

9 Broadcasting and Containment

I have saved the most obvious consequence of the movement-media history for last. Some of what the movement wanted to broadcast, about the world and about its own purposes and its nature, *got broadcast*.

Opposition movements enter the media spotlight for rational purposes. They want to recruit supporters and sympathizers. They want to challenge the authority of the dominant institutions. They want to attract, or at least to neutralize, third forces.¹ They may want the protection that publicity affords when they vocally and visibly confront a liberal conscience with threats to its values. They want to place issues on local or national political agendas. They may want to intimate new social possibilities by broadcasting images of a counterculture. They may want to redress specific grievances. Toward these ends it is difficult to see how an opposition movement can avoid addressing the mass media at some point in its career.

So the temptation of the radical movement of the sixties into the realm of the spectacle was not simply a result of its organizational and personal frailties. Not only were there powerful rational arguments in behalf of using the spotlight, but publicity did have many of the effects intended. It diffused some of the ideas, some of the concerns, some of the terms of the movement. It diffused them in an oversimplified and often distorted and debased form—in a

diffuse form, one might say—but it did diffuse them. Publicity helped antiwar feeling become a normal fact of American political life. In the South, television brought startling news of civil rights activity to the cabins of illiterate sharecroppers;² and it brought images of repression—those unblinkable cattle prods, those police dogs of Birmingham—to the living rooms of Northern liberals, and helped mobilize them into the financial base of the movement and the political base for its achievements (and its limits) in national politics. For isolated civil rights workers in dangerous areas of the Deep South in the early sixties, attention in the national press was a form of protection against local sheriffs.³ Even SNCC, which dis-trusted reporters and preferred not to speak with them at all, found it did not dare shirk the spotlight.

Movement workers were deeply ambivalent about publicity, and for good reason. True, participants in almost all movements seek "psychic gratification" in media coverage; the short-lived thrill of getting in the papers or getting on television helps compensate for the arduousness of movement work and the inevitable setbacks.⁴ But as I've already argued, movement people were not exceptionally narcissistic men and women; indeed, in their capacity to commit themselves to projects beyond their immediate gratifications, they may well have been less narcissistic than the norm. More to the point is the fact that publicity can be partial compensation for the unrewarding ardors of political work. Harvey Molotch is right to say that movements' concern with publicity flows not only from "activists' own knowledge that media are the means for organizational goal attainment" but from "the activists' sense that media coverage means that what they do *matters in the world*."⁵ Even framed amidst commercials and the clutter of other bits of "information," even distorted in manifold ways, a single evanescent appearance on the TV evening news permits a semblance of access to an audience many times larger than what one could speak

2. Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Information Machines* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 16-18.

3. Interview, Mania Varela, July 1, 1976. After 1965, when black protest moved North and West, the national coverage, too, turned hostile. According to Varela, "There was a certain point when SNCC was covered as 'young valiant kids' and then there was a certain point when SNCC was given coverage as 'these radicals who wanted to destroy a lot of things'" (*ibid.*).

4. Harvey Molotch, "Media and Movements," unpublished paper, 1977.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

1. See Michael Lipsky, "Protest as a Political Resource," *American Political Science Review* 62 (1968): 1151-1153.

to in a lifetime of nightly community meetings; simultaneously, it sends a message directly to the powers that be. Yet this sort of access can also be delusory, to the extent that media-made reputation is confused with substantive social power over public decisions: in the sixties, the barrage of publicity attending the movement may have raised expectations of quick change among the less experienced rank and file, and the inevitable disappointment of those expectations may have helped drive many of those people out of insurgent politics altogether. Some of the more sophisticated New Left leaders became aware that the spotlight, necessary as it may have been, was also exposing their vulnerabilities, taking the pace of the movement's development out of their hands, and detracting from their ability to define the movement for themselves. They became aware of the problem, but they did not know what to do about it. As the examples of Paul Booth and Dan Siegal show (see Chapters 3 and 5, above), once the spotlight was switched on, whether a leader cooperated with reporters or not did not make a great deal of difference in the nature of the coverage. A more canny and more rooted leader like César Chavez worked for years in obscurity to organize a union before turning to the glare of the mass media.

Precisely what made the mass media valuable instruments for an opposition movement—their capacity for mass exposure—was what made them dangerous. Although in the nature of the case we cannot be terribly certain, it seems plausible that distinct audiences would have interpreted the same media messages in contrary ways, so that the small audience inclined toward militancy had its inclinations reinforced, while the majority audience used the same footage to justify its condemnation of “violent tactics.” Polls of public opinion toward police and demonstrators after the 1968 Chicago and 1970 Kent State demonstrations suggest as much, the pro- and anti-demonstrator opinion tilting toward or away from the police on the basis of the same mediated information. The only relevant empirical studies I know of attribute a limited but real impact to media definitions of social and political reality. For example, a survey of the attitudes of British trade union members toward unofficial strikes showed that the electronic media (but not newspapers) made “a small but significant contribution” to rank-and-file opposition to those strikes, though not to opinion on other social issues. But tempering that effect, the media “had not affected the degree of support for the use of legal penalties in counteract-

ing” unofficial strikes.⁶ Groups of police and uncommitted night-school students watching British television coverage of the 1968 antiwar demonstration in London tended to accept the media version of the events; demonstrators, however, did not.⁷ In other words, *audiences with less direct experience of the situations at issue were more vulnerable to the framings of the mass media.*⁸ In 1967, financial supporters of SDS were estranged indubitably and directly by the *New York Times*'s presentation of the Calvert interview (see Chapter 6, above). In the United States, without the sort of traditional loyalties which British trade unions enjoy, the New Left rank and file especially may well have suffered from media definitions of movement events and concerns; and along with the movement's own sectarianism, media images may have backhandedly coaxed them to withdraw from movement politics altogether. The seventies' prevailing myth, reinforced by the media, that the movement accomplished little has helped isolate it historically from succeeding cohorts: why continue a loser?

All these possibilities suggest that the media helped *contain* the movement in the course of difusing images of it. Unfortunately, most studies of “opinion change” inquire into people's reactions only to relatively brief exposures to discrete messages; but newspaper and especially television coverage of routine events succeeds in framing precisely *through repetition*. I suggest that the more attentive audience in the sixties was able to attend more selectively to images of the movement, while the less attentive and less informed bulk of the audience was more vulnerable to the crude elements of the framing. In 1968, according to one survey, 59 percent of the TV audience said that it drew its main picture of the world from television;⁹ and even for those who still read newspapers, most of the newspaper coverage of deviant activity did not contradict the television framing. About unconscious impacts of repeated frames we can only surmise: for example, conceivably the repeated

6. Jay G. Blumler and Alison J. Ewbank, “Trade Unionists, the Mass Media and Unofficial Strikes,” *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 8 (March 1970): 52.

7. James D. Halloran, Philip Elliott, and Graham Murdock, *Demonstrations and Communication: A Case Study* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 307.

8. This extrapolates the findings presented in Joseph T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 53–60.

9. The Roper Organization, Inc., “Changing Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Mass Media, 1959–1976” (New York: Television Information Office, 1977), p. 3.

association of antiwar activity with futility bolstered the White House view that such activity was a waste of time, if not, indeed, an obstruction of peace. The repeated distinction between moderates and militants probably helped harden that division. In his study of British youth gangs, Stanley Cohen argues that the media, by accentuating the opposition between Mods and Rockers, actually helped bring it about:

Constant repetition of the warring gangs' image . . . had the effect of giving these loose collectivities a structure they never possessed and a mythology with which to justify the structure. . . . Even if these images were not directly absorbed by the actors, they were used to justify control tactics, which . . . still further structured the groups and hardened the barriers between them.

The mass media—and the ideological exploitation of deviance—also reinforced another type of polarization: between the Mods and Rockers on the one hand, and the whole adult community on the other.¹⁰

So it was with the New Left. The media spotlight brought the incandescent light of social attention and then converted it to the heat of reification and judgment. The spotlight turned out to be a magnifying glass. The State used that glass to help point, and justify, its heavy hand of repression. The isolated, inexperienced movement that came from the shadows caught fire under the glass, illuminated the landscape, and burned out; then, dialectically, so did the administration that pushed repression one or two burglaries too far. All opposition movements to come would inherit this history, all the ambiguity and irony of it.

10. Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972), p. 166.

III Hegemony, Crisis, and Opposition

10 Media Routines and Political Crises

THEORIES OF THE NEWS

Where do news frames come from? How are they fixed into the appearance of the stable, the natural, the taken-for-granted? And how, despite this, are the prevailing frames disputed and changed? How are we to understand the systematic denigration of the New Left?

Herbert Gans has recently put forward a list of theories that purport to explain how certain stories are selected as news, a list that will serve as a starting point.¹ First, there are *journalist-centered* theories, which explain the news as a product of professional news judgments. In the extreme form of this viewpoint, journalism is a profession with autonomous criteria for training, recruitment, and promotion, serving the public interest by following its own stated and unstated rules concerning objectivity. Like any other profession, journalism is—or ought to be (there is this tension in thought about the professions generally)—insulated from extrinsic considerations, whether from political pressures, pressures from publishers, news executives, or advertisers, pressures from outside interest groups, or, indeed, conscious or unconscious ideological screens operating within journalists themselves. In less extreme form, such theories are commonly held by journalists, and also by politicians like Nixon and Agnew who hold journalists guilty of a special ideological bias.

1. I adapt the following discussion from Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), pp. 78-80. The typology of theories is essentially Gans's, but I have altered his capsule descriptions considerably.

