

of truthful information which the public needs pertaining to crimes and criminals in our society in the light of growing problems of law enforcement at the local, state, and national level."

Potter's more recent protest against the bar association's drastic proposals called them "too likely to result in the withholding of information to which the public has a right." Concerning adoption of regulations limiting what officials may say publicly about criminal matters, Potter told the bar association point-blank that the proposal gives no guidelines and is therefore too broad and vague. Combining the ANPA and NNA statements on the bar association's proposal for news curbs in criminal cases, one comes very quickly to the conclusion that a knock-down drag-out battle and a bloody one has begun in earnest between those who publish news, particularly local news, in the weekly and daily newspapers of the United States and the profession of law, to whom news is a four-letter word.

**T**HOUGH there is nothing new in the continuing conflict between those who arrest, prosecute, defend, and try criminals in this country and those who report such events, this is by all odds the loudest head-on collision in our memory, and it is not going to be silenced overnight. The anomaly goes back to the American Constitution, which guarantees Americans the right of free press and also the right to a fair trial. In the famous Sheppard murder case, the Cleveland papers were accused of having tried Dr. Sheppard on their front pages and having made it impossible for him to have a fair trial in the Cleveland area. The highest court in this country agreed with these sentiments; at retrial Dr. Sheppard was acquitted.

The enmity between the legal and journalistic professions is as old as time, yet completely understandable. A newspaper reporter in Great Britain has far less leeway in discussing, prior to trial, an alleged criminal's confession or any other circumstances that might prejudice a jury, but it has always been open season on anyone arrested in the United States, often to the discredit of the U.S. newspaper. Just the same, we do not want to see our arrest and trial procedures move deeper and deeper into the shadows of the kangaroo court where the behavior of judge and jury, prosecutor and defense counsel, police witness and expert, are not part of the open public record. The evils of the star chamber are, for us, far worse than occasional damage done in a criminal case by premature or excessive publicity. News is a precious right and seldom the sort of four-letter word the bar association suggests, and we move away from that right at our own peril. —R. L. T.

## Letters to the Communications Editor



### Journalism and Degrees

THERE IS ANOTHER side to the picture presented in "Where Are Tomorrow's Journalists?" by Alfred Balk, [SR, Jan. 8], and "Please Don't Steal My Reporters," by Frank B. Gilbreth [SR, Oct. 8]. Both of the above-cited articles emphasize the lack of journalism school graduates. Perhaps this is the problem. Back in the "good old days" an editor didn't want to know which school you had graduated from—all he wanted to know was whether or not you could write. Nowadays, he's apt to be more interested in what school you came out of than in what you can do.

I'm a free-lance writer, with a seesaw income that fluctuates between \$60 and \$600 a month. I've plenty of credits, I wield a mean camera, and I've been trying to get a job on a newspaper for several years. I sold my first article when I was fourteen, and, for me, a college education would have been impossible. But without that piece of paper, I can't get a job on a newspaper.

To my way of thinking, the newspapers themselves have created a closed society of journalism school graduates. So long as editors are unwilling to look beyond their noses for good writers, I can't see that they have any valid complaint.

GAIL BARCLAY.

Kailua, Hawaii.

### Weather News, Clear or Cloudy

THE MERE IMPOSITION upon a TV weather program of a Seal of Approval by the American Meteorological Society [see "Weather or Not," SR, Nov. 12] insures that the man on camera is serenely at peace over the difficult distinction between an isobar and a rain gauge, but it in no way insures that the viewer is going to receive a clear idea of what tonight's and tomorrow's weather is all about. The reasons:

1) The weather reporter, on radio or TV, seldom if ever defines his terms. He seldom bothers to explain what a "high" is, what a "low" is, and why they're important in understanding the forecast. He seldom bothers to explain what a barometer is and what it does. The typical TV weatherman usually spends his precious minutes telling us what we can plainly see for ourselves: namely, that the temperature in Boston is 46, in Worcester, 42, in Portland, 44, while over here in Burlington, it's a rather nippy 38 degrees. Surely one doesn't need a seal of approval to elaborate the obvious—not at those prices.

