AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE 1979 STRIKE AT THE ST. JOHN'S EVENING TELEGRAM

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AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE 1979 STRIKE AT THE ST. JOHN'S EVENING TELEGRAM

by

© Mary Elizabeth Jane Burns, B.A.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Folklore
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an oral history of the 1979 strike by reporters against the St. John's Evening Telegram as they recounted it to me in private interviews. The oral historical method was combined with an approach derived from occupational folklore to allow the discovery not only of the strikers' interpretation of the historical event but to produce a more complete understanding of the ideals of the occupational group itself.

While describing the strike, reporters revealed the exoteric attitudes they held towards newspaper owners as well as the esoteric beliefs they held towards their own jobs. The confrontation situation acted as a catalyst for the emergence of concerns that were always present but which might not normally have been expressed.

In addition to analysis of narratives concerning the strike experience, and of the rhetorical use of anecdote, several behavioural theories have been employed. In interpreting the picket line behaviour as ritual action, an attempt is made to show why the line held such an emotional place in some of the reporters' accounts. Furthermore, in viewing the bar behaviour as "play," the importance is suggested of activities outside the workaday which provide a sense of cohesion to the occupational group.

An oral history of a strike allows the folklorist special insight into the concerns of the occupational group involved. Not only does it allow for the study of how actual experiences were narrated and interpreted by those involved, it also allows for the study of the values of the profession as they are more intensively articulated during the strike itself.

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editing of my work was invaluable -- if not at times humorous -- and my parents, who housed and fed me while I wrote the body of this thesis and paid for the long distance calls. Writing my thesis in Ottawa was made enjoyable by the humour of Chris Carton and the eccentricity of Mary Jane Lipkin, and in St. John's, by singing in the office with Janet McNaughton.

I am indebted to the following people for their assistance: to Ron Crocker, for allowing me to read through his files on Roy Thomson; to Bob Rupert for talking to me of his experiences as union organiser; to Joan Weeks for her patient role as honourary folklorist; to Wick Collins for sharing his experience; to Philip Hiscock for reading an earlier draft; and to poet and my typist, Cellan Jay, who worried about my thesis almost as much as I did.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to all of the 1979 strikers -- both the press and composing room employees as well as the reporters and photographers. In particular I would like to thank Dick Green for the use of his photographs, and those who took the time to talk with me for so long. They are: Ron Budgell, Ed Kirby, Vicky O'Dea, Len Penton, Pat Roche, Bob Wakeham and Bob Woolridge. This thesis is for them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On August 18, 1979, the reporters and photographers at the St. John's Evening Telegram joined the newspaper's composing and press room employees on the picket lines and thus began the first full-scale strike in its one hundred years. Picket signs denounced both the Evening Telegram and the Thomson Organisation, one of the two largest newspaper chains in Canada, which had bought the Evening Telegram in 1970.

The summer had seen a number of strikes in St. John's, including a nurses' strike. The nurses' strike was ending as the Evening Telegram strike began, and as the fall semester began. Thus, I decided to do a term paper on the strike for a course in "Folklore and Culture." The object of my study was to discover how the strikers felt while on the streets, the kinds of stories they told, and the ways in which they interpreted what was happening to them. My interest already lay in occupational folklore, having completed term papers on cabdrivers and carnival workers, as well as surveys of occupational studies.

My initial contact with the strikers was with one of the reporters who I knew had taken folklore courses and

who I hoped would be responsive to the idea. I interviewed him in my home during the strike itself, in late September. The interview was very informative but I was aware that other reporters would not be so easily reached and that this reporter would unfortunately not be able to help me with this problem.

After two weeks of procrastination, I decided to contact another reporter who I felt was not totally hostile to becoming a subject of folkloristic study. I phoned him, told him that I wanted to write a paper on the stories told about experiences on the picket line, and he sounded willing to be interviewed. He suggested that I bring my tape recorder down to the Ship Inn, the bar which the reporters generally frequented and which became a semi-official headquarters for them during the strike. This reporter told me that experiences on the picket line were the topic of much discussion and a visit to the bar would therefore afford an excellent opportunity in which to capture this exchange. I agreed although with little enthusiasm as I felt my presence there would hamper the exchange. I was aware as well, from brief meetings with reporters before the strike, that folklore and folklorists were none too popular with this crowd. I decided, however, that at least I would be able to meet them all, so I went down at the prearranged time the next day.

I was supposed to meet the reporter at 4:30 and arrived on time. He was not yet there, but I spotted a group

of three reporters, including my first contact, and went to sit with them. I chatted with the reporter I already knew, while the other two exchanged glances and one said to the other: "Hey -- I hear some folklorist is supposed to show up today to collect our folklore." Great guffaws rose from the two and uncomfortable laughter trickled from my first contact. I mumbled that I was the folklorist they were expecting. The reporter on my left then turned to me and said, "Every fuckin' folklorist I've ever met's been a fuckin' asshole," although he added graciously -- "but I've never met you." The second, across the table, then looked at me and said, "Have you come to collect our quaint little stories about the picket line?" Then my first contact stood up, said, "You shouldn't have come down here" and left. I explained that I didn't consider the picket line, or Newfoundland for that matter, quaint in the least. They asked why so many outsiders come to Newfoundland to study folklore and I replied that Memorial University has the only folklore department in English Canada and that we were encouraged to do our fieldwork in Newfoundland.

It was not the first time I'd encountered this kind of hostility. In my first course in folklore I went out to try and contact a potential informant amongst city cabdrivers. In the first cab stand I went in conversation was cut short when the driver asked me where I was from. When I told him Ottawa, he asked, "Do you have a federal grant to study us?". The statement drove home the point to me that there are areas

in Canada which are perceived as being over-studied.[1]

Newfoundland is also experiencing a new sense of confidence and nationalism, particularly under the flamboyant leadership of Premier Brian Peckford and his vision of the "New Newfoundland."[2] Amongst those involved in the arts, and media, particularly in St. John's itself, this has been expressed in the form of antagonism towards CFA's, i.e. "Come From Aways." I felt I gained some ground with the reporters when I said I would have chosen the same kind of topic no matter what city I was in. The particular antagonism which reporters feel towards folklorists may in part be a result of the fact that the two groups do similar work, although to different degrees of analysis.

After about fifteen minutes, the reporter I had phoned did come in and was quite supportive. Shortly thereafter, a number of people came in and joined the table, including the union spokesman and the negotiator from the International Union. Glad that my knapsack and its contents -- my tape recorder -- were well hidden under the table, I stayed for awhile and then left.

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[1] For a detailed discussion, see Neil Rosenberg, "Regionalism and Folklore in Atlantic Canada," in Canadian Folklore Perspectives, ed. Kenneth S. Goldstein (St. John's: Folklore Department, M.U.N., 1978), pp. 3-19.

[2] For a discussion of the rhetoric used by Peckford, see Robert Paine with Cynthia Lamson, Ayatollahs and Turkey Trots (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1981).

Knowing that I had to continue to try to finish my research, I again phoned my second contact and he quite readily agreed to an interview. I interviewed him in my home in early November, just two weeks before the end of the strike. Two days after the strike ended on November 14, 1979, he invited me to an "end of the strike party" and said it would be a good place to meet the others. I did go and found people who were quite willing to talk with me, and one apologised for his behaviour in the bar. During the next ten days, in early December, 1979, I interviewed three more reporters, including one of the hostile two. It wasn't until August, 1980, that I interviewed the second hostile reporter and not until February, 1981, that I did my last interview with a final reporter. Both of the latter felt the strike had been a particularly emotional time and were reluctant to talk to someone who had not yet gained their trust. I was hesitant about pushing them to talk with me and preferred to wait until they wanted to. When they did, as with the other reporters, it was out of a desire to leave some document of their experiences. Out of the same reticence, I did not interview the local reporter hired during the strike who Evening Telegram reporters classed "the lowest form of scabhood." Nor did I contact publisher Steve Herder until a year and a half after the strike ended. He had only given one interview during the strike and was not generally felt to be accessible on the matter. When I did phone him and explained what I was writing about, he

replied: "Of course you should interview me," and told me to phone the next week to set up an appointment. When I did so, he said he had decided he was "uninterviewable" on that subject. And in May 1981, I interviewed Wick Collins at his home. He was the associate editor fired during the strike after eleven years at the paper.

Because of the obvious reticence of some of the reporters as well as the fact that two of the seven I interviewed still work at the Evening Telegram, I have not used their names in the text of this thesis. There were three other reporters and two photographers who I did not interview and this thesis does not presume to present their feelings. Apologies should be made as well to the crafts -- the composing and press room employees -- who were also on strike and whose views are not presented here. As will be detailed later in this thesis, there are two bargaining units within Local 441 of the St. John's Allied Printers' Union which represents the unionized Evening Telegram employees, each with separate contracts. In this way, there were essentially two strikes at the same time. Because this thesis relies heavily on the reporters' attitudes towards management, to study the crafts' attitudes would have involved twice the amount of fieldwork, which time and course work did not allow. This thesis, then, is but half the story of the 1979 strike at the Evening Telegram, although it is a complete story in itself.

All reporters were interviewed separately in my

home. Most interviews lasted three hours; the first of which was spent answering questions I had prepared, although it was never administered as a questionnaire and I had intended the questions to stimulate conversation rather than produce direct answers; the second hour was spent more on impressions and to me was often the real crux of the interview; and the third was usually the reporters taking advantage of being on the interviewee side of an interview, and rambling. Transcripts of interviews have been deposited in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive under accession number 81-611.

One of the most pervasive impressions I received was of the amount of energy which went into the strike itself. When I asked one reporter how much time he spent thinking of the strike while it was going on, he replied:

> A lot. All the time. Twenty-four hours a day. You dream about it. It's the only thing. There is nothing else. There is no -- anything, happening anywhere. I lost touch with a lot of events that were happening around because of that. The total waking energy went into that strike.[3]

And another answered:

> The first thing you think about when you wake up in the morning is some aspect of the strike -- you just feel like, -- Well, I've got to head down to the picket line or I've got to do something for The Signal and, unless you're in the middle of a karate work-out or something -- you're going to be thinking about it pretty well all day, every day.[4]

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[3] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[4] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

To questions about the effect of the strike on them personally, other reporters answered:

> We lived that strike twenty-four hours a day.... It was one of the most emotional experiences I've ever been through in my life.[5]

And:

> It was simply that it was just too intense to continue to expose yourself to -- I must say, it was the most passionate thing ever -- it was second only to puberty, for me. It was that severe. It was a "We against them" situation and I had never been in that kind of thing before -- not to that same degree of intensity. It really, really deeply affected me.[6]

Comments like these naturally impressed upon me the impact of the strike on the strikers. Initially my idea had been to undertake a study of the reporters as an essay in occupational folklore similar to those I had already done. I soon found, however, that the reporters themselves expected me to write an oral history of the strike. In the course of the writing both approaches have been combined and additional perspectives have been added from the areas of rhetoric, play theory and ritual.

I was still faced, however, with the dilemma of how to write one piece of work which would satisfy two audiences, the academic, and the non academic, i.e. the reporters. Particularly because of their feelings of antagonism towards folklorists, and the fact that over the course of

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[5]Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[6]Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

the two years many became my friends, I felt the thesis should do the reporters' experiences justice. While I was certainly not solicited by them to write the history, I did feel a strong moral obligation towards them, which resulted in an initial bias in their favour. I was dissuaded from this approach by my academic advisors. Any study, but particularly one of an emotionally charged situation such as a strike, is fraught with potential biases, but I hope that the story stands on its own. In the end, I feel the two demands resulted in a more honest and straightforward document. Although the reporters were not accustomed to approaches taken by folklorists, their comments on the rough draft indicated that they found the approach interesting and that it made a few points which they had not considered. I doubt strongly that the reporters would have wanted a "puff job," as they call it, anyway.

The oral history approach has been applied successfully by a number of folklorists. These include William Lynwood Montell, whose book, The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History, attempted not to test the accuracy of local historical legends but, among other things, to discover the attitudes that were articulated within the oral traditional legends. He wrote:

> Folk history, as applied in this book, can be defined as a body of oral traditional narratives that are told by a people about themselves, and, therefore, the narratives articulate

> the feelings of a group towards the events and persons described.[7]

In a similar way, the study of the narratives about the strike at the Evening Telegram revealed reporters' attitudes towards owners, as well as beliefs about their own jobs, and the strike itself.

Another successful application of the approach was taken by George Ewart Evans in Where Beards Wag All. Besides "giving flesh to the materials" gathered from other sources, Evans also stresses that one of the positive aspects of oral testimony lies in the discovery of attitudes. He wrote:

> ... for it is vital to the historian to know, as far as he can, not only what the people he's writing about actually did but what they thought about what they were doing.... What one thinks and makes of the facts is at least as vital as the facts themselves; and this is as true for the man who is writing history as it was for the people who were living it.[8]

Henry Glassie and William Ivey both spoke about the discovery of attitudes rather than "truth" through oral history. At the Sixth National Colloquia on Oral History in 1971, Glassie stated: "On its surface the tradition may be false or true; it is always an authentic expression of the

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[7] William Lynwood Montell, The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1970), p. xxi.

[8] George Ewart Evans, Where Beards Wag All, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1970), p. 23.

author's personality and culture.[9] William Ivey suggested that "While the folklorist admits that oral tradition may at times distort factual detail, he sees in oral evidence a cultural, social, or psychological truth."[10] It is the peculiar training of the folklorist to be able to pick out these many truths.

In The Voice of the Past: Oral History, Paul Thompson notes that oral history was in fact the first approach to the study of history and that it has only been in recent years that historians have attempted to discredit the value of oral evidence.[11] Thompson points out that some of the historian's basic references, such as social statistics, newspaper reports, private letters and published biographies among them, are just as much representative of the "social perception of facts" as the recorded interview, and that all these forms of evidence must be evaluated for their social meaning rather than as bearing any inherent absolute truth. He cites a case in which oral historians studied a strike which had taken place over fifty years before at a Singer

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[9]Henry Glassie, "A Folkloristic Thought on the Promise of Oral History," in Selections from the 5th and 6th National Colloquia on Oral History, ed. Peter Olch and Forrest Pogue (New York: Oral History Association, Inc., 1972), pp. 55-56.

[10]William Ivey, "The Folklorist vs the Oral Historian," in Selections from the 5th and 6th National Colloquia on Oral History, ed. Peter Olch and Forrest Pogue (New York: Oral History Association Inc., 1972), p. 62.

[11]Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 19.

factory in Glasgow. One particular incident told by an informant differed from the account established through the checking of a number of other sources. The researchers concluded:

> Nevertheless, and this is the point I want to stress, subsequent labour relations in Singers seem to have been conditioned more by the first version, which seems to have circulated widely and been believed, than by the second. For some purposes, the fiction captured in oral evidence may be more important than "the truth."[12]

In dealing with the work process, Thompson found the oral history approach to be particularly rewarding for its sensitivity not only to technology, but to the actual experience of work and the social relationships which develop within it.[13] His point is illustrated in the work of folklorists such as Robert S. McCarl, whose work has attempted to relate the actual work processes with patterns of communications and social relationships within them.[14] McCarl's dissertation on occupational folklife contains an appendix "Approaches to Work and Occupations," which is an excellent review of the various approaches taken to this kind of study, and the reader is directed to that work for further discussion. Similarly, David Macdonald's thesis,

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[12] The work of Lindsay Morrison and Roy Hay quoted in Thompson, p. 107.

[13] Thompson, p. 73.

[14] Robert S. McCarl, "Occupational Folklife: An Examination of the Expressive Aspects of Work Culture with Particular Reference to Fire Fighters," Diss. Memorial University 1980.

"Process and Change in the Newfoundland Fishery: The Trawlermen's Strike of 1974-1975," presents a more than adequate history of unions and unionisation in Newfoundland.[15] Other relevant surveys include Robert Turner's bibliographic essay, "The Contribution of Oral Evidence to Labour History" and the compilations of folklorist Archie Green.[16]

The format of this thesis follows the lead of the informants themselves. The questions I asked at the beginning of the interviews were designed primarily to start conversation and to discover those issues which they felt to be the most important, and then to have them elaborate on those. In this, my approach was highly influenced by guidelines set out by James Spradley and David McCurdy in their book, The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society, in that I attempted to discover "the insider's point of view."[17] Or, as the oral historians might have it, their view of the truth. The approach of Spradley/McCurdy has also been recommended by Robert Byington, who wrote:

> First, work is an esoteric and highly specialised area of one's life which is

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[15] David A. Macdonald, "Process and Change in the Newfoundland Fishery: The Trawlermen's Strike of 1974-1975," M.A. Thesis, Memorial University 1980.