A second group of theories stresses the *inertia, the sheer habit of news organization*. Some of the organizational theories emphasize commercial imperatives; others, the organizational structure of the news operations themselves.² Compatible with these theories, and not sharply demarcated from them, are the more recent *phenomenological* approaches to news as a social construct, which emphasize the human agency of news, the informal rules which journalists adopt to enable them to process vast amounts of information and to select and repackage it in a form that audiences will accept as The News.³

The third approach is *event-centered*: it argues that news "mirrors" or "reflects" the actual nature of the world. From this point of view, if media treatment of the New Left changed between 1965 and 1969, it must have been because the movement, and the events it was involved in, changed. The mirror metaphor, as Edward Jay Epstein showed, was common among news executives in the late sixties.⁴ Although it has waned in credibility as critics from the first two groups have pointed to the systematic selectivities of news, mirror theory retains a commonsense standing among many journalists and news executives; it is reproduced in Walter Cronkite's nightly closing, "And that's the way it is."

There are also theories which locate the causes of story selection in *institutions or social conditions outside the news organization*: in technological factors, national culture, economics, the audience, the

most powerful news sources, and/or the ideologies of the dominant social powers. As Gans points out, each of these theories has something to recommend it, and each falls short of completeness. Professional, organizational, directly economic and political and ideological forces *together constitute* from the traces of events in the world, images of The News which are limited in definite ways and tilted toward the prevailing frames. Gans himself composes a synthesis of these approaches, viewing "news as information which is transmitted from sources to audiences, with journalists—who are both employees of bureaucratic commercial organizations and members of a profession—summarizing, refining, and altering what becomes available to them from sources in order to make the information suitable for their audiences. Because news has consequences, however, journalists are susceptible to pressure from groups and individuals (including sources and audiences) with power to hurt them, their organizations and their firms. . . . [Sources, journalists, and audiences coexist in a system, although it is closer to being a tug of war than a functionally interrelated organism." These "tugs of war" are in the end "resolved by power," and news is therefore, among other things, in the words of Philip Schlesinger, "the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality."⁵

Gans is right to look both inside and outside news organizations for explanations of the news, and right to conclude that the production of news is a system of power. These conclusions are irresistible; they help comprehend the framing patterns I have demonstrated in Parts I and II. What I seek here is not so much an *alternative* as a *more ample* theoretical domain within which to understand the framing process and the media-movement relationship. For this purpose I want an approach attuned to the particular procedures of journalism, yet sensitive to the fact that journalism exists alongside—and interlocked with—a range of other professions and institutions with ideological functions within an entire social system. I want an approach which is both structural and historical—that is, which can account for regularities in journalistic procedure and product, yet which at the same time can account for historical changes in both. Such an approach should encompass not only news and its frames, but movements and their identities, goals,

5. Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 80, quoting Philip Schlesinger, "The Sociology of Knowledge" (paper presented at the 1972 meeting of the British Sociological Association, March 24, 1972), p. 4.

2. The major organizational studies are Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom," *Social Forces* 33 (May 1955): 467-477; Edward Jay Epstein, *News from Nowhere: Television and the News* (New York: Random House, 1973); Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of News-making* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973); Bernard Roschco, *News-making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); and Robert Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories," *Dialectics* 104 (Spring, 1975): 175-194. Also see the excellent survey of this literature by Philip Elliott, "Media Organizations and Occupations: An Overview," in James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott, eds., *Mass Communication and Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 142-173, and Elliott's bibliography.

3. The major phenomenological studies are Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1972): 660-679; Tuchman, "Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected," *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (July 1974): 110-131; Tuchman, *Making News* (New York: The Free Press, 1978); Harvey L. Molotch and Marilyn J. Lester, "News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals," *American Sociological Review* 39 (February 1974): 101-112; and Molotch and Lester, "Accidental News: The Great Oil Spill as Local Occurrence and National Event," *American Journal of Sociology* 81 (September 1974): 235-260.

4. Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, pp. 13-18.

and strategies; it should comprehend both news and movements as contending conveyors of ideas and images of what the world is and should be like. As I suggested in the Introduction, the most comprehensive theoretical approach can be found in recent developments of the Gramscian idea of hegemony. After briefly canvassing the Gramscian territory, we can draw together some of this book's themes and explore the specific question of the sources of news frames for the New Left and opposition movements in general.

IDEOLOGICAL HEGEMONY AS A PROCESS

There exists no full-blown theory of hegemony, specifying social-structural and historical conditions for its sources, strengths, and weaknesses.⁶ But a certain paradigm has been developing during the seventies, after the collapse of the New Left and the translation of Antonio Gramsci's prison writings,⁷ and it is this paradigm—a domain of concerns, sensitivities, and conclusions—that can help situate the history of media-movement relations. Unfortunately, Gramsci, who was the first to specify the concept in a modern Marxist context,⁸ wrote ambiguously and in fragments: he was isolated in a Fascist prison, he was at pains to pass censorship, and he was at times gravely ill. Condemned to prison between 1926 and his death in 1937, Gramsci filled notebook after notebook trying to understand, among other things, why the working-class uprising in Northern Italy after World War I had failed; why the working class was not necessarily revolutionary; why most of it could be defeated by Fascism. Without neglecting the role of force in securing State power, Gramsci centered on the limits of working-class consciousness, on the issue of whether and when the

6. The following paragraph is based on p. 251 of my "Prime Time Ideology: The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment," *Social Problems* 26 (February 1979): 251-266.

7. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971). There is no single passage in which Gramsci unequivocally defines and applies the concept of hegemony; rather, it is a leitmotif throughout his entire work. But see especially pp. 12, 52, 175-182.

8. But note that his distinction between hegemony and coercion corresponds in some ways to Machiavelli's distinction between force and fraud in the operations of the State. See Sheldon S. Wolin's commentary in *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), pp. 220-224, and Wolin's references to Machiavelli in notes on p. 470. Gramsci honored his intellectual lineage by writing eighty pages of commentary on Machiavelli's *The Prince* under the heading *The Modern Prince* (pp. 125-205 in the *Prison Notebooks*).

working class could successfully challenge the prevailing bourgeois conception of its place in the world.

Gramsci's concept can be defined this way: hegemony is a ruling class's (or alliance's) domination of subordinate classes and groups through the elaboration and penetration of ideology (ideas and assumptions) into their common sense and everyday practice; it is the systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order. No hard and fast line can be drawn between the mechanisms of hegemony and the mechanisms of coercion; the hold of hegemony rests on elements of coercion, just as the force of coercion over the dominated both presupposes and reinforces elements of hegemony.⁹ In any given society, hegemony and coercion are interwoven. Recently, Raymond Williams¹⁰ and Stuart Hall¹¹ have elaborated the notion of hegemony and begun to use it in the analysis of popular culture. In Hall's words, drawing on Gramsci's terminology:

"hegemony" exists when a ruling class (or, rather, an alliance of ruling class fractions, a "historical bloc") is able not only to coerce a subordinate class to conform to its interests, but exerts a "total social authority" over those classes and the social formation as a whole. "Hegemony" is in operation when the dominant class fractions not only dominate but *direct*—lead: when they not only possess the power to coerce but actively organize so as to command and win the consent of the subordinated classes to their continuing sway. "Hegemony" thus depends on a combination of force and consent. But—Gramsci argues—in the liberal-capitalist state, consent is normally in the lead, operating behind "the armour of coercion."¹²

Further, hegemony is, in the end, a process that is entered into by both dominators and dominated.¹³ Both rulers and ruled derive

9. In an astute essay, Perry Anderson has shown with a close reading of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* that various major inconsistencies were built into Gramsci's own original usage of his term: specifically that Gramsci was ambiguous in how he positioned culture and hegemony vis-à-vis the State and force in his diagramming of society. (Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review*, No. 100 [November 1976-January 1977], pp. 5-78, especially pp. 12-44.) These issues are not at the center of my current concern, but further development of the theory of ideological hegemony should not overlook the clarifications of Anderson's essay.

10. "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *New Left Review*, No. 82 (1973), pp. 3-16; later reworked and extended in *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 108-114.

11. Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect," in Curran, Gurevitch, and Woollacott, *Mass Communication and Society*, pp. 315-348.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

13. See, by contrast, Georg Simmel's notion of domination as "a form of interaction" in which the dominant "will draws its satisfaction from the fact that the act-

psychological and material rewards in the course of confirming and reconfirming their inequality. The hegemonic sense of the world seeps into popular "common sense" and gets reproduced there; it may even appear to be generated by that common sense.

In liberal capitalist societies, no institution is devoid of hegemonic functions, and none does hegemonic work only. But it is the cultural industry as a whole, along with the educational system, that most coherently specializes in the production, relaying, and regearing of hegemonic ideology. The media of the culture industry are ordinarily controlled by members of top corporate and political elites, and by individuals they attempt (with varying success) to bring into their social and ideological worlds. At the same time, the ruling coalitions of "class fractions" are to a great extent dependent on these ideology-shaping institutions (1) to formulate the terms of their own unity, and (2) to certify the limits within which all competing definitions of reality will contend. They structure the ideological field within which, as Hall says, "subordinate classes 'live' and make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them."¹⁴ Because at any given moment there is not a unitary functioning "ruling class," but rather an alliance of powerful groups in search of an enduring basis for legitimate authority, the particular hegemonic ideology will not be simple; "the content of dominant ideology will reflect this complex interior formation of the dominant classes."¹⁵

The hegemonic ideology will be complex for a deeper structural reason as well. The dominant economic class does not, for the most part, produce and disseminate ideology directly. That task is left to writers and journalists, producers and teachers, bureaucrats and artists organized for production within the cultural apparatus as a whole—the schools and mass media as a whole, advertising and show business, and specialized bureaucracies within the State and the corporations. Thus the corporate owners stand, as Alvin W. Gouldner points out, in marked contrast to previous ruling classes:

ing or suffering of the other . . . offers itself to the dominator as the product of his will" (Simmel, "Domination," trans. Kurt H. Wolff, in Donald N. Levine, ed., *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971], p. 96). In this sense, hegemony differs from domination: in hegemony, dominator and dominated alike believe that the dominated is consenting freely. I am grateful to Mark Osiel for calling my attention to Simmel's discussion.