2) The weather reporter on TV or radio, whether ex-chorus girl, reclaimed disc jockey, or earnest young man still flushed from a laying on of hands by the AMS, hardly ever bothers to explain the *whyfor* of the weather. Having never explained what a "front" is (and how it got that name), he

can hardly explain how it works and why it produces (or sometimes fails to produce) the weather it does.

Radio, lacking visual tools, must resort to language—to analogy—to help the listener make some sense out of the jumble of figures thrown at him at the end of a newscast. The easiest way to do this is to describe the weather in terms of *clothes*, since many if not most people think of it in those terms. Moreover, there is no FCC rule which would prevent a radio weather reporter from trying to explain the cause of a few days of dismal weather by saying something such as: "The weathermen say there's a pool of cold and wet air lying overhead, and that it can't help but drop its moisture on us. Living underneath a pool of cold air is like living in the apartment underneath that of your mother-in-law—conditions are always unsettled, windy, and cold."

We shall never see this problem resolved until weathermen become announcers or announcers become weathermen. The latter, actually, is the more likely. They need not become full professionals, but they can learn enough, certainly, to understand the basics and to *explain* them to those who do not; to understand the thinking behind the forecast and *explain* it; to understand the weather freaks and *explain* them. Better that they leave the actual forecasting to the full professionals, and content themselves with *explaining* what the professionals are doing.

DOMINIC R. QUINN.

Scituate, Mass.

IN THE SPRING of 1965 and on November 12 of this year your Communications Supplement editorial made reference to the North American Newspaper Alliance poll. The first time I noted to you several criticisms of the "poll." Here we are—more than one year later—and you are still using this data. However, there is an issue of overwhelming importance which still remains—the research sampling method used. It seems that readers who have an interest in the subject matter of a poll such as this tend to become respondents to it. A sample selection method such as this raises many important questions such as: Who are these people, what motivated them to respond, how do they differ from readers not responding, what are the attitudes of non-respondents?

A common fallacy relating to opinion research is that the size of the sample makes up for shortcomings in its content. This is simply not true. As a case in point, I draw your attention to a magazine poll completed in September 1936. This poll predicted a huge Roosevelt loss in the upcoming election which, as history has demonstrated, proved to be incorrect. Investigation revealed that the magazine collected the opinions of several hundred thousand peo-

ple. However, most of them were readers of that magazine who, it turned out, were well above average in education and income. In the minds of these respondents, Roosevelt was a poor choice. However, their opinions differed widely from the majority of voters—a group whose opinions were ignored in that sample.

Still another aspect of the NANA poll which you should be more concerned with is the question wording that was used. Frequently, the wording of a question has a drastic influence upon answers to it. For example, a respondent might be forced to choose between two answers—neither of which represents his feelings—and would be forced to select the one which is closest to his real desire. Extending this logic to the present situation, a question such as “Do you like a large quantity of detailed meteorological information in your weather forecast or do you like none at all?” would probably yield a different response than “Do you like a lot of detailed meteorological information in your weather forecast, some detailed information, or none at all?”

The prosecution rests.

DAVID A. SCHWARTZ,  
Senior Project Director,  
Audits & Surveys Company, Inc.

New York, N.Y.

### Ann Landers, Pro & Con

THE ANN LANDERS article [“Behind the Advice Column,” SR, Nov. 12] was direct without a hint of hubris. Her article should do much in subduing the didactic disdain of many professionals. Those who disclaim her should quickly sense that her prime purpose is to provide an ear for those melancholy voices which have been muted by apathetic arrogance. Her laconic eloquence is a connection to common sense, serving as a go-between for the unhappy, and the uninformed who wish to communicate with empathetic authority.