[16] Robert Turner, "The Contribution of Oral Evidence To Labour History," Oral History, 4, No. 1 (1976), 23-40. and see Archie Green, "Industrial Lore: A Bibliographic-Semantic Query," Western Folklore, 37 (1978), 213-244.

[17] James Spradley and David McCurdy, The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society (Chicago: Science Research Associates Inc., 1972), p. 9.

> rarely shared with anyone but another member of the same occupational group... [I]however familiar the persons of the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker may be to us in daily interaction, when we approach them as workers, we must approach them as members of foreign communities (which they basically are), and attempt to view their unique rhythms, techniques, and stylized forms of communication as workers with a sensitivity and openness that will allow us to perceive these phenomena as they themselves do.[18]

The strike at the Evening Telegram afforded an opportunity to perceive reporters' work as they themselves do, although it did not allow an opportunity to view them at their jobs. This thesis is concerned with those events which take place outside the occupation although still common to the members of the occupation. Reference to works by folklorists which deal with activities away from the workplace is made in Philip Nusbaum's article in the special issue of Folklore Forum and include George Korson's Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry, and Mody Boatright, Minstrels of the Oil Fields.[19]

As we have seen, the oral history approach is particularly fruitful in discerning not so much the objective details of as the attitudes taken toward those events and issues by those involved. Chapter two of this thesis deals primarily with reporters' attitudes towards the

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[18] Robert Byington, "Strategies for Collecting Occupational Folklife in Contemporary Urban/Industrial Contexts," Western Folklore, 37 (1978), 189.

[19] Philip Nusbaum, "A Conversational Approach to Occupational Folklore: Conversation, Work, Play and the Workplace," Folklore Forum, 11 (1978), 27, n. 5.

Thomson Organisation and to management in general. A discussion of anecdotes told by the press about Roy Thomson illustrates their attitude. The folklorist is particularly skilled in studying not only the use of but also the content of anecdotes and both these issues will be discussed, as well as their appropriateness as evidence of rhetorical skill on the reporters' side. This stereotyping is the basis for much folklore communication and is the subject of William Hugh Jansen's article, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore."[20] Brief histories of the Thomson Organisation and the Evening Telegram provide a framework for the reader in which the significance of the anecdotes can be understood.

Chapter three deals with the formation of the union in the newsroom and the beginnings of the strike, as reporters felt the one was responsible for the other. They felt the strike had been forced upon them in a deliberate attempt to break the newly formed union. The chapter makes a further analysis of the rhetoric reporters employed to justify their position "on the streets."

Chapter four deals with the actual experience of being on strike and on the picket line. It deals with the experiences strikers had in trying to stop the general public from crossing their lines, of selling the strike paper, The Signal, of haranguing scabs and confronting

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[20] William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 44-51.

police. This is the chapter which relies most heavily on the Spradley/McCurdy approach as it seeks to discover the reporters' own criteria for interpreting what was happening to them, such as their changing conceptions of the role of the picket line and the manner in which they classified scabs.

Chapter five deals most specifically with occupational narratives, as it deals with the Ship Inn, the bar in which reporters met to relax with, share with and learn from each other. Like chapter two, it illustrates Jansen's concept of the "esoteric-exoteric factor" as the strike acted as a catalyst in determining what reporters think their jobs -- presented in an idealized form -- should be.

This thesis utilizes an oral history approach not in order to reconstruct the strike, but to present it as the reporters saw and experienced it, and to interpret their attitudes, primarily those held towards management as well as towards their own jobs, all feelings which were heightened by the conflict.

The importance of the individual's point of view was stressed by Barbara Allen in her article, "The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History." Allen justifies her stance by stating that "Written history provides the framework for interpreting the past; orally communicated history documents the human implications of

the historical events with which written history deals."[21] Thus, as the history books document the sale of privately owned newspapers to larger chains, the rise of the one newspaper city and the growing power of the newspaper chains, folklorists can document these changes as they are experienced by the people who work for them and feel their implications first hand.

[21] Barbara Allen, "The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History," Western Folklore, 38 (1979), 117.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THOMSON ORGANISATION AND THE EVENING TELEGRAM

Newspapers in Canada have been characterized by family ownership. Generations of owner/publishers -- those publishers who have top position through inheritance rather than career -- have passed on to their sons and other family members the operations of the newspaper.[1] As newspaper production has become more costly due, among other factors, to a reliance on the advances of an expensive technology, families have needed to have a great deal more wealth behind them in order to continue operations. Thus, with the sale in August, 1970 of the Evening Telegram to the Thomson Organisation, the founding family, the Herders, were replaced as owners of the Evening Telegram by the Thomsons. John Porter noted this trend in 1965 when he wrote in his book, The Vertical Mosaic:

> ... only the very wealthy, or those successful in the corporate world, can buy and sell large daily newspapers which become, in effect, the instruments of an established upper class.

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[1] John Porter distinguishes between publishers who are owners and those publishers who have arrived at that position through journalistic careers. Those in the first group have a social background similar to that of many business leaders. See John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 483.

> The controlling interest in the major newspaper complexes, in all of which the stock is closely held, is in the hands of families or individuals with two or three generations of wealth behind them.[2]

The Thomson family's interests, which began in newspapers, have since been expanded into such varied areas as the oil industry, tourism trade and department stores. A growing trend, anticipated in the 1960's, has been the emergence of the one-newspaper city. This centralization was pointed out by Porter, who noted that "There seems to be a contradiction in the process by which as cities increase in population, the number of newspapers which they support decreases."[3] The cost of newspaper production is held largely responsible for this trend, and so:

> The 20th century newspaper is thus a story of consolidation and centralization. Its inevitable result is the replacement of the multi-newspaper city by the single-newspaper city.[4]

Although still owned by families, there is currently a major change occurring in the nature of newspaper ownership and the reaction to this change being expressed in the press is largely that of resentment towards these two owners. As well, Canada's two major newspaper chains, Southam Inc.

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[2] Porter, p. 463.

[3] Porter, p. 462.

[4] W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada Ltd., 1967), p. 73.

and Thomson Newspapers Ltd., have recently come under study by a Royal Commission. The Commission's report severely criticized the Thomson Organisation but was less harsh in its treatment of the Southam chain. Although Southam also owns interests outside the newspaper trade, its outside interests have included such related enterprises as book publishing, unlike the vast corporate interests of the Thomson chain.

The Evening Telegram was sold to Thomson Newspapers Ltd. in August, 1970. This act marked the end of a locally owned and operated business and the Evening Telegram joined the collection of newspapers owned by one of Canada's largest newspaper owners. The change was viewed by the reporters and some former employees as highly significant. For them, the Evening Telegram had lost its local base and become a member of an organisation whose motive was felt to be profit at the expense of quality. In order to fully understand the role of the Thomson Organisation in the reporters' justification of the strike, a brief history of the Evening Telegram as it was before the sale in 1970 and the changes which were seen to take place after August, 1970 will be presented here. Furthermore, the character of Roy Thomson, as it has been presented in the press, and the reporters' drawing of parallels between Thomson and Herder, will be discussed.

There is a general antagonism amongst Canadian journalists towards the Thomson Organisation and the closing of two major city newspapers in August, 1980 precipitated a great deal of comment in newspapers and magazines. As noted

above, the Kent Commission which was set up to look into the operations of both the Thomson and Southam chains was highly critical of the Thomson chain. On August 27, 1980, Thomson ceased operations of the Ottawa Journal, which left the Southam-owned Ottawa Citizen free of competition. In Winnipeg, Southam closed down the Winnipeg Tribune, giving the Thomson-owned Winnipeg Free Press a monopoly in that city. By these actions, they provided each other with monopolies and severely reduced the number of two-newspaper cities in Canada, a trend discussed at the beginning of this chapter and a trend which had been warned against by the ill-heeded Davey Report on the mass madia in 1969.[5] As a direct result of these closures and perhaps due to the federal government's embarrassment at its own lack of action on the recommendations of the Davey Report, the two chains were charged under the Anti-Combines Act, and a Royal Commission was appointed to look into newspaper ownership, under the chairmanship of Tom Kent.

Reactions in journalistic circles to the sale of the Evening Telegram, the closing of the Ottawa Journal and the Winnipeg Free Press, and the 1979 strike, reveal a similar reliance on the use of anecdote to present an unflattering characterization of Roy Thomson in the press and a tendency to connect the character of the Herder family with that of the Thomson family. There is a peculiar problem in reading

[5] St. John's, with the privately owned Daily News is one of the few cities left in Canada with two competing local newspapers.

accounts on Thomson, in that, being written by journalists, they perpetuate their own attitude towards the news business, which is one that places the ideal of public service before that of the profit motive.[6] Lee Sigelman has noted that "... in their periodic introspections, American newspapermen reveal a morally conditioned 'public regardness,' a self-imposed obligation to watch over the 'public and the public's business'."[7] This attitude colours journalists' assessments of Thomson's business practices. In addition, this problem manifests itself in the scholarship on Canadian journalism, which is hardly disinterested, having been written largely by Canadian journalists.[8] The Kent Commission was staffed by journalists.

On the whole, journalists resent the full-scale entry of the newspaper business into the corporate world. Although newspapers have certainly always been a business and a vehicle for advertisements, and resented by their writers even as such, the structure and size of the corporate world would appear to have aggravated this resentment. The Kent Commission noted that today, reporters feel like "... cogs in an empire that governs them from a distance."[9]

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[6]The phrasing comes from Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1981), p. 171.

[7]Lee Sigelman, "Reporting the News: An Organizational Analysis," American Journal of Sociology, 79 (1973), 133.

[8]See for example the writings of Walter Stewart, W. H. Kesterton and Peter Newman.

[9]Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, p. 113.

The peculiar dilemma of the journalist was pointed out by Ben Bagdikian in his book, The Information Machine:

> News is an intellectual artifact fashioned under a code of professional ethics and received as a cultural experience.
>
> But it is also the product of a bureaucracy with employees, unions and stockholders, processed in a manufacturing plant that has some of the same characteristics of its sister factories that produce hubcaps and monkey wrenches.[10]

This dualism was also expressed in the Kent Commission's report:

> In any field of endeavor there are inevitable tensions, not necessarily unhealthy, between an employer and those employed. They see the role of the enterprise from quite different perspectives. The tensions exist in the newspaper industry in a special way because, as we believe has been made sufficiently evident, the newspaper is a business unlike others. Its two central purposes, to earn a profit and to perform a public service, tug it in opposite directions.[11]

At the Evening Telegram, the perception of these conflicting purposes -- earning a profit on the part of owners and performing a public service on the part of reporters -- indicates an important area of stress in reporters' work experience and is consequently a major theme of the occupational narratives. In this clash of perceptions, what reporters think of owner/publishers is vital in

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[10] Ben Bagdikian, The Information Machine (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 115.

[11] Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, p. 171.

understanding the use of an abundance of anecdotes about Roy Thomson and of owner/publishers who occupy similar positions in the press' scheme of opponent-figures. The process behind these beliefs has been elaborated on by William Hugh Jansen, when he wrote:

> The esoteric applies to what one group thinks of itself and what it supposes others think of it. The exoteric is what one group thinks of another and what it thinks that other group thinks it thinks.[12]

These beliefs became glaringly evident during the 1979 strike, not only in what reporters think of publishers but how they view the ideal of their own job, which will be discussed in chapter five.

In her thesis on counter protest in Newfoundland to the seal hunting controversy, Cynthia Lamson noted that:

> ... the expressive forms of protest provide an index to the beliefs and values held by a particular group.... While groups have certain ideas about their own identity as contrasted with other groups, they are not always verbalized. In protest situations, esoteric and exoteric attitudes come to the surface and often are the core of expressive behaviour.[13]

Exoteric beliefs are particularly apparent in the kinds of anecdotes which the press in general told about Roy Thomson after the sale in 1970 of the Evening Telegram to the

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[12] William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 46.

[13] Cynthia Lamson, "'Bloody Decks and a Bumper Crop': The Rhetoric of Counter Protest," Unpub. M.A. Thesis Memorial University 1979, p. 5.

Thomson Organisation and the 1980 closing of the Ottawa Journal, and in the reporters' at the Evening Telegram use of anecdote about Herder and the history of the Evening Telegram, and in the manner in which they drew a parallel between the character of the Thomson Organisation and the current publisher, Steve Herder. The use of anecdote in these cases was particularly appropriate in the anecdote's economy of length as well as being particularly persuasive in its strength of emotional appeal.

This chapter, then, will attempt to discuss three separate yet entwined subjects. First it will present the character of Roy Thomson as it has been established in the press, primarily through the press' use of anecdote. Secondly, it will give a brief history of the Evening Telegram and the changes that were perceived to take place after its sale to the Thomson Organisation. Thirdly, it will attempt to show how reporters exhibited a certain rhetorical skill in drawing a parallel between the Thomsons and the Herders and the demonstration of an exoteric belief they revealed in doing so.

Roy Thomson and the Growth of the Thomson Organisation

When Thomson Newspapers Ltd. bought the Evening Telegram in 1970, its newspaper interests were primarily in small towns. At the time of the 1979 strike, the Evening Telegram was their second largest newspaper in terms of circulation, second to the Sudbury Star, in Sudbury, Ontario. In January, 1980, Thomson Newspapers bought the six newspapers

of the Free Press chain, thus acquiring a number of large city newspapers, including the most prestigious of English Canada's newspapers, The Globe and Mail. Today the Thomson group's holdings are varied and extensive, as the following excerpt from the Kent Commission's report indicates:

> Thomson Newspapers Ltd. and its subsidiary companies reported owning, at December 31, 1980, 128 newspapers: 52 in Canada, 40 dailies and 12 weeklies; 76 in the United States, 71 dailies and 5 weeklies. . . . The company is part of a much larger group of corporations, controlled by the Thomson family, that forms a multi-national mixed conglomerate engaged in many other kinds of businesses, including wholesaling and retailing, real estate, oil and gas, insurance, travel and tourism, financial and management services, high technology communication, trucking and so on, most of which have no direct relationship with newspaper publishing.
>
> In addition to Thomson Newspapers Ltd., three major public companies form part of the Thomson Organisation: Hudson's Bay Co., Int'l Thomson Organisation Ltd., Scottish and York holdings.[14]

These holdings are all based on the wealth amassed by Roy Thomson after he entered the newspaper business at the age of forty, in 1934.

The first Lord Thomson of Fleet, father of the current head of the organisation, was born on June fifth, 1894. The son of a Toronto barber, Roy Thomson has been portrayed in the media as the classic self-made man in his oft-quoted remarks that hard work can get a man anywhere he wants to go. Thomson's early ventures into the media came in 1925, when he accepted an Ottawa franchise to sell radios:

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[14] Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, p. 171.

> Three years later, he shifted his base of operations to northern Ontario, where he knew there was a vast untapped market for radios. But since most of his customers could get nothing but static, he decided to open a radio station in North Bay.... In 1934, Thomson's tiny empire acquired its first newspaper, the weekly Timmins Press.[15]

Eventually, Roy Thomson made his way into newspapers in the United Kingdom and, ultimately, to a peerage. He acquired both the prestigious Sunday Times and The Times of London in 1966, which were sold in 1980 by his son, Ken.

Roy Thomson's bluntness in his ambitions have made him a prime victim for treatment in anecdotes. He is continually portrayed by the media as avaricious but eccentric, completing multi-million dollar transactions on the same day as he has gone bargain hunting for clothes and was seen picking pennies up from the street.[16] Most anecdotes use as their punch line a quote from Thomson. For example, the Toronto Star ran the following obituary on the day of his death in 1976:

> Lord Thomson of Fleet, the Toronto-born press baron who died in London today at the age of 82, loved money and said so. "For enough money, I'd work in hell," he once said. Roy Thomson became a publisher for one reason. That's where the money was.[17]

The remark has also been reported as "for enough money I'd

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[15] Irwin Ross, "No Sense at all in Stopping," in In Search of Canada, ed. Reader's Digest (Montreal: Reader's Digest Association, 1971), p. 284.