14. Hall, "Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect," p. 333.

15. *Ibid.*

"Unlike the slave-owners of antiquity or the ruling nobility of feudalism, the dominant class under capitalism is actively and routinely engaged in the conduct of economic affairs."¹⁶ By itself it cannot directly command the political or the administrative or the cultural apparatus that conditions the consent of the governed, even should it desire to do so. Rather, distinct strata have emerged and solidified, charged with specialized responsibilities for the administration of the entire social order. The liberal capitalist political economy is layered as an economy and a polity which meet and interpenetrate at many levels but remain organized separately; the executives and owners of the cultural apparatus—the press, mass entertainment, sports, and arts—are also interlocked at high levels with the managers of corporate and political sectors. But these sectors operate according to different principles. What Gouldner writes about the differentiation of political and economic sectors might then be extended, *mutatis mutandis*, to the cultural order:

In consequence of these developments, the system of stratification under capitalism differs profoundly from that of previous societies. . . . With the growing differentiation between the economic, political, and bureaucratic orders, and with the growing specialization among different personnel, each of the newly differentiated spheres develops a measure of autonomy and, we might add, of "slippage," from the other. The operating personnel of the administrative, the political, and the ruling classes, each develop specialized standards and skills for dealing with their own spheres, thereby making the latter less intelligible and less accessible to the direct supervision of the dominant economic class.¹⁷

The fact that power and culture in a modern social system are to some considerable degree segmented and specialized makes ideology essential: ideology comes to the fore as a potentially cohesive force—especially in a society segmented in all the realms of life experience, ethnically and geographically as well as politically and occupationally. At the same time, the relative autonomy of the different sectors legitimates the system as a whole. And crucially, as Gouldner points out, the economic elite now becomes dependent

16. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: The Origin, Grammar, and Future of Ideology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 229. A similar approach to relations between economic and political structures is contained in Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

17. Gouldner, *Dialectic of Ideology and Technology*, p. 230 (emphasis in the original).

on other sectors for securing the allegiance of the whole society. Specifically:

Ideology assumes special importance as a symbolic mechanism through which the interests of these diverse social strata may be integrated; through the sharing of it the several dominant strata are enabled to make compatible responses to changing social conditions.¹⁸

But the need for unifying ideology is also a vulnerability for the system as a whole:

It is precisely because the hegemonic elite is separated from the means of culture, including the production of ideologies, that ideologies developed in capitalist society may often be discomfiting to the hegemonic elite, so that they prefer other mechanisms of dominance and integration more fully and routinely accessible to them.¹⁹

Indeed, the hegemonic ideology of bourgeois culture is extremely complex and absorptive; only by absorbing and domesticating conflicting values, definitions of reality, and demands on it, in fact, does it remain hegemonic.²⁰ In this way the hegemonic ideology of liberal, democratic capitalism is dramatically different from the ideologies of pre-capitalist societies and from the dominant ideology of authoritarian socialist or Fascist regimes. What permits it to absorb and domesticate criticism is not something accidental to liberal capitalist ideology, but rather its core. The hegemonic ideology of liberal, democratic capitalist society is deeply and essentially conflicted in a number of ways. At the center of liberal capitalist ideology there coils a tension between the affirmation of patriarchal authority—currently enshrined in the national security State—and the affirmation of individual worth and self-determination. Bourgeois ideology in all its incarnations has been from the first a contradiction in terms, affirming the once revolutionary ideals of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," or "liberty, equality, and fraternity," as if these ideas were compatible, or even mutually dependent, at all times in all places. More recently, the dominant ideology has strained to enfold a second-generation set of contradictory values: liberty versus equality, democracy versus hierarchy, public rights versus property rights, rational claims to truth versus the arrogant

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 230–231.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 232 (emphasis in the original).

20. I have drawn much of this paragraph from my "Prime Time Ideology," pp. 264–265.

tions of power. All opposition movements in bourgeois society—whether for liberation or for domination—wage their battles precisely in terms of liberty, equality, or fraternity (or, recently, solidarity)—in behalf of one set of bourgeois values against another. They press on the dominant ideology in its own name.

And, indeed, the economic system routinely generates, encourages, and tolerates ideologies which challenge and alter its own rationale. For example, as corporate capitalism became dependent on an indefinite expansion of consumer goods and consumer credit, it began to commend and diffuse hedonist values which conflicted with the older values of thrift, craft, and productivity. Workers are now told to be self-sacrificing and disciplined for eight hours a day and to relish their pleasurable selves for the next eight: to give themselves over to the production interests of the company or the office during the week and to express their true, questing, consuming selves over the weekend. Inevitably, hedonism and self-affirmation spill over from the realm of consumption into the realm of production, disrupting workplace efficiency and provoking managerial response: this whole process is central to what Daniel Bell rightly calls "the cultural contradictions of capitalism."²¹

But contradictions of this sort operate within a hegemonic framework which bounds and narrows the range of actual and potential contending world views. Hegemony is an historical process in which one picture of the world is systematically preferred over others, usually through practical routines and at times through extraordinary measures. Its internal structures, as Raymond Williams writes, "have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended; and by the same token . . . they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified."²² Normally the dominant frames are taken for granted by media practitioners, and reproduced and defended by them for reasons, and via practices, which the practitioners do not conceive to be hegemonic. Hegemony operates effectively—it does deliver the news—yet outside consciousness; it is exercised by self-conceived professionals working with a great deal of autonomy within institutions that proclaim the neutral goal of

21. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976). On deliberate corporate attempts to define popular happiness as the consumption of mass-produced goods, and to bring workers to identify themselves as consumers, see Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976).

22. Williams, "Base and Superstructure," p. 8.

informing the public.²³ Yet we have seen in Part I that the news frame applied to the New Left was not neutral; it held reporting within definite limits. Specifically how was this possible? How, more generally, does hegemony take place within journalism as a totality of techniques, assumptions, and choices?

THE WORKINGS OF HEGEMONY IN JOURNALISM

As Ben Bagdikian puts it, news outside regular beats usually results from three stages in selection: (1) an editor decides that a certain scene should be looked at as the site of a newsworthy event; (2) a reporter decides what is worthy of notice on that scene; and (3) editors decide how to treat and place the resulting story.²⁴ Behind this process stands the institutional structure of the media, and above all the managers who set overall corporate policy, though hardly with utter freedom. (In the argument to come, I shall single out national commercial television, but the argument about print media would not be essentially different.) By socialization, by the bonds of experience and relationships—in other words, by direct corporate and class interest—the owners and managers of the major media are committed to the maintenance of the going system in its main outlines: committed, that is to say, to private property relations which honor the prerogatives of capital; committed to a national security State; committed to reform of selected violations of the moral code through selective action by State agencies; and committed to approving individual success within corporate and bureaucratic structures.

The media elite want to honor the political-economic system as a whole; their very power and prestige deeply presuppose that

23. In a 1971 national survey of over four thousand journalists (including editors) a little over three-quarters said that they had "almost complete freedom in deciding which aspects of a news story should be emphasized"; 60 percent said that they had "almost complete freedom in selecting the stories they work on" (though only 48 percent of editorial employees in the larger organizations, those employing over 100 persons, claimed freedom of selection); and 46 percent said that they made their own story assignments (as opposed to only 36 percent in the larger news organizations). See John W. C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski, and William W. Bowman, *The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 222. Asked to rank aspects of their jobs in importance, the journalists in this sample placed public service first, followed, in descending order, by autonomy, freedom from supervision, job security, pay, and fringe benefits (p. 229). Such ordering is roughly what sociologists find among the professionals generally, though journalists differ from other professionals in lacking a generally agreed-upon training program and credential (chap. 6).

24. Interview, Ben H. Bagdikian, May 2, 1979.

system. At the same time, they are committed, like members of any other corporate elite, to their own particular economic and political advantage. The networks above all—far more than prestigious newspapers like the *New York Times*—play for high profit stakes. The resulting conflicts—between particular corporate interests and what the networks take to be the interests of the corporate system as a whole—constitute one irreducible source of strain within the system as a whole. Even a news organization's methods for legitimizing the system as a whole, its code of objectivity and balance, pull it in conflicting directions: at one moment toward the institutions of political and economic power, and at another toward alternative and even, at times, oppositional movements, depending on political circumstance. Organized as a distinct pyramid of power, the network develops the strategy of neutralization, incorporating the competing forces in such a way as to maximize its audiences and thus its profits, its legitimacy, and its stature. It claims and earns legitimacy (Harris Polls show TV news to be the most credible of all American institutions, though it shares in the general relative decline) in part by sanctioning reliable routines of objectivity; yet those very routines of objectivity sometimes permit—indeed, may insist on—the entry of challenging social movements into the public ideological space. The network's claim to legitimacy, embodied in the professional ideology of objectivity, requires it, in other words, to take a certain risk of undermining the legitimacy of the social system as a whole. The network's strategy for managing this contradiction is to apply the whole apparatus of techniques that we have examined in Part I, precisely to tame, to contain, the opposition that it dares not ignore.

