that they can take action they deem desirable.33

I think it should do its best to tell the people how and why the decision or policy was reached, including what's done with their money, how it is spent, for what purpose and also including the philosophical social reasons for these decisions.34

More specifically, newsmen described their functions as: (1) A channel of political information to the people as an informal arm of government; (2) A scrutinizer of government activities for the public or watchdog concept; (3) An assessor of public opinion. All of the state reporters in Helena said they operated in the realm of informer; the preceding comments illustrate this belief. One-third of the reporters also mentioned the watchdog concept. These

32Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune, capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

33John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

34Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
reporters split about even on whether the informer role or
the watchdog role should receive primary consideration.

I think he [reporter] has two functions: One is inform people of what's going on and
the second is to act as the people's watchdog of government. Point out the failings,
to watch the dollar, make sure it's being spent wisely.35

I would hope that it would be probably two
things: first, a check or watchdog on
government, and second informative function
in terms of informing people of what
government is doing or not doing.36

Public information officers in general see the primary
function of newsmen as informers; Helena PIOs agree with
this consensus. However, only one PIO in Helena recognized
the watchdog function of newsmen. Response of many Helena
PIOs indicate they would seriously question whether the
press has such a role at all. One PIO thinks the reporter's
job is to "... understand what we are trying to say and
then repeat it accurately."37 Another PIO sees the function
of the press as "nothing more than the dissemination of news."38

35Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau,
interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.

36Jerry Holloron, Lee Newspapers capital bureau,

37Max Stone, chief of Information and Education
Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena,
Montana, April 7, 1971.

38J. Morley Cooper, chairman of board, State Board
of Equalization, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
The third function of newsmen—assessing public opinion—received general recognition from Helena reporters. Only a few newsmen thought they didn't shape or articulate public opinion. One comment such as: "No, only informing the public, I cannot shape the public, I better not."

reflects a standard toward objectivity which does not theoretically permit such shaping. However, while other reporters recognized a high standard of objectivity in their theoretical approach to reporting, they believed they participated in shaping public opinion.

I think that any newsmen doing a good job of informing the public . . . shapes public opinion in that you advise them of the facts and they form an opinion from those facts. I think there's no question about it.

This happens—shaping. It shouldn't be one of my functions, but this is what happens. It's not something I try to do; it's something in my own mind. I'm sure that this is what can happen particularly from capital coverage that one does shape public opinion for better or for worse.

Anytime you sit down at your typewriter to write a story on a news event you have access to all the information you have and you pick out one of those facts and put it in the lead of your story. That fact is

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41John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
what's going to be the headline. So if you've got 15 facts in front of you, you are shaping public opinion by which one you pick to put in the lead. So I think it's just part of the job and actually what you do is going to affect public opinion and in some ways shape.

Obviously, public information officers believe the news media shape public opinion or they would not concern themselves with what the media carry.

The question of objectivity relates closely to the comments on shaping public opinion. Do reporters think they report objectively—just present the facts—or do they explain and interpret? Helena reporters divide fairly even on the question—45 per cent believe they report facts objectively while 55 per cent said they go further to explain and interpret. The following comments represent typical reactions from capital reporters:

I think interpretation is part of news because you can't just put down cold facts because they don't mean anything to most people. You've got to write the news as you see it and hopefully an experienced newsman can see the news in such a way that his interpretations will help people see what's really going on. I think there's a big difference between interpretation and opinion, but I do think you have to put a little life into the bare facts because they don't mean a heck of a lot by themselves. I think a newsman who just puts the bare facts down isn't doing his job.

42 Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.

43 Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
... I think if you are going to tell the story of what's going on you have to necessarily make some interpretations. You have to be careful, but based on what you know about the agency and the philosophy of the people who operate it.\(^4\)

... I'd say that we write news, we don't interpret news. The difference is giving personal opinion.\(^5\)

Considering all three functions of newsmen—informing, scrutinizing and shaping public opinion—newsmen and public information officers agree on the first and third. As demonstrated, some disagreement exists about the second. The areas of agreement and disagreement contain the circumstances for conflict. One would expect that since both Helena reporters and PIOs see the primary function of the news media as informing, there would be little potential conflict between them. Interviews indicate, however, that PIOs and reporters in Helena see the possibility of conflict from opposite points of view. Of the PIOs interviewed, 55 per cent thought the relations between themselves and reporters fell somewhere between conflict and harmony, and 45 per cent thought the relations reflected harmony. The following are typical comments:

\(^4\)Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

\(^5\)Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 22, 1971.
As far as I know, they have always been very harmonious. 46

I don't see any conflict if the news media carries the information of the agency rather than imposing their own . . . 47

I imagine everybody would agree it could be either. When they cover water board policy to the advantage of the water board, or give the water board publicity or inform the people of water board programs or policies, it's nothing but harmony. But on the other hand, there could certainly be quite a bit of conflict if they get out and get hold of something and maybe blow it out of proportion just for the sake of making a sensational story that the public wants to read. There could be a great deal of conflict between a state agency and the press. 48

Contrary to this viewpoint, 92 per cent of the state capital reporters see a basic conflict and 8 per cent see the relations somewhere between conflict and harmony:

I think it's almost inevitably one of inherent conflict. I think that most newsmen have to be healthy skeptics--take what government officials say, report it, but look at it to see if they are telling the whole story. 49

I think that truth comes out of conflict. That's how truth is determined. Truth

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47J. Morley Cooper, chairman of the board, Board of Equalization, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

48Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

49Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.
doesn't grow out of it, but conflict wears away all the falseness and leaves the truth and so you've got to have that conflict. But at times there isn't any conflict—things are harmonious. I think when anything important, anything of consequence is going on, there's conflict.50

I think probably the news media and government should be inherently at odds. I think basically you have to . . . be critical. Whereas they are going to feel that everything they do is right and perhaps what they are doing is in the best interest of the people. I think you have to be the critical one, the questioner. So therefore the relationship is going to be at arm's length. I don't think this has to develop into mistrust between the two. I think the press has to act as the devil's advocate toward a lot of government policy and philosophy.51

The differences of opinion between some PIOs and most reporters regarding conflict add additional support to the concept that both groups become significantly involved in the political process. The examination of the functions of both groups provides conclusive evidence to illustrate their involvement. However, not all reporters or PIOs regard themselves as political communicators. Nonetheless, literature and interview data indicate reporters and public information officers represent different interests which determine, to a significant degree, how each sees his role.

50Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

51Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
CHAPTER III

ENVIRONMENT FOR POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

This chapter discusses the various influences on reporters and public information officers in Helena. One such influence is the employer who does not have confidence in his employes' judgments. Others include the attitudes of newsmen and PIOs toward sources of information, the media, audiences and friends.

PIOs AND THE ORGANIZATION

The degree to which a public information officer is accepted by reporters is determined by his agency's attitude toward publicity. His usefulness to reporters rises in proportion to the amount of "inside dope" he reveals. The PIO who does not keep informed or whose supervisor does not keep him informed cannot serve even as a neutral source of information.

In Helena, most agency public information officers have limited authority to determine what information to release, when to release it, and to whom. Most PIOs would agree with the statement, "everything I turn out
Two PIOs had the following opinions about their authority:

As far as initiating a press release on my own, anyway in the past, I pretty much have been told when to release a news release. I think as I work here and get to know the director better, I wouldn't need an order from him to issue a press release. I'll know these men, the events, and problems of the water board that merit the press release and I'll be able to do it on my own. I can't write one on my own and send it out to the press; it always has to be approved.

I feel that at this point in time in Montana, in my case, that probably we have not reached the level of trust or whatever develops between a PIO and management to use our own judgment. I'd say, by and large, someone else makes the decision—someone higher on the management level.

Only one PIO said his agency did not restrict him.

A few others indicated they have more discretion than expressed by the majority. One information bureau director said his field PIOs "have quite a bit of discretion on

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1Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

2Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

3Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

releasing information" once the commission sets guidelines.

He said:

When we see a problem, we present this to the commission and ask them for a policy statement: do you want us to pursue this, do you want us to drop it, what do you want us to do? In other words, guide us as to where to go and we'll take it from there.5

However, political considerations may influence guidelines for releasing information. An officer of a different agency said:

Sometimes they [agency personnel] have to clear a few things through the administration that they are working with. Not too often, but there may have been times when politics might have entered into it, but usually this is very rare.6

Part-time public information officers have additional restrictions limiting their willingness to release information or their understanding of the need to do so. McCamy in Government Publicity describes the "nonpublicity official" as a highly trained technician or executive administrator who prefers secrecy to disclosure. He quotes a hypothetical nonpublicity official:

... since the public forms its judgments in irrational ways, there is really no point in our trying to explain what we are doing and why. The job has to be done. It's more important for us to spend our

5Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.

6Cato Bulter, administrative assistant, Department of Agriculture, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
full time on doing the job than to dissipate part of our time in keeping you publicity men informed of what we're doing... And even if we should need to reach the public, we can make a much more accurate report than you can because we are close to the facts and you are once removed.  

The three beliefs of the hypothetical nonpublicity official—that his agency doesn't need to explain its activities, that it doesn't have time to, and that "publicity men" are poorly informed—are prevalent among part-time officers in Helena.

Although responsible for public information, two agency heads disqualified themselves from answering questions about information restrictions in their agencies. They said their agencies did not employ PIOs and they never had thought of themselves in that capacity. Their comments:

I can't give a well-developed opinion because I have no frame of reference.  

I'm not qualified to make any positive statement in that area.

No part-time PIO said publicity was a major part of his job and a majority would agree with the following PIO's statement about the time he spends on public

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8Theodore Carkulis, administrator, Department of Welfare, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

9Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
information: "It's minor. I wouldn't want to put it into insignificance, but it's not my main assignment."10

A majority of the PIOs said accuracy or knowledge of the subject were among the most important characteristics of a good newsman.

What I think is . . . important is that they understand what we are trying to say and then repeat it accurately.11

I think the reporters should be as knowledgeable as possible before he commences. But we do get questions that just can't be answered because of the inability of the person to really ask what he wants. So we have to filter out what he means, try to at least, and answer.12

NEWSMEN AND THE ORGANIZATION

A newspaper's editorial policy may limit a reporter's ability to exercise his judgment about how to write a story, or whether even to cover it. Rosten, representative of a newsman-scholar, gives an example of how a newspaper's editorial policy can influence a reporter's judgment:

The newspapermen whose publisher has a phobia about income taxes may communicate a different version of a Congressional debate than the

10Ibid.

11Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.

12J. Morley Cooper, chairman of board, Board of Equalization, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
reporter whose publisher is crusading for
government control of profits and unearned
increment.  

A more extreme interpretation of organizational
influence suggests that newspaper policy is a dominant
influence on the reporter's behavior. Warren Breed
states: "In practice we find the publisher does set news
policy, and this policy is usually followed by members
of his staff."  

He offers a specific definition of policy:

'Policy' may be defined as the more or less
consistent orientation shown by a paper, not
only in its editorial but in its news columns
and headlines as well, concerning selected
issues and events. 'Slanting' almost never
means prevarication. Rather, it involves
omission, differential selection and prefer­
tential placement, such as 'featuring' a
pro-policy item, 'burying' an anti-policy
story in an inside page, etc.  

Breed states:

--Every newspaper has a policy, admitted or not,
and the principal areas include politics, business and
labor.

--While no paper in his survey conducted a training
program for its newsmen, all the newsmen interviewed knew
their paper's policy. ("They say they learn it 'by osmosis.'")

13Leo C. Rosten, The Washington Correspondents, (New

14Warren Breed, "Social Control In The Newsroom, A
Function Analysis," Social Forces, XXXIII (1955) pp. 328-
332.

15Ibid., p. 327.
— A reporter's judgment is limited because of his tendency to accept the values of the newsroom group.16

Interviews with Helena reporters suggest organizational influences do limit the reporter but not nearly to the extent suggested by Breed.

Four of the five capital bureaus in Helena offer the media a variety of views. Neither the Associated Press nor United Press International take editorial stands and each serves outlets expressing different editorial policies. Similarly, the Intermountain Network feeds radio stations that take many different editorial positions. Reporters for the Lee Newspapers capital bureau follow no particular editorial point of view. Lee Newspapers in Montana often take opposing editorial stands and conduct no coordinated efforts to direct the newsgathering activities of the capital reporters.

The Great Falls Tribune capital bureau reporters are the only capital newsmen who could easily be influenced; the two reporters for this bureau write only for this newspaper. However, bureau reporter Frank Adams denies that any organizational influence exists:

No, I don't think there are any restrictions that I know of as far as management goes. I think you have your own personal restrictions,

16Ibid.
ethics and so forth. Your own feelings of what journalism is all about are the only restrictions that I know about for Montana anyway.¹⁷

All the capital reporters believe their employers do not restrict their reporting activities. However, several thought their freedom was unique and that at least some capital reporters worked under serious limitations. The following statements, to some extent, suggest that restrictions do exist. . .

Some newsmen are not encouraged to write in-depth stories. Their primary function is to produce radio copy. I can think of the UPI; its prime job is to produce small news blurbs that are suitable for someone in the electronic media to use on the other end. Restriction on length, so they naturally would not be allowed to spend much time writing a news-analysis. Occasionally they do, but this would be a restriction on space. There are some newspapers that wouldn't touch subjects because they will be too controversial or will create too many waves in their own communities.¹⁸

. . . I know of instances where the way the newsmen has seen it was not the way his editor has seen it, or the way that his publisher has seen it or the way that it is eventually put in the paper.¹⁹

I've seen a few instances, not very many, and they weren't very serious, where you went easy or didn't say something because

¹⁷Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

¹⁸John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

¹⁹Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.
it might be offensive to one group of your customers or clients or members. But like I say, they were not serious instances, it wasn't a coverup or anything.20

Other organizational influences appear more indirect than direct. Mentioned by both Nimmo and Breed, these include (1) the desire to please a superior, (2) type of assignment, (3) placement of a story, (4) space allocated for a story, and (5) granting or withholding a by-line.21 The Helena interviews suggest these influences vary from reporter to reporter and bureau to bureau.

