

WHAT SURVEY DO YOU BELIEVE?

By ARVILLE SCHALEBEN, *managing editor, Milwaukee Journal.*

USEFUL news and real knowledge, like everything else of value, are not to be obtained easily through, for example, the flick of a switch. They must be worked for, studied for, and thought for. This truism is what caused me to wonder about John Tebbel's answer to *Saturday Review's* headline question, "What News Does the Public Believe?" in the March 10 issue. In print, I think, his answer does not stand analysis well.

Mr. Tebbel reported that while 57 per cent of the "2,000-case statistically accurate representative cross section of the United States population over twenty-one years of age" usually get most of its news of the world from newspapers (compared to television, 52 per cent; radio, 34 per cent; and magazines, 9 per cent), newspaper people ought really to be concerned because: 39 per cent called television "most believable," a jump of 10 per cent in two years," while newspapers at 24 per cent had dropped from 32 per cent, with radio (12) and magazines (10) unchanged.

The article was based on a survey by Elmo Roper and Associates, a reputable opinion research firm whose proprietor is one of *Saturday Review's* editors-at-large. It had validity for some readers, I suppose, and I myself do not question that Mr. Roper accurately reported the answers his surveyors got.

But the article did not tell you that the survey of Mr. Roper's "2,000-case statistically accurate representative cross section of the United States population over twenty-one years of age" was paid for by the Television Information Office. We need to know that to judge the allegations.

We should have been told, too, how the Television Information Office survey came about.

In elsewhere using the results, the Television Information Office said the Roper office held full control over the survey design, wording of questions, and field work for the survey in 1961.

The 1961 survey paralleled—as far as practicable—the Roper study done in December, 1959.

Q. Why did the Television Information Office hire Mr. Roper to do the 1959 survey?

A. To help the television industry before the Federal Communications Commission at the time the industry was in deep unhappiness over the quiz shows.

Thus, while Roper and Associates "completely controlled" the 1961 survey, it was patterned after the 1959 survey, which bore a happy result for the Television Information Office just when the industry needed some cheer.

THE first of the parallel questions of 1959 and 1961 asked where most people said they got their news. Newspapers scored 57 per cent in both surveys, and TV 52 per cent in 1961 and 51 per cent in 1959.

Answers to question two revealed in 1961 that "the public continues to be far less concerned about possible negative aspects of television than about other public issues." The respondent had been handed a card listing ten issues, such as the testing of atomic bombs, the increasing amount of juvenile delinquency, dishonest labor leaders, government officials accepting bribes, international disarmament, and "the bad effects of TV on children." Against that kind of competition, the moral question involving TV finished absolutely dead last. It just goes to show you, even in the broadcasters' own survey, that some people just won't take TV as seriously as international disarmament.

The answers to the third question showed that "the majority continues to feel that schools, newspapers, and television are doing a good job."

You might wonder what questions two and three have to do with "believable" news. So do I. But the Tebbel article did not discuss the varied nature of the Roper survey, so I will.

Now came this question in both surveys: "If you got conflicting reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines, and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe—the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?"

Seventeen per cent of the "2,000-case statistically accurate representative cross section of the United States population over twenty-one years of age" answered "don't know." The others caused Roper Associates to tell the Television Information Office, in the

percentages Mr. Tebbel noted for you, "Here television seems to have scored a rather impressive gain and newspapers a corresponding loss."

A question relating directly to what news the public believes was asked also, and also in 1961, by the Gallup Poll (American Institute of Public Opinion) for comparison with its 1957 study of the American press. Nobody hired Gallup to do these studies—not the American Newspaper Publishers Association, nor the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, nor Hearst, nor Newhouse, nor the *Times* of Los Angeles, New York, or London.

I don't know why Dr. George Gallup did the surveys. But it wasn't because the newspapers were concerned with the honesty of their crossword puzzles.

Here is Gallup's question in 1957 and 1961, approximating, in effect, Roper's believability question in 1959 and 1961 but much better weighing, I feel, what the respondent believed about news: "What has been your experience—in the things you have known about personally, has your newspaper got the facts straight?"

Sixty-seven per cent of the men and 71 per cent of the women answered yes, 26 per cent of the men and 22 per cent of the women said no, 7 per cent of each said they couldn't say. What do those percentages mean as to what news people believe? Is Gallup right? Is Roper wrong?

Gallup asked about things the respondent knew *personally* and Roper asked: If you heard "conflicting reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines, and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe?"

I ask: which survey question is most likely to give you a believable answer?

MASS communicators depend overwhelmingly—almost exclusively in the case of most radio and TV stations and newspapers—on the Associated Press and United Press International for wire news. What "conflicting reports?"