After all, the legitimacy of a news operation rests heavily on the substantial—if bounded—autonomy of its employees. The audience must believe that what they are viewing is not only interesting but true, and the reporters must be permitted to feel that they have professional prerogatives to preserve. To avoid a reputation for having an ax to grind, the top media managers endow their news operations with the appearance, and a considerable actuality, of autonomy; their forms of social control must be indirect, subtle, and not at all necessarily conscious. Their standards flow through the processes of recruitment and promotion, through policy, reward, and the sort of social osmosis that flows overwhelmingly in one direction: downward. The editors and reporters they hire are generally upper-middle-class in origin, and although their per-

sonal values may be liberal by the conventional nomenclature of American politics, they tend to share the *core* hegemonic assumptions of their class: that is, of their managers as well as their major sources.²⁵ Their salaries are handsome (in 1976, CBS News paid its correspondents between \$35,000 and \$80,000 a year, not counting fringe benefits and perquisites), and they share tastes and vacation spots and circulate at dinner parties with many of their sources. In the essentially impersonal operations of the newsroom, their relatively homogenized outlook ordinarily overwhelms any discordant personal opinions they might harbor, at least when it comes to defining a story and selecting its essential themes. Their common approach to the world infuses their homogenized cadence and tone: the news voice conveys the impression that the world is unruly because of deviations from a normally adequate and well-managed social order.²⁶

The network chiefs want to maximize both audience size and prestige: size determines the rates they may charge advertisers, and prestige, desirable for its own sake, also boosts the upper-middle-class audience for whose attention advertisers will pay more. In working to maximize the audience and to report the news "as it is," the networks must operate, of course, under the (ordinarily glazed) eye of the Federal Communications Commission, Congress, and whatever interventions the White House may attempt. The FCC is charged by 1934 law with ensuring that local stations serve "the public interest, convenience, and necessity." Since in practice this empty phrase is interpreted to mean that the local channels must run a certain amount of news and "public affairs" programs, and since it is cheapest and most profitable by far for the affiliates to meet this requirement by broadcasting what the networks have to offer (along with local news), the FCC is in effect constraining not only the local stations but the networks. In effect, through the so-called Fairness Doctrine, the FCC is requiring the networks to provide response time for interests—but not *all* interests—offended by their coverage. (Consider this boundary to the permissible: It is not "the Commission's intention to make time

25. Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 209; Johnstone et al., *The News People*, pp. 25–28.

26. There has not been much discussion of the meanings and impact of style and format in television news. See my "Spotlights and Shadows: Television and the Culture of Politics," *College English* 38 (April 1977): 789–801; Tuchman, *Making News*, chap. 6; and Gans, *Deciding What's News*, Part 1.

available to Communists or to the Communist viewpoints.")²⁷ But how much do the networks actually fear FCC regulation, and how much does their fear explain the timidity of news departments in their habit of imposing "balance" upon each news story? Probably not very much. CBS, at least, wants to repeal the Fairness Doctrine, to "deregulate" broadcasting, arguing that the balance requirement violates their First Amendment rights and that deregulation would permit more aggressive, freewheeling journalism.²⁸ On the other hand, ABC News, early in 1979, defended the Fairness Doctrine. How unconstrained the networks want their journalism may be doubted. Skepticism comes easily when the FCC has placed only the lightest of hands on programming at large, and no restraint at all on the vast profits in broadcasting. For all the broadcasters' hue and cry, the FCC has never lifted a station license for violations of the Fairness Doctrine, and continued violations have only once played a part in a decision not to renew.²⁹ The networks' top commands are probably more concerned about the possibility of congressional investigations and constricting laws, about losing profits to cable and satellite systems, about direct protests from offended political powers, and about vaguely anticipated regulation and repression in a hypothetical future. (One top CBS producer exclaimed to me in November 1976, "We're weak as hell. The First Amendment is a frail reed. Look what Mme. Gandhi did in India—she closed down the press just like that.") In any case, the conventions about objectivity, balance, legitimate sources, and the rest are all derived from newspaper journalism: and no Fairness Doctrine applies there.

In the force field of intersecting political pressures—from the White House, the FCC, Congress, and the affiliates—the networks test the boundaries of the permissible; they carve out an ideological sphere in which they are free to move as they please. With documentaries especially, where the total air time and budget are so limited to start with, choices of subject and slant will depend most

27. FCC, "Application of the Fairness Doctrine in the Handling of Controversial Issues of Public Importance," *Federal Register* 29, Part 2 (July 25, 1964): 10416, cited in Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, pp. 64–65.

28. See, for example, William Small, *To Kill a Messenger: Television News and the Real World* (New York: Hastings House, 1970), pp. 267–270. Small was head of CBS News's Washington Bureau, then Senior Vice-President and Director of News of CBS News, and is at this writing a high executive at NBC News.

29. Nicholas Johnson, "Audience Rights," *Columbia Journalism Review* 18 (May–June 1979): 63.

directly on the larger interests (in both the economic and the ideological sense) of the media elites. These interests, in turn, will of course take into account larger ideological currents in the society, and decisions will be made to amplify some and to dampen others. With the network's mass market mentality, "controversial" decisions—that is, decisions to broadcast anything of political substance—are not taken lightly. For example, CBS's "The Selling of the Pentagon" in 1971 capitalized on a rising tide of antimilitarist sentiment, expressed CBS's desire to declare independence from the military propaganda apparatus, and pointed the finger at a strictly limited, isolable sector of Pentagon operations. For all its limits, though, "Selling" drew complaints of bias—and congressional subpoenas for top executives. In a glare of First Amendment publicity, CBS stood fast against releasing outtakes to Congress, but subsequently failed to give the "Selling" producer, Peter Davis, new assignments; nor did it broadcast another documentary critical of the military until mid-1976, when the Vietnam war and the Nixon administration itself had ended. Early in 1977, likewise, CBS broadcast Bill Moyers's dramatic two-hour exposé of CIA-sponsored military actions against Cuba. It is hard to believe that such a broadcast would have been made under an administration that was not moving toward *détente* with Cuba. Yet Moyers shortly thereafter left CBS, saying that there was no room there for serious documentaries; and the top CBS Evening News producer, Ron Bonn, argues that "the most serious damage done to our branch of the free press by Mr. Agnew" was to "make it possible to think the formerly unthinkable—that maybe television *didn't* have [the obligation to provide a steady flow of news and public affairs]—that maybe it should just shut up and run some more game shows. I date the decline of the serious documentary, of tough, controversial television from that time, from that administration, and from that man."³⁰ One need not rue the loss of a Golden Age of "tough, controversial television" to observe a loss of luster: a decline from the sixties, when network news conventions were fresher and more fluid and had not yet quite hardened into bureaucratically fixed patterns.

But day to day, political and corporate pressures have not changed much: they go on setting unspoken outer limits for the routines that journalists are trained for and believe in. Once hired

30. Ron Bonn, letter to the author, May 1, 1979.

and assigned, reporters customarily form strong bonds with the sources (especially in Washington) on whom they depend for stories. They absorb the world views of the powerful. They may also contest them: when one institutional source disputes another (the General Accounting Office against the White House, say, or the Environmental Protection Agency against the Department of Energy); or when they come to believe that the powerful are violating the going code of conduct;³¹ or when they develop, consciously or not, their own interest (as when their spouses and children actively opposed the Vietnam war); or, on occasion, when they resent, and organize to protest, one of their publishers' more outspoken editorial opinions.

But even when there are conflicts of policy between reporters and sources, or reporters and editors, or editors and publishers, these conflicts are played out within a field of terms and premises which does not overstep the hegemonic boundary. Several assumptions about news value serve, for the most part, to secure that boundary: that news involves the novel event, not the underlying, enduring condition; the person, not the group; the visible conflict, not the deep consensus; the fact that "advances the story," not the one that explains or enlarges it.³² Only where coverage under these rules flies in the face of immediate institutional interest, or might be construed to be at odds with it, or wanders into some neutral zone where interests have not yet been clearly defined, is there ground for conflict between reporters and media elites over the integrity of the news operation. When outside political powers complain, top news executives mediate between them and the reporters; they may ask the staff to document their factual claims, for example. In newspaper rooms, national and foreign editors mediate between the top editors who are their superiors and the reporters who work beneath them.³³ CBS personnel almost universally say that the news executives insulate them from direct

31. Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 60.

32. Some of the historical constancies throughout the 150 years of mass commercial newspapers are underscored in Helen M. Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), and Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories." The concept of "advancing the story" comes from Cindy Samuels, Assistant Manager of the New York Bureau of CBS News, who defines it qualitatively: "if you have a story, and it gets bigger, then something else happens that moves it forward, you say it moved forward and it got bigger, you don't say it got bigger and it moved forward" (interview, November 13, 1976).

33. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, p. 19.

political pressures with great skill and reliability (with the important exception of the censored Watergate takeout; see p. 278, below)—which is not, of course, to deny the indirect pressures and understandings that one way or another find their way into the preconscious stuff of news policy.

Finally, there are organizational factors that in a lesser way constrain the news. Budget ceilings, for example, lead to shortages of bureaus, correspondents, and crews, all of which increase television news's dependence on a few big stories, preferably the dramatic and the metropolitan.³⁴ For the same reasons, many major newspapers have been shutting down their expensive out-of-town bureaus, especially abroad, and increasing their dependence on the wire services and on the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times-Washington Post* services.

The work of hegemony, all in all, consists of imposing standardized assumptions over events and conditions that must be "covered" by the dictates of the prevailing news standards. On television especially, this work is fairly routine. It is work: effort is expended on it. But certain conventions make the effort less burdensome to news processors. One such convention is the ritualized news story format. The correspondent identifies the problem; there is a rising curve of narrative which establishes the situation, identifies protagonists, and sets them against one another; whatever complication emerges from this conflict then dissolves as the correspondent wraps up the package as neatly as possible. (The term *wrap-up* is well chosen.) Meanwhile, on the screen, the pictures stereotypically illustrate the package. Despite the industry's rhetoric about the value it places on TV pictures as such, the regular format is actually what one perceptive cameraman calls the "illustrated lecture."³⁵ The ratio of film (or tape) shot to film used

34. See Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, pp. 105-112, and Gould, "The Trials of Network News," *More* 3 (May 1973): 8-11. For example, in November 1976, the Northeast bureau of CBS News, located in New York and responsible for the territory from Maryland through Maine, had a total of five camera crews.