One rather extreme example of influence, more direct than indirect, occurred when a Helena wire-service reporter's supervisor wanted to be present during the interview for this research. The reporter often checked with him to see if he wanted to add anything. The supervisor may have just been interested in the subject and curious about the interview; he did not add comments to this reporter's answers. Nevertheless, the supervisor's presence was itself an influence. Possibly any editorial judgment suggested by the supervisor would be followed closely by the reporter. Writing for supervisors was not mentioned by other reporters or detected in their interviews.

20Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

21Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 77.
Some influences appear more important than others. However, none appears to have a significant influence on the editorial judgment of reporters. Most stories from the Lee State Bureau and the Great Falls Tribune Bureau carry a by-line. The by-line may have some significance for reporters working for the wire-services, but the interviews did not indicate that. More important considerations for reporters were the placement of and space allocated for a story. Most said the newspapers ran their full stories, and they considered that important. The greatest variation among newspapers publishing the same story was placement. Reporters did not want their stories buried.

Finally, the reporters said their newspapers did not edit their material to the extent its meaning was changed. Jerry Holloron, Lee Newspapers bureau reporter, expressed the thoughts of a majority of reporters:

... if you go to a source and write an accurate story on what the source says and then if the desk were to change it because of some personal philosophy of the editor, I think the reporter's credibility would be destroyed almost immediately. We haven't run into this problem at all.  

Reporters for the Lee Capital bureau and the Great Falls Tribune bureau said they had sufficient time to pursue a subject, and that sometimes made the difference between getting a story or nothing.

For instance, if he sees something that is significant but it will take him four days to dig out the story, his editor is willing to take him off this beat and give him those four days. When this happens, chances are he'll get a good story. If his editor tells him to do it in his spare time, he's probably not going to get a story.23

I've had the feeling that for some reason I have to have a story in every day; it's a feeling I think is wrong. It's a feeling I try to defeat . . . the editors have put no pressure on us to do that, to turn out daily stories. I mean if there's something happening, yes, they want us to turn out daily stories. But if it's a quiet week they have no objection at all, as far as I can sense, of taking the week and not doing any stories and working on something, as long as we are working.24

Wire service reporters do not have so much time:

Yes, I do produce something everyday. Very few days will pass that you can't dig up something from the capital beat. It may not be the most momentous story you ever wrote, but at least they know you're out there.25

Yes, I believe we should do it, that is write at least one story a day. Our organization requires it.26


NEWS SOURCES

The axiom "A reporter is only as good as his sources" emphasizes the high value newsmen place on their sources. Newsmen assume the more reliable sources he has, the more accurate story he will produce. In contrast, government officials tend to restrict sources; they centralize information distribution to one or two sources to control the image of an organization.

The policy-maker or the person in charge is the primary source sought by reporters. The public information officer is not the person in charge and only two reporters said they use PIOs for news tips. One commented:

Public information people are helpful for a start and helpful for obtaining information for you, but they are not people you would hang a story on.27

In stating their preference for the policy-maker, two reporters said they tried to avoid PIOs:

I usually go to the policy maker, usually to the agency head. I try to avoid the public information officers because it has been my experience that public information officers are created as a self-serving type thing. They are going to get out everything that is good about an agency but not necessarily everything that is news about an agency. Most of the public information officers that I've known are not real professionals. I just don't necessarily trust the information I get from them. I want to go to the head

man and get my information. Montana is a small enough state with few enough agencies that normally you don't want to quote a public information officer or spokesman.\textsuperscript{28}

I usually talk to the agency head or a head of a division in some of the larger agencies. In the Fish & Game Commission, if there is a political matter, as there so often is, I'll go to the director, the governor or members of the commission. If there's something relating to a fishery matter, say a dispute about stocking the Madison River, I would go to the head of the division of fisheries. I would almost never go to the public relations department . . . Usually the job of the public relations man is either to interview people in the department who are knowledgeable on the subject or to steer you to people who, if you know your way around the capital, you know as well as they do.\textsuperscript{29}

Reporters agreed they prefer the top policy maker as their primary source at least for attribution, but conceded that the best source depends on the story. They concurred that government releases concerning controversial subjects might be incomplete or inaccurate regardless of the source. This distrust leads reporters to verify information with other sources within an agency or with outside sources. These comments typify reporters' attitudes toward sources:

I think it [reporter's approach to a story] would depend a lot on the circumstances because sometimes a top man in an agency might not feel as free to talk as somebody

\textsuperscript{28}Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.

\textsuperscript{29}John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
lower down and I think the opposite is true just as often. You depend a lot on both. Sometimes you talk to people lower down but they don't want you to use their names and then go higher up and pin it down and try to get the attribution from higher up.30

It just varies so much from agency to agency. For example, the State Board of Health, which I think is one of the best agencies in the state as far as giving honest and straight answers to inquiries, we know the people in that agency now and go directly to the lesser officials. On the other hand when you get into an organization which is sort of a jungle like the highway department, I most often go directly to the top.

That's on routine stories. On other stories which could reflect poorly on the administration of the agency involved, we'd try to get as many facts as we can from sources connected perhaps with private organizations before we go to the agency so we have background and know what we are talking about so we aren't put on the spot. We can tell if the agency is giving us the straight line or not.31

You can get a lot of information from people in the lower echelons, from advisers, assistants, secretaries and so on. You can gather a lot of news that will give you something to go by when you finally do get to the top man. If I were to go to the governor, I might go through two or three of his aides first to get as much information as I could because if I walked into the governor I might only have half of the information I might have been able to obtain the other way.32

30Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.


About half the reporters mentioned newspapers as sources for news tips.

Generally I read newspapers both in state and out of state. That's my first source for a news item. I see what they're doing elsewhere and see if there's anyway I can apply this to a story here.33

Newspapers, morgue material of which I have a personal file that is probably equal to or better than any in the capital area.34

The attitude of reporters about sources and reliability of information appears constant regardless of whether an agency has a part-time or full-time public information officer or staff. Reporters agree that an agency's point of view toward the release of information depends on the attitude of the agency's top official. One said:

It's the old saw about trying to talk to the police chief instead of the patrolman. But it's not always true. For instance the present governor, Forrest Anderson, he's a relatively inaccessible man, he was always this way, even as attorney general. One thing about Forrest, at least when he was attorney general, he had a bright, young corps of men around him and when they spoke, they were speaking for Forrest and you didn't have any fear of quoting them, Forrest would stand behind them. And then you run into another agency where the head man had given out specific orders and they're frightened


to death to say boo unless they have cleared it with the head man. 35

Several reporters noted the different policies of agency heads for releasing information:

— Dr. John Anderson, executive officer of the State Board of Health, had an open news policy under which reporters could consult with division heads and get information without clearance from Anderson. The Department of Health employs a part-time PIO.

— Lou Chittim, chief engineer for the State Highway Department, apparently preferred that newsmen go to him first if he is available; he usually had the information they wanted or, if not, he referred them to the person who could answer the questions. The State Highway Department has a full-time information staff.

— Frank Dunkle, former director of the Fish & Game Department who resigned in 1972 to run for governor, preferred to answer political questions himself but delegated responsibility on other questions to division heads. The Fish & Game Commission employs a full-time information staff in Helena.

While the agency head sets the information policy of his department, the state legislature influences the department head. Several department heads, who perform the information function, and PIOs mentioned an informal study

35 Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
made by a legislative committee during the 1971 session to
determine how much state agencies were spending on public
information. According to one officer, the report, read
in the senate, said some state agencies "had gone overboard
in a certain extent and that the state offices really
shouldn't have to explain to the general public what they
are doing. . . ."36 Edwin G. Kellner, director of the
State Department of Institutions, said the legislature
had cut information services funds from his proposed budgets.

The variety of information policies in Helena
indicated that the legislature exercises little or no
control over them.

MEDIA AND ALTERNATIVE CHANNELS

Public information officers in Helena unanimously
agree that the capital press corps is their most important
channel to the public. Just fewer than half said the
capital press corps was their only channel of distributing
information to the public unless other reporters covered a
special event.

More than half the PIOs said they used channels other
than the press corps. Some agencies send press releases
to the capital reporters and to daily newspapers, radio
and television stations throughout the state. Two send

36Cato Bulter, administrative assistant, Department
of Agriculture, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
releases to the weekly newspapers. The University of Montana system and the Fish & Game Commission, which have public information personnel in several cities, ask local news media to report events of particular interest to their community.

Other methods are the agency newsletter or bulletin and technical journals. One officer said:

"We have the newsletter that goes to approximately 2,200 people. Probably two-thirds of which are general public and groups like the League of Women Voters."

Max Stone, chief of the Information and Education Division, Fish & Game Commission, said the commission likes to publish in magazines aimed at "stock growers, wool growers, outfitters. . . ."

Also used is the hearing notice--often paid advertisements or bulletins published for a limited audience. One PIO said:

"We put out a notice of public hearing. We attempt to mail it to all the public officials--county commissioner, mayors--the paper and attempt to have it posted on a post office bulletin board."

The state conducted an advertising campaign primarily in the electronic media to attract more tourists. The

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37 Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

38 W.M. Johnson, director of public utilities, Railroad and Public Service Commission, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
University of Montana system is producing a series of public-service announcements for radio and television. It also conducted informational meetings in cities where university officials met with community leaders.

AUDIENCE PERCEPTIONS

Audience perceptions play a significant role in the preparation of news. Cater states: "His [reporter's] preparation of the news cannot help but be conditioned by the audience for whom he is writing." Some specific audiences mentioned by Cater are sources, bosses and subscribers.

Capital reporters in Helena agreed that they hope to write for the "general public" or "you just write the story thinking it's for them out there, anybody." Subscribers attracted the attention of all the reporters; sources as an audience were mentioned by a few, and no reporter mentioned that he wrote for his boss.

While reporters wrote for the general public, their images of that public varied to much that the unanimous opinion loses much of its significance. One reporter said he writes for the "general public or the Kansas City...


40Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
milkman— you always write for this man who never went to high school or college."^41

In contrast, another reporter said:

I hope that it would be the general public. I think the average American voter is reasonably sophisticated. When I started there was all this talk about an average newspaper reader with a sixth grade education. I don't believe that anymore at all. I didn't particularly believe it then either. I think the man who sits down, or the woman who takes time to read a newspaper, is interested, does like to be informed and it would be to that general public and not particularly lawyers and accountants and people like that who have their own channels of communications . . . I try hard, without oversimplifying it, to put it in terms that they can understand in the sense they have a part in it.^42

To another reporter, the general public meant something quite different:

Generally the general public is who I aim for. I can always picture about a 40-year-old woman reading the paper and I'm trying to get to her. I think if she can understand the gist of what I have to say, I think anybody can. Kind of a middle-class housewife about 40 years old.^43

Two reporters recognized the role of sources or special interest groups in their audiences as they attempt to write for the general public.

^41 Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 22, 1971.

^42 Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

I'm aiming for the general public, at least I hope I am. I think one of the failings of all newspapers is that we write too much for the sources. I hope that I'm not afraid to step on the source's toes. If he's doing something wrong, I comment on it.

... you would have to say general public. I think subconsciously you try to relate your story to all groups including special interest groups. They are all part of the general public and all part of your reading audience.

Still other reporters limited their concept of the general public as they considered the limited number of subscribers who read political news.

I suppose you cover all fields--general public, special interest groups, policy makers ... I don't believe ... you can be all things to all people, you just have to pick what you feel is the majority and try to please them. And a good deal of the time, what's good news to some people is bad news to others--you can almost choose up sides, particularly when you get into political news.

I think we like to think we're communicating to the general public. But I think in any story you write, you really communicate to a somewhat limited group that is particularly interested in that subject ... I think you're communicating in almost all stories to the people who work for state government and who are affected in that area and to ... state legislators who aren't in session. I think it's a fallacy to think

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44 Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.


we are sitting up here and thinking that everything we write is avidly read by everybody who subscribes to a newspaper. Sometimes I think it's very low, the number of people who read it, but I don't think that that is necessarily bad.47

In contrast to reporters, most public information officers have specific audiences they hope to reach and these receive equal or more attention than the general public. Almost half the PIOs did not mention the general public or regarded it as insignificant.

One PIO said:

Right now, what we're interested in reaching and reaching hard are people who will be voting yes and no. As educators we also want to reach students who we don't reach very well through the mass media. A lot of our information is directed toward teachers. We do a lot of work directed toward school boards. There are a variety of publics we deal with. Educators in general, university people, large school district administrators are different from small school district administrators, all these people constitute different publics.48

Edwin Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, waits until a group expresses interest in his agency or institutions:

I'm sure some groups are more important than others. Those groups who are more active, more interested in the institutions which is


48Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
the area of my concern . . . if I can tell
the story of the institutions, maybe I can
create some interest which will carry over.49

He used the League of Women Voters as an example of a
group that had shown interest in his agency. Kellner
said the League influences the legislature.

Other PIOs mentioned the legislature as a specific
audience to which they want to send information. Mike
Schwinden, public information director for the Department
of Water Resources, said it is his most important public:

. . . definitely, some groups are more important
than others. Legislators are probably the
most important to reach. They are on the
mailing list for our newsletter. Other than
legislators, anybody who is in a capacity to
meet with a lot of people is important for us
to contact. For example, county commissioners,
people who use water, people who are concerned
about water are important to disseminate our
information to.50

Another said:

. . . you do have specific publics that you
aim your news to such as the legislators.
It is quite conceivable that something you
turn out might be primarily for their
consumption.51

Other PIOs limited their audiences severely. One said:

49Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of
Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

50Mike Schwinden, public information director,
Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana,
April 7, 1971.