To be such a liaison for the lonely, the lost, one needs heart, not academic honors. This lady knows her limitations, but unlike most who would languish over them she has successfully lent her lore to those who have no one else to lean upon.

ELAYNE LANSBURG.

Encino, Calif.

LET’S HAVE more feature stories on people like Ann Landers by people like Ann Landers. That’s where the real people are, not on the editorial pages.

HENRY J. FREYLIGER.

New York, N.Y.

IT IS INDEED unfortunate when a magazine of the stature of SR lends space to the self-congratulatory banterings of an individual of Ann Landers’s caliber. It is distressing that a thousand people a day must turn for ethical and practical advice to a woman who is without qualifications for such a position, with the exception of her amazing ability to parrot and apply nineteenth-century mores.

More distressing, however, is the vast amount of ignorance and fear and stupidity distributed through her column. One can only speculate as to how many people’s lives have been marred because they took the advice of a pretentious housewife whose

background in ethics and morality does not appear to go beyond a Sunday School primer.

This woman who spreads moral bigotry and stupidity, for a price, in our daily newspapers may well be this decade’s answer to Elmer Gantry.

ED STEWART.

Dallas, Tex.

### Me, Myself, and I

WILLIAM H. FRANKHAUSER of Coldwater, Michigan, does have a point [Letters to the Communications Editor, Nov. 12]. The word *myself* is never a personal pronoun (“John and myself”), and its intensive use is indeed “weak-kneed” (I, myself, think it’s a good plan”). However, Mr. Frankhauser has overlooked a most important use for the compound pronoun: its reflexive action. Without *myself*, how does Mr. Frankhauser propose to announce such achievements as “I cut myself while shaving this morning”?

Please, Mr. Frankhauser, “leave us not” commit the error of “throwing out the baby with the [cold] water”! Instead, let us be careful to use *myself* only in the correct manner, intensively (for emphasis on special demand) and reflexively (to show action upon the doer).

RUTH C. CLARK,  
Instructor, English Department,  
Oklahoma Baptist University.

Shawnee, Okla.

I SPRING to the defense of *myself*. William H. Frankhauser of Coldwater would like

to see it deleted from our language. He gives only one correct use: for emphasis. (“I think it’s a good plan, myself.”) But how about the following: “I had to pinch *myself* to be sure I wasn’t dreaming.” “I scratched *myself* on that rough board.” “No, teacher, my parents didn’t help me. I did it *myself*.”

And what would poor Humpty Dumpty use in its place in:

I took a corkscrew from the shelf:  
I went to wake them up myself.

How dull the commercial without the line, “Please, mother, I want to do it *myself*.” Off to oblivion such pop lyrics as “All By Myself in the Moonlight” and “Me, Myself, and I.”

But perhaps the word is worth saving if only for the very young, or for the handicapped undergoing rehabilitation. How can the pride in accomplishment be expressed more succinctly and directly than, “I can do it *myself*!”

Please, Mr. Frankhauser, stop throwing Coldwater at innocent words! Our language is richer for having so many; you have your own choice—you’re not forced to use any.

MRS. DORIS L. PERTZ.

Pine Brook, N.J.

MOTTO SUGGESTED for those bothered by GO SLOW signs: THINK BIGLY!

A. GROVE DAY,  
Senior Professor of English,  
University of Hawaii.

Honolulu, Hawaii



“As long as you’re up, get me a grant.”

# THE TRIALS OF STATEHOUSE JOURNALISM

By TOM LITTLEWOOD

**R**ECENTLY thirty-six promising young state legislators from the eighteen largest states unburdened themselves of their frustrations at a seminar in Miami arranged by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University and financed by the Carnegie Corporation. Prominent among their grievances was the state of press coverage of their legislatures.

They felt that the nation's press had given up on the legislatures as a workable, innovative branch of government. On one side, they saw at the Statehouse inexperienced, underpaid beginners trying gamely to cope with their confusing and difficult assignment; at the other extreme, cynical oldtimers worn down by the drudgery and conditioned subconsciously over the years to become part of the inbred system they're writing about. The end result, the legislators concluded, is reporting that tends to be dull, superficial, preoccupied with scandal, and pitched to the antics of the publicity-minded celebrities in their midst.