35. Interview, Stephen Lighthill, June 16, 1977. In a systematic study of British television news, the Glasgow University Media Group makes the same point: "In most newsfilm the shots do not directly relate to one another in the ways we are used to from the feature cinema. Rather they are used to illustrate the audiotext and the rules governing their juxtapositioning come not from the visual but from the audio track—indeed largely from the commentary. . . . It is because the journalistic logic dominates the film logic that common professional opinion of television news journalists as film makers is a low one" (*Bad News* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976], p. 29).

is very high, often twenty or thirty to one; the film used must be selected to illustrate the verbal story. It is the correspondent's narration that situates the story, identifies its components, and names the point. Television's reputation as a visual medium for news is based disproportionately on some extraordinary pictures (e.g., Jack Ruby shooting Lee Harvey Oswald), on routine disaster coverage, on "shooting bloody" in war; but in the bulk of stories, most actual pictures are decorative and illustrative—shots of coal shovels gouging coal out of a seam, with the "natural sound" of gouging, as the reporter talks about the energy crisis; and so on. If, at times, the words and pictures are slightly discrepant, this discrepancy may be one index of friction in the work of hegemonic superimposition. Aspects of the pictures may imperfectly, inadvertently, or weakly testify to the existence of a discordant reality which the correspondent is working to assimilate into a conventional framework. Battlefield footage in Vietnam, for example, might in its bloodiness fight against the government's we-can-see-the-light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel frame, which is relayed, however skeptically, by the correspondent's voice-over narrative. The closer to air time the story breaks, the fewer hands and minds may intervene to process the film into the dominant frames. But most of the time discrepancies are flattened out by producers and editors splicing the piece together in New York (or another major bureau). Commonly the lecture is unitary and controlling. The lecture format enables the correspondent and the producer to clamp a rather definite frame onto a minute or two of film—selected from footage which itself has been shot selectively from amidst a complex and contradictory reality.

So stereotyping does result in part—as network people often admit and complain—from their simple shortage of time. The network news runs to some 22½ minutes of reporting every evening; that is what is left after commercials take their bite from the half-hour. But stereotyping also results from the organization's desire for easy ways of transmitting and manipulating bits of information—bits which, moreover, need to be easily interchangeable and easily edited, re-edited, or reorganized at the last minute, usually by producers and editors who have been nowhere near the scene of the story. If the network is to "cover the day's news," it has to simplify stories so that they can be processed and covered in one-and-a-half or two minutes; even a "long" takeout may be only three or four minutes. (Probably on average it is even shorter in the

seventies than in the sixties, though, in 1977, NBC News installed one major takeover each evening as "Segment 3.") The imperative of finding "good pictures" (usually vivid illustrations) adds to the premium on simplification.

But although the length of a day or an hour is fixed, the way in which time pressure is experienced is not a neutral, technologically determined, ineradicable feature of a world of scarcity. What is experienced as time pressure actually flows from a combination of immediate economic imperatives and the more general imperatives of the commercial system as a whole. In the first place, the affiliate makes considerably more money on locally originated programs—where it sells advertising time directly—than it does on network programs; thus the affiliates resisted the networks' move from fifteen to thirty minutes of national news, starting with CBS in 1963, and they have so far successfully resisted the CBS news executives' desire to expand from thirty to forty-five or sixty minutes.³⁶ The more general imperative is that the network must sell a reliable audience to the sponsors, and a reliable audience is usually (though not always) one that can be counted on to tune in at a given time every day (or, in the case of an entertainment, every week). Although the weekliness of entertainment has broken down, at least temporarily, with the success of "Roots" in early 1977, and although the networks are now liable to cancel series with greater alacrity than ever before, the dullness of news remains a commercial necessity. And this regularity is not simply concocted by network elites: it makes good sense to an audience conditioned to a regular existence by regularity in its school schedules and regularity in its working schedules. A regularly programmed life-world conditions, and is partly reconditioned by, the orderliness of the news and entertainment formats.

The orderly format ends up promoting social stability, which is what much of the audience longs for: a sense that whatever is wrong in the world, it can be put right by authoritative (almost always official) agencies. Even if the story is about disorder, it likely turns to the restoration of order under benign official aegis.³⁷ Con-

36. CBS and NBC News went from fifteen to thirty minutes of evening news in September 1963. According to Godfrey Hodgson, whose theories of the importance of the media in the American sixties overlap mine somewhat, one reason for the expansion was that the networks had forfeited a good deal of legitimacy in the quiz show scandals of 1959-60, and were seeking to make good their losses. See Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 142-145.

37. Gitlin, "Spotlights and Shadows," p. 792; Gans, *Deciding What's News*,

tent that starts out seeming destabilizing and threatening—a mass demonstration, a riot, a new style of political deviance—may thus end up confirming the inherent rightness and necessity of the core hegemonic principles. The same process operates after news of scandal or disaster. After Watergate and Nixon's resignation, the new media frame was: "The system works." Official folk heroes such as Senator Sam Ervin, or Harold Denton of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission after the accident at Three Mile Island, are elevated as new mass-mediated fountainheads of authoritative moral and technical excellence, to replace the fallen gods.

In general, then, stereotyping solves an enormous number of practical problems for journalism. But why should time pressure and the desire of newswriters and audiences for regular stories, rhythms, and authoritative *dramatis personae* lead to particular stereotypes? To process news from the campuses in the sixties, journalists had to reify a category of "student activists"; but why this stereotyped version and not *that*? As Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester point out, the imperative of building a large audience cannot, by itself, explain any specific frame; in strictly market terms, how could executives be sure in advance that their ratings would suffer from this news treatment rather than that?³⁸ Reporters hear little from their actual audience, tend to have a low opinion of the audience's knowledge and attention span, and form images of this abstract audience compounded of wish, fact, and indifference. Abstractions of market and audience explain little indeed. Rather, the stereotypes usually derive from editors' and reporters' immediate work and social circles, and from premises that filter through the organizational hierarchy: from sources, peers, and superiors, on occasion from friends and spouses, and from the more prestigious media reports, especially those of the *New York Times* and the wire services.³⁹ Journalists and executives may justify these images in terms of audience interest ("America is tired of protest," as the *Times* editor said about uncovered demonstrations against nuclear weapons in Colorado; see p. 5 above), but they perceive that audience through a frame, darkly.

p. 54. In a study that Gans cites (p. 226), Mark R. Levy concludes that many television news viewers "watched to be reassured that the world both near and far was safe [and] secure, and that . . . it demanded no immediate action on their part" (Levy, "The Audience Experience with Television News," *Journalism Monographs*, No. 55 [April 1978], p. 13).

38. Molotch and Lester, "Accidental News," p. 254.

39. See Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 201 and chap. 7.

At the same time, news stereotypes are not frozen. As Harvey Molotch points out, "news" is a rather undefined state of affairs.⁴⁰ Anything could be news, for news is what news-gatherers working in news-processing organizations say is news. Therefore, it is historical and contestable; all deep social conflicts are in part conflicts over what is news. Despite the widespread claim that objectivity in news is possible, any attempt to exact a general definition of news—a routine, universalizable definition—comes to naught. Ask a reporter what is news and one is likely to elicit vague references to "what is important" or "what is interesting" or "what is new." As one probes these notions, posing examples and counterexamples, the general criteria dissolve. Reporters finally acknowledge that "what is important" depends on who is asking, or on "the situation," or on "news judgment." These notions have to be just clear and specific enough to justify the claim that journalism is a profession, and then to justify the naming of a particular beat that can be relied upon to produce news (the police beat, for example); and just general enough to allow for the "unlikely" story—that is to say, for "news."

The professional insistence that objective journalism is desirable, and that objective determinations of newsworthiness are possible, arose during the nineteenth century, albeit fitfully, as part of the sweeping intellectual movement toward scientific detachment and the culturewide separation of fact from value.⁴¹ From time to time, as in the sixties, the value of objectivity gets questioned; it always returns, virtually by default. "Opinion" will be reserved to editorials, "news" to the news columns; whatever was in the minds of the ideologues of objectivity, generations of journalists have aspired to that value, even enshrined it. And the aspiration does have the effect of insulating reporters greatly—though far from perfectly—from the direct political pressures of specific advertisers, politicians, and interest groups, and even, in the more prestigious news institutions, from the prerogatives of interfering publishers.⁴² Journalists are trained to be desensitized to the voices

40. Molotch, "Media and Movements," unpublished paper, 1977.
 41. Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

42. Of course, publishers went on ensuring that their immediate economic interests would be protected. Newspapers do not ordinarily cover antitrust suits against themselves, for example, and their coverage of downtown business developments tilts toward the downtown businesses that are their advertising mainstays. The closer to home the affected interest, the greater the strictures on news coverage.

and life-worlds of working-class and minority people;⁴³ they are also trained in locating and treating "the news" so that it is "credible" and, by their own lights, "important." "Credibility," "importance," "objectivity"—these elusive categories are neither arbitrary nor fixed. They are flexible enough to shift with the expectations and experience of news executives and high-level sources, yet definite enough to justify journalists' claims to professional status and standards. A top TV producer told Herbert Gans: "They can order me to do something on big or small issues, for after all this is a company and a business, but they rarely exert that influence. I am as autonomous as I could expect to be."⁴⁴ I stress the final sentence. Journalists' ideals are fluid enough to protect them from seeing that their autonomy is bounded: that by going about their business in a professional way, they systematically frame the news to be compatible with the main institutional arrangements of the society. Journalists thus sustain the dominant frames through the banal, everyday momentum of their routines. Their autonomy keeps within the boundaries of the hegemonic system.