51Harold Colley, health educator, Department of
Just the oil industry we're interested in and they're the only one interested in this department.52

Finally, a group of PIOs recognized the importance of reaching the general public as well as special publics. One officer said:

Sure we want to cover the waterfront, but there's the guy that's driving a truck or carrying a lunch bucket or something like that who looks upon higher education as something he could never accomplish . . . I think we have to reach this kind of individual because I think he's important.53

Different audience perceptions could result in conflicts between reporters and PIOs. The interviews indicate PIOs often try to reach a specific audience with a news release. A reporter, then, could alter or broaden the release so it would appeal to his image of the general public. Such changes might explain some PIOs utilize alternate methods to release information.

FRIENDSHIP VS. PROFESSIONALISM

Most capital reporters agree that having public information officers as friends is generally a good practice

52Norman J. Beaudry, executive secretary, Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

53William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
but that it contains the possibility of conflict. Two primary reasons were cited for the need or desirability of becoming friends with PIOs: The general society of Helena as a small town and the workings of a relatively small government, and friends are better sources than acquaintances (an opinion also held by many Washington, D.C., newsmen).

The following reporter's statement cites some assets and possible problems of having officers as friends:

I think to a certain extent it's probably impossible to avoid in a state like Montana with a capital city the size of Helena. We've got a relatively small state government and we spend about 90 per cent of our time at the capital... You see a certain number of people everyday; you're bound to become friends with some of them. Certainly if it reflects how you write about an agency then you have a problem. On the other hand, I've found knowing someone in the department... can be a tremendous aid. If you know them so well that you're afraid to write anything that might reflect badly on them, then it's naturally a detriment.54

Two reporters mentioned the need for friendships that would help them meet or beat competition for news.

Well I think a good reporter has to have a lot of friends or you are going to miss many good tips that puts you ahead of the others. I depend a lot on contacts, some are just casual acquaintances that you've cultivated and others are more the friend type... 55

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I have personal friends. Most reporters have personal friends. At times I get irritated if, because of another reporter's personal friendship, stories are withheld from me and saved for somebody else. . . . The longer a reporter is at the capital the more friends he makes and the better chances he has to get a particular story. 56

Neither reporter mentioned the possibility of being used by friends who are PIOs or that they might have difficulty writing stories that reflect poorly on agencies for whom their friends work. One newsman said:

It can become a problem and especially if you're dealing with a man who puts out a great deal of information. It can become a very serious problem if, because of your friendship, you're afraid to step on his toes. 57

Public information officers agreed that having reporters as friends has definite advantages, ranging from securing a relation of confidence and trust to outright advantages for the agency:

I think it's important to have a good relationship with the members of the press. Not that you are trying to buy them off with friendship so that they wouldn't write something that is newsworthy about that what you may feel is adverse to the office. I think you have to have a relationship so at least there's some confidence between the two: that you're giving them the truth . . . that they're going

56 John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

57 Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.
to report correctly and accurately the information that you give them . . . it's a two-way street.58

There's no question about it, it's an advantage. Because if you know them personally all you have to do is call them up and say here's some information. You don't have to write him out some detailed story on it; you can give him the bare facts and he will write it and you know it's going to come out all right . . . Very early in anyone's working here we know who these people are. You know who you can call up and say look we did this or are going to do that or whatever it is and you know it's going to come out accurate. Others you can give them a detailed written statement and it still won't come out accurate.59

I would say that friendships, good friendships with newsmen, can be a big help to you when you have something you need a favor on because something is going to break that isn't good. But I don't think it's a good habit . . . there's always a tendency to use people.60

None of the PIOs cited the possibility of reporters using friendships to "use" them as a source. And only one mentioned the idea that all newsmen should have an equal opportunity for news:

. . . we have made it a practice in this office to be friendly with newsmen, but not

58William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

59Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.

60Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
necessarily to cultivate any special newsman... I think every newspaper, every radio, every television station should have an equal chance.  

THEUNEASY ALLIANCE

The influences on reporters and public information officers in Helena generally correspond to the Alsops' description of the relations between the two groups in Washington, D.C. The Alsops said:

We think... that the reporter and the man in government are natural allies; since it is the reporter's business to portray the national situation to the American people, and since the man in government cannot do what needs doing unless the American people understand the national situation. It is not always an easy alliance, for obvious reasons.  

The Helena interviews indicate that reporters and PIOs, in general, cooperate in getting news to the public. The two groups obviously have a common interest. But the influences on them are not constant and their relationship exists as a changing and uneasy alliance.

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CHAPTER IV

IDEALS AND VALUES

Asked to describe characteristics of a "good newsman" and a "good news story," Helena reporters listed ideals and values they want exemplified by their profession. Similarly, public information officers expressed values and ideals as they described the "good public information officer" and the "good news story." Reporters and PIOs also were asked what they believed to be the ideals and values of their counterparts: reporters of PIOs and PIOs of reporters.

While the values and ideals of reporters and PIOs are similar, basic differences are apparent. Differences appear in primary qualities, while similarities appear in secondary qualities. Differences also appear in the definition of "accuracy."

THE GOOD NEWS STORY

The newsmen's description of a "good news story" is based on how it "affects the reader" and "reader interest." Reporters agreed that the good news story attracts the reader
by affecting his life. They also stressed accuracy, objectivity, comprehensiveness, conflict and good writing.

One said:

It must have some effect on people's lives; otherwise, they're not going to read it. There are all kinds of elements, I suppose, that go into news stories. Conflict is one that is important: Democrat vs. Republican; Governor vs. Attorney General; Liberal vs. Conservative.

A story affecting the lives of people draws readers, according to another reporter.

A good news story has to have all the basic requirements that a freshman in journalism is taught, but mainly it has to have magnetism. Then you can go right down the line . . . it has to have all its facts straight . . . be objective . . . written fluidly.

One reporter gave this example of what he meant by 'affecting the reader:

A good news story should have something that directly affects or will affect the people . . . such as an income tax increase.

Newsmen regard their definition of the good news story as an ideal and realize that much of what they write is for a small, select audience. Contending that reporters don't often write the "good news story," Bill Beecham of the

1Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.


3John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
Associated Press capital bureau said: "I think I've written one once."

Public information officers in contrast put primary emphasis on accuracy and timeliness. They also mentioned comprehensiveness, good writing, objectivity and an understanding of the agency involved in the story. Another contrast is apparent: Where newsmen spoke of reader interest, PIOs emphasized the best interest of their agency.

Stressing the public information officers' emphasis on accuracy, two PIOs said:

Well it's got to be factual first. Then it ought to be timely. There's nothing worse than stale welfare news, in my opinion.4

Accuracy. We're a public agency and, as such, anything we do is public information. As long as the story is told like it is, there's no problem as far as we are concerned. We don't look for a sympathetic press... as long as they just write what it is.5

Two other PIOs expressed the need for promptness:

If it's about a policy of the water board, it should follow immediately the action taken by the water resources board.6

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4 Theodore Carkulis, administrator, Department of Welfare, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

5 Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.

6 Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
Timeliness, number one.7

PIOs also think newsmen have an obligation to understand agency objectives. One who said accuracy is the story's most important element went on:

Number two, I think they should understand what the objectives of a particular agency are. For example, we wear a number of hats here. We work for the board of regents; we also coordinate the six units of the university. I think it's important for a newsman to understand . . . . what hat would be involved when he is going to report on some activity with this particular agency.8

Another PIO, who stressed factualness and good writing, also mentioned the need for reader interest:

It should be written in a manner that the public can understand, written in such a manner that it is interesting enough to read.9

Public information officers believe they often produce the "good news story." They said accuracy and promptness are possible in most stories they write.

Clearly, the newsman and the PIO do not emphasize the same primary ideals and values regarding the "good news story," nor do they have a clear idea of what their counterparts want in a "good news story."


8William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

9Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
All newsmen interviewed said they believed the PIO wanted to substitute subjectivity for objectivity; PIOs were not so much interested in news as they were in making their agencies look good. Only one reporter said PIOs were interested in any other characteristic; he mentioned accuracy. The two statements below represent the opinions of newsmen indicating what they believe PIOs prefer in a story.

I think they have a tendency in general to substitute subjectivity for objectivity . . . I just think they substitute the newsman's objectivity with their subjectivity.10

Whatever makes the agency look good. If it makes them or their boss look good, that's what they usually want.11

Only half of the public information officers said reporters want reader interest in their stories. The others said newsmen want accuracy, promptness and good writing. According to the PIOs who said the newsman wants a high interest value in his story, the definition of reader interest ranged from simply giving the public something it wanted to sensationalism.

One PIO gave this definition of reader interest:

First of all, I would suppose that it [story] would have an inherent interest for the widest


11 Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
number of readers. There must be a certain intense human action and reaction in the story.12

Another PIO:

Well, it seems to me that they are often times searching for something spectacular. They want something that's completely out of the ordinary. I think they like it if it's shocking. I don't think they are concerned about some of the things I might be concerned about—just plain old solid information about what goes on at an institution. . . . I think a newsman is trying to decide in his own mind what the public would be interested in and that's what he wants to get into the paper. And, of course, that's what sells papers.13

A third PIO said:

I imagine shock value is what they're looking for—headlines. All of them like to have their story wind up on the front page, especially the wire services. I know they make quite a check to see where their story lands.14

THE GOOD PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Newsmen and PIOs disagreed on the most important quality of a "good public information officer," but they agreed on secondary qualities.


13Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

14W.M. Johnson, director of public utilities, Railroad and Public Service Commission, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
Almost all the PIOs interviewed agreed that the most important quality of a PIO is knowledge of his subject. One said: "Number one, he would have to know the resource."15

Newsmen placed primary importance on the PIO's honesty:

... he has to be honest; first and foremost he has to be honest and reliable, because if you're taking his word for something you have to know that he is giving you the truth and not misleading you.16

Secondary qualities of a "good public information officer," according to the reporter, include knowledge of the subject and an ability to communicate his knowledge in writing or by talking to a reporter. One reporter said a good PIO "has to be qualified in his field, highly qualified, and he has to know what makes a good news story."17

Another, while stressing honesty, commented on effective communication:

Honesty is the best attribute, one that will play it straight with you. The ability to make himself understood.--lot of people complain of being misquoted and the fact is, it's not so much a problem with the newsman sometimes as it is that they just don't make themselves

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15Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.


understood to begin with. The ability to make themselves understood is a very important thing.18

Public information officers said that next to knowledge of his field, the most important attributes of a PIO are ability to communicate and experience in news dissemination. One PIO said:

I think he would have the kind of personality in which he could meet people and communicate with people.19

Expressing the need for news-media experience, two PIOs said:

Good solid media background. It may not be the most essential but it's essential... Not only training in the media, but training in the communications techniques because generally a PIO person not only has to do external communications, but a large part of his job is internal communications.20

I would say experience in the whole range of preparation of news dissemination. It would do no harm to have been in an organization similar to this [State Highway Commission PIO office] in the past, or allied experience.21

18Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

19William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

20Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

THE GOOD REPORTER

The good reporter must be intelligent, according to both public information officers and reporters. While intelligence ranked highest with both groups, no particular characteristic was given a unanimous vote by either.

Characteristics that rated almost as high as intelligence with PIOs were accuracy, writing ability and a knowledge of the subject; others were desire, politeness, honesty and personality. Most PIOs would agree with the following description:

It would be a matter of judgment, a matter of intelligence, a matter of interest. He should be knowledgeable in the area in which he's working. He should be honest, he should be objective.22

Two-thirds of the reporters mentioned intelligence as a primary quality. Other characteristics mentioned more than once were ambition, integrity, objectivity, writing ability, persistence and interest in the subject. Characteristics mentioned once were experience, aggressiveness, personality and skepticism. The descriptions given by reporters often seem to say the same thing in different words. Both of these statements stress the need for a high mental capacity and honesty, but they say it in different ways:

I think he would have to have a very inquiring mind; he would have to be ambitious; he would

22Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
probably, above all, have a great deal of integrity. He'd have to be fair. . . . He'd have to be objective.23

I suppose the old standards of honesty and incorruptibility apply. I think also the ability to put complicated matters in a clear and concise form without over simplification; that's very important in government. Ability to look beyond the immediate story and see the ramifications of it. . . .24

A DEFINITION OF "ACCURACY"

The sharpest distinction between the reporter and the PIO appears to be in their definition of "accuracy."

To the public information officer, accuracy means the reporter's fidelity in relaying the PIO's words to the public. When the director of the Public Information and Education Division of the Fish & Game Department said a reporter's "responsibility is to reproduce accurately" the facts of a news release, he meant reproduce in exact duplication.

To the reporter, accuracy means a true representation of what is happening, or an access to all the facts. Reporters believe organizational influences on the PIOS will not permit them to release all the facts; reporters believe PIOS will subjectively select those facts that make the agency look good. Some PIOS would complain if a reporter


went beyond the facts listed in a release and added information unfavorable to the agency regardless of whether the additional information was true.

These disparate definitions of accuracy affect the two groups in their definition of the "good" public information officer. The reporter wants the PIO to be "honest." To the reporter, this means being an open book, presenting a true picture of what is happening. But only one PIO mentioned honesty as a necessary characteristic of the "good" PIO. She said:

Honesty. That may sound kind of silly. The ability to know in yourself when you're being straight and when you're covering up. A public information officer must really believe that the public has a right to know. Sometimes state agencies prefer they didn't.25

The different descriptions presented by reporters and PIOs do not represent misunderstanding of their counterpart's role as much as they state an ideal that neither can fulfill. The ideal PIO, according to the reporter, would accurately tell everything he knows about everything that happens. The PIO cannot do this; he represents a special interest that he must guard and promote. A PIO, at most, can be accurate about subjects neutral or favorable to his agency and avoid subjects that might force him to be dishonest.

25Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
To the public information officer, the ideal reporter will become knowledgeable about the PIO's agency, recognize the agency's importance to the public and act as a simple, neutral channel of information to the public. A reporter, at best, can become familiar with the workings of an agency, then apply his subjective judgment on the information produced by the agency.

**IDEALS AND VALUES IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Striking differences of opinion about PIOs appear in the comments of reporters and PIOs in Helena and in Washington, D.C. The primary reason for the differences appears to be the quantity of news generated by the federal government agencies for a relatively few reporters. In Helena the state agencies produce less information and reporters do not feel overwhelmed with government-produced news. In the nation's capital, the reporter realizes he cannot cover everything, so he seeks help from the PIO.

In contrast to Helena reporters who wanted the "good public information officer" to possess honesty as a primary characteristic, Washington, D.C., reporters wanted PIOs to possess a "sense of news and publicity values" as a primary attribute. Nimmo said:

The newsman is not equipped to handle a wide variety of information; pressures of time and

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limited talent make it difficult to search through the infinite variety of newsworthy events. Hence, he prefers the news source that makes his task easier, the source that knows what items deserve significant publicity.27

The following additional characteristics cited by newsmen are listed in order of the most frequently mentioned: agency knowledge, personality, responsibility to public and press, and sense of responsibility to agency activity.

Public information officers in Washington, D.C. agreed with reporters that the most important characteristic of a PIO is a "sense of news and publicity values." PIOs in Helena said knowledge of the resource or agency was the most important characteristic. Possibly a more important contrast appears in secondary characteristics. More than half of the PIOs in Washington, D.C. listed a responsible attitude toward the public and the press as an important attribute; this attribute was listed second to a sense of news and publicity values. Only one Helena PIO mentioned such a characteristic; PIOs in Helena listed personality and ability to communicate as important secondary characteristics.

Reporters and PIOs in Helena and Washington, D.C., listed similar characteristics of the "good reporter." Newsmen in Washington listed intellectual capacity as the most important characteristic, while PIOs listed the attribute second. In Helena both PIOs and reporters listed

intellectual capacity or intelligence as the primary attribute. Other characteristics listed by the two groups in Washington, D.C., were similar to those listed by PIOs and reporters in Helena. Listed in the order of those most frequently mentioned, the characteristics are: professional (news judgment, writing ability and experience), responsible attitude, character, personality, education and physical health.

In Washington, D.C., both reporters and PIOs considered accuracy the most important element of a news story. This attitude is similar to that expressed by PIOs in Helena but slightly different from that expressed by reporters in Helena. Reporters in Helena said reader interest was the most important element and accuracy was second. Reporters in Washington, D.C., listed reader interest the second most important element.

The Helena reporters' opinions regarding the willingness of PIOs to be honest or accurate and their tendency to substitute subjectivity for objectivity parallel a statement made by Walter Lippmann:

> Were reporting the simple recovery of obvious facts, the press agent would be little more than a clerk. But since, in respect to most of the big topics of news, the facts are not simple, and not at all obvious, but subject to choice and opinion, it is natural that everyone should wish to make his own choice of facts for the newspaper to print. The publicity may do that. And in doing it, he certainly saves the reporter much trouble, by presenting him a clear picture of a
situation out of which he might otherwise make neither head nor tail. But it follows that the picture which the publicity man makes for the reporter is the one he wishes the public to see. He is censor and propagandist, responsible only to his employers, and the employers' conception of his own interest.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} Lippmann, \textit{Public Opinion}, p. 344.
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CHAPTER V

TOOLS FOR POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

While reporters and PIOs use the same tools, their attitudes toward them differ greatly. This chapter examines those attitudes. The tools discussed are the news release, press conference, interview, background conference and the informal release or "news leak." Reporters and PIOs were asked to comment on the use or abuse of these tools.

An initial contrast should be noted. Both the Washington, D.C., and Helena studies were undertaken with the assumption that these tools were understood and used. The assumption was correct for Washington, D.C. but not true to the same extent for Helena. With a high percentage of part-time and non-professional public information officers in Helena, comments about these tools indicated a few persons interviewed did not understand some of the tools or did not use them.

1Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 144.
PREFERRED TOOLS

Once mastered, reporting tools or techniques do not make the reporter a journeyman of his craft. The Alsops said:

A Washington correspondent does not get his news from a series of delightfully convenient pipelines; each reporter must rely on his own initiative, genius, and imagination to ferret out needed information.2

Cater cites a number of tools the reporter can use, and indicates that each has several uses and variations. He said:

Reporting has grown complex and technical along with everything else. Take, for example, the shading of attributions that can be given the source of a reporter's story--"high government officials," "informed circles," or simply, "It was learned that . . . ." The "leak" has become institutionalized. There is the background briefing, deep background, and off-the-record. Reporting has become ritualized. The open press conference has turned into a mass convocation, its usefulness often impeded by the hordes of reporters who feel duty-bent on being present to write down, to tape and to film all that occurs.3

As an initial question, reporters and public information officers in Helena were asked which tool they liked to use most. Most PIOs said they preferred the news release. Among the general reasons was the belief that the


press release is least open to misinterpretation or misquote. In this sense, the news release provides security for the PIO; he has written the release, it has been cleared by a superior and now it's up to the press to pass it on accurately to the public.  

The press release also becomes part of a file that shows the PIO's work and value. The file tells when it was released, from which office and the number of the release. For instance, a press release issued from one government office in Montana contained the code--RI--939:022872. It was distributed to all news outlets in Region One (RI), was the 939th release by the office and was released Feb. 28, 1972. That same office has a file of its releases for 35 years, which it says provides excellent research material.

PIOs also think the news release is "more of a closed concept." One said, "I think if you handle a press release properly, you can get the idea across and there's no need for a lot of questions and answers."  

Two reasons news releases are preferred by particular agencies are: they are required by law and when an agency

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4Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 144.

5William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

6Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
doesn't attract much interest from newsmen, the news release tries to attract reporters' attention.

The Montana Public Service Commission and the Department of Fish & Game said some of their press releases are required by law. The PIO for the Department of Water Resources, which doesn't attract much attention from newsmen, said, "If we waited for the press to come over here, there would be very few news releases." 7

All agencies believe the press release is valuable in releasing information of secondary importance: appointment of low-level officials, service anniversaries, staff reorganization, etc. Expressing an opinion held by many colleagues, one PIO said: "I think the news release is a powerful tool to get out a lot of the information that would not normally be picked up by reporters covering the capital." 8

Reporters preferred the interview, followed closely by the informal release or "news leak" which are linked to the reporters' desire for the exclusive story. Newsmen realize that all capital reporters have access to agency news releases; they have no desire to repeat what another reporter writes. In fact, reporters for the capital bureaus

7Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

8Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.
of the Lee Newspapers and the Great Falls Tribune do not
duplicate wire service stories. For them, the exclusive news
story has even greater importance. The comments of the
following two reporters express the preference for the
interview and the news leak and their relationship:

We depend mostly on private, and I stress
private, and personal interviews with
officials. . . . Certainly leaks have
helped us. Some of them have turned out
to be no story; when we check them, they
are not accurate. But we do get a lot of
story ideas from leaks.9

I would have to say leak and personal interview
because both of them would be exclusive and, of
course, that's what you're after. You don't
want news that everybody else has. An
interview with an official who is going to use
his name . . . is reliable, solid news, but
sometimes it takes a leak to direct you to
the interview.10

News releases were not listed by any reporter as the
preferred tool of news gathering, but all wanted the news
release for reasons that ranged from using it for an article
to stimulating an idea for a story. One reporter said:

About the only thing we use news releases
for is to get an idea for stories. We
read the releases and see if there are
some unanswered questions, something we can
follow up on . . . and then we go after that
angle.11

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9Jerry Holloron, Lee Newspapers capital bureau,

10Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau,
interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

11Jerry Holloron, Lee Newspapers capital bureau,
Public information officers did not mention the informal release or news leak as a tool for releasing information. They do use the interview and generally regarded their role as a go between for the reporter and the agency official to be interviewed. PIOs said they were rarely the persons to be interviewed and generally thought interviews were initiated by reporters.

USE AND ABUSE OF TOOLS

The Press Release:

Only a few newsmen in Helena or Washington, D.C., speak favorably about press releases; however, the reasons for their negative attitudes differ. Newsmen in Washington, D.C., are flooded with press releases, many of which contain, in their opinion, worthless information. Just trying to read the many releases from federal agencies takes a considerable amount of time. The reporter would rather work on self-initiated stories.

Helena reporters do not receive an overwhelming number of press releases and try to read all of them. They dislike the press release because it is not exclusive and usually contains routine news.

The general reporter, representing the wire services, considers the press release an aid in covering the capital. "News releases are something we pick up in our routine
coverage of the various agencies,\footnote{12} said one general reporter. If the PIO issuing the release selects newsworthy information and writes clearly, he can save the general reporter time and effort.

The attitude of the specialized reporter was illustrated by Frank Adams of the Great Falls Tribune capital bureau. Describing the purpose of a press release, he said:

\begin{quote}
It's just getting the information out the way the agency or official wants it put out. We don't mess with news releases too much; that's routine stuff that we usually let the Associated Press pick up and grind out. Of course, we always pick up every news release we can because we are looking behind the news release. A news release, as such, usually isn't very good news but you can sometimes make good news out of one by following it up.\footnote{13}
\end{quote}

The confidence in and reliance on the wire services to cover routine news was stressed by all the specialized reporters. A typical response was that of Great Falls Tribune capital bureau reporter John Kuglin, who said the function of the press release was to help the wire services who in turn serve our newspaper. We seldom will use the contents of a news release unless it's given to us before the other members of the media get it. It serves very little function for us . . . .

\footnote{12} J.D. Holmes, Associated Press capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 28, 1971.

\footnote{13} Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
because we can clip out just what the news release has to say in the newspaper the next day in keeping our files up to date.\textsuperscript{14}

The press release remains the PIO's most effective tool. It doesn't really matter that only general reporters, who constitute fewer than half of the capital reporters, will use their releases. The PIOs know the wire services will deliver their messages. One PIO represented the consensus of public information officers toward the press release when he said: "It's the easiest and probably the most efficient way of getting policy out in front of the people."\textsuperscript{15}

Reporters look forward to the press release for immediate story information or future story ideas. "Government by press release," which has been used to describe press-PIO activities in Washington, D.C., does not apply to Helena. Information released by state agencies continues at a manageable level and reporters can use other tools to get information.

The News Conference:

Neither reporters nor PIOs favored the news conference. Most reporters believed it was a tool of the politician.

\textsuperscript{14}John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

\textsuperscript{15}Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
One said:

I think news conferences are generally for politicians. I can't think of a news conference that hasn't been involved with politicians... the politician involved is using the news conference for something for his own gain. Granted, what he gives you is news, but he used the news conference to benefit himself.

I've talked to politicians who say they're in a position to guide the news. One man I talked to recently was referring to another man who is planning to run for the same office. He said that as soon as the legislature is over, this man will go home and the public will forget him. However, he said, I am here in Helena and I have the news media at my disposal. If I feel like calling a news conference, then I can bring my name before the public often enough to do me some good. This politician is right and this is generally the purpose of a news conference.16

Reporters did not like the non-exclusiveness of the press conference. One said "it's a lazy way of doing things. Instead of briefing each one of us individually, they get us collectively."17 Reporters also said there was not enough opportunity to follow up a particular subject before another question on a different subject was asked.

The general reporter did not particularly like news conferences but realized he had to cover them. The specialized reporter was also negative and depended on the general reporter of the wire services to cover them.


17 Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 22, 1971.
Two general reporters noted that press conferences generally serve the person calling them more than the press:

I personally am not an exponent of news conferences. I resist them; I'd much prefer to take the direct route to the source. I usually view the news conference as the source's most expedient way of getting all the reporters off his back, getting rid of all of them with one fell swoop.\(^{18}\)

I hate news conferences. I think their function in Helena . . . is an attempt of a government group or somebody to be fair and give the information to as many people as possible. A secondary function is that the individual is seeking widespread publicity and this is why he calls a news conference.\(^{19}\)

Expressing the view of the specialized reporter, John Kuglin of the Great Falls Tribune capital bureau said:

The function of the news conference is generally to glorify a particular agency or politician who has something to say but wants to dramatize its importance. News conferences generally aren't very good for me. I often, and our bureau as a matter of policy, does not attend news conferences because if anything of any substance is mentioned the wire services . . . will report what is said. Sometimes we will attend a news conference if it is one called by a high official so we can obtain background information to write a news analysis or pick up tips for future stories.\(^{20}\)


\(^{19}\)Bill Beecham, Associated Press capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 20, 1971.

\(^{20}\)John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
Reporters preferred the press conference to the press release, for they could ask questions. The more inaccessible the official, the better the reporter liked the press conference. One said: "News conferences are valuable occasionally, particularly with the governor when he's inaccessible." A specialized reporter said:

I think the news conference has a legitimate function. . . . I don't expect public officials, when they have some major announcement to make, to leak it to one reporter. I understand why they call press conferences. They're not overused, I don't think, in Montana.

Another specialized reporter suggested using the news conference as a beginning point for a story:

Whenever anybody calls a news conference, generally he's got a certain message that he wants to get across. He wants to get it across the way he wants it put across and that's not always the way things really are. I think a newswoman should go to news conferences, find out what the guy has to say, but shouldn't just stop there. You've got to probe behind what is being presented, find out what the picture really is . . . you have to keep asking yourself why is the guy calling a news conference; what is he trying to get across; is he really telling it straight in giving it to everybody at the same time.