The Gallup polls and the Roper polls had one remarkably identical question. Gallup asked, "Where do you get most of your information about what is going on in the world (Gallup's capitalization)—from magazines, TV, radio, or newspapers?" Roper asked, "I'd like to ask you where you

usually get most of your news about what's going on in the world today—from the newspapers or radio or television or talking to people or where?" Here are the 1961 results (some persons got news equally from two sources):

	Gallup	Roper
Newspapers	60%	57%
TV	52½%	52%
Radio	21%	34%
Magazines	18%	9%
People	—	5%
Don't know	—	3%

The Television Information Office report on the Roper survey did not break down these percentages (though it said Roper's "believability findings held consistently in all subgroups of the study sample . . . at all socioeconomic and educational levels." Gallup explicitly reported substantial differences in answers from different parts of the population. This is important in judging *what* public believes *whose* news. For example, Gallup said that in households headed by a professional or business person, 70 per cent named newspapers and 44 per cent television, and among manual workers, 59 per cent newspapers and 55 per cent television.

Both commercial and academic surveys have shown these differences for years. That's no surprise, of course. The people with the highest income have greater reading skills.

Hardly anyone would dispute that entertainment in your house is fun. Thus another Roper survey question produced a predictable answer.

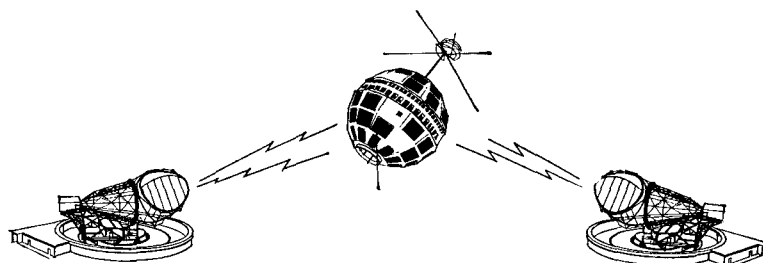
Q. Suppose you could continue to have only one of the following—radio, television, newspapers, or magazines—which one of the four would you want to keep?

A. Television, 42 per cent; newspapers, 28; radio, 22; magazines, 4; Don't know, 4.

But wait—

Audits and Surveys (polling 4,826 people for the distinctly interested Newsprint Information Committee) asked: Assuming you could not watch TV or read a newspaper for quite some time, "which of these statements comes closest to describing how you would feel about it?" The results are at the bottom of this page.

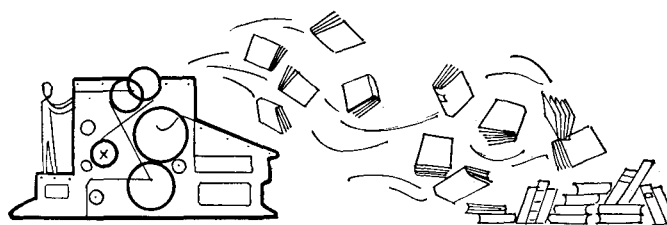
Judge for yourself what question and



During the recent seventy-fifth anniversary convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, editors and publishers were given a dramatic demonstration of news sent via the AT&T's satellite Telstar. A full-size model of Telstar was successfully used by Eugene J. McNeely, president of AT&T, to send a 250-word news story from the transmitter to a receiver on the convention stage of the Waldorf-Astoria. The story described what was being done via satellite and it came through on perforated tape at the rate of 1,000 words a minute.

The Telstar itself will probably be launched this month by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and will orbit at altitudes of 500 to 3,000 miles. The 170-pound sphere will serve as a microwave tower in the sky. Its use in transmitting news anywhere in the world is almost unlimited.

ANPA members were greatly impressed—and as they left the meeting they were handed a sheet of paper containing the 250-word news story they had just seen transmitted on the platform via Telstar relay.



which results tell you most about whose news the public believes.

Creative Research, Inc., found, in a study paid for by a large house construction firm in 1958: The newspaper "is able to take the role of an authoritative and comprehensive source of information. It is, therefore, trusted."

The Institute for Motivational Research, Inc., found in 1960: "Our studies in the TV field as well as the magazine area tend to reveal a somewhat higher prestige value attached to magazines and newspapers."

The Psychological Corporation made an interesting study (I don't know why, especially) among 2,000 household heads which resulted in 84 per cent saying that "his neighbors respect" a person "who reads newspapers a great deal" and that only 47 per cent "respect" a person "who watches television a great deal."

The American Newspaper Publishers Association told me the same survey found that 73 per cent named newspapers and 23 per cent television as the place they would expect to find "most of the things you really need to know in your daily life," 70 per cent named newspapers and 24 per cent TV as the place where they would most expect to find "information about how a person should act to get along in his community," and 87 per cent named newspapers and 10 per cent television as the place to find "information about what people around here have been doing lately."

"But television did show up well on several other content features," ANPA boasted. "Eighty-nine per cent mentioned it as the place to find 'relaxing entertainment that serves no other useful purpose' and 91 per cent as the place to find 'stories about things that couldn't really happen.'"

Naturally I don't begrudge the publishing industry's glee in what most opinion surveys show about what news the public believes. What you believe depends upon what you are, and what you are depends on what you know solidly, rather than on what you get from fleeting sound or sight.