THE LIMITS OF HEGEMONIC ROUTINE

Still, traditional methods of news-gathering often contradict the demands that interested publics make for "credibility" and "responsibility" as their needs and expectations develop and shift. As oppositional groups and movements make claims for coverage, reporters may change their images of their audience or even of the world, and, too, their "instincts" about what is "newsworthy," "interesting," or "important." These changes may be more or less subtle, more or less conscious: reporters may be influenced even as they resist overt pressures to report an issue in this or that way. Their vulnerability depends on many things: personal life-experience, specific organizational arrangements, and the shifting boundaries of the ideologically permissible in the wider society as well as within the newsroom. But this vulnerability also begins with the fact that reporters have only sparse contacts with their actual readers and viewers; their everyday sense of audience cannot be strong enough to insulate them against specific, focused pressures. And media managements cannot entirely overcome the symbiosis between reporters and their movement beats, even when

43. Thelma McCormack, "Establishment Media and the Backlash," paper read to meetings of the American Sociological Association, Washington, D.C., 1970, pp. 32-33.

44. Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 96 (emphasis added).

they wish to, since the organization's ability to generate the commodity called "news" depends on the reporter's ability to achieve rapport with a client group. Management's worry about reporter-source rapport is suggested, for example, in the *New York Times's* practice of rotating reporters out of a foreign country every year, on the theory that within a few years familiarity will obstruct their critical distance.⁴⁵

When movements mobilize, then, reporters may be pulled into the magnetic fields generated by their alternative or oppositional world views. Now the routines of objectivity prove somewhat adaptable. For normally, in the course of gathering news, reporters tend to be pulled into the cognitive worlds of their sources. What- ever their particular *opinions*, for example, Pentagon correspondents define military issues as generals, admirals, and Pentagon bureaucrats define them: as a choice between this missile system and that, not as a choice between the arms race and disarmament. When movements become newsworthy, reporters who cover them steadily are subject to a similar pull. Indeed, they may use the rhetoric and practices of objectivity to justify covering the movement sympathetically and to protect their work from editorial dampening.⁴⁶ Or further: when opposition is robust and compelling, reporters may even go so far as to jeopardize their mainstream careers. Thus, in 1970, Earl Caldwell of the *New York Times* refused to turn over to a grand jury his notes on the Black Panther Party, arguing that he could only do his job of covering them objectively if the Panthers could trust him. For although the main sources of news are official, the media also need other sources: they must survey the society for signs of instability, they must produce dramatic news, and thus they are vulnerable to the news-making claims of unofficial groups. Because the idea of "objectivity" and the standards of "newsworthiness" are loose, the hegemonic routines of news coverage are vulnerable to the demands of oppositional and deviant groups. *Through the everyday workings of journalism, large-scale social conflict is imported into the news institution and reproduced there: reproduced, however, in terms derived from the dominant ideology.* Discrepant statements about reality are acknowledged—but muted, softened, blurred, fragmented, domesticated at the same time. That is, the vulnerability of the news system is not neutrality. The news routines are skewed toward representing demands, in-

45. Dartmont, "Writing News and Telling Stories."

46. Tuchman, *Making News*, pp. 100 ff.

dividuals, and frames which do not fundamentally contradict the dominant hegemonic principles: *the legitimacy of private control of commodity production; the legitimacy of the national security State; the legitimacy of technocratic experts; the right and ability of authorized agencies to manage conflict and make the necessary reforms; the legitimacy of the social order secured and defined by the dominant elites; and the value of individualism as the measure of social existence.* The news routines do not easily represent demands, movements, and frames which are inchoate, subtle, and most deeply subversive of these core principles. Political news is treated as if it were crime news—what went wrong today, not what goes wrong every day. A demonstration is treated as a potential or actual disruption of legitimate order, not as a statement about the world. These assumptions automatically divert coverage away from critical treatment of the institutional, systemic, and everyday workings of property and the State. (In 1977, for example, the *New York Times* hired its first investigative reporter assigned to business.) And secondly, the needs and values of sources, constituencies, and journalists alike are structured within the dominant ideology as a whole. Journalists and audiences collaborate in preferring media products which ratify the established order of commodity production and State power. Within these real limits, and only within them, the media may work out a limited autonomy from the expressed interests of political and corporate command posts: they may even affect the ways in which the elites understand their own immediate choices.

When the *New York Times* published parts of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, it risked legal penalties for relaying evidence that several administrations had lied about what they were doing in Vietnam. It did not report that the Papers confirmed some of what antiwar activists had been saying about the war for years. Editorial Page Editor Max Frankel told me that he compared the Pentagon Papers and the *Times's* war coverage, and "discovered we didn't do so badly. If you read the papers carefully, the press didn't do all that badly, given what we knew. Though true, it was hard for the general reader to put it all together."⁴⁷ The antiwar movement, researching and writing outside the *Times's* conventions for objectivity, had presented over the years a range of views that rather successfully "put it all together," amassing a strong case that American policy was systematically neocolonial, racist, and criminally targeted on the civilian population; but the *Times* did not

47. Telephone interview, Max Frankel, March 23, 1979.

to the world views of top managers and owners. These factors shape the news; even centralized manipulations by the State have to respect these limits. Everyday frames and procedures suffice to sustain the legitimacy of the economic-political system as a whole.

Yet the hegemonic system for regulating conflict through judgments of newsworthiness presupposes a certain minimum of political stability. When political crises erupt in the real world, they call into question whether the hegemonic routines, left to themselves, can go on contributing to social stability. Now some of the opposition movement's claims about reality seem to be verified by what mainstream reporters and editors discover about the world. Then the hegemonic frame begins to shift. Thus, in 1968, editors at the *New York Times* and other establishment news organizations turned sympathetic to moderate antiwar activity. The Tet offensive shattered the official rationale that the war should be pursued because it was not only just but winnable. The observed and reported facts of Tet subverted the Johnson administration's own claims—precisely the claims which had structured the media's dominant frame. At the same time, amidst what they experienced as economic and political crisis, the foreign policy elite (the "Wise Men") began to turn against Johnson's war policy. The elite media amplified their critique of the war—a critique itself lodged within the hegemonic assumption that the United States had a right to intervene against revolutions everywhere—just as business and political authorities influenced media executives to shift positions on the war. But the political crisis was not confined to a back-and-forth process between sealed-off elites; the elites experienced political crisis precisely because of the upwelling of opposition—both radical-militant and liberal-moderate—throughout the society. That opposition made its way simultaneously into the newsrooms. Younger reporters had already begun to share in their generation's rejection of the war. And crucially, editors, like other members of their class, worried about their sons' draftability and were influenced by their antiwar children and spouses (wives, mostly). Ben Bagdikian, former national editor of the *Washington Post*, remembers this complaint by Executive Editor Ben Bradlee: "We tell reporters not to march in a demonstration. But what can you do when their wives march in demonstrations?"⁴⁹ Reporters wheeling around to see the war differently were obviously more inclined to frame the anti-

49. Interview, Ben Bagdikian, May 2, 1979.

cover these revelations and analyses at the time, and it would not have been seemly, in 1971 or since, for the *Times* to endorse the world view of the radical opposition, even retroactively. The solution to these unfortunate matters had to be left in the hands of duly constituted authorities; the *Times* could not criticize its own conventions or comprehend its own blind spots.

A news item like Dan Rather's routine report on FBI lawbreaking (discussed in the Introduction, pp. 5–6, above) illustrates how a certified social problem and a legitimate solution are ordinarily framed together. The FBI has been committing burglaries and illegal wiretaps for forty years, the story says. These illegalities continued through the period of "civil disturbances of the sixties." Thus, by implication, popular movements—responsible for "civil disturbances"—are not to be looked to as ways of keeping the FBI in line. Or, by the same token, a report on the landing of the first two Concordes at Dulles Airport (on both CBS and ABC News, May 24, 1976) becomes (1) a certification that the "controversy" over the plane's noise is legitimate controversy, (2) a certification that noise-detecting machines placed by the Federal Aviation Authority will determine ("objectively") whether the noise is "excessive," and (3) a deprecation of what ABC called "almost unnoticed" demonstrators, who were, in their leaflets and signs, asserting their own right to say what is excessive noise. The complete message is: when there is legitimate ground for "controversy," it will be defined and taken care of by authorities, not by marginal disruptors.⁴⁸ And yet, at the same time, those demonstrators lurking in the margins for a few seconds of film may suggest—to viewers primed to receive this alternative layer of the message—a different model of social action. The FBI's and Air France's views of the world do not totally fill the ideological space; but their definitions of problems ("civil disturbance," noise levels whose seriousness can be certified only by officially monitored machines) are preferred and relayed, while conflict between these and alternative views is denatured, managed, and contained.

Thus, in brief: sources are segmented and exist in history; journalists' values are anchored in routines that are at once steady enough to sustain hegemonic principles and flexible enough to absorb many new facts; and these routines are bounded by perceptions of the audience's common sense and are finally accountable

48. I draw these examples from my "Spotlights and Shadows," pp. 792 and 795, where I discuss them in more detail.

war movement differently. After the Chicago police riot of August 1968, they were still less inclined to assume that the police were the legitimate enforcers of a reasonable social order.

If editors had not shifted away from administration war policy—if elite authorities had not turned against the war—it is hard to know how far the journalists would have been able to stretch their frames for antiwar activity. Frames are in effect negotiated among sources, editors, and reporters; how they will emerge in practice is not preordained. But as the antiwar frame changed, the formulae for denigrating New Left actions remained in force; now they were clamped onto the *illegitimate* movement. As we saw in Chapter 7, the media were now at pains to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable opposition. Respectful treatment of the moderate antiwar activists, including the Moratorium, was clamped within the newly adjusted hegemonic frame: the war is unsuccessful, perhaps wrong; but ending it is the task of responsible authorities, not radical movements.