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23 Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
Public information officers don't really expect reporters to be as analytical about the reasons for a press conference as the preceding comments suggest. Experience of PIOs has led them to believe the opposite. A former reporter, now a PIO, said: "We are markedly surprised by how superficial reporters can be. . . . Reporters ask questions that seem remarkably superficial and accept information which is only surface information. The result is that they print only what government officials want them to print."24

The consensus among PIOs in Helena was that news conferences should be used sparingly and called only for significant reasons. PIOs did not express any desire to "get rid of all the reporters in one fell swoop," but thought a press conference provided an opportunity for reporters to ask questions. One PIO said:

Probably the biggest advantage of the news conference is to allow reporters the chance to ask questions or to elaborate on what we have to say. I find this to be particularly advantageous on issues that are controversial or highly technical. They can ask us questions when we make a statement because it may be clear to us but it isn't clear to them, and perhaps they can see that it won't be clear to the public.25

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24Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 160.

25Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.
Comments by Helena PIOs supported the idea that news conferences are more a tool for the politician than for the agencies. More than half of the PIOs said they had never conducted a news conference. One PIO, also a board chairman, said his agency would call a press conference only "if all the reporters just happened to be in the building at the same time. Then I'd be gald to have them sit down and we'd talk." Other than that remote possibility, he could not envision his department using the press conference.

Attitudes of PIOs and reporters in Washington, D.C., parallel those of the two groups in Helena. Politicians are the major users of the press conference in Washington, D.C., with the exception of cabinet officials or department heads who are often political appointees. Agency PIOs seldom use the press conference in Washington, D.C. Reporters in the nation's capital complained that they could not pursue a subject with more than one question at a press conference and they were not exclusive. Washington reporters complained of too many conferences.

26J. Morley Cooper, chairman of the board, Board of Equalization, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

27Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 160.
The Background Conference:

The concept of a background conference is understood by only a few PIOs in Helena. The tool is rarely used by PIOs. Reporters have a better concept of the background conference and some of its advantages and problems.

While some PIOs said they did not know what a background conference was, a few tried to guess the meaning from the words. One suggested he had no real need to give background conferences for the people in his department because they generally knew that they were talking about; he did not relate the background conference to newsmen. About two-thirds of the PIOs said they did not know what a background conference was or did not use them. Two typical comments:

I've never held a background briefing in 25 years. I've made up fact sheets, but never held a background briefing.28

Well we don't hold any of those, never have.29

The other PIOs said they had used the backgrounder or should use it. One thought the background conference involved providing information in addition to what already was provided:

... after a board meeting, if a newsman comes up to me and asks for a little more information,

28Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

29J. Morley Cooper, chairman of the board, Board of Equalization, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
I'll give him some background information concerning some item that was on the agenda and on which the board took some action. And maybe he didn't get the full significance or he missed some of the pertinent points, so I'm always willing to provide the background information that they desire.30

Another PIO thought the background conference was to provide reporters "with information so they could ask questions that would be relevant to what was going on."31

Three PIOs expressed the need for background conferences, and two of these used the tool. The one PIO who hadn't used the backgrounder said:

We never, to the best of my knowledge, used a background briefing. I think in education there would be lots of reasons for them. For example, we get into a lot of federal programs ... Title I, for instance. Through a background conference we would tell them what the intent of the legislation was and what ways it might be used in Montana.32

The two PIOs who used the background conference said:

Some of our projects that the press are interested in are complicated. Most reporters simply don't know enough about the projects to write an accurate story.33

30Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

31William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

32Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

33Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
I think background conferences are important in that if we see a problem coming up, we can contact reporters, brief them on what has gone on in the past... and in light of this information they can, I think, more intelligently provide more information on whatever happens in the future. That's kind of a simple thing, but I think it's very important, because if they don't have a background on something, they don't know whether a statement being made is right, wrong or what it is.34

There were no natural divisions among the PIOs' opinions about the background conference. Part-time and full-time PIOs were among those who did not know what a background conference was or did not use it. However, the few PIOs who knew what a background conference is and expressed a desire to use it were full-time public information employes.

In Chapter 4, PIOs indicated that one of the most desired characteristics in a "good reporter" was a knowledge of an agency or subject. The background conference is a primary tool for increasing the knowledge of a reporter on a particular subject or agency. It would appear that if the PIOs in Helena are serious about having their agencies better understood by capital reporters, they would use the background conference.

34Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.
"I can't recall any background conferences during the approximately three years I've been with the Tribune at the capital"35 and "We haven't had many background conferences in Montana"36 are typical responses from newsmen. The lack of backgrounders doesn't mean reporters are apathic about them. One said:

I think it has a good function. It's necessary especially in government. In order to write the things a reporter must, it's necessary that he knows some of the inside workings and functions of certain parts of government, not necessarily to print them but so he can enhance his own background and his stories.37

Another reporter said:

The background conference suggests to me something pretty structured in terms of a group of reporters being called in and having something explained to them. I don't remember in three years that ever happening in Montana. I think we often ... go in and talk to someone in an agency who can tell us the background on something that is developing. I think the function sometimes, from the standpoint of the public official involved, is to get to the reporter and in a sense lock him into a position so he can't report the thing. The reporter has been told this off-the-record for background and I think that's the function of it—to stop news. You have to be pretty careful about who you go off-the-record with and listen to. On the other hand, it is often used very legitimately

35John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

36Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 22, 1971.

in terms of stories that are developing that public officials want you to be aware of but what you legitimately can't write about right then. But when it does break you have a head start in terms of understanding it.38

Analyzing the advantages and problems of the background conference, one reporter said:

I think it can be valuable . . . it depends on how you define the rules for it. If the information you're receiving in the background conference is something you can use, but can't attribute, then you are probably going to have to write sort of a news analysis story. I think it's always more credible when you're quoting sources in the news. On the other hand, it has its good aspects . . . a news source can explain to you the reasons for certain decisions which he might not be willing to explain on the record. But one big problem I have with backgrounders is that a source will say that I can tell you this information off-the-record. It depends on what the story I'm seeking and how bad I need the information whether I'm willing to take it . . . Sometimes the source will give you information off-the-record that you could get somewhere else on-the-record. And if you subsequently print the story with the facts in it, the source may think you betrayed him.39

In Washington, D.C., the attitudes toward the background conference are more specific because it is more widely used. Reporters in Washington speak of the mass backgrounder, the exclusive backgrounder or the in-depth backgrounder. However, much like the press conference, the background conference is, for the most, part, limited to high


government officials and politicians. Agency officials offer information sessions during which reporters may learn about an agency; PIOs usually limit background conferences to technical or controversial subjects.40

Washington, D.C., and Helena reporters expressed many of the same suspicions about the background conference. Reporters in the nation's capital said it was valuable if all other sources for the news were closed, the number of reporters invited were small and the information presented were for attribution.41

The Interview:

Capital reporters unanimously selected the interview as their most valuable tool, because they could obtain exclusive information. Other reasons included the opportunity for in-depth information and a "good news peg" or attribution for the story.

The reporter also likes the idea of being able to "ask the questions he wants; he can demand the answers."42 With no other tool does the reporter have the opportunity to exert as much influence:

40 Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, pp. 163-166.
41 Ibid., p. 164.
Usually an interview is requested by a newsman rather than by the person who is being interviewed so you know what you're going in there for. You've got certain things on your mind that you're trying to dig out and the person being interviewed is kind of at your mercy and so you can do a lot of things with an interview.\textsuperscript{43}

The interview, in my mind, is the best way of getting information because you can confront the guy, follow up on your questions and you are free to discuss the subject at some length. You know what he really means and what the situation is.\textsuperscript{44}

About half the PIOs were not aware of the importance of the interview to the reporter or had little or no experience with it. Two PIOs said the interview was the same as the press conference. J.D. Holmes, Associated Press capital reporter, said: "The interview, as opposed to the press conference, is an individual reporter and his subject, rather than a group of reporters and the subject."\textsuperscript{45}

The other PIOs in the study realized the interview's importance in terms of more in-depth information. The PIO usually said the interview would "provide background, some in-depth information covering the program or issue, 

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{43}Frank Adams, \textit{Great Falls Tribune} capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
  \item \textsuperscript{44}Daniel Foley, \textit{Lee Newspapers} capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.
  \item \textsuperscript{45}J.D. Holmes, Associated Press capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 28, 1971.
\end{itemize}
or whatever it may be. A few PIOs also mentioned the reporter's influence in an interview. One said:

The interview would be more detailed, or perhaps, it would allow us to determine exactly what the interviewer has on his mind, what he thought was important. In this we could either agree or elaborate from there.

Another PIO wanted to balance the control of an interview:

The function I would perform would be to monitor the interview and guide it... if I found the interview getting into matters no longer germane, I would try to turn it back onto a proper course. I would also try to shut it off if we were getting into tender areas that would have no real meaning to the public.

Comments of Helena reporters and PIOs regarding interviews parallel those in Washington, D.C., with two exceptions: In contrast to Helena, the PIOs in Washington, D.C., clearly understand the importance of the interview to the reporter. Secondly, the PIOs appear to have a continuing debate on whether the reporter should check with them before asking an agency official for an interview. At the time of Nimmo's study, the attitude of PIOs on this

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46 Edwin G. Kellner, director, Department of Institutions, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

47 Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.

question was evenly divided. In Helena, the reporter would go directly to the official without informing the PIO. If a reporter did not know the official responsible for a particular activity, he might seek a PIO's assistance in arranging an interview.

The Informal Release or "News Leak":

News leaks ran a close second to interviews as the most preferred tool of reporters. Similar to the interview, the reason cited for preferring the news leak was the exclusiveness of the information. Unlike the interview, however, the news leak is not fully accepted as an information tool and involves more risks than do the other tools. The Alsops were negative toward the news leak:

It is a little strange and more than a little insulting to the press, this belief in "leaks." It implies a total disbelief in reporters' energy, intelligence and power to acquire knowledge on their own behalf. But the belief in "leaks" is an unvarying article of faith among all officials of every administration, from the President downwards; and reporters have to swallow the implied insult and learn to be amused by it.

Cater realized the value of the leak and offered this analysis:

What caused the leak? One veteran reporter has written, "The leak or exclusive story is rarely

\[49\text{Nimmo, Newsgathering In Washington, p. 167.}\]

\[50\text{Alsop and Alsop, The Reporter's Trade, pp. 72 and 73.}\]
an example of a reporter's persistence and skill. More often it is simply an evidence of the harassed necessity of some official to put a situation before the public with a spurious sense of drama in order to gain attention for it." On occasion, of course, human frailities—vanity, desire for vengeance or recognition—have led an official to disclose secrets that he ought not to have. But the primary cause for the almost constant revelation of behind-the-scenes episodes of government is the power struggle that goes on within the government.51

Reporters in Helena aren't as critical of the news leak as the Alsops are, nor are they as concerned about what causes the leak. Helena reporters simply recognize that "leaks are the general instigators"52 of many stories. J.D. Holmes, Associated Press capital reporter, said he liked the leak because it produces "the more exciting stories, and because it infers that you are getting something that you normally would not get."53 Another reporter cited the caution with which leaks must be used:

... leaks are always valuable. They don't all pan out; I think you have to be aware of where the leak is coming from and whether it's of genuine interest or whether it's a self-serving interest. You have to be suspicious


52Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 22, 1971.

of them. Of course, they often pan out to be the best stories in quality and quantity.54 A lot don't pan out when you look into them.

Generally news leaks are intentional. One reporter, however, saw a value in the unintentional leak such as "off-hand comments made by officials at meetings."55 For the alert reporter, these comments can be followed up and provide information not included in other stories.

Public information officers in Helena did not recognize the news leak as a tool for dispensing information. PIOs in Washington, D.C., while recognizing the news leak as a tool, did not use it frequently, although some used it as a "trial balloon" or to "plant stories."

54 Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

55 John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
CHAPTER VI

NEWS AND STATE STATUTES

If a newsman and a PIO disagree on whether some information is news and the information is withheld, there is a high possibility the reporter will say the people's freedom of information has been violated. Generally the newsman will say the public has the right to all government information, at least on the state level. He believes he represents the people and the people have a right to know what government is doing. The newsman wants to determine what part of government information is news.

The PIO and his supervisor will argue that they have a right to conduct government business in an orderly manner, not at the whim of the press. Releasing information may not be in the public interest, they say; moreover, the press is only one channel to the people. For instance, government officials will provide to elected representatives some information that they will not give to the press.

Because such conflicts exist, federal and state governments have enacted statutes to arbitrate them and this
arbitration has been only partially successful. The wording of the statutes needs interpretation; not all newsmen and PIOs are familiar with the statutes; the statutes generally lack enforcement power.

WHAT IS "NEWS"

"To study the publicity process in government means . . . to examine the definition of news itself,"¹ according to Cater. Lippmann has stated "there are no objective standards"² for defining news, yet reporters decide what information will or will not appear in a newspaper. Because the reporter must decide what is and is not news, public information officers often try to make their definition coincide with reporters'. The more a PIO's definition of news coincides with a reporter's, the better his chance of having the reporter use his story. At the same time, PIOs qualify their definition to the degree necessary to protect their agency.

News to reporters is anything that is interesting, affects the reader or is new. Two-thirds of the reporters in Helena said news must be interesting or affect the reader. Two reporters simply defined news as: "Something

²Lippmann, Public Opinion, p. 354.
of interest to anybody"³ and "anything that would be of interest to people."⁴ Two others elaborated and included examples of news affecting persons:

News to me would be what is actually taking place that affects the lives of the public, the people as a group and as individuals. How public agency decisions and actions affect people's lives, affect the social structure.⁵

. . . whatever concerns or is of interest to the average Joe Blow, the average person in the state of Montana. Anything that affects more than one person or even one person is news, just about anything.⁶

Another reporter expanded the idea of interest to include what people should know. His definition indicated the important role judgment plays in his work. He said news is

a combination of what people want to know and what people should know. In other words, there are somethings that people may not think as news but if the reporter, through his background or knowledge, foresees that it is something that is interesting and it's worthwhile, it's news. I'm not thinking so much of highly controversial things, but, for example, the

³Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

⁴Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.