[16] "Obituary," Toronto Star, 4 August 1976, n. pag.

[17] "Obituary," Toronto Star, 4 August 1976, n. pag.

live in hell" and was recorded in his biography as a facetious comment made to his wife.[18] Another anecdote published in Peter Newman's book, The Canadian Establishment, concentrated on the following remark by Thomson:

> During a 1963 audience with Nikita Krushchev, the Russian dictator teasingly asks what use Thomson's money is to him. "You can't take it with you," says Krushchev. "Then I'm not going", Thomson replies.[19]

Similarly, the CP News Service kept the following account on hand in their biographical section:

> He was president of the Canadian Daily Newspaper Association in 1951 when the Quinquennial Commonwealth Press Union Conference was held in Canada. As usual, he went around asking delegates: "Is your paper for sale?"[20]

In Colombo's Canadian Quotations, the collector has called Thomson "endlessly quotable" while his biographer found that:

> No one remembers Thomson doing things, only saying things.... In North Bay, or Timmins, or Toronto, or Edinburgh, I would invariably be given ten different dates for any one event in

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[18] Russel Braddon, Roy Thomson of Fleet Street (London, Toronto: Collins, 1965), p. 172.

[19] Peter C. Newman, The Canadian Establishment Volume I (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 284. Also reprinted in John Robert Colombo, Colombo's Canadian Quotations (Edmonton: Hurtig Pubs., 1974), p. 585 and Peter C. Newman, "The Table Talk of Roy Thomson," Macleans, December 1971, p. 41.

[20] From the Biographical Services of the CP News Service. Thanks should go here to Ron Crocker for allowing me to consult his clipping files on Roy Thomson.

> his life; but I would also be given ten almost exactly similar dicta.[21]

His biographer found some of the anecdotes to be rather apocryphal in content and reprinted them as "alleged remarks."[22] He is skeptical, for example, that Thomson ever made the following remark, which has also been reprinted in Colombo's Canadian Quotations:

> ...sitting next to Princess Margaret at a Scotsman fashion show, he had commented upon the lamé gown of one of the models, "My favourite colour", he had told the Princess. "Gold!".[23]

What makes the incident believable is that the comment lives up to our expectations of Thomson, as his character has been presented in the media. In commenting on the "migratory anecdote," Jan Harold Brunvand has written that: "These stories are accepted as authentic because they are clearly true to our expectations of such people."[24] As a means of persuading one's listener/reader, anecdotes are particularly effective. After the strike, one former Evening Telegram associate editor told me a story about Roy Thomson told to him by a fellow journalist. The friend, while in London, had decided to drop in and meet this famous Lord Thomson:

> So he went in. And Thomson was sitting behind a desk, which had nothing on it but

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[21] Colombo, p. 586 and Braddon, p. 10.

[22] Braddon, p. 242.

[23] Braddon, p. 242 and Colombo, p. 584.

[24] Jan Harold Brunvand, introduction to Mac E. Barrick, "The Migratory Anecdote in the Folk Concept of Fame," in Readings in American Folklore, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1979), p. 279.

> gold coins, just one mass of gold coins all over the desk -- he was nearly blind -- I met him once -- big thick glasses and a magnifying glass and he was examining every gold coin in detail... He said if he had taken them and thrown them over his head like a miser, it would have completed the picture, you know. That's the feeling Perlin had with him, you know. That this was just the thing that Thomson would do -- he'd be rolling in gold, sort of thing. Avaricious old man, you know.[25]

Although the image is rather larger than life, the anecdote is believable because of Thomson's character as it has been established in the press.

Journalists enjoy "characters," most likely because they make "good copy," but they also tend to characterize people in their own field. Particularly in their reminiscences, journalists concentrate on characters in the newsroom and of the trade in general. Many of the articles in Walter Stewart's book, Canadian Newspapers: The Inside Story, reveal this tendency.[26] Journalists have repeated many of Thomson's comments with little care for substantiation. It is therefore difficult to sift what Thomson actually did say from what he did not.

There is little doubt that Thomson really did make some of these comments, however. One of his most ill-received remarks came after he gained a government license

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[25] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[26] See Michael Enright on the Globe and Mail, Glen Allen on the Montreal Gazette and Heather Robertson on the Winnipeg newspapers all in ed. Walter Stewart, Canadian Newspapers: The Inside Story (Edmonton: Hurtig Press, 1980).

to run Scottish commercial television. Thomson stated that it was "Just like having a license to print your own money." This statement was reprinted in articles by columnists Richard Gwyn and David MacFarlane in response to the closing of the two newspapers in August, 1980.[27] The article by Gwyn used the Evening Telegram and Peterborough Examiner as examples of what happens to a newspaper after its sale to Thomson. The statement is also recorded in Braddon's extensive biography on Thomson and is admitted to by Roy Thomson himself in his autobiography.[28]

Archer Taylor has defined the anecdote as:

> A brief narrative current in oral tradition that tells something unusual about a person, an event, or a thing. It may involve quotation of a witty remark or a description of a remarkable situation.[29]

As illustrated earlier, anecdotes about Roy Thomson involve the quotation of one of his characteristically blunt statements. Thomson called himself a "blunt man" while his biographer labelled him "revoltingly candid and immodestly unpretentious."[30] Taylor likens the anecdote to the jest in

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[27]Richard Gwyn, "A Dreadful Tale of Timidity," Ottawa Citizen, April 1981, n. pag. and David MacFarlane, "The Accidental Tycoon," Saturday Night, October 1980, p. 27.

[28]Braddon, p. 56 and Roy Thomson, After I Was Sixty (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1975), p. 78.

[29]Archer Taylor, "The Anecdote: A Neglected Genre," in Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 223.

[30]Braddon, p. 242. In his autobiography, Thomson indicates he quite approved of the biography.

that "both are likely to give point to the incident by a quotation."[31] The rhetorical potentiality which lies in anecdotes is contained within their very structure: by the use of a quotation as a punch line, the person who is the character in the anecdote appears to be speaking for himself. On this Brunvand has written: "Anecdotes always have the air of truth about them and they supposedly demonstrate how people have revealed their own personalities."[32] Thus, as a means of persuasion, anecdotes are particularly effective. Reliance on a quotation by Thomson himself makes his character appear to stand out without any additional or editorial comment and thus allows the listener/reader to feel that he is evaluating the situation on his own. In his job, the reporter is very much at ease with the rules of rhetoric. Donald Bryant has written that journalists are particularly skilled in this matter:

> Whether editorial writer, commentator, or plain newswriter, reaching into his audience's mind is his problem. If the people who buy the paper miss the import, the paper might as well not be published.[33]

The very appropriateness of the anecdote lies in its form and content. Its brevity and colour allows for a rapid assessment of the issue. Roger Abrahams has examined the

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[31] Taylor, p. 227.

[32] Jan Harold Brunvand, The Study of American Folklore (New York: W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1968), p. 95.

[33] Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Function and Its Scope," in Rhetoric: A Tradition in Transition, ed. Walter R. Fisher (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1974), p. 208.

issue of "appropriateness" in his article "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms." Of the use of shorter forms in folklore, he has written:

> The shorter forms employ fairly direct strategies relying on the intensity and colour and concision of manipulated materials to do their convincing. Though all folklore calls for a sympathetic relationship between formal object (item of folklore) and audience, the longer genres increasingly draw upon vicarious, rather than immediate, involvement to induce sympathetic response.[34]

Journalists are working in a medium which demands brevity.

Thomson's background also makes him a prime candidate for the subject of anecdotes. His father was a barber, his mother a hotel chambermaid. Thomson is frequently described -- and he used the phrase himself in his autobiography -- as "the Toronto barber's son."[35] His rise was slow in starting; it was not until he was forty years old that he began buying newspapers and not until he was fifty-nine that he expanded his newspaper ownership to the United Kingdom, having suffered a number of failures, such as his venture into farming in his early years. His poor background is also emphasized in accounts of his life. His biographer wrote:

> Talking of Thomson the tycoon, Canadians still insist "there's more to the man than that," and remember him, forty years ago in the North, waddling along down an icy road in his coat that was too light, his

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[34] Roger D. Abrahams, "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms," Genre, II (1969), 111.

[35] Thomson, p. 42.

> fedora hat on the back of his head. They still remember the one suit, the patched pants, the beaming desire to sell even fifty cents worth of washers: this, then, and now, is his image, even though today he can buy all the clothes in the world and negotiate deals worth millions.[36]

Thomson's rise from a poor background, his major eccentricities such as his drive for money and his meaness, colour his character as it has been presented in the media. His biographer noted: "There are a thousand anecdotes to hand of Thomson's thrift, to put it euphemistically; and he himself confirms them all."[37]

Although Ken Thomson inherited his father's business and his ambition, he did not inherit his father's flair and colour. Furthermore, being the son of a wealthy man, he does not have the "folk hero" appeal of the poor man made rich and famous through his own hard work. When the Thomson Organisation, headed at that point by Ken Thomson, closed down the Ottawa Journal, stories concentrated on the character of the original Lord Thomson. Descriptions of Ken Thomson described him in the following manner:

> He radiates niceness from every pore, down to the hole in the sole of his shoe. He's self-effacing, shy, unpretentious, soft-spoken. He peppers his conversations with engaging archaisms, like "golly" and "gee whiz".... Without ever asking for it, Ken Thomson evokes sympathy because you know he's carrying

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[36] Braddon, p. 362.

[37] Braddon, p. 359.

> around in that thin, gangly frame the weight of his memory of his father. The memory that is of Roy Thomson, the self-made financial genius, who made his son everything he now is, and himself into Lord Thomson of Fleet and a folk-hero, able to get away with saying everything from a t.v. station is a "license to print money" to the "only difference between rape and rapture is salesmanship."[38]

Because of his wealth and the vastness of his holdings, Ken Thomson has been viewed as "a corporate figure of extraordinary power."[39] But anecdotes today about the Thomson Organisation still concentrate on the thrift aspect, although they no longer count on quotations from Roy Thomson.

In the Kent Commission's report, accounts are to be found of the "stingy practices and tendencies" of the Thomson chain which have sapped the energy of the journalists who work for these papers.[40] The Thomson operation formula is seen as cutting costs in the most extreme ways. Financial cutbacks at one paper resulted in a situation where reporters had to go to a nearby newstand to buy a copy of their paper, rather than having the paper delivered to the newsroom.[41] One former member of the Free Press news service, a service cut by Thomson shortly after his purchase of the Free Press chain and news service, described arguments over "Whether our man in Edmonton was entitled to two wastepaper baskets

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[38] Gwyn, n. p.

[39] MacFarlane, n.p.

[40] Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1981), p. 113.

[41] Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, p. 113.

or merely one -- before we got that sorted out, the Edmonton bureau was closed too."[42] The article appeared in response to the closing of the Ottawa Journal. An autobiographical account by a man who had worked with Thomson papers for over twenty-five years and who had felt an increasing alienation from Thomson as the company continued to expand and become less personal, described a managers' meeting in which he felt the Thomson head office people were trying to "...squeeze every drop of blood out of the stone" and wrote that one publisher had apparently whispered to another: "God help us if they ever realise there are two sides to a piece of toilet paper."[43] Similar Thomson practices have resulted in Thomson being labelled in newspaper articles as "an operator of journalistic sausage factories and sweat shops" and accused of producing bland newspapers worthy of the title "Pablum Canada."[44] The term was coined by former Winnipeg Tribune editor, Eric Wells, who warned chairman Tom Kent that:

> Well, there's always a danger, sir, of Pablum Canada coming about. The person who introduced it in large measure to Canada was Lord Thomson, who now owns one of the greatest newspapers around here.[45]

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[42] Walter Stewart, "Games People Play," Quest, Summer 1981, p. 79.

[43] James Lamb, Press Gang (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), p. 184.

[44] Christopher Young, "'Barndoor' news commission: an interesting, useless project," Ottawa Citizen, September 1980, n. pag.

[45] Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, Transcripts, p. 137.

The criticism directed towards Thomson by journalists is a result of what they see as his overriding concern for profit at the cost of quality. Journalists complain that for the price of one quality writer, Thomson could and does hire three junior reporters to cover weddings, Rotary luncheons and plant openings.[46] Over and over, Thomson insists that he does not interfere with the editorial content of his newspapers and, equally convinced, journalists state that he does. Ken Thomson reiterated the company's position when he appeared before the Kent Commission:

> Editorial independence is the cornerstone of our company's philosophy. We operate our newspapers in a highly decentralized manner, delegating operating authority to publishers. We have vested in our publishers the responsibility and the autonomy to decide what news, information and comments should be published daily, in their newspapers. In our view, there is no other way to operate.[47]

Barrie Zwicker, editor of the recently defunct magazine about the Canadian media, Content, presented the journalists' point of view when he wrote:

> Thomson is omnipresent in his papers' newsrooms. The Thomson head office (and any chain head office for that matter) appoints all publishers who in turn control all budgets. That isn't interference, of course. That goes light years beyond it.[48]

The cutbacks and strict central financial control through which the Thomson Organisation run their operations mean a

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[46] Walter Stewart, "Games People Play," p. 79.

[47] Royal Commission on Newspapers, Transcripts, p. 6814.

[48] Barrie Zwicker, "The Marketplace," Canadian Consumer, June 1980, p. 46.

smaller editorial staff and editorial expenditures and this is seen as interference as it limits the scope and quality of news coverage.

The Evening Telegram

Historical accounts of the Evening Telegram are not plentiful. The newspaper itself celebrated its fiftieth, seventy-fifth and one hundredth anniversaries by publishing supplements to those issues.[49] All three reprinted stories covering major historical events and contained photographs of the line of publishers and editors as well as most staff members. An essay by Elizabeth Barrett, an undergraduate student of history at Memorial University, outlines the history of the Evening Telegram; although she cites no references she appears to have relied heavily on these anniversary issues and is primarily concerned with the technological growth in the Evening Telegram in terms of its presses and its succession of editors and publishers. Nevertheless three accounts in her paper indicate the role the Evening Telegram felt it played in the Newfoundland community. The first mentioned is the following:

> On December 10, 1894, the Union and Commercial Banks crashed, leaving only the Newfoundland Savings Bank in business. The "Telegram", through its editorials, was instrumental in minimizing a run on the Newfoundland Savings Bank, and, by

[49] See the following Evening Telegram issues: 3 April 1929; 5 April 1954; and 3 April 1979.

> raising an emergency loan, that bank managed to survive the crisis.[50]

In 1936, the Evening Telegram carried daily news of a child who had been lost in the woods for twelve days. When it learned later that the child would lose both her legs, the paper raised over $3000 to aid her and and her family.[51] And in 1954 the Evening Telegram raised over $6000 for an eight year old boy who had to be sent to Toronto for two brain operations after being hit by a car.[52]

The one hundredth anniversary issue of the Evening Telegram stated that the newspaper was founded in April, 1879 by William James Herder, grandfather of the current publisher, Stephen Rendell Herder. It was started at a time when St. John's, with a population of about 30,000 people, already had one tri-weekly and seven bi-weekly newspapers.[53] To attempt to produce a daily at this time was therefore viewed as highly ambitious, but the venture succeeded.

In this one hundredth anniversary of the Evening Telegram -- ironically the year of the strike -- the paper wrote proudly of its role in the Newfoundland community:

> During its long history, the Telegram has played an integral part in the life of the

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[50]Elizabeth Barrett, "A History of the Evening Telegram, 1879-1966," Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, p. 10.

[51]Barrett, p. 27.

[52]Barrett, p. 40.

[53]Michael Harrington, Evening Telegram, 3 April 1979, p. 3A.

> city of St. John's and the country and province of Newfoundland, in addition to doing its job as a gatherer and spreader of news and an observer and critic of the local scene in all its aspects. In 1929, it started a subscription list for victims of the South Coast disaster that eventually went to $250,000. This practice was carried out on numerous occasions especially in times of great national or individual distress.[54]

In the same issue, George Story, currently Henrietta Harvey Professor of English at Memorial University, and who worked part time for the Evening Telegram from 1950 to 1951, wrote that the only direction he was ever given in the writing of a story was the importance of reporting all details. In covering the founding of the Federation of Fishermen in the spring of 1951, this meant "Writing about this delegate's concern about the need for a wharf, that one's about a water line to a fish plant, everyone's need for a better price for fish, and all the multitudinous but locally vital details the men had on their minds."[55] In the brief submitted to the Special Senate Committee which studied the mass media in 1969, the Evening Telegram alluded to its history as a family newspaper, and then wrote of its dedication to the Newfoundland community.