This adjusted frame presented problems for the media, the State, and the movement alike. The hegemonic routines had been amplifying—and distorting—an opposition movement. Legitimate authorities were not coping smoothly with the economic and political crisis; willy-nilly, they were firing up opposition; they were now widely seen as incompetent managers. At this point, *the normal routines for constructing news and reproducing hegemony became, from the point of view of much of the political elite, unreliable*. Opposition seemed to dominate the news and to contest routine management of the frames for war and antiwar news. Top media managers bridled at the normal results of hegemonic routines; therefore, from 1968 through 1973, and especially (but not only) under pressure from the Nixon White House, they interfered more directly in the news-gathering process. The forms of direct intervention are hard to smoke out. They are singular (by definition they are not routine), they may be idiosyncratic, and news of them is embarrassing: after all, they fly in the face of the hegemonic claim to professional journalistic autonomy. But a few examples of executive intervention have surfaced. During the Columbia University uprising in the spring of 1968, for example, Managing Editor A. M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times*—an organization deeply entangled with the Columbia administration—went to the unprecedented length of filing a front-page story *under his own by-line*, focusing on how brutish the occupying radicals had been in mess-

ing up Columbia President Grayson Kirk's office.⁵⁰ The *Times* Magazine that spring ran two pieces inspired by the Columbia rebellion: one a general alarm by Harvard neo-conservative James Q. Wilson, the other a critique of militant nonviolence by Supreme Court Justice and Johnson advisor Abe Fortas. Herbert Gans writes that *Newsweek* killed its own reporter's story, which was sympathetic to the radicals, after its top editors saw the *Times* account.⁵¹ In crisis, the normally hegemonic routines threatened to undermine hegemonic ideology; caught in a bind between class loyalties and strict professionalism, executives were now more likely to intervene in the news process in order to sustain their deepest principles.

But precisely because the media have established some independence from the State, top political officials may feel threatened enough by amplified dissidence, however domesticated, to crack down directly. The State can intervene in media operations most subtly by withholding interviews, by preferring competitors, or by feeding false information to reliable reporters. The President can reward compliant editors and writers with prestigious political jobs (thus, for example, Johnson appointed pro-war *Washington Post* editor J. Russell Wiggins to a lame-duck term as Ambassador to the United Nations);⁵² or the President and other officials can alterately scold and cajole insufficiently docile media powers, or try to intimidate them directly. In October 1963, John F. Kennedy tried to convince *Times* publisher Arthur Ochs ("Punch") Sulzberger to transfer David Halberstam out of Vietnam.⁵³ Lyndon Johnson preferred to phone reporters with his complaints; he also liked to go over low-level heads, calling his friends Frank Stanton and Robert Kintner, the presidents of CBS and NBC, respectively, appealing to them in the name of old ties and patriotic duties. Stanton above all had been Johnson's friend and counselor since 1938, when Johnson had acquired CBS affiliate status for his wife's Austin radio station. Former CBS News General Manager and Vice-President Blair Clark told me that while covering the presidential campaign of 1956, he

50. See Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York: World, 1969), pp. 513–515, and Richard Pollak, "Abe Rosenthal Presents the *New York Times*," *Penitentiary*, September 1977, p. 50. *Times* publisher Sulzberger was a Columbia trustee.

51. Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 347, n. 32.

52. David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 545–546.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 445–446.

had a Vice-President who specialized in threatening rhetoric; and he orchestrated years of attacks, including, not least, threats to regulate the networks more closely. Only in retrospect are we entitled to say that he paid a price for overstepping: he might have succeeded.

For most of the Nixon years, the media strained to occupy a middle ground between the Nixon White House and the newly legitimized antiwar movement. Nixon had campaigned in 1968 as a "peace" candidate, and the media relayed that frame unskceptically. He had campaigned to "bring us together," and the media shared that objective as well. In fact, at the beginning of Nixon's first term in office, the media processed antiwar coverage into a frame that legitimated his administration as the agency to end the war. With all due respect to Vice-President Agnew and the White House's critique of network "instant analysis," both NBC and ABC had gone so far toward the presidential frame as to have promulgated the policy that the "story" in Vietnam was now the negotiations, not the battles. In March 1969, as Edward Epstein discovered, the executive producer of the ABC Evening News, Av Westin, sent a telex message to the Saigon bureau:

I think the time has come to shift some of our focus from the battlefield, or more specifically American military involvement with the enemy, to themes and stories under the general heading: We Are On Our Way Out of Vietnam. . . .

And as Epstein writes: "Quite predictably, a radical change from combat stories to 'We Are On Our Way Out'-type stories followed in ABC's coverage of the Vietnam war."⁵⁷ NBC decided likewise. The air bombardment of Cambodia and Laos was downplayed to the vanishing point. Such decisions admirably suited the purposes of the Nixon administration, which wanted not so much to extricate America from the war as to create an *image* of extrication ("Vietnamization").

Nonetheless, Nixon was unplaced: he found the incoherent, superficial, halting, unreflective media version of the war, and its amplifying of the moderate antiwar movement, an obstacle still. And so came the heavy hand. The new chairman of the FCC, Dean Burch, phoned the three network heads on the morning after Nixon's "Vietnamization" speech of November 3, 1969, asking for

57. Epstein, *News from Nowhere*, pp. 17-18; Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, p. 378.

had shared a plane ride with Johnson, who had asked him: "How well do you know Frank Stanton?" and then advised: "You better know Frank better. He's one of the finest men in America. Why, he and Ruth were down on the ranch doe-shooting last week."⁵⁴ During the mid-sixties, Johnson was regularly infuriated by CBS's war coverage, and Stanton, as chairman of the Board of Trustees of the RAND Corporation, a top military research think tank, was in any event no critic of the main thrust of Cold War and interventionist politics. So Stanton regularly relayed Johnson's anger in Chairman Paley's presence, no less—at weekly lunches of CBS News executives. At one point in 1964, according to David Halberstam, Johnson complained to Stanton about Dan Rather's work—nothing radical here—and Stanton relayed the complaint to News President Fred Friendly, who, violating the norm (news executives are supposed to insulate reporters from high-level intervention), chewed out Rather for irresponsible reporting.⁵⁵

Johnson's style was mostly person-to-person; he was the master of arm-twisting. But he could go further when pressed: in August 1965, CBS correspondent Morley Safer—a Canadian by birth—covered the U.S. Marines setting fire to Vietnamese huts in the village of Cam Ne. Simply as film, Safer's piece was so strong and so shocking that, as David Halberstam says, the news executives "simply could not fail to use it." They ran the piece. Early the next morning, according to CBS officials whom Halberstam interviewed, Johnson called Stanton and woke him up. "Frank," said the President of the United States, "are you trying to fuck me?" "Who is this?" asked the sleepy Stanton. "Frank, this is your President, and yesterday your boys shat on the American flag." Johnson insisted that Safer must be a Communist, got the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to investigate him, and, when informed later that Safer was not a Communist, only a Canadian, insisted: "Well, I knew he wasn't an American."⁵⁶

But for all this, Johnson kept his fury at CBS behind closed doors. Beginning late in 1969, by contrast, the Nixon Oval Office launched a *public* crusade, a protracted campaign against not only the media but the Wall Street-Council on Foreign Relations establishment as a whole. Johnson had to keep face with Frank Stanton; Nixon owed no such debts. He was blunter and more sweeping; he

54. Interview, Blair Clark, November 10, 1976.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 432-442.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 486-492. Quotations from p. 490.

transcripts of the networks' "instant analyses." After Vice-President Agnew's anti-media speeches of November 13 and 20, the White House mobilized the local affiliates against the networks. Nixon and his staff orchestrated a campaign to manage the news during the Mobilization and Moratorium of November 15. In 1971, Nixon went to court seeking to restrain the *New York Times* and other newspapers from publishing some of the Pentagon Papers. In 1972, Charles Colson of the White House staff called and visited CBS's Paley and Stanton, complaining about the first part of Stanhope Gould's takeover on Watergate; as a result, CBS News President Salant ordered the second installment cut from fifteen to seven minutes.⁵⁸ Salant has denied that Colson's intervention was the direct immediate cause,⁵⁹ but the overall impact of the Nixon campaign against the media is deniable only at the cost of common sense. Even a top CBS producer acknowledges that Agnew's crusade "made us more cautious," though he is quick to add: "That might not have been a bad thing: where we would have double-checked a fact before, we would triple-check it now."⁶⁰ A CBS cameraman remembers considerably more apprehension: "Everybody was running scared. Everybody was being incredibly cautious. And [correspondents] would make jokes about it to us. Like, 'We can't offend Mr. Agnew,' or 'We have to be careful because Agnew's watching.'" ⁶¹ A few months later, Walter Cronkite said: "I think the industry as a whole has been intimidated."⁶² Everyone I spoke to who was connected with CBS at the time is at pains

58. On Colson's intervention and CBS's response, see Timothy Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus* (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 174-175; Robert Cirino, *Power to Persuade* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), p. 35; William S. Paley, *As It Happened* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 318-327; Daniel Schorr, *Clearing the Air* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), pp. 52-58; and Halberstam, *Powers That Be*, pp. 651-661. On the Nixon White House and its campaign against the networks generally, see Jeb Stuart Magruder, *An American Life* (New York: Atheneum, 1974), pp. 81 ff. and 105 ff., and my discussion above, pp. 224-229; the extremely thorough account in William J. Porter, *Assault on the Media: The Nixon Years* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976); Thomas Whiteside, "Shaking the Tree," *The New Yorker*, March 17, 1975, pp. 41-91; and Schorr, *Clearing the Air*, pp. 14-120.