	TV	Newspapers
"Would feel lost without it"	28%	49%
"Would miss but could get used to it"	36%	30%
"Could easily do without"	36%	21%

HOW TO WRITE A PERFECT EDITORIAL

By RALPH SCHOENSTEIN

JOURNALISTS have been writing editorials since the *Eden Examiner* said: "Things have come to a pretty pass when it's unsafe to walk on the Garden's fashionable East Side. It is to be hoped that the Power-That-Be will do more than merely deport Mr. Cain and others of his ilk. May we therefore suggest that remedial legislation also be forthcoming from Him to curb this shocking outbreak of terror that poses an ever-present threat to the security of the entire fallen world."

This first editorial writer was good, but he could have been better. (He was, let it be noted, too blunt in his attack on organized religion.) Forthcoming, then, are a few simple rules by which any right-thinking scribe can pen the Perfect Editorial, a task fraught with significance for our day and age.

Rule 1. Qualify your remarks so they can keep pace with the rapidly changing world picture, especially on that island in a red sea, West Berlin. Therefore, take firm stands only for "the unity of the free world, now more than ever" and against "further injustice to the already overburdened taxpayer." Be that as it may, on any day of days, you may also stand firm for welcoming a new hockey team to town or congratulating a state on the hundredth anniversary of its attempt to leave the Union; but otherwise, middle-of-the-road-it-with, "Though this is bad, it well could be worse," and "Good though this may be, well it could be better," two bread-and-butter thoughts that can often be used in the same editorial.

Rule 2. Know how to shift your position, a short trip if you've followed rule 1. Remember that the safest distance between two points is the middle of the road. If you don't stray from it, few will note when you change your mind. This rule is especially useful on the day after the defeat of your candidate, when you can take pen in hand:

"May we now point with pride to the fact that today we're neither Democrats nor Republicans: we're (Americans) (Chippewas). Let it not be denied that we had certain major reservations about the competence of Mr. Johnny Doe to (serve in the Senate) (haul our garbage). But now the peo-

ple (have) (has) spoken and we abide by their (will) (wisdom) (whim). Let us then close ranks behind Mr. Johnny Doe, who now has a genuine opportunity to prove. However, by the same token, may we continue our honest evaluation of his work, casting grave doubt when necessary, for this is the stuff of democracy. As to how it will all turn out, that remains to be seen, for in our book, performance not words is what counts."

Rule 3. Stay cool by avoiding the active voice. Never say, "Since we have tried too long to look the other way, we now have probed these shocking new burdens to the already overburdened taxpayer and suggest remedial legislation as the remedy." This is awkward as well as rash. Rather, say, "Since the other way has too long been looked by us, it now has been probe-revealed by (us) (this newspaper) that the shocking new burdens to the already overburdened taxpayer can be remedied only by remedial-type legislation." There is no point of view that this doesn't cover. It has been eloquently used to both support and oppose capital punishment.

Eloquent-wise, Rules 1 and 3 are beautifully blended in the following chestnut, whose crisp straddling yet vague effectiveness are to be noted by you. "The mayor is to be commended." This is an ideal phrase when you're not sure how you feel about the mayor; for one of its meanings is that the commendation needn't come today: it can come any time the mayor decides to do something right.



Rule 4. Use strong words. Though the passive voice gives your editorial a professional detachment, another big plus is needed. It is to be regretted that not enough journalists know the best words to be voiced passively. As has been said so well by the Pulitzer Prize Committee, it's not only how you say it but also what you say. As a case in point: "After delving for a closer look, it is clear to us that the next move in this cat-and-mouse game, both now and for the long pull, is to have respect evinced for law and order." Some writers feel that evinced is jargon, so they prefer evidenced. Don't worry about the difference between them: evinced and evidenced can be used as interchangeably as effect and effectuate, orient and orientate, and potent and potentate.

Rule 5. Avoid creativity, lest you confuse the few people who read your editorials. For example, a reader would be uneasy if you called West Berlin "an island in a dead sea." Moreover, in the Cold War struggle, you must never "note with alarm:" anything alarming must be "viewed" or it isn't worth the fuss. The well-tempered editorialist cannot note with alarm any more than he can "gesticulate with pride," any more than his world can be "chock full with crisis." It would be like saving of the noted just-deceased, "He will be remembered." Telephone numbers are remembered: a great man "is missed."

Can you imagine a prestige-producing event being followed by the words, "(Americans) (Coney Islanders) have better posture today, for (Colonel Glenn has orbited the earth) (the new sewer has gone through)." Of course not. Only our military defense has better posture: people "stand a little taller"—now more than ever.

These, then, are the guideposts; the rest is up to you; the time has come for decision. Clearly, what is needed now more than at any time in our history is for your editorials not only to evince but, in a larger sense, to also implement support for the entire non-Communist block. Performing with words though you may be, it's performance not words that counts. When right-thinking Fourth Estaters are tallied, never let it be said that you will be missed.