After ten years of covering the Illinois legislature in Springfield for the Chicago *Sun-Times*, I can attest to the validity of many of their complaints. It is at least equally evident, though, that many legislators are ignorant of the reporter's complex problems. To do his job well, the good reporter needs to be detective, political scientist, and technical specialist in public administration, the law, psychology, and diverse other disciplines.

Understandably absorbed in their own activities, few legislators are aware of the magnitude of the Statehouse correspondent's beat. In addition to covering the legislature—which in Illinois meets in regular session every other year for six months—he is responsible for reporting on the executive and judicial branches of state government. In a large state such as Illinois this can be a big order. Along with the governor, there are independently elected state officers, such as attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer, and chief education officer. The departments and agencies in the executive branch have grown phe-

nomenally, in some cases if only in order to handle and pass on ever increasing federal grants. Their responsibilities include hospitals, penal institutions, tax collection, higher education, the regulation of various business and public service activities—hundreds of vital affairs involving thousands of state employees and requiring a biennial budget of more than \$1 billion. All this means the conscientious reporter has little time for leisurely reflection when the legislature is in session.

Here, for example, is how a typical day in Springfield might go: First thing in the morning the governor may hold a press conference—and, though it never fails to irritate legislators, the governor commands public attention. Or perhaps the state supreme court is handing down opinions which must be digested, translated into English, and, if possible, made some sense of. Then, too, the level of public morality is such in Illinois that a local grand jury may well be dealing with some irregularity of statewide interest that must be followed carefully.

New bills that are introduced once the day's legislative session begins must be screened and evaluated as to their importance and impact. The action on the floor of the legislature must be covered. Stories must be written and transmitted either by Western Union or telephone. And a couple of times in the midst of the literary production an editorial writer or someone else from the Chicago office might call with a question about some legislative happening.

In the afternoon, if the reporter has any stamina left, there are committee sessions. These are often the most significant of all the day's activities. But their prospective importance is difficult

to judge in advance. Along with the endless stream of news releases—which, unfortunately, often try to obscure the meaning of the news—there may also be voluminous reports from some administrative agencies or state commissions to scan. In the evening there are likely to be obligatory social events. And, on top of it all, if the reporter works for an afternoon newspaper he has the ever-present “overnight” to file—a story composed in the middle of the night for use the next day.

But time and stamina are the simplest of the reporter's concerns. In any Statehouse the legislator and the journalist who is reporting his activities may be surprised to find themselves sharing a common problem: the difficulty in obtaining reliable factual information about what is really going on. For our tradition of part-time citizen-legislators has meant that the only pros in the legislature are the managerial cliques who profitably preserve their monopoly of insight. The committee system thus is made ineffective and the legislator-in-the-ranks lacks the tools for doing his job.

**I**N Springfield we once were presented with the spectacle of the chairman of the legislative budget-screening agency frantically resisting efforts to supply him with a professional staff. As it was, sometimes only he knew the inner significance of a budgetary item. With a staff of analysts, others might know too! By reducing his exclusive insight, this state of affairs would thus reduce his personal power.

Information and insight are hardest to come by in the final hours of the legislative session when the managers have contrived to cram together most of the important decisions. For the first five months of the session, when everyone is eager and wide-eyed, the yeast is allowed to ferment and little of any substance is settled. Then, in order to finish on time, it is often necessary in the final days to hold all-night sessions. Legislators and reporters alike are bewildered and exhausted as hundreds of bills sail through or sink. The public interest be damned, let's go home.

The *Sun-Times*, in its bureau, uses at least two, usually three—and sometimes more—men during the session. But the smaller newspapers and broadcasting stations depend for most of their legislative news on one or both of the major



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