59. Salant twice refused my attempts to interview him about CBS coverage of the New Left, in the fall of 1976 and again in the spring of 1977, claiming that "I have the world's worst memory and can't remember what happened yesterday, let alone the sixties." He did insist, however, that "the way we work here at CBS News, the choices were never mine." (Letter to the author, October 18, 1976.)

60. Interview, Ron Bonn, November 19, 1976. See Bonn's further remark, above, p. 262.

61. Interview, Stephen Lighthill, June 16, 1977.

62. Cronkite was speaking on March 3, 1970, as quoted in James Aronson, *Deadline for the Media* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), p. 9.

to deny there was any direct management interference with reporters after November 1969; but documentaries, news specials, and "instant analyses" suffered. The Nixonian chill was felt—and resisted.⁶³

Yet the power of *direct* political intervention is still easily exaggerated. In this case, *TV Guide* was announcing on September 27, 1969—fully six weeks before Agnew's opening barrage in Des Moines—that the networks were going to be retrenching in their coverage of the Left, that they would be shifting toward "exploring middle and lower-middle-class Americans."⁶⁴ "Middle America" and the "silent majority" were the new shibboleths. Thus did the networks strive to maintain a political equilibrium in which their corporate position was secure. They do not need to be chided in public to know that their room for maneuver is limited. The low-background potential threat of the State is a constant. Political crises may disrupt the normal equilibrium of institutions. Yet between crises and normal situations—between situations requiring extraordinary State or corporate interventions into the news, and situations in which the routine procedures are left to take their course—there is no hard-and-fast line. Indeed, the late sixties were a time when political crisis itself became routine—Tet, the anti-war campaigns within the Democratic Party, the intervention of the Wise Men, the balance-of-payments and gold crises, Johnson's abdication, the King and Kennedy assassinations, black uprisings, student rebellion, Chicago, the November 1969 Mobilization, and the killings at Kent State and Jackson State. Extraordinary interventions into news policy became more ordinary.

The media, finally, are corporations of a peculiar type. It is not only that broadcasters are regulated, directly and not, by the State; so are many other industries. (In any event, newspapers and news-

63. According to Daniel Schorr (interview, May 10, 1977), when Chairman Paley, in June 1973, discontinued all vestiges of "instant analysis," even the bland summaries that CBS had instituted in late 1969, correspondents in the Washington bureau "were all rocked by that; we were all very angry." Several, including Schorr, wrote a letter of protest to Salant, who acted as if he welcomed it as ammunition against Paley's decision. And indeed the decision was rescinded in November. See also Schorr, *Clearing the Air*, pp. 61-64.

64. Cited in Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, pp. 382-383. Hodgson's interesting discussion of the 1968-69 media retrenchment (pp. 369-377) emphasizes the conservative force of public opinion and the media elite's fear of finding itself too far ahead of the mass audience. There is no question that the media managers felt this fear. But their fear of the public reaction was inextricably entangled with their fear of the potentially regulating State. These were experienced as a single fear.

magazines are not directly regulated, and their framing procedures and the frames that result are not vastly different from those of the networks.) More to the point, the product that the networks sell is the attention of audiences; their primary market is the advertisers themselves. (Newspapers, too, draw the bulk of their income from advertising.) To assemble the largest and richest possible audiences, for whose attention advertisers will pay the highest rates, the media may risk offending particular corporate interests. They see themselves exercising a general steering function for the entire political economy. As CBS President Stanton said in 1960: "Since we are advertiser-supported we must take into account the general objectives and desires of advertisers as a whole."⁶⁵ But the networks' profit interests are, in general, perfectly compatible with their journalists' routines for achieving objectivity. The "good story" in traditional journalistic terms is also appealing to a mass audience: "common sense" ratifies the hegemonic frames. The news organization therefore has two reasons to reward the production of "good stories": for the network, good journalism is good business; but more, the media have a general interest in stabilizing the liberal capitalist order as a whole, and it is this interest, played out through all the hegemonic routines, which stands behind the dominant news frames. The whole hegemonic process in journalism operates in a reformist key: it exposes particular business and State violations of the core hegemonic principles. Precisely for that reason, the relations among media, corporations, and the State are intrinsically thick with conflict.⁶⁶

So it is hardly surprising that businessmen regularly complain that the networks are biased against them.⁶⁷ In the first issue of a

65. *Television Network Program Procurement: Report of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, House of Representatives, 88th Cong., 1st sess.* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 335, as quoted in Erik Barnouw, *The Sponsor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 57.

66. See Gans, *Deciding What's News*, pp. 68-69, 203-206, on the muckraking Progressivism of American journalism.

67. Business critiques of the news media are legion. Among the more articulate versions are "Business and the Press—Independent or Interdependent?" a speech by Donald S. MacNaughton, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, the Prudential Insurance Company of America, November 4, 1975, excerpted in the *New York Times*, Business Section, March 7, 1976, p. 12; "The Values That Can Serve Man-kind," Remarks by David Rockefeller, Chairman of the Board, the Chase Manhattan Bank, before the Northern California Region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, April 7, 1976; and the discussion in Leonard Silk and David Vogel, *Ethics and Profits* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), pp. 104-116, drawing on comments from many executives who are members of the Conference Board. Media

closed-circulation magazine called *Chief Executive*, for example, Walter Cronkite urges businessmen to make themselves more available to reporters in order to respond to charges against corporate practice. Cronkite argues that businesses need a reliable press to satisfy their own intelligence function, and he tries to enlist them in the networks' contest with the State over press freedoms and the First Amendment. He defends the bond between business and the news media as "something known in the biological sciences as symbiosis":

It's a word that may have been sullied and discredited in your minds by that group of ill-fated young fanatics who called themselves the "Symbionese Liberation Army," but it remains a valid concept.

Symbiosis is a curious relationship. It is defined as the intimate living together of two kinds of organisms whereby such association is advantageous to each. It seems to me that journalists and business leaders are bound together in just such a relationship.

Newspapers, broadcasting outlets and networks survive on the advertising revenues that come from business. Journalism can thrive only so long as the business community remains healthy enough to provide these funds. Business, on the other hand, depends upon journalism to foster its own growth—through the dissemination of information through news and advertising.⁶⁸

This is what the "Dean of the World's Broadcast Journalists" (the magazine's blurb) urges upon an audience of top business, government, and other executives. Campaigning for symbiosis, as other top media people have also been doing, Cronkite acknowledges implicitly that it is far from an accomplished fact. On the other hand, the fact that he takes the trouble to spell out the goal reveals that the media elite is defensive. It is media strategy to accomplish symbiosis with the corporations as a whole, to guide that sym-

responses include "Business and the Press: Who's Doing What to Whom and Why?" Remarks of Arthur R. Taylor, President, CBS Inc., before the Financial Executives Institute, October 21, 1975; and "Businessmen Can Look Better if They Try," by Dan Cordtz, economics editor at ABC, in the *New York Times*, Business Section, July 18, 1976, p. 12. The tone of these latter two articles is strikingly similar to Cronkite's appeal, below, for a symbiotic division of labor: the media have their jobs to do, business has its job to do, and businessmen should learn how to make more effective use of the existing media system. In other words, the media spokesmen are defending a functional division of labor between economic and cultural-legitimation spheres.

68. *Chief Executive* 1 (July-September 1977): 26. Weirdly enough, the role of the young heirless-terrorist in the film *Network* was played by Walter Cronkite's daughter Kathy.

biosis, and in the process to guide the whole society toward a stable environment in which the media corporations may flourish. Just as the networks must be careful not to offend core interests of the State, so they must take care not to violate the most central premises of the business system as a whole: they must sanction the right of private control over investment and production, just as they sanctify their own right to control the space within which public communication takes place. The business practices exposed in the news—bribes, sudden health hazards, damage to the environment—are precisely the exceptional; and the frames generally cushion the impact of these reports by isolating exceptional corporations, by blaming "the public," by speaking from the angle of consumers and not workers, and by refraining from attempts at general explanation and radical solution. Yet, in this weakly reformist process, the media set terms for discourse which, corporations believe, threaten the legitimacy of the corporate system as a whole. *The media seek symbiosis with the corporate system precisely through the bounded routines of "objective" journalism.* This drive is utopian; it does not cease, though it is always, in the end, unconsummated.

11 Seventies Going on Eighties

IMPLICATIONS FOR MOVEMENTS

Straining to take advantage of the media's interest in "exciting" or "important" news, opposition movements step into this web of conflicting yet interdependent corporate and State powers. One core task of opposition movements is to contest the prevailing definitions of things, the dominant frames. They must "rectify names," they must change the way people construe the world, they must penetrate and unmask what they see as the mystification sustained by the powers that be. In this sense, all insurgent movements must be empirical in their approach to the conventional definitions of objective reality; they must probe to discover *in practice* how far the principles of news "objectivity" can be severed both from the disparaging codes and from the corporate and State interests that sustain and delimit them.

Since the sixties, opposition movements have become still more sensitive to the impact of the media on their messages and their identities. At one extreme, the Symbionese Liberation Army learned how to manage an exercise in total manipulation, commandeering the media for a moment of spurious glory. At the other, the women's liberation movement, recognizing some of the destructive and self-destructive consequences of the spotlight, has learned from the experience of the New Left and worked with *some* success to decentralize leadership and "spokespersonship," avoiding *some* (not all) of the agonies of the single-focused spotlight.¹

1. On relations between the feminist movement and the media, see Monica B. Morris, "Newspapers and the New Feminists: Blackout as Social Control," *Journal*.