> Provincial "flavour" is also obtained by the fact that we have bureaus in the major central Newfoundland towns of Gander and Grand Falls, each with its own news staff,

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[54] Harrington, p. 3A.

[55] George Story, Evening Telegram, 3 April 1979, p. 37A.

> sales staff, transportation and communications facilities.[56]

Bureaus across Newfoundland allowed for a lot of in-depth reporting of local events. One former employee told me what he felt the Evening Telegram was like before the Thomson purchase:

> The newsroom was chock-a-block with reporters -- the woman's page and woman reporters -- woman's editor and all .... We were doing interpretative pieces, we were doing large double page features -- I remember time after time I did double page features on the resettlement program, on the fishery, and all these things, you know -- in fact, the Telegram really led the battle against the resettlement program, you know. Successfully, too, you know. But, we had to have a staff to do that, because if a person went out on the road to do a feature, he had to have three or four days sizing up the local area and what's going on, talking to people and this -- and then he'd come back and need a week to write out his notes and make some confirmations here in town.... But we had quite a crew of writers around -- they lost Ray Guy, for instance. I don't think there's any writer in Canada who can write satire the way Ray Guy can write. Or write humour when he wants to be funny.[57]

Although reminiscences do lend themselves to idealization, the Evening Telegram's active role in the Newfoundland community is indicated in the previous examples.

Family ownership of an enterprise tends to produce a "We're all one, big, happy family here" attitude on the part of the employer towards the employees and this was

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[56] Canada, Parliament, Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media, Brief #75, p. 5.

[57] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

certainly true of the Evening Telegram. Paternalism is particularly evident in Newfoundland culture primarily because of Newfoundland's initial dependence on the fishery and the early establishment of the merchant/fishermen relationship. The "Amulree Report" (the Royal Commission Report of 1933 which led to the establishment of Commission Government) stated the following:

> ... from the days when the country first came to be permanently settled until the middle of 19th century, the organisation of the fisheries was largely feudal. The merchants or exporters who established themselves in St. John's and other centres employed a number of fishermen to catch fish for them. The fishermen did not receive wages but were provided by the merchants, in return for their services during the fishing season, with sufficient food stuffs and other necessities to maintain themselves and their families in tolerable comfort throughout the year.... It was the practice of each merchant to support his own fishermen in bad times as well as good.[58]

This attitude was carried over into other forms of business and was one of the characteristic aspects of the structure of the Evening Telegram. The practice most often cited by strikers was that of maintaining an employee on full salary even though the employee had been off sick for as long as four months.[59] Thus, like the merchant, the Evening Telegram supported its employees "in bad times as well as good." Many

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[58] Quoted by George Perlin, "Patronage and Paternalism: Politics in Newfoundland," in Perspectives on Newfoundland Society and Culture, ed. Maurice Sterns (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1974), p. 117.

[59] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

employees took their first and only job at the Evening Telegram. One craftsman who had worked with the Evening Telegram for about fifty years stated that "When the Herders were there, one was expected to stay for life."[60] The 75th anniversary issue listed the number of families working in the Evening Telegram as well as the number of years some of their employees had worked with them. An account by the craftsman mentioned above described a banquet at which Charlie Jeffery, editor at that time, told the employees that the Evening Telegram was not a family business only because it was owned and operated by a family, but that the entire Evening Telegram family was there, sitting around the table at the banquet. Each staff member was a member of the Evening Telegram family. This employee said he was shocked when the Evening Telegram was sold to the Thomson Organisation.[61]

The figure of the founder of the Evening Telegram, William James Herder, plays an important role in the history of the paper. In his history of Canadian journalism, W. H. Kesterton wrote:

> The maintenance of printed news as a family enterprise holds a special place in the mythology of the trade. There continues to be a legend of a crusading proprietor whose main interest is civic betterment and for whom personal profit is so unimportant as to tempt him to perpetual bankruptcy for the sake of journalistic

[60] Mac Swackhammer, MUNFLA MS. # 78-444, p. 74.

[61] Swackhammer, p. 27.

> virtue. Whatever occasional truth this may have in reality is moderated by the fact that many heirs to newspapers are indifferent publishers.[62]

This belief plays a strong role in conceptions held of the Evening Telegram by those who have worked for it. The following, by his son James, is the entry on Herder in the Grolier Encyclopedia Canadiana: it takes up a full half of the entry.

> ... Herder fearlessly espoused the cause of justice. On one occasion, refusing to divulge the name of the writer of a letter he had published, he was held in contempt of court and sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment. He declined to put on the prison garb and served his sentence in his underwear until his release, after four days, on the strength of a petition signed by nearly every adult in St. John's.[63]

The incident is recorded in a variety of places. It was mentioned by Elizabeth Barrett in her paper on the history of the Evening Telegram.[64] It appears in Joseph R. Smallwood's autobiography, in the section on his days as an Evening Telegram reporter.[65] It appears in an article in the short-lived journal, St. John's The Alternate Press in 1972, in a report detailing the changes at the Evening

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[62] Kesterton, pp. 116-117.

[63] James Herder, "The Evening Telegram," in Encyclopedia Canadiana Vol. 5 (Toronto: Grolier of Canada, 1957), 119.

[64] Barrett, p. 11.

[65] Joseph R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1973), 100.

Telegram since the Thomson purchase.[66] Harold Horwood records the incident in an essay on his years at the Evening Telegram.[67] And it appeared in the following form in the strikers' paper, The Signal, written by a former reporter:

> It saddens me to see it the Evening Telegram in such tatters. I weep for a lost institution, for the Evening Telegram founded in 1879 by W. J. Herder, the man who spent four days in jail in only his longjohns on a point of journalistic principle. I weep for the newspaper personified so perfectly over the years by those big shy Herders who ran it, ran it stingily but with a sense of community service.[68]

The incident is thus of great rhetorical value when used against the sale of the Evening Telegram to Thomson as well as during the strike. It encapsulates a strongly held value system among journalists and sums up their public-service ideals for the newspaper.

One perception of what the paper meant to its readers was expressed by Wick Collins, who was fired during the strike for refusing to take on reporting duties. Collins had been associate editor of the Evening Telegram for eleven years. In August, 1979, Collins returned from his annual holiday to find the newspaper embroiled in a strike. He

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[66] Bill Gillespie, "The Thomson Telegram," The Alternate Press, February 1972, p. 7.

[67] Harold Horwood, "The St. John's Evening Telegram: Joey and the Crusader," in Canadian Newspapers: The Inside Story, ed. Walter Stewart (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1980), p. 33.

[68] Ron Crocker, "Record Purse for Big Indy," The Signal, 2 November 1979, p. 8.

prepared his comment piece that week by detailing what the paper meant to its readers as a record of their births, their marriages, their deaths; in other words, their lives:

> I pointed out too how the Newfoundland people -- a lot of Newfoundland people had been very upset when the Evening Telegram was sold out to the Thomson family, you see. Because they had always regarded it as their paper -- the readers had that kind of feeling that the Telegram was their paper -- now, all of a sudden, it was owned by a company in Toronto.[69]

The change in ownership by the sale in 1970 was felt to change the flavour of the paper just as it changed the morale of the people who worked there. Loyalty disappeared. A three day wildcat strike by the printers, the first in the Evening Telegram's history, was supposedly in reaction to a change imposed by the Thomsons from a five to a six day publishing week. The Alternate Press interpreted the action in the following way:

> The major issue of the strike was the union claim that their contract had become void because the Telegram had switched from a five to a six day publishing week. One senior member of the Telegram staff said the real reason could be found in a number of small efficiency changes which had come about since the Thomson takeover. In other words the printers now felt like they were being treated as mere employees whereas before they had felt like members of the organisation.[70]

A similar situation, this time in Quebec, was described by the Kent Commission:

> The acquisition of Le Soleil by Uni Média

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[69] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[70] Bill Gillespie, p. 7.

> in 1973 created discontent among journalists and provoked strikes that were painful to both sides. As one of our studies shows: the entry of the daily newspaper, Le Soleil, into Jacques Francoeur's empire meant a cultural clash between Québec traditions and Montréal marketing practices.[71]

The same cultural differences and sense of being controlled by a disinterested absentee landlord exist in both cases. The Thomson purchase of the Evening Telegram in 1970 meant that the business would be directed by a head office in Toronto, because this is where all accounts of expenditures are ultimately sent. One reporter, who quit shortly after the strike, expressed his sentiment in the following way:

> I'm really glad that we did take them on -- I think that's another reason why we did get so much support. I think people knew we were taking on this incredible giant who didn't give a fuck about the Telegram -- didn't give a fuck about us.[72]

In describing their strike against Thomson, many reporters employed this 'giant' imagery. One printer told me that all he could think while on the picket line was "David and Goliath, here we go again -- the little against the big."[73]

In the Alternate Press in 1972, just two years after the Thomson purchase of the Evening Telegram, Bill Gillespie quoted one reporter on the changes of the past two years. In the article, he wrote:

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[71] Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, p. 113.

[72] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[73] Telephone Interview, December 1979, Fieldnotes.

> The Thomson Organisation, true to its word, has never said a word on editorial policy, says Herder, however with cuts in staff, coverage has become more superficial, an opinion which is supported by several present staff members in private. "Most people here think that the paper is going downhill and there's nothing that can be done about it," said one staffer. "It's become one big, fat, lot of advertising. Personally I wish the Southam chain had taken it over instead."[74]

Harold Horwood, who worked at the Evening Telegram when Thomson bought it, described the purchase as "the day the sky fell":

> We woke up one morning to learn that the whole operation had been sold to the Thomson Organisation. We were assured that there would be no drastic changes -- and there were not, for awhile. Lord Thomson of Fleet and his boys never meddled in the editorial policies of their papers. They were only concerned with money.[75]

Of the changes following the purchase, Wick Collins stated:

> Thomsons is pretty shrewd at this business. They've been at it a long time, making money out of newspapers. They don't interfere with editorial policy. They don't tell you what to write -- no one at the Tely ever told me what to write or anything else. The method they use is they start the reduction of staff. Say, I forget the figures and how many reporters we had, but when I went to the "Tely" first in 1968, they had a problem in the newsroom to find somewhere for me to sit down. To find a desk.... When I left, I could have picked any of ten desks in the newsroom.[76]

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[74] Gillespie, p. 7.

[75] Horwood, pp. 45-46.

[76] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

The speaker went on to say that they had been forewarned of what was to take place after the Thomson purchase by a reporter from the Toronto Globe and Mail, who had described the process as a "disease."[77]

One striker told me that working conditions at the Evening Telegram were "Dickensian," as he described the drab newsroom with its walls yellowed by years of tobacco smoke.[78] Another striker described the paternalism at the Evening Telegram as intolerable and used the following analogy in his presentation:

> Herder had this idea -- Herder's been called a plantation owner, which is what he is -- he goes way back to the way it was in Newfoundland the last couple of hundred years -- like a fish merchant. He just figured that we owed him something. If we had worked twelve or fifteen hours a day -- so what -- he was paying us well, as far as he was concerned. He was giving us a job.... He always looked upon us as his little niggers, his little boys, his little men, and here we were -- rebelling against him, you know.[79]

The analogy to the plantation owner indicates their perception of the almost "feudalistic" set-up of a family operation. Another former employee described the attitude as "paternalistic in the worst sense," as employers would "... turn up for a fellow's funeral after having paid him

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[77] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[78] Interview, 25 February 1981, Fieldnotes.

[79] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

a miserable wage all his life and employed him in the most miserable of working conditions."[80]

Thomson and Herder today fulfill the same role in the strikers' perception of opposition figures. During the strike, Herder was felt by many to be the tangible aspect of Thomson, while others felt they simply could not differentiate between the two. It is not surprising that the two are seen as parallel in this way; as pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, both are family organisations with people at the top who have reached that top level through inheritance rather than through journalistic experience and ability. This makes the gap between reporters and owner/publishers particularly wide. In discussing the pattern of what he calls "generational continuity in the ownership of newspapers" across Canada, John Porter has noted that:

> A large proportion of the men who control the major newspapers belong to upper class institutions. They are graduates of private schools and belong to the same exclusive metropolitan clubs as do members of the economic élite.[81]

This isolation makes this group of owner/publishers particularly susceptible to the application of an exoteric stereotype. This is illustrated in Alden Nowlan's article on the Irving-owned New Brunswick papers:

> Inevitably, there was a lot of nostalgia for The Old Building, the setting for

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[80] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[81] Porter, p. 483.

> numerous newsroom legends. In many of these the central figure was a former publisher, by then deceased, of whom it was said that he had mistaken junk-mail invitations to join the Reader's Digest Association and the National Geographic Society for singular personal honours; and that he had ordained there be no fog in Saint John, not ever, so that the hateful word had to be blue pencilled not only when it turned up in news stories but when, as frequently happened, it appeared in the copy for the daily weather report.[82]

The image is that of a man rather out of touch with the real running of a newspaper. Again, this is seen to be because many publishers have never worked as reporters.

The exoteric attitude taken by reporters toward owner/publishers is contained within these anecdotes which they tell about them. Furthermore, in drawing a parallel between owners Thomson and Herder, reporters are indirectly accusing Herder of the same evils as Thomson has been so widely accused of in the press. Commenting on the effects of cutbacks imposed by the Thomson Organisation, one striker stated:

> It's been Thomson's philosophy all along -- and it fits in very well with Herder's -- with the Herder family philosophy -- is that when Roy Thomson started off, he said, "Okay -- you pay these guys next to nothing, they get a little bit of experience and they go off somewhere else to build on the ground-work that they built up here -- and ah --

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[82] Alden Nowlan, "The New Brunswick Papers: What About the Irvings?" in Canadian Newspapers: The Inside Story, ed. Walter Stewart (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1980), p. 65.

> they'd rather do that, they'd rather lose their top people by refusing to pay them money and let them go on and do something else. I don't know what that says about the character of the company. Certainly a strange philosophy.[83]

The parallel thus has great persuasive strength.

The above discussion indicates how the strike acted as a catalyst for the expression of the reporters' perception of both Thomson and Herder and their belief that the prime role of the newspaper is to act as a public service. The use of anecdotes about Roy Thomson and the Thomson Organisation and the parallel made by strikers between Thomson and Herder are designed to persuage the reader/listener of the unethical approach of the Thomson Organisation. Reporters have utilized rhetorical skill in this presentation of their own values. Anecdotes provide colourful illustration of their beliefs. Donald Bryant has written that rhetoric deals with values and that these values are established with "... the aid of imaginative realisation, not through rational determination alone, and they gain force through emotional animation."[84] It is not surprising, then, that reporters have relied on the presentation of the negative sides of the Evening Telegram and the Thomson Organisation, such as the negative consequences of a paternalistic employer and the opposition they feel towards owner/publishers. The following discussion on the problems reporters experienced

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[83] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[84] Bryant, p. 214.

in forming a union and the beginning of the strike indicates a similar need to justify their strike action in their accounts.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FORMATION OF THE UNION IN THE NEWSROOM AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE STRIKE

This chapter will deal with the structure of the narratives concerning the reporters' experiences in forming a union in the newsroom. It will also look at the beginnings of the strike itself as it was viewed by the reporters as an attempt to break the union. On August 2nd, 1979, the composing and press room employees were locked-out by management. Negotiations on the crafts' contract had been proceeding slowly since February so they had called for a slow down in an effort to pressure management. As a result, management laid off two women and then the crafts held an in-plant strike which resulted in the lock-out. The reporters, having just joined the same union as the composing and press room employees and negotiating their first contract, were thus in the awkward position of having to cross their own union's picket line, as the two -- the crafts and the editorial staff -- make up two separate bargaining groups within the union. They did this for two weeks, until they were in a legal position to strike. Reporters felt they had been forced on the streets in a deliberate attempt to split and

and thereby break the union, as an extension of earlier attempts to thwart the development of a union in the newsroom.

Because taking to the streets in a strike is, although not unlawful, a disruption of normal events, the act was felt by the reporters to require a certain amount of justification. It was in this context that reporters made comparisons between Roy Thomson and his organisation and the Herders, invoking the anecdotes and the theme of paternalism to establish their case for taking the first strike action in their new union's experience. In explaining their views of the strike to me, the reporters felt it imperative to give a history of the union and its attendant problems although I never asked for this history.