⁵Arthur Hutchinson, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

explanations of the school foundation program which many of the readers may not consider important. But it is important because it reflects directly on their property taxes and I think it's our job to make it interesting for them. I don't want to make it sound like . . . we're sitting up here trying to hammer things home or that we have this unique knowledge that they don't have. But I think there are a lot of things that are important that they don't know or may not want to know necessarily. I'm sure they would be very interested in wanting to know some personal aspects of a public official's life, for example. I'm not really sure, in some cases, that's really necessary if it doesn't have a direct bearing on his service.7

The other reporters were specific about news containing something new. For example:

News to me implies something that has just happened or is about to happen.8

First thing that comes to mind is anything that's new, that hasn't been said before or a news angle on a subject. Any new development is news.9

Public information officers agree that news should be interesting, affect the people and contain something new or different. A difference is evident among PIOs who see news as a general concept and those who restrict the definition to their department or a specific audience. Only one-third of the PIOs projected the concept of news

7Jerry Holloron, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 20, 1971.
8John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
9Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.
beyond their department or agency. The following are
typical comments of these PIOs.

News . . . is anything that's happening that
people want to know about. 10

. . . news is anything of sufficient interest
to a sufficient number of people to be carried
on the media. 11

. . . news is . . . anything that has an effect,
good or bad, on the people of Montana. 12

The other PIOs restricted their definition of news.
One PIO said news was "some event that was about to happen
or just happened that would affect the higher education
community." 13 Another PIO said "news is supplying
information to parties that are interested in the operation
or activity of the department." 14

10 Max Stone, chief of Information and Education
Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena,
Montana, April 14, 1971.

11 Harold Colley, health educator, Department of

12 Mike Schwinden, public information director,
Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana,
April 7, 1971.

13 William J. Lannan, assistant to the Executive
Secretary of the University System of Montana, interview,
Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

14 Norman J. Beaudry, executive secretary, Oil and
Gas Conservation Commission, interview, Helena, Montana,
April 6, 1971.
Reporters and public information officers generally agree that government has an obligation to inform the public about its activities. They also agree the public should have total access to government information, except for a few subjects. While PIOs say they follow these concepts in practice, reporters cite examples of government agencies withholding information.

PIO Comments:
PIOs were adamant in stating that government has "a strong obligation to inform the public" because government officials are working for the people and, therefore, the people have a right to know what they are doing. The following comment by a PIO expresses the consensus:

I think it's our duty, the duty all state agencies have to inform the public of what they're doing, what they intend to do and why they are doing it.

PIOs cited two reasons for state agencies informing the public of their activities. A majority said the taxpayer was paying the bill and therefore he should be kept informed. Expressing this concept, two PIOs said:

We are in effect a public servant. Their taxes are paying water resources board

15 Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

16 Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.
salaries and are financing water resource projects. It's like we are a large corporation and we are the shareholders. It's our duty and our responsibility to make sure they know what we're doing with their money.17

Your... paycheck comes entirely from tax money, from the people out there. The whole idea of state government is supposed to be service, facilitating society. So you ought to be open about it.18

The second reason was that government can only move as fast as the people will let it move. Two PIOs said:

If... a program is going to fly, you must have public support. I don't know how you get public support unless the public understands and identifies with it.19

I think you have a responsibility to do this [inform the public] because... you can only move as fast as the public accepts and takes your information.20

One of the two PIOs who thought the obligation to inform the public amounted to "honesty" said:

If I am a public employee, it seems to me it's my moral duty. I think there's a certain moral suasion in government positions and I

17Ibid.

18Marilou Madden, information services supervisor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

19Harold Colley, health educator, Department of Health, interview, Helena, Montana, April 6, 1971.

20Max Stone, chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Fish & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.
think the better employes are certainly self bound by moral codes. 21

PIOs placed only minor limitations on the public's right to know. Generally these were limitations specified by law or courtesies agreed on by both reporters and PIOs. An example of statutory limitation would be when an agency, commission or board discusses personnel and the person involved does not want the discussion open. Examples of courtesy were cited by the University System of Montana and the Fish & Game Department. Each year the University System presents several awards and honorary degrees. The board of regents must approve these presentations before the persons involved are notified. The regents ask reporters not to release the names of the persons involved until they have been notified. The Fish & Game Department PIO said some information about negotiations for the purchase of land is discussed at open meetings. Reporters are asked not to publish this material until negotiations are complete.

PIOs said they would not ask reporters to keep information off-the-record unless it involved statutory or courtesy agreements. However, PIOs agreed there was no conflict in asking reporters to hold information off-the-record if there was a significant reason for the request. PIOs thought most reporters would comply with such a request.

Public information officers also agreed there was no major problem regarding access to information in Helena. Typical comments were: "I don't think it is a serious problem."^22 or "I don't see a problem."^23

One PIO thought there was a freedom of information problem and placed the responsibility with the reporter. He said reporters didn't always use the information given them and "... toss it in the garbage can. I've had this happen before. I gave them something that my boss feels deserves public attention and a reporter feels differently."^24

Reporters Comments:

Reporters also were adamant in saying government is obligated to inform the public. Several reporters said the obligation exists because government employes are paid with tax dollars. Two reporters said:

Their employer is the public and they should be candid with him. Assuming they have a good, sound philosophical background and reason for doing something, I can see no reason why they don't make information public.25

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^22J. Morley Cooper, chairman of the board, Board of Equalization, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.


^24Mike Schwinden, public information director, Department of Water Resources, interview, Helena, Montana, April 7, 1971.

It is the public's business. They're working for the public; it's not the other way around. They're not in little ivory towers with little kingdoms; they have a perfect right to account for their stewardship which is what it is. They are public servants and I think that's lost sight of a lot of times. They are using the public's money for the public and they have just as much obligation to tell the public what they're doing as Joe Blow working for somebody downtown has to tell his employer what he's up to. It's as simple as that.26

Many reporters said they thought the obligation to inform the public was absolute. A typical comment:

On the federal level where you are involved with national defense, there might be some reason for withholding some information, but I can't conceive, on the state level, why any state official would have any reason to withhold any information. Now I know state officials are not going to agree with me and I might not be able to win that case in court everytime, but that is my belief. The public has a right to know anything and everything that's going on in government.27

Contrary to the comments of public information officers, all reporters interviewed said they had problems with government agencies withholding information. Reporters said that information withheld may or may not be important, but they wanted to make that determination. The following comments of reporters illustrate their conviction that withholding information is a problem and provide examples

26Frank Adams, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

27Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.
of how information is withheld. A few reporters also indicate how they solve the problem.

They [government officials] can make it difficult to get information. But generally if it is not available in one place, it's available in another. It makes you work harder...you may have to make an end run or go behind the fellow or approach it from a different direction. Perhaps this is all for the good, it probably makes a better story and it certainly makes a better newsman out of you.28

...we can get it one way or another. You'll find one commission member who'll leak it to you.29

Many of the PIOs used open board or commission meetings as illustrations of freedom of information within their agencies. Reporters disputed this and cited meetings as an example of one way in which agencies withheld information. One reporter said:

There are those in state government who do not wish the public to know what's going on. There are deliberate attempts to minimize information—for instance, splits in our boards and agencies on important questions. In other words they do not want a newsman present at a meeting when something controversial will be discussed. Many of the boards and commissions thrash everything out in a private meeting over cocktails or dinner or at some motel the night before, make up their differences and come in the next day for their so-called public meeting and have a


29Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, Helena, Montana, April 22, 1971.
pretty blah public meeting. So the public really doesn't know what's going on in many of the agencies.30

Another reporter cited a specific example of information being withheld from him:

I occasionally run into some resistance. One time I did a story to the fact that the legislative council had sent out letters to various lobbyists asking them for contributions so that they could have a legislative conference in Glacier Park. They wanted the lobbyists to pay for this. I thought legislators soliciting contributions from lobbyists wasn't too good an idea. I went to the legislative council and asked for a list of all the lobbyists they had sent the letters to requesting money. They refused to give it to me and I never did get it. That's just one minor example.31

As a last resort, reporters will take their requests to court. This is not done often, but frequently enough for agency officials to realize reporters are serious about their requests. One reporter referred to the "Cheadle Case." Larry Cheadle, a prisoner in the state prison at Deer Lodge, died while in solitary confinement or the "hole." The reporter relates the impact of this case on state government:

... there's a natural inclination among everybody ... if there's something going on that will make them look bad, they'd just as soon it not get out. In government

30 John Kuglin, Great Falls Tribune capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 21, 1971.

31 Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.
it's particularly bad because ... they are working for the public and the public has a right to know the information. Along this line one of the most important things that has happened in Montana in the last ten years probably is the Cheadle case where the reporters over here got together and hired a lawyer in an attempt to get the information. The information wasn't as important when we got it as the impact on state government. I found things opening up a lot more since they found the reporters are going to fight this sort of thing. The Board of Institutions, which was involved in the case and was at the time extremely reticent about giving information, has been ... one of the best departments recently.32

Reporters only partially agree with public information officers about the conflict of taking information off-the-record. Reporters agree that there may be statutory or courtesy information that is taken off-the-record with full cooperation. One reporter used the example of the courtesy request by the Board of Regents asking reporters not to release the names of persons being recommended for awards or honorary degrees by the University System.

Reporters disagreed with the PIOs' belief that keeping information off-the-record is a problem in Helena. While reporters don't consider it a major problem, the fact that it occurs frequently was indicated by reporters using phrases such as "that's a ploy a lot of people use," and "many, many times particularly in the legislature."

Reporters thought taking information off-the-record bound them to a position of being unable to report the information even if they receive it from another source or making the source feel the reporter had betrayed him. One reporter said:

The biggest problem is that you're tying yourself down as a newsman if you take it off-the-record and therefore you can't print it without betraying your source. It may be that you can get that information from someone else. If you promised your original source that you are not going to use it, you're tied down.

Another reporter expressed "frustration" when sources tricked him into taking information off-the-record:

There are many times that you can sit with a man for better than an hour and get a lot of worthy news and then he'll tell you it's off-the-record. I personally don't like it.

Another reporter described how reporters generally have to work with the problem. He said:

I think it's something each reporter has to kind of feel his way with each source. There are definite conflicts in it. This happened to me a couple of times where I'd listen to things off-the-record and the story has broken and I'm caught flat footed.

33Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.

34Bill Bear, United Press International capital bureau, interview, Helena, Montana, April 22, 1971.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND STATE LAWS

Montana has two general statutes dealing with public meetings and records. Other statutes concern activities of particular agencies.

The Montana public records inspection statute states:

Public records and other matters in the office of any officer are, at all times, during office hours, open to inspection of any person. Every citizen has a right to inspect and take a copy of any public writings of this state, except as otherwise provided by statute.36

Section one of the open meetings statute states:

The legislature finds and declares that public boards, commissions, councils and other public agencies in this state exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of this act that actions and deliberations of all public agencies shall be conducted openly. The people of the state do not wish to abdicate their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. Toward these ends, the provisions of the act shall be liberally construed.37

Section two of the statute describes boards, commissions, councils and other public agencies in broad terms in an apparent effort to include any meeting of government officials gathered to conduct public business. The statute also lists six exceptions in which a public meeting may be closed to the public. These include


37Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, (Vol. 1, Thirty-Eighth Session 1963), Ch. 159, pp. 480, 481, 482.
national or state security, discussion of a complaint against a public officer unless the officer requests the meeting be open, employment, promotion, dismissal of public employes, purchasing of public property, revocation of a license, or law enforcement matters.

Section three of the statute provides that all meetings declared open, shall keep and make available to the public minutes of the proceedings.

Reporters generally agreed the statutes were valuable tools in their efforts to gather news. Two reporters said they carried a copy of the statute with them and "have used it on a number of occasions." 38

All capital reporters knew of the open meetings law and could basically describe its content. Half of the reporters were familiar with the open records law.

Jerry Holloron, Lee Newspapers capital bureau reporter, described what he thought were the shortcomings in the open meetings law: The law "does have a lot of weaknesses--mainly that it doesn't have any sanctions in it." Citing examples of how the law is not obeyed, he said:

The worst one [state agency] in the state is probably the board of education. Another bad one is the Montana Water Resources. The problem we run into is that they simply say we are going into executive session. We say what are you going into executive session for.

38Daniel Foley, Lee Newspapers capital bureau, interview, Missoula, Montana, April 19, 1971.
They pull something out of the law—they say we are going to discuss personalities or we are going to discuss firing someone—so we are barred from the meeting and they can discuss anything they want in the meeting. The Board of Education is notorious for doing this. And I don't know what we can do. We can't prove what they are discussing because we can't be in the meeting.39

In sharp contrast to the reporters, only half of the public information officers knew an open meeting law existed. No PIO knew an open records law existed.

The PIOs who knew about the open meetings law said meetings were open except when personnel were being discussed. They cited none of the other exceptions listed in the law.

One public information officer said he didn't know of any statute, but believed it was his responsibility to comply with the bill of rights.

CHAPTER VII

ATTITUDES VS. PRACTICES

Reporters and public information officers in Helena agree that intelligent popular decision requires an informed public. PIOs agree they need to inform the public if their programs are to be accepted; they recognize the need for news media support. Reporters express the dual goals of informing the public and acting as its "watchdog" of government. Reporters and PIOs in Washington, D.C., express similar attitudes and goals. Scholars of news dissemination recognize the pursuit of these goals as a necessary part of democracy.

This chapter compares these goals with the practices of PIOs and reporters in Helena. The comparisons offer evidence for some generalizations about how successful they are in attaining the goals.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AS A PRIORITY

Walter Lippmann has suggested that the responsibility of informing the public is different for public information officers than for reporters. As quoted in the preface of this study, Lippmann said public institutions have the
primary responsibility to provide a constant information "light of their own." The news media, like a searchlight, complements the light of institutions by drawing attention to episodes and incidents.

If informing the public is a high priority with the organizations for which reporters and PIOs work, these organizations will provide personnel and resources to do the job. The extent to which organizations are willing to provide personnel and resources indicates whether the goals they have expressed are simply theoretical or are actually sought through practice.

State Agencies:

With a few exceptions, state agencies in Helena do not provide a constant "light of information" about their activities. Evidence gathered in the interviews suggest state agencies do not place a significantly high priority on informing the public to allocate personnel and resources to this function.

Of the 27 state agencies surveyed, seven employ public information personnel. Five of these positions were created within three years prior to this study. Only two agencies have had information positions for more than 10 years. Several major agencies, judging by the number of employees and relationship with citizens, are not included among the seven.
There is no equation that states informing the public equals a public information staff. However, if an agency employs an information staff, it is assumed it will try to inform the public or agency employes. In contrast, agencies that do not employ a public information staff assign the function to an employe part-time. Employes who perform this function part-time repeatedly said the amount of time and effort they gave to public information was "minor."

Whether a person can allocate only a "minor" portion of his time to informing the public about the activities of a government agency and do a good job is questionable. Usually a part-time PIO limits his activities to answering press queries, directing reporters to authorities in the department and preparing news releases about monthly board meetings.

The time an agency employe spends on informing the public is only one indication of the priority publicity has within an agency. Another is the authority given to the publicity function. In Helena most full-time PIOs have only limited authority to speak for their agencies. Rather than a member of a management team, the PIO is most often a conduit responsible only for relaying information from his superiors to the public. Even part-time PIOs who were directors of agencies or high-management employes thought they should check with their boards or a higher management person before releasing information.
Three general reasons were given for not allocating more personnel time and resources to informing the public: The agency doesn't have a sufficiently large budget, there's not enough work for a full-time PIO, and everything the agency does is open to the press and the public (if they want it, all they have to do is ask). Some agencies would not agree with all of those reasons. Those agencies with full-time PIOs might not agree with any of them.

The interviews were not intended to check the validity of these reasons. However, the interviews provide evidence indicating contrasting practices, which indicate the different priorities agencies have set on informing the public. For instance, a large agency such as the welfare department, which has a large budget but does not employ information personnel, and the Commission on Aging, which has a small budget and employs two information persons, have set different priorities on the importance of informing the public. Agencies that cited lack of finances often held the state legislature responsible for cutting their publicity budgets. Why the legislature would cut the publicity budgets of only some agencies is not clear.

The director of the department of institutions said he didn't think his agency would have enough work for a full-time information person. The department of institutions administers eleven facilities in the state and its Helena
office. Much smaller agencies such as the Water Resources Board or the Agriculture Department employ a full-time information person. Obviously, the scope of the public information function is seen differently by officials of these agencies.

Those officials who say their major effort in informing the public consists of open meetings and having open records place too great a burden on the public and the news media. Such an attitude may also be contradictory if the agency follows the practice of having private board meetings before the public meetings.

While there is probably no best way for all government agencies to inform the public, most depend on the news media as a primary channel to the public. The attitude of reporters and public information officers toward each other and the extent to which PIOs try to help or even use the news media also indicate the priority agencies put on informing the public.

For instance, in Washington, D.C., reporters are overwhelmed with news released from government agencies and, according to reporters, far too many news conferences are held. Reporters in Washington believe the PIO's job is to promote his agency, but despite this, the reporter also respects the PIO for his ability to judge what is news, to provide him with pertinent information, or to set up an interview with a news source.
In Helena, the opposite is true. Reporters are not overwhelmed with government information nor do they generally respect the PIO position. Many agencies could provide additional information that would receive favorable attention by reporters. And rather than respect, reporters express hostility toward PIOs in Helena. This is primarily due to organizational influences that restrict the PIO from acting as a news source rather than as a news conduit. The reporter avoids the PIO rather than seeking his help.

News Media:

Capital news organizations generally provide a strong "searchlight" on state government activities. Reporting of government activities in Helena took a new direction in 1959 when the Lee Newspaper Group of the Midwest purchased the Anaconda newspapers in Montana and in 1961 began the Lee Newspapers capital bureau. Previously, Montanans receiving daily newspapers got state government news written by two capital reporters—one for the Associated Press and one for the Helena Independent Record. The Independent Record reporter shared his stories with the wire service. The Great Falls Tribune was the only newspaper with an additional reporter in Helena to supplement these stories. At the time of this study, eight reporters covered state government full time. The readers of Montana's five major dailies receive Associated Press stories and stories from either the Tribune
capital bureau or the Lee capital bureau. This additional material is designed to supplement rather than repeat Associated Press stories.

Dillon, Bozeman, Havre, Miles City, Lewistown, Livingston, Kalispell and Hamilton all have daily newspapers served only by the Associated Press. Many other communities have weekly newspapers that specialize in local news only. Residents of these communities may receive a daily newspaper from a neighboring city or may rely on radio or television for their state capital news. Residents of a few communities, such as those in northwestern Montana, may subscribe to a daily from another state such as the Spokesman Review of Spokane, Washington, and receive very little printed news of Helena.

Most radio stations in Montana receive either the Associated Press or United Press International service. The Intermountain Network provides 15 stations with additional stories from Helena.

Television news coverage is lacking in Helena. Although surveys indicate most citizens receive their news by television, Montana television newscasts carry little or no on-the-scene coverage. The newscasts usually use the same wire service stories as radio stations.

Helena capital reporters work under a healthy competition for news. For instance, all reporters at the
capital want news releases distributed by the agencies. While only the Associated Press and United Press International will use this information, all other reporters check the release for angles that might give them an exclusive.

Organizational influences on reporters are considerably less than those of PIOs. For instance, reporters for the Lee and Tribune bureaus are given the time they need to work on in-depth or investigative stories. Most reporters express general freedom to pursue the news.

AVENUES OF CHANGE

Despite the need for additional public information from state agencies in Helena, there is no indication that these agencies will make any major changes in their publicity practices in the near future. Before any basic changes can take place both top agency and elected officials need to want such a change. Most agency executives in Helena do not express any great need for such a change. Elected officials appear apathetic; they sometimes appear negative when the cost of agency publicity is an issue.

As time passes officials of single agencies may recognize the need for additional publicity and begin a public information program. During the past three years officials of five agencies saw such a need and began programs. While this trend is positive, some of the new public information
programs are shallow. For example, most of the new PIOs are not part of the management team of their agencies and a few sometimes appear to be the personal publicity man for the director or board rather than for the entire agency. Such practices indicate that additional PIOs alone would not be enough to change the publicity function as it now operates in Helena.

Elected and top agency officials need to look at business, agencies of other states and the federal government and ask: Why do they have public information programs? How do they conduct their programs? Why do some businesses have vice presidents and some state agencies have assistant directors in charge of the public information programs? It is unreal to expect all or even most elected and agency officials to educate themselves on the function of government publicity. However, the state Legislative Council could undertake such a study. The council could survey the publicity programs of Montana state agencies, of other states and businesses. The council could then make the information, along with any recommendations, available to state legislators and agency officials.

Such an initial phase of education would point to the need for continued education. Those persons responsible for public information could become associated through an organization dedicated to improved communications between the
citizens of Montana and their government. Local organizations devoted to publicity already exist in many cities in the nation. Such an organization in Helena could focus attention on the publicity function.

The primary goal of education would be to broaden understanding of the publicity function. Secondary goals would be to increase the knowledge and use of a variety of communications tools. Chapter V indicated that PIOs in Helena do not have a good understanding of a variety of communications tools. The value and use of the interview and the background conference are two examples of tools that PIOs need to know more about. Additional knowledge about the use of interviews would be to the advantage of both reporters and PIOs. An organization of persons responsible for public information in Helena could easily provide a means for this kind of education.

Most state agencies in Helena also need to develop additional communications channels to the public other than the news media. Such channels will develop only as agency officials see the need to provide a "constant light" of information about their agencies rather than the glimpses provided by the news media. A few agencies publish newsletters that are sent to specific audiences. The university system is preparing radio and television public-service messages which will not depend on news value. The university system also conducts meetings with small groups of
community leaders in cities throughout the state. The Fish & Game Commission uses mail surveys to obtain reactions to its practices and programs. The State Highway Commission produced a film promoting the objectives of the department. Such techniques help provide a more "constant light" of information about the agencies using them. However, such techniques are the exception rather than the rule among agencies in Helena.

Another priority subject for an organization of PIOs might be the discussion of state statutes relating to the regulation of government information. PIOs, as shown in Chapter VI, need to become better acquainted with these state laws. With a basic understanding of these laws, PIOs would be in a better position to act in the spirit of the statutes. They could also, in cooperation with newsmen, initiate action to improve these laws. Questions such as the following might be discussed: Should a newsman be permitted to sit in on the executive sessions of a commission or board if he keeps the information discussed off-the-record? Such a practice might keep commissions and boards from discussing items in executive session which by law should not be. Should boards or commissions be required to release the minutes of executive session meetings after some time limit has passed? Should boards and commissions be required to announce one or two days in advance that a
portion or all of their meeting will be held in executive session and list the subjects to be discussed? Should penalties be imposed for failure to comply with state information laws?

While newsmen do not have an organization for reporters in Helena, they do have informal meetings and discussions about their jobs. An example such as the Cheadle case indicates that newsmen have acted as a group. Newsmen might encourage PIOs to form an organization and, when the opportunity came, participate in their discussions.

While cities served by the Great Falls Tribune state bureau and the Lee Newspapers state bureau appear to have good coverage of state government activities, most Montana communities receive only Associated Press coverage. The Scripps League newspapers in Bozeman, Havre, Kalispell could combine and begin a Scripps capital bureau similar to the Lee Newspapers capital bureau. The small daily and weekly newspapers in the state could subscribe to an independent news service from Helena. Such a service could be devoted to capital news which affects rural Montana.

A feasibility study was conducted during 1971 to determine whether weekly editors would be interested in such a service. Almost all of the editors said they would not subscribe to the service. They said their readers were interested only in community news from their newspapers.
They said daily newspapers from neighboring communities or radio and television provide state capital news to the residents of small communities.

While there doesn't appear to be any great change in the news coverage of state government activities, a better understanding of the role of publicity in government and additional knowledge of tools and techniques would create conditions conducive to changing the publicity function in Helena. If the attitude toward the publicity function changed, the practices of informing the public would change also.
APPENDIX A

Interview for Newsmen

I. Background Data:

1. Sex: Male____Female____.
2. Present age: 20-29____; 30-39____; 40-49____;
   50-59____; 60-69____; over 69____.
3. Organization by which respondent is employed: ______
   ____________________________
4. Type of duty performed most often by respondent in
   job: write routine news____; write specialized news____;
   newscaster____; bureau chief____; other___________.
5. Does the respondent specialize in writing any specific
   type of news which is sent from Helena (agriculture,
   specific agencies) or write dispatches covering several
   areas of news? If yes, specify__________________________
   ___________________________.
6. Which of the following categories most adequately
   describes respondent's formal education: college graduate____;
   attended college but did not graduate____; high school
   graduate____; attended high school but not a graduate____;
   did not attend high school____.
7. Experience: Number of years in journalism in any capacity_____; number of years as newsman in Helena_____; what type of employment did respondent have just prior to entrance into service as a Helena newsman_________________________ _______________________; has respondent held any type of government office_____.

II. Response Data:

1. What do you believe to be the functions the newsman performs with what is referred to as the "governing process" in this state?

   (1.1) Within the framework that you have just mentioned, how would you describe your own job as to your purpose in reporting news and the type of stories with which you are concerned?

   (1.2) Normally, when you prepare your copy, what types of readers do you think about? To whom do you think you are communicating (policy makers, general public, special interest groups, etc.)?

   (1.3) Would you say that most newsmen in your experience are allowed to report and interpret the news pretty much as they see it or are there restrictions operating on the newsmen that you would cite?

2. When you use the concept "news," what do you intend to indicate by it; what is your definition of the concept of "news?"
(2.1) Some persons distinguish between writing news and interpreting it; do you see any such distinction, and if so, what do you think it to be?

(2.2) Interpretation has at times introduced problems of objectivity; would you say that the newsman can generally perform his duties in an objective fashion?

(2.3) Does the degree of freedom that a newsman has generally aid him in obtaining information from news sources?

3. When you prepare a story about state government or a federal agency operating in Montana, to what types of sources do you normally turn first for ideas about what to write and about where to obtain information--newspaper files, Public Information Officers, policy-makers, fellow newsmen, news releases, etc.?

(3.1) Is it generally true that you prefer to go as high as possible in obtaining access to the news of an agency? Explain.

(3.2) Do you believe that it is generally incumbent on the newsman to publish some new piece of information each day even though nothing new has actually happened either because he feels he must do it or his organization requires it?

(3.3) In defining the relationship between news sources and newsmen, what is your general reaction about newsmen having personal friends among officials of agencies or among information officers of agencies about which they write news?
4. Of the various means of gathering news--news conferences, background conferences, interviews, releases, leaks, etc.--which do you most often prefer as a means of getting reliable material for a story?

(4.1) What function do you personally attribute to the news conference--for you and for those interested in providing public information?

(4.2) What function do you personally attribute to the background conference--for you and for those interested in providing public information?

(4.3) What function do you personally attribute to the news release--for you and for those interested in providing public information?

(4.4) What function do you personally attribute to the interview--for you and for those interested in providing public information?

5. Some agencies have established information staffs which provide information considered by them to be newsworthy; how would you describe the functions performed by such staffs in providing information to the news media?