The statement by one reporter that: "We started talking about a union last August and it was about a year later that we finally ended up on strike," indicates the implicit connection reporters made between the union's formation and the strike itself.[1] Labov and Waletsky's work on narrative as it relates to temporal sequence in the retelling of narratives will be discussed at the end of the chapter to further illustrate the reporters' point.[2]

Union busting is not without precedent in Canadian newspapers and the reporters were well aware of this.

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[1] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[2] William Labov and Joshua Waletsky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," in Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts, ed. June Helm (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973), p. 13.

In her honours dissertation for the Department of Journalism, Carleton University, Alison Hare documented the 1977 attempt by Halifax Herald employees to form a union with the International Typographical Union.[3] The Herald's employment policy appears to have been similar to that of the Evening Telegram in its attempt to create a loyal staff. This is Hare's description:

> The four-storey building was full of Herald faithfuls who had built careers with the company, saw it as a paternalistic employer and felt indebted to its benevolence. The company was proud of its employees and proud of its employees' "loyalty."[4]

Hare's account states that the Herald dismissed ten editorial employees in November, 1977 during the height of a union drive. Six of those decided to fight back. As a result, the Herald did hire the six back but when the union vote was finally taken, the result was forty-nine to twenty-four against the union. Hare felt that "In the crunch, the employees had retreated to the security of their roles of Herald faithfuls."[5] The case illustrates one of the problems the Evening Telegram employees would face in their own attempt to form a union.

The brief submitted to the Davey Report by the American Newspaper Guild in 1969 documented a history of

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[3]Hereafter referred to as the I.T.U.

[4]Alison Hare, "Massacre on Argyle St.," Unpub. Honours Research Project, Carleton University, p. 1.

[5]Hare, p. 23.

intimidation by management to halt the growth of unions in newspapers. It recounts a 1937 attempt by the Guild to unionize the editorial employees of three Toronto dailies. The attempt was lost when one editor wrote across the bottom of a Guild meeting notice on the bulletin board, "Anyone attending this meeting is liable to jeopardize his job."[6] In 1938, Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis led a legislative battle which resulted in the denial of union membership to newsmen.[7] And in Windsor, Ontario, in 1945, intimidation tactics took place similar to those in Hare's account of what happened at the Halifax Herald:

> Organisation was in high gear when management started calling in individual employees for private conferences and laying down ultimatums. Efforts were also made to set workers in one department against those in another and one nationality against another. The result was defeat for another workers' attempt to unionize.[8]

The first Canadian group to successfully join the Guild were the editorial employees of the Toronto Daily Star in 1948.[9] A more recent problem faced by the Guild was the failure of its members in the Winnipeg Free Press advertising and editorial departments to win a contract. In August, 1981,

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[6] Canada, Parliament, Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media, Brief # 7, p. 2.

[7] Brief # 7, p. 2.

[8] Brief # 7, p. 2.

[9] Brief # 7, p. 3.

the group applied to join the I.T.U. which was already established in the building and recognized by management.[10]

Many newspaper accounts state that unionization is particularly difficult to achieve in a Thomson-owned newspaper. In an article describing the problems the I.T.U. had in signing up editorial employees of two Thunder Bay, Ontario, newspapers -- in which the provincial Labour Board supported union claims that the company had exerted "undue influence" on its employees regarding the union -- Werner Bartsch summed up by stating: "Thomson doesn't want any unions in his newsroom."[11] Columnist Doug Fetherling wrote elsewhere that, in North America at least, "Thomson has always kept the unions at bay and could easily expect to continue doing so."[12] These kinds of accusations occur throughout the oral and written materials I have collected on unions in Thomson-owned newspapers. The problems the reporters at the Evening Telegram faced were summed up by a former associate editor when he commented about the strike: "I think it all got started with the idea that Thomsons don't like unions and they did everything they could to try to defeat the union before it got going."[13]

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[10] Brian Gory, "Staff at Free Press applies to join ITU," Globe and Mail, 11 April 1981, n. pag.

[11] Werner Bartsch, Content, November 1978, p. 3.

[12] Doug Fetherling, "A Family Affair: Investigating the Newspaper Chains," Quill and Quire, January 1981, p. 19.

[13] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

The need for secrecy in the 1978 drive to form a union in the newsroom of the Evening Telegram was made even more immediate by the memory of an earlier attempt which was halted once management learned of it. In 1971, the Newspaper Guild attempted to unionize not only the newsroom, but also the van drivers, the advertising department and whatever other departments were not already unionized. The element which most current reporters remembered and commented on was that newsroom employees had been talked out of the action by the managing editor. Bob Rupert, currently a professor of journalism at Carleton University, was the Guild representative sent in to help set up the union. He described the reason behind its failure:

> We were all ready to go and the -- I think it was the last trip I was going to make in there before we went ahead and had cards signed for the application. Anyway -- I got in and I had a call immediately from two of my key people -- in fact, they were the key people. Anyway -- they said that the managing editor had called them in to have a chat and had expressed some surprise at them being interested in joining a union -- that he thought they had a good career at the paper and that he thought they were professionals and how could professionals consider going into a union that would also include vandrivers. And this is the old elitist argument that publishers often will make. At any rate -- they were my key people.[14]

The following remark is typical of the way in which current reporters remembered the failure of the 1971 attempt:

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[14] Interview, 21 October 1980, Fieldnotes.

> I think management got ahold of some of the veterans and ah -- tried to talk them out of it. Which they did. And ah -- gradually, as one veteran fell apart and another veteran fell apart, the whole shebang fell apart.[15]

Thus, their strategy for the 1978 attempt relied heavily on the need for secrecy and steadfastness should management learn of the drive.

As outlined in the previous chapter, numerous factors led the reporters to unionize. These included a more regular standard for raises in salary, and the issue of overtime as well as working conditions. Some saw the formation of the union as a chance to stop what they saw as the deterioration of the Evening Telegram's quality since the Thomson purchase.

On the issue of wages, one reporter stated that: "Every decent writer who's ever been at the Telegram has left either for more money or a better job, or in total disgust because of the way he was treated".[16] Another described the way in which working at the Evening Telegram had changed his attitude towards unions:

> So, I should say -- I hadn't had a union bent for a long time, although my father was a member of the L.S.P.U. I always scoffed and scorned -- I hated unions up until I went to the Telegram and I walked smack into it.... The attitude of Herder and all the others -- it was that paternalistic thing that they got away with for years

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[15] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[16] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> and years. So all that compounded to change my views on unions and, of course -- I suppose it was a matter of not judging until you find yourself in the position, which is what I was doing before. I always equated unions with hard hats, lunch cans and Export A's.[17]

As to the quality of the newspaper, one reporter, who spoke more about the history of the union than the strike itself, stated that he had begun motions towards a union in the hope of improving the quality of the paper, a hope he gave up shortly after the strike ended. This belief that it is the first responsibility of a newspaper to provide a public service has already been mentioned and will be further explored in the chapter on the Ship Inn. The conflict between ideal and actual practices in the industry is one of the largest sources of frustration felt by the reporters and often results in reporters leaving journalism altogether.

In the fall of 1978, then, after years of talk about a union, three Evening Telegram reporters finally said -- "Let's do it."[18] Two of the three were among those interviewed and they described this period at length, detailing doubts and problems. They held a meeting at one of the three's home and invited those who they felt would be interested. The reporter at whose home the meeting was held described the event:

> And we had it here on a Saturday morning. And I can remember being

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[17] Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[18] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> really nervous, you know, 'cause I figured -- maybe one or two people would show up.... By around twelve o'clock or so, people started pouring in. Next thing I knew we had practically the whole newsroom.[19]

After the enthusiastic response it was decided that the newsroom should contact the Newspaper Guild. After waiting two months for a reply, the reporters learned that the Guild was not interested, presumably because the Evening Telegram newsroom would have represented too small a unit. The I.T.U. was then approached but they too turned the reporters down as they will not go into a building where another union is already present. The crafts -- the composing and pressroom employees -- had been members of the International Printing and Graphic Communications Union since the printers had joined the union in the nineteen forties.[20] The reporters then decided to contact the I.P.G.C.U. and eventually a majority signed union cards. They now make up Local 441 of the St. John's Allied Printing Union, an affiliate of the I.P.G.C.U.

Various employees in the newsroom, such as desk editors, were not told of the union drive because the reporters thought they "... might let Herder know there was union talk on the go."[21] This statement contains an important element in the events: there were people who were not

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[19] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[20] The union is hereafter referred to as the I.P.G.C.U.

[21] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

told about the union attempt for fear management would find out, as they had in 1971, and defeat the attempt. These employees were described as "Scabs even before the opportunity was presented to them."[22] Because of this anxiety, secrecy had to be maintained throughout the drive. Former associate editor Wick Collins stated that management had suggested to him that he listen around for talk of a union. Collins refused to comply, primarily on the grounds that: "I hadn't spent six years in the army during the war just to come back and stop other people from having freedom to form a union or whatever."[23]

In order to avoid management interference this time, the reporters did not ask those "loyal employees" who were liable to "... run to tell Steve Herder and tell him that they were asked to join a union."[24] One reporter described the secrecy:

> The next thing you knew, we were signing union cards in March and all having these covert secret meetings -- like every second weekend or something, right -- at people's houses -- determined that Herder's not going to find out about it this time. And in fact, the week, very appropriately, that we celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the Telegram -- was the week that we all signed our union cards. They don't like unions and they don't like unions in the newsroom, for some reason.[25]

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[22] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[23] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[24] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[25] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

This time the reporters did manage to keep the drive a secret and publisher Steve Herder only learned of the attempt at unionization when he was officially notified by the Labour Relations Board. The reporters were proud of their success in keeping the drive a secret, as the following expression of triumph indicates:

> One morning in March, Herder opened his mail -- one Tuesday morning -- and, as he put it -- "There it was." And that was the first he heard about it.[26]

After Herder received the application for certification, he called up each reporter separately to his office. Here the narratives of those involved echo each other. The narratives about this incident begin: "He called up every single one of us to his office,"[27] "So Herder called up everyone individually,"[28] and "He took everybody up,"[29] then mention the publisher's discouragement of the union, and conclude: "I just sat there and looked at him and smoked cigarettes,"[30] "I just sat there and listened to him, I didn't say anything,"[31] and "I just didn't say anything."[32] This cluster of narratives around the same event describe a

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[26] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[27] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[28] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[29] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[30] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[31] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[32] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFla # 81-611.

confrontation that was experienced both individually and collectively. Their similarity indicates the solidarity of the group at this time in its stand against management. Furthermore, they describe a passive stance: reporters sat and were silent as Herder talked on. This is the opposite situation to the one to be discussed in the following chapter on the picket line, in which the cluster of narratives describes an active stand as the reporters were involved in a demonstration on the picket line. These narratives are highly individualistic and vary greatly from one another. Jack Santino has noted the same tendency regarding active and passive stances and their relation to the structure of narratives. In studying the narratives of those who work on the railroad, Santino found that narratives arise "... out of and deal with each of the relationships and interactions that are part of the occupation," in this case, the relationship between trainmen and engineers.[33] The narratives of those in a subordinate situation, the trainmen, arise out of a more passive stance and concern how something is done to them. The engineers, in a superordinate position, picture themselves in a more individualistic position. Thus, the reporters' narratives are similar at this point because of the passive stance they took against the superordination of publisher, Steve Herder.

Another reason for the similarity in the former

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[33]Jack Santino, "Characteristics of Occupational Narratives," Western Folklore, 37 (1978), 211.

case is that the narratives represent a strategy developed to deal with Herder. The event was later recalled and relived in the semi-official headquarters and nearby bar, the Ship Inn. One reporter explained why he knew what to expect and how to react when Herder finally called him in to his office:

> But I'd already heard it about ten times over because each person went up revealed exactly what Herder said, over in the Ship Inn afterwards. Much to everybody else's delight. We had a great laugh over it.[34]

The performance of narratives in the Ship Inn provided entertainment while also allowing the reporters to develop a strategy with which to deal with the confromtation.

Reporters felt that the strike had been forced upon them in a conscious effort by management to break the union. This interpretation was also presented by fellow unionist Richard Cashin. Cashin publicized this issue when he spoke to the strikers on the picket line and was subsequently quoted in the strike paper, The Signal:

> Striking and locked-out employees of the Evening Telegram are fighting "one of the most significant labour battles ever fought," says Richard Cashin, president of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers' Union. . . . Cashin described the dispute as no ordinary strike situation, and said that the crux of the present situation is that the Thomson Corporation is denying the workers the right to have a union.[35]

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[34] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[35] "Telegram strike one of the most significant in Nfld. history," The Signal, 28 September 1979, p. 11.

There are two bargaining units in this Local of the union, and the editorial staff were negotiating their first contract. When the crafts people, members of their own union, were locked-out, reporters had to cross their own union's picket line for two weeks, until they were in a legal position to strike. The reporters joined the crafts on the streets on August 18th. One reporter explained their position:

> We wanted to go out at that time -- as a matter of fact, we felt pretty shitty crossing their picket line, but they knew we were going to go out the minute that we got our opportunity to go out.... The main reason we went out was just because we were sick and tired of crossing their picket lines.[36]

The reporters felt that management hoped to split the union by forcing the issue at that time and thereby defeat it. Their view of management's aim is evident in this reporter's description of the days leading up to their decision to go out:

> And then Herder was saying that -- if we went on strike, it wouldn't be our cause because the printers were on the streets already. And he says, "You know, you're just backing them up and it will be to your detriment and so there's no point in you guys getting involved with them at all". So that was probably the turning point for us, so Friday we were pretty sure we were going on strike.[37]

Another reporter summed up his feelings towards the strike as "It was just a blatant attempt to break the union and

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[36] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[37] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

show who's the boss."[38] The reporters stayed on the streets while the crafts' contract was settled and the crafts stayed out while the editorial contract was settled. When the strike ended, many of the reporters feared that the more militant members of the union would be weeded out and that the union would gradually fall apart. So far this hasn't happened. In fact, a third group, the advertising department, has recently joined the union.

Labov and Waletsky's analytical work on narrative discusses the desire on the part of the narrator to follow temporal sequence in the relating of narratives.[39] When a reporter associates the date of the strike with the time of union discussion, it is to be implicitly understood by the listener that the strike was only one incident in the struggle for a union. By detailing the problems involved in this struggle, the reporters persuade their listener that they were justified in taking the action, i.e. "Hitting the streets," that they did. To open discussion, I asked one reporter at what date in August had the strike begun -- was it early August? He replied:

> Not quite -- it began in March, when we first signed union cards. In fact -- it began even before then -- perhaps a year ago September, when ah -- the boys first started talking about a union.[40]

The strike, presented in such light, is not to be viewed in

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[38] Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFlA # 81-611.

[39] Labov and Waletsky, p. 13.

[40] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

isolation. Robert Byington has noted that collecting union folklore often involves collecting union history as well. He wrote that in many instances "... it just comes with the territory."[41] In the case under study here, not only did it come with the territory, it was critical in understanding the reporters' justification of the strike.

This chapter has described how the reporters felt they were forced on to the streets in a deliberate attempt to break the newly formed union. In retrospect, they placed the date of the strike at the start of union discussion itself. The following chapter will describe how the reporters perceived their experiences while on the picket line itself.

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[41] Robert Byington, "Collecting Occupational Folklife in Contemporary Urban/Industrial Contexts," Western Folklore, 37 (1978), 192.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PICKET LINE

This chapter will examine various aspects of the picket line, particularly those aspects given importance in the strikers' narratives. As the outward representation of the strike, the picket line attracted the hostility of some members of the public, such as those who continued to enter the Evening Telegram building to conduct business as usual, as well as the support of others, such as those who were drawn to the picket line as a place from which to make public statements on the strikers' behalf. Experiences there were responsible for changing conceptions in the strikers' minds of the role and purpose of a picket line.

The strikers often used the term "on the streets" rather than being "on strike," a phrase which focuses attention on the picket line experience. Their experiences there determined their behaviour and over the three months of the strike they saw the function of the line change from a purely symbolic and intellectual stance to a tangible and physical blockade. This chapter will examine the characteristics of each stage as well as the experiences which contributed to these changes. It will also examine the

picket line in relation to the strikebreakers who crossed the line and allowed the Evening Telegram to continue publishing as well as examining the role of the police, particularly during the September twelfth demonstration. The presence of placards and the selling of such propaganda as "Boycott the Telegram" buttons and the strike paper, The Signal, will also be discussed. Finally, the application of concepts of ritual and rites of passage may aid in understanding the reporters' perceptions during what for them was the new experience of "being on the streets."

At the beginning of the three month strike, the reporters felt that the public had a right to cross their lines. As the strike wore on and they found their position increasingly frustrating, reporters found that they had to change their conception of the picket line. These frustrations, and their eventual translation into physically blocking the public from entering the Evening Telegram buildings, grew out of a number of facts. Not only were they confronted with a public who was largely unaware of and sometimes hostile to their picket line, they had to watch as the Evening Telegram continued to publish each day through the aid of scab labour. Production of their own paper, The Signal, also increased tensions, as did management's action when they fired associate editor Wick Collins when he refused to take on reporters' duties. All these factors placed the strikers in completely new situations and were responsible for the strikers' confusion in defining their position on the streets.

Reporters' Definition of The Picket Line

The reporters had not made preparations for a picket line before they joined members of the crafts unit on the streets. When the reporters went on strike, they fitted themselves into the existing strikers' shift system. Three shifts had been organised, the first beginning at seven in the morning and the third ending at six in the evening. Picket lines were set up at both the Water St. entrance, where distribution vans continued to pick up copies of the Evening Telegram, and the Duckworth St. editorial entrance. The following description stressing the strikers' lack of experience is significant in understanding the confusion which they first felt towards their position:

> So we had no -- I don't think any of us had ever been on a strike before. I doubt very much if anybody had been involved on a strike before. So we had no idea of picket lines, or no plans at all and it had to be a sort of rush job over the weekend -- I think we took the strike vote on a Saturday morning.[1]

Preparations for a picket line, both mentally and physically, were rushed and uncertain. As the speaker points out, none of the strikers had been on a strike before and thus they had no clear definition of the function of the picket line.

Experiences on the picket line were related by all the reporters I interviewed in a manner which described a shift in terms of their behaviour towards those members of

[1] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

the public who crossed their lines. As the weeks wore on, the strikers became increasingly aggressive towards the public. Although they were initially tactful while on the line, within a few weeks this approach was replaced by the use of verbal aggression. By the last weeks of the strike, the situation had become one of physical confrontation on the part of some of the strikers.

All reporters were aware that these three approaches had been taken. One reporter in particular described the changing definition of behaviour in terms of stages. The initial stage was one of polite persuasion. When that failed, the "Sarcastic, swearing stage" developed, replaced in the last few weeks by the "... not letting them in at all and also swearing at them stage."[2]

Definitions of the picket line during the first month concentrated on the line as a "symbolic gesture"[3] or "a formality."[4] As a symbol, the picket line informed the general public and non-striking employees that the strikers had put their jobs in jeopardy and that by crossing the line they had hurt the strikers' cause by allowing the employer to continue functioning almost normally.

As pointed out above, the strikers, having never been on strike before, initially found their position to be

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[2]Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[3]Interview, 30 September 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[4]Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNCLA # 81-611.

a rather ambiguous one. They intellectualised their position and made an effort to be polite to those members of the public who tried to cross their line. As one reporter put it:

> In the beginning, Jesus, we were just there and Christ -- I don't think any of us actually opened doors to let people in, but it was that ludicrous. We just didn't know how a picket line was handled.[5]

Another reporter described their stance at this time in the following way:

> One of the guys may pick up his sign and walk back and forth, but most of the time we spent leaning on our picket signs.[6]

Passing the time, finding out who was down at the Ship Inn having a beer, discussing stories to cover in The Signal, the reporters hoped the picket line could still function as a psychological block to stop people from entering the building.

At this point in the strike, picketers found that some people would come up to the line, commiserate with them, particularly on the issue of Mainland scabs, and then rush through while the strikers' backs were turned. The failure of this first approach was underlined by the fact that some members of the public hardly noticed their presence:

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[5]Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[6]Interview, 30 September 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> They were all ready to go in, and they come to the picket line and didn't realise you were there. "What the heck are you guys doing here?" I don't know where they were -- they must have been in never-never land -- or maybe that's my perception.[7]

The reporters, in retrospect, were quite conscious of the changing conception of the picket line:

> And again -- it's really funny how it changed -- the first month we were on strike there was none of that shit. But as it progressively got on -- Jesus -- if a nun came over you'd call her a fucking scab, you know -- didn't make a difference who it was.[8]

The approach of the first few weeks was soon felt to be ineffective as people continued to cross the line. Others were almost unaware of their presence, as picketers stood in scattered arrangement around the doors, their picket signs often left leaning against walls or parked cars. The picket line went unnoticed to such an extent that it led one reporter to describe certain days as "... like a dollar forty-seven day inside and they're just going in an' out all over the place."[9] Before this time, strikers felt the public had a right to cross their lines. As one reporter put it during the strike, "That's the goddamn trouble with this goddamn strike -- we're so goddamn understanding."[10]

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[7]Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[8]Interview, 10 August 1981, Fieldnotes.

[9]Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[10]Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

When the presence of the picket line as a morally persuasive block failed, the strikers were forced to alter their definition of their position and hence of the role of the picket line. As tempers became frayed, the experience of being on the line was no longer one of just passing the time and some of the strikers became abusive. As the third month wore on, some of the strikers, believing that the Thomson Organisation could keep them on the streets for as long as necessary to break them, and having never confronted the Organisation in a strike before, physically blocked entry to the Evening Telegram. This action revealed their frustration and, perhaps, a fear that the strike was failing.

At the beginning of the third stage, the strikers decided, "Well, what we're going to do is stand here and we're just not going to let them in at all and that's all there is to it."[11] From polite talk and persuasion to verbal aggression, the third stage of simply blocking the doors developed. This approach worked:

> A lot turned away because a lot of people just walk by the picket line absent-mindedly, not thinking it signifies anything. And a lot of people had it pointed out to them -- you might say forcibly -- that the picket line is there for a purpose. It had some effect. There was one incident where the fellow crossing the line offered violence and had it returned again.[12]

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[11] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[12] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

Besides making the public more aware of the picket line's presence and significance, the physical blockade of the last month of the strike became a concrete experience rather than the purely intellectual one of the first stage. When I asked one reporter what was discussed at their semi-official headquarters, the Ship Inn, at the end of the day, he replied:

> Things that happened on the picket line and ah -- negotiations. Things like someone came up to you and wanted to barge across the picket line and you blocked them or something like that -- they became major victories after awhile -- although we didn't want it to go that way because we figured it was their <u>right</u> to go across the line.... It was only the last month or so that we started to physically block people and when we did, that was a major coup for us, because it was the only <u>firm</u> thing that you could grasp for that day. Negotiations had been broken off, there was no sign of -- that they would ever get going again. There was no yielding on Thomson's part at all, or anything else, so that the little incidentals that happened on the picket line or with the paper or with scabs or anything else became something we could hold up and say -- "We may not have negotiations, but we can do something with what we're doing now."[13]

The move to the physical blockade was not just a move against the public who ignored the line. It also gave the strikers a tangible way of expressing their frustrations. These frustrations grew not only out of their inability to influence the public as well as to affect negotiations, but out of a situation in which the <u>Evening Telegram</u> was still able to

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[13]Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

publish through the help of scab labour.[14] Other frustrations included the dwindling number of people on the picket line and the pressures of preparing the strike paper, The Signal.

Although the strikers did become more physically aggressive, none felt that their behaviour ever reached the point of being unreasonable or radical. As one reporter put it: "When you're on the picket line for three months and tempers don't get frayed, you're not normal -- you're not a normal human being and that's all there is to it."[15] Another reporter felt that a blending of the attitude at the beginning with that of the end may have been the answer, while another claimed that this was "... about the most gentlemanly strike in the history of labour in this country." He continued:

> Heavens, nobody's gotten beaten up -- I think. Violence and strikes always go together. If this was a picket line anywhere else, his building would have been levelled.[16]

Another stated:

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[14] For a discussion of the history of the term "scab", see Archie Green, "The Workers in the Dawn: Labour Lore," in Our Living Traditions, ed. Tristram Coffin (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 254, and for his observation that the newspaper industry is probably the only industry in which scabs went on strike, see Marc Zwelling, The Strikebreakers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 116.

[15] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[16] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> There was no radical element at all to the union, in comparison with other unions. There was a lot of passion and heat and everything, but the radicalism stopped short of any kind of physical violence. We threatened on a couple of occasions to go in and wreck the presses and that was towards three months of having been on the streets.[17]

Perhaps if the strike had gone on any longer, some of the strikers would have become more violent. As it was, some found themselves doing things they had never done before and in circumstances where normal rules did not seem to apply. Being on the streets was not in their previous experience and their rapid reassessment of the function of the picket line can be seen in their changing behaviour there.

The Public

Strikers encountered three types of behaviour from the general public: those who crossed the line and continued to enter the Evening Telegram building for business purposes; those who came to the picket line specifically to offer encouragement; and those people the strikers met while out selling The Signal, an activity which they viewed as an extension of the picket line because it was an opportunity for them to explain their case to the public. The following chart is based on a similar one developed by Ingrid Fraser in her thesis on the occupational folklore of bar musicians. It dealt with the performers' relationship to their audience

[17] Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

and is based on etic categories. The behaviour strikers encountered from the public can be classified in the following way:

Place	Type	Behaviour
picket line	hostile -- i.e. those who crossed the line	anticipated
picket line	supportive -- member of another union	expected
selling The Signal	neutral	unanticipated[18]

Fraser differentiates between "anticipated" and "expected":

> If a performer knows an individual he can expect a certain type of behaviour from them. The actions of strangers can only be anticipated.[19]

Because they could not have anticipated the public's reaction in the third case, some strikers found the support encountered here to be the most encouraging.

The hostile group has already been discussed in the first section of this chapter when, as a result of their actions, the picket line finally became a physical blockade. This section will deal first with the actions of those members of the public who were outwardly supportive. The chapter will then give a brief outline of The Signal and

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[18] Ingrid Fraser, "Public Tradition in an Urban Context: An Occupational Folklore Study of Musicians in St. John's," M.A. Thesis, Memorial University 1981, p. 185. Thanks to Cynthia Lamson, who suggested this comparison between members of an audience and members of the public.

[19] Fraser, p. 184.

will deal with those experiences the strikers had while selling the paper.

The public showed their support by coming to the picket line to buy copies of "Boycott the Telegram" buttons and/or copies of The Signal, which were sold both on the picket line and throughout the city. One reporter stated:

> We sold "Boycott the Telegram" buttons for awhile -- some people would give you five dollars. One guy -- or more than one person, actually -- gave us twenty dollars for one paper. People were just digging through their pockets looking for change.[20]

Others showed support by honking their car horns when they drove by:

> You find that among people who've been on strike before. They honk their horns more often, I'm sure. Saying -- "I know what it's like, boy -- keep it up". This kind of thing comes out when people pass you on the streets.[21]

And yet others showed support by coming to the line to present the strikers with donations and used the line as a place from which to make a public show of support. This was the case with support which came from other unions. Naturally, a show of solidarity is expected behaviour from union members. As pointed out in the previous chapter, one unionist who came to the line was Richard Cashin. While presenting the strikers with a cheque, Cashin made a statement that was reprinted in The Signal:

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[20] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[21] Interview, 30 September 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> Striking and locked-out employees of the Evening Telegram are fighting "one of the most significant labour battles ever fought in Newfoundland," says Richard Cashin, president of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers' union.
>
> Cashin made the statement last week while presenting $2,500 from the NFFAWU to Local 441 of the St. John's Allied Printer's Union, which represents the Telegram employees.[22]

Thus, Cashin used the picket line as a place from which to state his union's solidarity with the strikers' cause.

Other unions provided support in different ways, as the following accounts indicate:

> The Longshoremen have been really good and come along fairly regularly. They're strongly union. They were on strike for fifteen months -- they know what it's like to be on strike.[23]

And the post office:

> When they're passing by the lines, they're great support -- all of them. But, ah -- they don't have to cross the picket line. They only have to sort the Telegram's mail. And the Telegram sends somebody down to the post office to pick it up. I've heard of stories from the post office -- from a whole bunch of sources -- that things -- packages destined for the Telegram -- being accidentally dropped into mail bags for Portugal. I think that happens fairly often -- that's all they can do.[24]

Support from smaller unions also came in the form of donations, as well as in messages of solidarity published in

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[22] "Telegram strike one of the most significant in Nfld. history," The Signal, 28 September 1979, p. 11.

[23] Interview, 30 September 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[24] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

The Signal.

Thus, the picket line drew support in a variety of ways. Of course support can come from the strangest places, including some of St. John's best known street characters. One reporter found this kind of support entertaining:

> Well, B----- K--- likes to hang around the picket line. He's a character. He drinks a bit -- he's half crazy to begin with. And when he drinks he's more crazy. On top of that, he loses the use of his legs completely when he drinks. And there was one day a couple of months ago, I was on the picket line when it seemed like all the crazies in town dropped by for a chat. You know this young fellow who goes around in army uniform all the time? Well, he buys the Telegram regularly. No one talks to him. We don't bother. He doesn't stop to talk to us. He doesn't even direct any comments our way. Well, one day, he was passing by, with the Telegram under his arm, and B----- K--- was leaning on somebody's car, by the picket line -- loaded to the gills. And ah -- he sobered up briefly, just long enough to tell us -- "See buddy there? He's nuts."[25]

As stated earlier, most strikers found the most encouraging area of support came from those members of the public who they encountered while selling The Signal. For many it was their first real opportunity to explain their case in what was a rather confusing strike. One reporter stated:

> Oh yeah. It's great. They all say, "Keep it up" or they'll say they really like the paper or they don't like the paper. Most of them said really positive

[25]Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> things. And a lot of people, when they realised that it was for the strikers -- they sort of turned around and came back and opened their wallets and gave you like a dollar or fifty cents or something like that, and said, "How's the strike going?" So you sort of had to keep people up to date on it. It was really worthwhile to know that there were that many people interested in it.[26]

Strikers insisted that The Signal was started to generate strike pay, which was fifty dollars per striker and ten dollars extra per dependent, rather than as an alternative paper. It allowed the strikers to use the skills they already had in relaying information independently of press releases, and avoided the problem of having to rely solely on donations.

The first edition of The Signal came out on 21 September 1979, and was produced on a weekly basis, appearing every Friday. The publication went through seven issues, the last edition appearing on 2 November, two weeks before the end of the strike. It was a tabloid in format, ran to an average of sixteen pages, and sold for twenty-five cents.

The strikers were responsible for all aspects of the publication, which included soliciting advertising, delivering the paper to corner stores as well as selling them on the streets, canvassing other people to write for the paper, as well as, for the first few weeks, the layout of the paper. All these tasks took up a great deal of time and

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[26] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

energy and the number of people on the picket line dwindled as the strike went on and more time was devoted to The Signal. Strikers sold The Signal not only on the picket line, but in the shopping malls, the bars, the Confederation Building, the university, and the corner stores. Money had to be collected from the advertisers and corner stores and then deposited in the bank.

For some, this meant The Signal represented both the best and the worst aspect of the strike. The best because it brought everyone together and allowed them to think up their own stories and editorials, the worst because the time and energy that went into its production increased the tensions brought about by the strike itself. One reporter described what he referred to as "The darkest day":

> The day that the second issue of The Signal was delayed and everything went wrong -- we were late and we had trouble with the lawyers and squabbles -- people got really depressed.... That was the darkest day, I think -- that one. It seemed like all the efforts were going to waste for that week. As it was I think we only sold eight or 10,000 papers that week. And not being able to sell the newspaper on Friday night meant we had to go out on Saturday and you're talking about a six day a week affair. On the weekends, I just sat down and read, listened to music, recharged -- because on Monday morning, you had to start it all over again.[27]

Another stated:

> You get really sick of it. You're on the picket line four or five days a week.

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[27] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> Then Friday, Friday night and Saturday and/or Saturday night -- you're selling The Signal. Three or four instances I wrote up something for The Signal on Sunday.[28]

Some found the work to be more than the actual job at the Evening Telegram had been, while for others one of the major dilemmas was how to produce a paper and not end up acting like management, when you're on strike against management.