(5.1) From your personal standpoint, do information staffs assist you in any way in your work and, if so, how and how often?

(5.2) Do you believe information staffs generally create problems for the newsmen by controlling access to news?
(5.3) Do you think that most information officers are permitted to exercise their own judgment about what and when to release information, or are there restrictions on the information officer that you would cite?

6. If you were asked to list the characteristics of a "good" newsman, what attributes would you consider as the most important for him to possess, particularly for the man writing political news?

   (6.1) In general, what are the most important attributes of "good" news source should possess—one on whom you could rely from day-to-day as a source of hard news in your writing?

7. A newsman may have several requirements in mind when he gathers material and writes his story; that is, he may think that any story, to be a "good" news story, should have certain characteristics. What do you believe to be the requirements of a "good" news story?

   (7.1) Of the information officers that you have encountered, what would be your guess as to the characteristics they most highly regard in a story?

8. In some quarters, attention has been devoted to the problems of freedom of information—the right of the public and news media to access to information about the activities of government. Why do you think this problem receives attention periodically?
(8.1) In your job, do you find that the withholding of information is any problem?

(8.2) What conflicts, if any, do you see in requests to keep information "off-the-record"?

(8.3) Do you know if Montana has any kind of freedom of information statute or statutes? If so, what is your understanding of this statute or statutes?

(8.4) What do you believe to be the extent of the obligation for government officials to inform the public of their activities in carrying on the "public's business"?

(8.5) In covering different political administrations in Helena, what differences, if any, have you encountered in the problems of obtaining news about what agencies were doing?

(8.6) Do you believe that members of the news media tend to be less critical of some administrations than of others?

9. What obligation, in your opinion, is the policy-maker generally under to give consideration to public opinion in policy formulation?

(9.1) What are the sources of public opinion that policy-makers can generally rely upon?

(9.2) Do you regard yourself as having any function of either articulating public opinion or of shaping public opinion on an issue as well as informing the public?
(9.3) What obligation do the news media have to carry messages of publicity which are aimed not at public information as such, but are tactics in the passage or blocking of policy or legislation?

10. Some observers of government-press relations have argued that the relationship is one of inherent conflict, others that it is inherently harmonious. Do you think either is the case and, in any event, how critical are government-press relations to the operation of democracy?
APPENDIX B

Public Information Officer Interview

I. Background Data:

1. Sex: Male____Female____.
2. Present age: 20-29____; 30-39____; 40-49____; 50-59____; 60-69____; over 69____.
3. Organization by which respondent is employed: __________
4. Type of duty performed most often by respondent on job:
   Second most often:
   --Hold press conference____
   --Write or clear news releases____
   --Answer inquiries____
   --Write speeches____
   --Others (specify)____
5. Which of the following categories most adequately describes respondent's formal education?
   --College graduate____
   --Attended college but did not graduate____
   --High school graduate____
   --Attended high school but did not graduate____
   --Did not attend high school____
6. Experience:

--Number of years in journalism in any capacity_____
--Number of years in government PIO in Helena_____
--What type of employment did respondent have just prior to entrance into service as a PIO________
--Has respondent ever held any type of reporting job?_____
(Specify)____________________________

II. Response Data:

1. Some agencies have established information staffs which provide information considered by them to be worthy of public attention; what function does the PIO perform with the "governing process" in this state?

   (1.1) As an employee responsible for disseminating information to the public how would you describe your own job as to the purposes you have in providing information to the public and to the news media?

   (1.2) Do you regard it your function to reveal matters of policy deliberations to newsmen if asked -- policy disagreements, policy agreements, etc.?

   (1.3) Generally, how extensively do you believe the public information officer should participate in the policy making levels of the organization?
(1.4) Do you think that most information officers are permitted to exercise their own judgment about what and when to release information or are there restrictions on the information officer that you would cite?

2. Your office performs several types of services for members of the news media; would you list briefly what you consider to be the most important of these services?

(2.1) What function do you personally attribute to the news conference--for you and the newsman?

(2.2) What function do you personally attribute to the background briefing--for you and the newsman?

(2.3) What function do you personally attribute to the news release--for you and the newsman?

(2.4) What function do you personally attribute to the interview--for you and the newsman?

3. How would you describe the newsman's role as it relates to your own function of transmitting information to the public?

(3.1) Do you believe that your office normally causes any problems for the newsman in his job, even though unintentional, by exerting a degree of control over access to news?

(3.2) There are several types of reporters who are interested in obtaining news from government agencies--for
example, the routine reporter assigned to a beat, the feature writer—would you draw any distinction between such writers in the value to you in getting your agency's information before the public?

(3.3) Of such types of reporters as those mentioned, which do you believe most often contact your office?

(3.4) What kinds of information would you say are most often sought from you by newsmen?

4. Insofar as the provision of information of a newsworthy note to the media is one of the functions of your organization, your definition of news is of importance; how would you define news?

(4.1) Many newsmen insist that they have a duty to go beyond the reporting of news, that they must also interpret news for the reader; what consequences are implied for your work by the knowledge that a newsman is interested in more than the news which you might give him, that he also will be interested in interpretation?

(4.2) To the extent that it does prove difficult for some reporters to be objective in their work, what problems does this produce in putting the information which you deem that the public should have before them in as complete and objective as possible?

(4.3) In defining the relationship between news sources and newsmen, what is your general reaction about having personal friends among newsmen who write news about agencies?
(4.4) In the performance of your job to make information available to the public, are there any particular types or groups of persons that you wish to reach? Are some groups more important to you than others?

(4.5) Do you release news to the general public by some means other than through capital news reporters? If yes, how do you do this?

5. If you were asked to list the characteristics of a "good" information officer in this organization--that is, one who could both inform the public adequately about activities and at the same time provide a source of hard news for the newsman--what attributes would you consider as the most important for him to possess?

(5.1) If you were asked to list the characteristics of a "good" newsman, what attributes would you consider as the most important for him to possess in order for him to adequately perform his function as you have defined it?

6. An information officer may have several requirements in mind about any story for which he gathers material and prepares to distribute to the public and the news media; that is, he may think that any story about his organization should possess certain characteristics--accuracy, comprehensiveness, prompt publication, interest to the readers, usefulness to readers, publicizing of an event or person--what
characteristics do you think a story written about your own organization by the news media should possess?

(6.1) Of the newsmen with whom you work, what would be your guess as to the characteristics they most highly regard in a story?

7. What do you believe to be the extent of the obligation for government officials to inform the public of their activities in carrying on the "public's business?"

(7.1) What are the sources of this obligation?

(7.2) What limitations do you feel can prevail which limit this obligation on the part of policy makers?

(7.3) What conflicts, if any, do you see in the practice of asking newsgathers to keep information "off the record?"

(7.4) In some quarters attention has been devoted to the problem of freedom of information--the right of the public and the news media to access of information about the activities of government. From your point of view, how serious do you believe this problem to be in keeping information flowing to the public?

(7.5) Do you know if Montana has any kind of freedom of information statute or statutes? If so, what is your understanding of this statute or these statutes?
8. What obligation is the policy-maker generally under to give consideration to public opinion in policy formulation?

(8.1) Upon what sources of public opinion can the policy-maker generally rely?

(8.2) Do you regard yourself as having any function of articulating public opinion for the policy-maker?

9. Some observers of government-press relations have argued that the relationship is one of inherent conflict, others that it is inherently harmonious. Do you think either is the case, and, in any event, how critical are government-press relations to the operation of democracy?

Additional questions for part-time PIOs

1. Why doesn't your agency have a full-time PIO?

2. Do you think the present set-up provides the public with the information it needs to act as informed citizens?

3. Would you say public information is a major or minor part of your job?
APPENDIX C

Government Agencies Included In Survey

FEDERAL:

Director  
Department of Agriculture  
616 Helena Ave., Helena.

Commander  
Department of Army  
Headquarters  
501 Euclid Ave., Helena

Director  
Social Security Administration  
616 Helena Ave., Helena

Director  
Department of Housing and Urban Development  
616 Helena Ave., Helena

Director  
Fish & Wildlife Service  
Power Block Bldg., Helena

Director  
Veterans Employment Service  
ESC Building, Helena

Director  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Department of Transportation  
313 Airport, Helena

Director  
Veterans Administration  
Ft. Harrison, Montana

Director  
U.S. Forest Service  
616 Helena Ave., Helena

Director  
Federal Housing Administration  
616 Helena Ave., Helena

Director  
Food and Drug Administration  
Power Block Bldg., Helena

Director  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Department of Interior  
638 Logan, Helena

Director  
Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training  
Department of Labor  
Power Block Bldg., Helena

Director  
Selective Service  
State Headquarters  
616 Helena Ave., Helena

Director  
Federal Highway Administration  
Bureau of Public Roads  
501 N. Fee, Helena
STATE:

John J. Womack
Adjutant General (National Guard)
State Arsenal Building
Main and Lyndale, Helena

Robert L. Woodahl
Attorney General
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

*Chairman
Railroad and Public Service Commission
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

Chief Justice
Montana Supreme Court
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

*Chairman of Board
State Board of Equalization
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

Chairman
Employment Security Commission
ESC Building, Helena

Chairman
Labor, Industry and Apprenticeship Council
Sam W. Mitchell Building
Helena, Montana

Executive
Board of Examiners
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

*Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

*Agencies in which interviews were conducted.
STATE: (continued)

State Controller
Department of Administration
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

Director
Civil Defense Agency
State Arsenal Building
Main and Lyndale.
Helena, Montana

*Department of Welfare
Administrator
10th and North Ewing
Helena, Montana

Chairman
Industrial Accident Board
Front and 14th Street
Helena, Montana

Commissioner
Lands and Investments
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

Administrator
Liquor Control Board
Front and Lyndale
Helena, Montana

*Executive Officer
Department of Health
W.F. Cogswell Building
Helena, Montana

*State Highway Engineer
Highway Commission
6th Ave. and Roberts
Helena, Montana

Chief
Highway Patrol
1014 National Ave.--Hustad Center
Helena, Montana
STATE: (continued)

Secretary of Board
Public Employees' Retirement System
1712 9th Ave.
Helena, Montana

*Director
Department of Institutions
Sam W. Mitchell Building
Helena, Montana

*Director
Water Resources Board
Sam W. Mitchell Building
Helena, Montana

Director
Department of Planning and Economic Development
Governor's Old Mansion
Helena, Montana

*Director
Fish and Game Commission
Sam W. Mitchell Building
Helena, Montana

*Executive Secretary
Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
325 Fuller Avenue
Helena, Montana

*Executive Secretary
University System
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

*Commissioner
Department of Agriculture
Capitol Annex Building
Helena, Montana

Executive Director
Commission on Aging
Room 411, Mitchell Building
Helena, Montana

Director
Aeronautics Commission
Airport
Helena, Montana
STATE: (continued)

State Director
Veterans Welfare Commission
Horsky Building
Helena, Montana

Executive Director
Montana Legislative Council
State Capitol Building
Helena, Montana

State Boards and Agencies not included in survey:

Grass Conservation Commission, Council on Natural
Resources and Development, State Soil Conservation Committee,
State Water Pollution Control Council (I covered this under
the Department of Health).

State Board of Morticians, Abstracters Board of
Examiners, Board of Architectural Examiners, Board of Barber
Examiners, Board of Medical Examiners, State Board of
Examiners in Optometry, State Board of Chiropractic Examiners,
Montana Real Estate Commission, State Electrical Board,
State Board of Massage Examiners, State Board of Registration
for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors, State Board
of Nursing, Water Well Contractors' Examining Board, State
Board of Dental Examiners, State Examining Board of
Cosmetology, State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners,
Board of Plumbing Examiners, Board of Certification for Water
and Waste Water Operators, Board of Examiners in Accountancy,
Board of Chiropody Medical Examiners, State Board of Pharmacy,
STATE: (continued)
Sanitarians Registration Council, Board of Examiners for
Coal Mine Foreman and Examiners.

Individual units of the state university system.
Montana Wheat Research and Marketing Committee,
Livestock Sanitary Board, Milk Control Board, Montana
Livestock Commission, Agriculture and Livestock Council,
State Board of Hail Insurance, Wool Laboratory Advisory
Committee, State Entomologist, Western Interstate Commission
for Higher Education, Columbia Interstate Compact Commission,
Commission on Uniform State Laws, Horse Racing Commission,
Montana Arts Council, County Printing Commission, Board of
Arbitration and Conciliation, Labor Safety Study Commission,
Personnel Commission, State Athletic Commission, Montana
Historical Society, State Board of Pardons, Montana Motor
Vehicle Reciprocity Board, State Depository Board, Montana
Highway Patrolmen's Retirement Board, Co-Ordinator of Indian
Affairs, State Board of Food Distributors, Teachers Retirement
Board, State Library Commission, Board of State Canvassers,
Law Enforcement Academy, State Board of Eugenics, Civil
Defense Advisory Council, Advisory Committee on Boiler Rules,
Outdoor Recreation and Advisory and Planning Committee,
Law Enforcement Teletypewriter Communications Committee,
Advisory Council on Prison-Made Goods, Hospital and Long-Term
Care Facility Advisory Council, Advisory Committee on
STATE: (continued)

Predatory Animal Control, State Mosquito Advisory Committee and Fire Prevention Advisory Commission.
News Gathering Organizations In Capital

United Press International
36 W. 6th Ave.
Helena, Montana

Associated Press
317 Allen
Helena, Montana

Great Falls Tribune, Capital Bureau
309 Allen
Helena, Montana

Lee Newspapers, Capital Bureau
317 Allen
Helena, Montana

Intermountain Network News
2433 N. Mont Ave.
Helena, Montana
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Stone, Max. chief of Information and Education Division, Department of Figh & Game, interview, Helena, Montana, April 4, 1971.