The Signal covered a variety of local issues. Its first edition published articles on oil off the coast of Labrador, a large fishing port planned for Harbour Grace, and a by-election. Editorials covered a wide range of topics as well. Only two editorials had anything to do with the strike itself, one concerning the firing of associate editor, Wick Collins. Reports of negotiations included major articles and minor items throughout the issues. Feature writers such as well-known humourist Ray Guy wrote weekly columns. Advertising for the paper came primarily from smaller enterprises, including health food stores, laundromats and bars; i.e., all of which may be viewed as being on the fringe of mainstream business.

Despite internal demands, the personal contact strikers made while selling The Signal was still an important source of support. One reporter stated:

> I think that that personal contact does a heck of a lot for us. Last week when we were out selling the paper -- I did the

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[28] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> university, and just the people who bought it and said, you know -- everything from Dr. Bruce, who's head of Arts, saying, "Well, since I buy the Evening Telegram, I might as well get the other side of the story" -- to a political science professor who was really interested and asking -- really curious about the strike. What the boys experienced in the malls was unbelievable. People lining up for the paper. It was great -- it got to be a line-up situation. That kind of thing really helps to boost morale.[29]

Other forms of support came in the form of donations for one paper as high as twenty dollars.

Scabs

Publisher Steve Herder told the reporters that he intended to continue publishing the Evening Telegram even if they did go out on strike. To do so, three to six[30] management people were brought in from Thomson-owned newspapers elsewhere to work in the composing and press rooms.[31] A local reporter was also hired during the strike to aid desk and copy editors in reporting local news.

On the picket signs were six dominant slogans which lasted through the strike: "Support Union Not Scabs", "19thC Paper Pays 19thC Wages", "Telegram Wages Makes Thomson Richer", "Thomson Wages By The Ounce, Profits By The Ton",

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[29] Interview, 30 September 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[30] Accounts of the precise number vary.

[31] The growth of newspaper chains has meant the business is particularly susceptible to strikebreakers as employees can be transferred easily from one branch to another. See Zwelling, p. 117.

"Scabs Come From Away To Break Strike" and "Mainland Strikebreakers Help Print The Telegram."[32] Figures one and two on the following pages, photographs taken on the day of the demonstration, illustrate these slogans. Although reporters claimed there was no official policy behind the slogans, it can be seen that half of them were devoted to the issue of scabs. Scabs and strikebreakers are at the heart of any strike because their presence allows the employer to continue operations almost as usual and negates the effect of the union's key weapon, the withdrawal of services.

When asked about the picket signs, most reporters talked about the haphazardness of their construction. The first picket signs were made out of cardboard but were replaced by plywood ones when they fell apart. Then, "everybody who had a slogan that could fit made one -- or two."[33]

Defined by policy or not, the slogans which were aimed at getting the largest amount of sympathy were the ones which attacked mainland scabs. The reporters were well aware of the propaganda aspect of this issue:

> It is effective. I was out selling papers in the malls on the weekend -- so many people came up to me and said, "Have you

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[32] Like a proverb, slogans are headline-like in form and attempt to sum up the entire conflict in one succinct phrase. See Barbara and Wolfgang Mieder, "Tradition and Innovation: Proverbs in Advertising," Journal of Popular Culture, XI (1977), 308-319.

[33] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

Figure One: Picket signs carried during the September 12th demonstration illustrate one of the dominant themes: "MAINLAND STRIKEBREAKERS HELP PRINT THE TELEGRAM."


MAINLAND
STRIKE-
BREAKERS
HELP PRINT
THE
ELEGRAM

Figure Two: Demonstrator's picket sign reads: "Scabs Come From Away to Break Strike."


SCABS
COME FROM
WAY TO
REAR
TRIKE

> got those Mainlanders out of there yet?" Now, appealing to one of the less savoury aspects of Newfoundland character is perhaps not the very best tactic, or the most justifiable tactic, but it is pragmatic.[34]

Strikers were thus appealing to an esoteric belief that Newfoundlanders hold towards mainlanders, that mainlanders are trying to run Newfoundland. Another reporter stated:

> So you use this motherhood issue of Mainlanders coming down to take Newfoundlanders' jobs and use whatever propaganda devices you've got.... I assume Newfoundlanders really get upset about this, and then they would cancel the subscription.[35]

Although the tactic did not result in enough cancelled subscriptions, it did generate public sympathy. The issue of mainland scabs was certainly the most publicized. One reporter stated:

> I wonder what people would say they'd heard about the strike. I think what they would say is that there have been Mainlanders sent in to take over our jobs.[36]

Although the issue of "mainland scabs" was the most publicized and the most effective in terms of propaganda, the reporters had their own classification of scabs and the mainland ones were in fact the least offensive to them.[37] One reporter, who began the remark by stating that

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[34]Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[35]Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[36]Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[37]This does not hold true for the composing and press room employees, where there were more mainland scabs.

folklorists would find this interesting, categorized four levels of scabs, finding the local reporter the most offensive and the "mainland scabs" the least. His categories, or levels, appear in the chart below. Unlike the earlier classification of the public in terms of expected and anticipated behaviour, this chart relies upon emic categories as it represents the reporters' own scheme. The chart also compares the strikers' categories to those of Ernest Hiller who, in his book The Strike: A Study in Collective Action, characterized and labelled the most common types of scabs.[38]

strikers' category	person(s)	degree of offense	Hiller
level one	local reporter	most offensive	"hunger scab" unemployed labourers who are the greatest menace to strikers
level two	photographer who tore up union card after signing		"good job scabs" employees who for various reasons do not join the union
level three	those who were not asked to join the union for fear they would tell management		"good job scabs" employees who for various reasons do not join the union
level four	Mainland scabs	least offensive	"professional scabs"

[38] Ernest Hiller, The Strike: A Study in Collective Action (New York: Arno and The New York Times, 1969), p. 100.

About the local reporter, opinion was unanimous. One reporter stated:

> I think he was the ultimate in scabbing, you know, he waited until we were on strike -- on the streets -- and then went and applied for a job as a reporter. And of course, the photographer is a different story altogether because he was the guy I worked with for eight years.[39]

And another reporter stated:

> Oh -- that's the lowest form of scab life, I think. A local guy, who worked with -- oh, I don't know if he's worked with any of us in particular -- but who knows people we know, and who just jumps into the Evening Telegram.[40]

Another reporter claimed: "He's the one who upsets people the most."[41]

The treatment of scabs was not violent. They were heckled on sight, but generally entered the building too early and left it too late to be seen by the picketers. The first edition of The Signal carried a large photograph of three of the mainland scabs with a caption reading: "Three members of Thomson Newspaper Ltd.'s strikebreaking team," on the front page."[42] Another one-quarter page photograph on page four of that issue shows the local reporter entering the building. Again, it was more effective in terms of public sympathy to use the photograph of the mainland scabs

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[39]Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[40]Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[41]Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611

[42]Photograph, The Signal, 21 September 1979, p. 1.

on the front page. In the seventh and final edition of The Signal there appeared a photograph supposedly taken by the photographer who had torn up his union card after signing it. The caption mocks the photographer's incompetence and names him "Scabby Silly."[43] The reference is very much an in-group one and of limited propaganda value.

As already mentioned, one of the most frustrating experiences of being on the picket line was the sight of vans continuing to pick up and deliver the Evening Telegram. The paper continued to publish with the aid of scab labour while also stretching resources within the building. Interviewed on the CBC's The Harris Report, publisher Steve Herder stated:

> I mean, I said at the very beginning when, even when it looked like we might possibly have a settlement, that I intended to continue publishing.[44]

Newspapers can continue to publish news even when their newsrooms are on strike through the use of wire services, such as the CP wire service. Stories can be taken directly from other sources, in this case, the competing newspaper, The Daily News, as well as from local radio stations. One reporter commented on the Evening Telegram's practices at this time:

> Nobody was brought in from the Mainland to do local news, to do any kind of

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[43] Photograph, The Signal, 2 November 1979, p. 5.

[44] The Harris Report, host Michael Harris, CBC St. John's, 4 October 1979.

> reporting. Management and those who refused to join the union in the first place have been reporting. Mostly they've been rewriting press releases, or not even rewriting, just putting them in wholesale.[45]

One of the lowest points in the strike came when associate editor Wick Collins was fired. Collins had been ordered by Steve Herder to carry out reporting duties. Collins refused, citing poor health and the fact that he had not been hired as a reporter as his reasons. He was subsequently fired by Herder after eleven years at the Evening Telegram. Collins described his position with the newspaper before his dismissal:

> I was associate editor and effectively, I suppose -- assistant editor, because in the absence of the editor, I acted as editor, you see. Layout of the editorial page, contents of the editorial page and the writing of all the editorials. As associate editor, I was doing roughly half the editorials plus writing comment pieces for the paper -- writing a column for the paper.[46]

It has already been pointed out in chapter three that management eyed Collins with some suspicion because he had refused to report on talk about possible union formation among the reporters. When Collins came back from his annual holiday in August 1979 to find the newspaper on strike, he wrote his weekly comment piece on the paper itself and the strike.

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[45] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[46] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

> I wrote a comment piece, deploring the strike as such, not blaming it on management, not blaming it on the union, just deploring the fact that there was a strike -- outlining what the paper meant to people, that people expected the paper to be produced -- this is the record of their births, deaths, marriages -- their lives, really.... And in the middle, somewhere in the middle, I pointed out too how the Newfoundland people -- a lot of Newfoundland people had been very upset when the Evening Telegram was sold out to the Thomson family, you see. Because they had always regarded it as their paper -- now all of a sudden it was owned by a company in Toronto.[47]

The piece annoyed Herder so much that Collins was asked to resign. "Not likely," replied Collins, who simply told Herder not to publish the piece. A week or so later, as was convention, Collins was again asked to fill in as editor when the editor became ill and things appeared to return to normal. Then, on a Friday morning, Herder told Collins he would be acting as a reporter starting on the next Monday. Collins replied: "Not likely I'm not -- no reason why I should," citing health problems such as chronic bronchitis and gastric ulcers as his main reasons. Furthermore, Collins told Herder:

> And I said, "Anyway, I wasn't hired to be a reporter and I refuse to be one. And I certainly refuse to take any part in breaking your strike."[48]

Herder told Collins that he would have to resign if not and that he would expect an answer by the following Monday.

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[47] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[48] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

On Monday morning Collins again told Herder "No," and was officially fired.

> When I left the building on the Monday morning, the last person I saw as I left the building was Steve Herder, who had come down to wait in the doorway for me to leave and I was almost in a state of shock. Because this -- it was a job that I put a lot of effort into, I worked long hours at home to get stuff done, to find things, to get copy done, and everything else. So, I was really in a state of shock.... And when I came out through the door, the one right on the doorstop waiting for me to leave was Steve Herder. I said, "I don't think you have any idea what this paper means to the people who work for it -- it probably means more to me, I think, than it does to you" and then I left the building. That was the last I saw of him. Except in court, you know.[49]

Collins subsequently sued the Evening Telegram for wrongful dismissal and was awarded fifteen months' notice with fifteen months' pay, the second highest award of that kind in Canada to that date, the top being an award of eighteen months.[50]

The people on the picket line were enraged by the move to fire Wick Collins, particularly because it was a move made by the Evening Telegram itself and could not be blamed on the Thomson Organisation. Reporters commented:



> That was the most miserable thing. I think that was the most miserable thing that happened during that strike. The man had built up a reputation -- as a political columnist. And he'd built it

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[49] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

[50] Interview, 7 May 1981, Fieldnotes.

> up on his own -- the Telegram didn't give him a hand -- he had built it up on his own. And his whole career was shot -- it really was, you know.[51]

and:

> It was the stupidest thing for Herder to do in the strike.... Right in the middle of a strike, you're firing someone in management because they won't and can't really -- do the job that you're ordering them to do. And we thought Herder had flipped out -- we though he was mentally deranged, you know -- what was he doing?[52]

Like the issue of the local reporter, it was actually the fact that it was a locally motivated move and not one imposed by the "giant" Thomson Organisation that enraged reporters.

The Police

Interaction with police was generally positive. One reporter stated that they always said "Hello" to the police, who would stop to ask them how the strike was going. During the final month, when the strikers were using the picket line to physically block entrance to the building, police were called by Herder on occasion but relations between the two groups remained respectful.

The only serious confrontation with police came on September twelfth, when the strikers decided to make their presence felt by blocking the vans from picking up that

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[51] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[52] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

day's Evening Telegram. As already pointed out in this chapter, during the first month of the strike, many members of the public were almost oblivious to the strike and thus the demonstration was planned as an effort to gain publicity. Twenty-eight of the thirty-five strikers[53] marched in front of the Water St. entrance, carrying their placards and shouting. Police were called in and the vans were ordered across the lines. At this, a number of the strikers sat down in front of the vans in a further attempt to block entry. Six strikers were arrested, one twice, before the commotion died down. Figures three through six show the demonstration itself, two of the strikers being dragged off, and part of the crowd watching the incident.

Planning for the event was done as surreptitiously as possible so that Herder would not hear about it and take preventative measures. Its purpose was to provide publicity and generate sympathy for the strikers. One reporter explained the rationale behind the demonstration.

> Part of that was just to let people know that there was a strike at the Evening Telegram. It's surprising the number of people who still probably didn't know.[54]

And another stated:

> I used to find a lot of people used to say to me -- "You're not doing anything." Now here we were, asking them to buy The Signal, asking them to buy "Boycott

[53] Accounts of numbers vary.

[54] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

Figure Three: Striking employees attempt to block delivery vans from leaving with the day's issue of the Evening Telegram.


LEATHER &
CRAFT SUPPLIES

Figure Four: Police attempt to control demonstration.


KING'S HEAD
PUB

Figure Five: Portuguese sailor attempts to free arrested Evening Telegram reporter.



Figure Six: Section of the crowd watching September twelfth demonstration.



> the Telegram" buttons, buy this and buy that, but we weren't doing anything. All we were doing was standing on the picket line and going off and getting drunk. So I thought -- let's show people we mean business -- let's show Herder we mean business.[55]

Throughout the accounts is the insistence that the action was intended to generate sympathy -- not for the strikers to be arrested, which was not anticipated at all. At the meeting held to discuss plans, one of the subsequently arrested strikers stressed the publicity aspect:

> I said -- look, I said -- I'm not talking about being organised. We just want a bit of publicity and I figure we'll get it and we want the vandrivers to know that we don't want them crossing our fucking picket lines. It's just as simple as that.[56]

The strikers marched in a circle with their placards. When Herder came out he asked for a spokesman but found none. The police were then called. Although they took no action at first, a sergeant arrived at the lines and ordered the vans across. When the strikers sat down in front of the vans, the policement pulled them away. By the end six people had been arrested in three shifts: first two, then three, then another two, one of the last two also being one of the first who was arrested.

There exists a cluster of narratives around the demonstration of September twelfth. Although they describe

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[55] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

[56] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

the same event, the narratives vary greatly in length and detail. Unlike the narratives discussed in the chapter on the formation of the union, which described a passive stance, these describe an active role taken by the narrator and are therefore much more individualistic. The beginning of the action, however, concerning the unanticipated behaviour of the police is described in similar ways. One reporter stated:

> They sent down the sergeant to watch over everything. We started calling him Sergeant Bilko. You know -- there's all kinds of harsh words and names gonna fly around at such an occasion. And he took it the wrong way. He started encouraging the delivery vans to cross our lines -- in fact, he ordered them to. Now, although they didn't really have to pay attention to his orders, they did. They started to drive across. That started the whole thing. That started us sitting down in front of the vans.[57]

Another:

> That day, the cops didn't make any arrests there until they had no choice. There was one guy there who lost his cool and started pushing people -- Sergeant Bilko, we called him.[58]

And another:

> The police were a bad mistake. They sent down this sergeant who'd obviously just recently got his stripes and he was going to show these people how a goddamn

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[57] Interview, 4 November 1980, MUNFLA # 81-611. "Bilko" is a reference to the U.S. Army Sergeant, a scheming buffoon, played by Phil Silvers in a television comedy of the 1960's.

[58] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> police force handles this kind of thing. So all in all it was pretty calm and then the vandrivers decided to get into it -- that I think was the breaking point of our resolve not to harass the vandrivers and the regular staff. Because -- we were doing our best to contain ourselves -- but they got carried away -- with all the policemen on their side and Herder ordering them in and everything.[59]

The beginnings of the narratives describe a consensus on what started the trouble. After this point, the narratives diverge as they describe individual action. Naturally, the story by the striker who was arrested twice is quite lengthy. Realizing that the police intended to show their strength, she decided to give them a chase while they were at it. The following is part of her story:

> They finally got me over by the cop car, but they couldn't get me in. And at this point -- everybody was in the middle of the road -- traffic was stopped, up and down Water St., people were hanging out of windows, CBC cameras were coming down, and everybody's having a great time and they were all saying, "Let her go, let her go."[60]

Another account indicates others were more surprised at their arrest:

> I felt somebody put his arms under mine to lift me up, looked around and saw a sleeve, so I got up, figuring he wanted me to move. And ah -- I was halfway up before I realized I was on my way to a car.[61]

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[59] Interview, 25 February 1980, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[60] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[61] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

And a story of a striker who was arrested almost incidentally:

> She was doing nothing. It was just coincidence that she -- they were walking the line, you know -- it was just coincidence that she was in front of a van. The cops had decided to take, say -- half a dozen or so -- she just got grabbed. No one even saw her go.[62]

But the event achieved its goal by getting the strikers "All kinds of good publicity, which we really needed."[63]

Conclusion

Events on the picket line forced the strikers to confront a wide variety of new situations. They encountered hostile and supportive members of the general public, they found themselves haranguing scabs, and some experienced being arrested for the first time. As the outward representation of the strike, the picket line was the site of many of the most emotional experiences of the three months.

The strikers talked of their experience of being on strike as "hitting the streets" or "being on strike." By being on the street, the strikers were in neither one place nor the other, i.e. neither inside the buildings working nor simply members of the public passing on the sidewalk, but ambiguously in between. In this respect, their position was that "liminal" one discussed by Victor

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[62] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[63] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

Turner in "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage." Arnold van Gennep's theory of rites de passage suggests that human societies organise and signify the passage of their members between various statuses through rites of separation, margin and incorporation.[64] The marginal, or liminal central stage is described by van Gennep as "a state of confusion or structured ambiguity."[65] It has been pointed out that the strikers found their position on the streets an ambiguous and confusing one. Further, the experiences of the strikers were entirely without precedent for them, as the following statements indicate:

> We did a lot of things I've never done before, you know. Just, say, the day to day experience of meeting people on the picket line.[66]

and:

> I punched him, just like that. That sounds like it's nothing, but it -- you don't like to beat up people, trounce on people like that. All kinds of other experiences.[67]

As well as noting the structured ambiguity felt by the participant in a liminal state, Turner also suggests that beings in a liminal stage are:

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[64] Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, 7th ed. (Trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

[65] As quoted by Roger D. Abrahams in his "Rituals in Culture," Folklore Preprint Series, Vol. 5 #1, n.d., p.15.

[66] Interview, 10 August 1980, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[67] Interview, 10 August 1980, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> ... neither one thing nor the other; or may even be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of any recognised cultural topography), and are at the very least "betwixt and between" all the recognised fixed points in space time of structural classification.[68]

The application of the concept of liminality to the strikers' experience may help to explain aspects of their behaviour and perceptions.

Even more appropriate to understanding the case under study may be the application of Roger Abrahams' concept of ritual, laid out in his "Rituals in Culture." There can be no doubt that the maintenance of a picket line is a ritual: it is traditionally recognised, patterned and repetitive action, framed in this manner to point out to passers-by that this is not everyday action, but an action of a higher level. Abrahams discounts the "steam valve" approach to the study of ritual, i.e. that ritual is organised chaos which reinstates and reinforces order. He writes:

> In our cultural lives we constantly tread the line between boredom and chaos; we certainly agree on giving order to the world and especially to our interactions, but we also seek to test these rules and codes, perhaps to destroy them, thus dismembering ourselves.[69]

And later:

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[68] Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," in Reader in Comparative Religion, ed. William Lessa and Evon Vogt (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 340.

[69] Abrahams, "Rituals in Culture," p. 2.

> We are too enamored of making fun for its own sake, of going up against the edge of order for the sake of the experience itself, because that is where the power of vitality resides.[70]

Although the strikers were not on the streets simply for the experience itself, the experience was an intense one and the passion felt parallels the sense of vitality of which Abrahams writes. As pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, strikers felt that their "Total waking energy went into that strike."[71] The intensity of the experience is best expressed by the following statement:

> It was simply that it was just too intense to continue to expose yourself to -- I must say, it was the most passionate thing ever -- it was second only to puberty, for me. It was that severe. It was a "we against them" situation and I had never been in that kind of thing before -- not to the same degree of intensity. It really, really deeply affected me.[72]

It was an intense period of high emotion in which the strikers pushed not only themselves but a social order as well. In this way, many felt that the strike was an important period of learning, of testing new situations. The statement by one striker that "it was second only to puberty" suggests that, for him at least, it had the character of a rite of passage.

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[70] Abrahams, "Rituals in Culture," p. 13.

[71] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[72] Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

Abrahams' approach also provides an explanation of why the strikers performed the ritual action of maintaining a picket line with such varying degrees of intensity while, at the same time, expecting it to be uniformly effective.

> In its very predictability, ritual calls forth the coordination of energies and actions -- but doesn't demand them.... Rituals on their very surface bespeak a deep emotional investment in the part of the group, but not one which must pay out the same dividends each time it is repeated. Thus, the ritual recitation of "the Lord's Prayer" or "the Pledge of Allegiance" will usually be performed by most people while they think of something else. But during times of personal or national crisis, the recitation may provide an immense reservoir of reassurance or well focused shared sentiments and energies.[73]

Similarly, during the third and more desperate month of the strike, the manning of the picket line became a much more focused activity as strikers became more aware of what was at stake.

Perhaps the most useful manner in which to interpret the position of being on the picket line is in terms of the line as a "sacred place." "Sacred" because jobs, and for some, ideals were at stake when the strikers stepped outside of everyday action into ritual action. Their experiences there were thus of a different quality. Raymond Firth elaborated on this matter of ritual and the sacred:

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[73]Abrahams, "Rituals in Culture," p. 10.

> Ritual is a symbolic mode of communication, of saying something in a formal way, not to be said in ordinary language or informal behaviour. This idea of "not to be said" in an ordinary way means that a special characteristic of ritual is its reserve, its apartness, its sacred quality. Its grammar is different than that of ordinary language. What is said in ritual may refer to individual, personal states or actions, but on the whole tends to refer to social states and impersonal relations.[74]

Strikers were involved in undefinable situations because the line represented a sacred area. The "symbolic mode of communication" was represented by the line itself, along with the traditional placards and slogans, all of which make up the grammar of the line and set it apart from ordinary behaviour. The slogans on the picket signs indicate the kinds of ideals they felt they were involved in in the strike. the thirty-five strikers had not only taken on the Evening Telegram, but also what they characterised as the "giant" Thomson Organisation. As stated earlier in this thesis, one craftsman told me that all he could think of while on the picket line was: "David and Goliath, here we go again -- the little against the big."[75] Furthermore, the strikers used the slogan, "Scabs come from away to break strike" and "Mainland scabs take Newfoundland jobs" to appeal to nationalist sentiments of fellow Newfoundlanders. This kind of stand, taken by only thirty-five people,

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[74] Raymond Firth, Symbols: Public and Private (New York: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 176.

[75] Telephone interview, December 1979, Fieldnotes.

must have given the strikers the sense that they were involved in an action that was larger than life, perhaps even "sacred" as detailed above, and thus explains why "things happened to me on that line that had never happened to me before."[76]

In encountering the hostility of some members of the public, dealing with scabs and confronting police, the reporters needed a place where they could release together some of the tension these encounters produced. As a result, their regular bar, the Ship Inn, became even more essential as a meeting place than it was before the strike began.

[76] Interview, 10 August 1980, MUNFLA # 81-611.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SHIP INN

"A nose for news and a stomach for booze."[1] The association of reporters with alcohol is well known and the reporters at the Evening Telegram are no exception to the rule. In this case, the Ship Inn is the name of the bar which the reporters frequent. With no press club in St. John's, the Ship Inn functions as an unofficial one. The bar is on the alley which joins the two Evening Telegram buildings; this stairway, Solomon's Lane, is more commonly known as "the Telegram steps." Reporters may eat lunch there -- the bar serves a light lunch of soup and sandwiches -- but it is in the evenings that most socializing is carried on, particularly on Fridays. A record player plays music quietly and thus the Ship Inn, unlike many bars in St. John's provides a good atmosphere for conversation. Tables are easily moved together so that more people can freely join a group already present. A dart board is situated in one corner, a fire-place in another, and playing cards are available at the bar. Used

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[1] Coined by Marilyn Willcott one night in the Ship Inn.

regularly by the reporters before the strike, the Ship Inn has been a meeting place for a number of groups since it opened in 1976. These other groups include CBC reporters and management and those involved with theatre at the nearby L.S.P.U. Hall.

The Ship Inn acted as an unofficial headquarters during the strike. Besides being a base where other strikers could be found, discussion at the Ship Inn allowed the strikers to release some of the emotion aroused by the activities they were involved in. Because the Ship Inn is a regular meeting place, the exchange of occupational narratives makes up a lot of the discussion and functions both as education and entertainment. Furthermore, the format of the "joking relationship," in which one person appears to be insulting another while in fact testing and sometimes teasing that person, allows the reporters to prepare themselves, through play, for situations they may meet in their jobs. When I interviewed reporters about the strike, they talked about the role of the Ship Inn both before as well as during the strike.

In the bar, the group of reporters may be seen as a "play community" as it has been defined by Johan Huizinga.[2] Huizinga defined play as an activity outside "ordinary" life, which for an occupational group may be seen as those activities which bring it together although outside the actual

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[2] Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 13.

job itself. My analysis of the exchange of narratives relies heavily on the work of Robert McCarl and Jack Santino. Furthermore, throughout the analysis I will point to aspects of Jansen's "esoteric/exoteric factor."[3] As pointed out in chapter two: "In protest situations, esoteric and exoteric attitudes come to the surface and often are the core of expressive behaviour."[4] In that discussion, what reporters think of publishers was revealed. The strike also acted as a catalyst in discovering how reporters see themselves and their jobs as well as a glimpse at what they think others think of them.

Reporters regard a convenient bar as a necessary adjunct to their work; as one of my informants told me:

> It's traditionally -- traditional in other cities anyway -- that near a reporter's -- near the newspaper -- there is a bar and reporters hang around there, have a few beers. You know -- you go down and dissect the day's events.[5]

Dissecting the day's events takes on both an educative and entertainment value. One reporter stated that the only value of some news stories is in their entertainment value. He said:

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[3]William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 44-51.

[4]Cynthia Lamson, "'Bloody Decks and a Bumper Crop': The Rhetoric of Counter Protest," M.A. Thesis, Memorial University, 1979, p. 5.

[5]Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

> Most of the stories you write don't affect you anyway -- unless it's a story you know very well you're going to follow -- or unless it's a story worth telling in a bar some day.[6]

The educational aspect of this exchange is contained within another reporter's statement that: "There's a lot of serious talk that goes on over a few beers."[7]

As pointed out earlier, the reporters are not the only group in St. John's to use the Ship Inn as a regular base. As one group of regulars, however, they feel that they are the most conspicuous:

> A lot of the regulars at the Ship Inn think we're really weird -- of course, we are. Mostly because we're not the quietest people in the bar.[8]

The statement indicates that some of the reporters think of themselves as a group apart, even from the other regulars. As for drinking, one reporter claimed, "Booze and reporting go hand in hand and they always have."[9] Another put it more sardonically when I asked why there were so few older

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[6]Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[7]Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[8]Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[9]Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611. For an excellent discussion of reporters' use of a bar as a base, see Rodney Stark, "Policy and the Pro's: An Organisational Analysis of a Metropolitan Newspaper," Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 7 (1962), 11-32. Other discussions include Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," Social Forces, 33 (1955), 326-335; Robert Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories," Daedalus, 104 (1975), 175-194; Ben Hecht, A Child of the Century (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1954); Lee Sigelman,

reporters around. "They drink themselves to death," he replied.[10] This tendency is seen as the result of the particular pressures of the job. For others, it is the social element of the bar which attracts them, as they deal with a lot of people during the course of their job. Furthermore, the mix of people at the Ship Inn makes it a good place in which to pick up information and to make contact with high governmental officials and politicians. One reporter stated:

> Ah -- you'll be sitting down, lean over and have a chat with Cabot Martin -- or Peckford will be in there sometimes.... And a lot of information -- it's a good bar to pick up information on anything.[11]

Information exchange is thus also an important aspect of interaction in the bar.

Cynicism strongly pervades the discussion of the day's events and the joking which goes on. Although this attitude may certainly be viewed as playing up to an occupational stereotype, it is difficult to discern which comes first, the attitude or the stereotype. The following excerpt from the autobiography of journalist, playwright and novelist, Ben Hecht, indicates how this attitude is

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"Reporting the News: An Organisational Analysis," American Journal of Sociology, 79 (1973), 132-151; and Gaye Tuchman, "Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected," American Journal of Sociology, 79 (1973), 110-113.

[10] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[11] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

passed on to new reporters. In a section on his entry into journalism entitled, "My Friends, The Press," Hecht wrote:

> My world suddenly filled with friends. I lunched daily at a crowded round table in King's Restaurant. A four-piece orchestra played on a balcony the gayest and most yearning of waltzes. To its strains, masticating reporters sat denouncing Mr. Dunne and Mr. Finnegan the editors. They denounced also the mayor, the chief of police, women, literature, politics and morality.
>
> I contributed happily to the denunciations. Of these conclaves I remember nothing except that I, the least embittered young man on the earth, sat and took gleeful part in the destruction of the world.... Around this table in King's Restaurant we who knew nothing spoke out of a knowledge so overwhelming that I, for one, never recovered from it. Politicians were crooks, the leaders of causes were scoundrels. Morality was a farce full of murders, rapes and love nests. Swindlers ran the world and the Devil sang everywhere.[12]

Thus, Hecht was brought into a world of cynicism by those already involved in the job. His portrayal of the apartness of the group, its gleeful cynicism, lends itself very well to the application of Huizinga's concept of "play" and "play community." The seriousness of this play is evident in the writer's description of his happiness in this talk and in his statement that its result was that: "I, for one, never recovered from it." Hecht appears aware of the exaggerated form of the talk as well as his role as initiate.

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[12] Ben Hecht, A Child of the Century (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1954), pp. 142-143.

In Homo Ludens, Huizinga characterised play in the following way:

> Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite conspicuously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious", but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings, which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their differences from the common world by disguise or other means.[13]

All the above characteristics are present in the case of the Ship Inn. Activity in the bar stands outside the "ordinary" life of the group as it is outside the job. Furthermore, certain types of behaviour not otherwise accepted are condoned within the bar. Included in these is the "joking relationship" in which members of the group may actually appear to be insulting each other. These may include comments on the other's work or an approach taken. The "joking relationship," as it has been defined by Radcliffe-Brown, is extensively employed by the reporters as a means of testing each other as well as outsiders. That it is "not serious" in Huizinga's sense is explained within Radcliffe-Brown's definition:

> The joking-relationship is a peculiar combination of friendliness and antagonism.

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[13] Huizinga, p. 13.

> The behaviour is such that in any other social context it would express and arouse hostility; but it is not meant seriously and must not be taken seriously. There is a pretense of hostility and a real friendliness. To put it another way, the relationship is one of permitted disrespect.[14]

Other types of condoned behaviour include drinking binges.

Huizinga's characteristics of time and space are represented here by the bar itself and the regular Friday afternoon and evening sessions, with the buying of rounds of beer representing one of the activity's rules. Of secrecy and disguise, both may be viewed in terms of the stereotype conveyed by the reporters themselves. The "cynical reporter" attitude creates both an aura of secrecy around them as well as disguising their individuality. The importance of play in life was pointed out by

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[14] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "On Joking Relationships," in his Structure and Function in Primitive Society (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 90. For other discussions of the "joking relationship" in more contemporary urban settings, see Pamela Bradney, "The Joking Relationship in Industry," Human Relations, X (1957), 179-187; Robbie Davis Johnson, "Folklore and Women: A Social Interactional Analysis of the Folklore of a Texas Madam," Journal of American Folklore, 84 (1973), 221-224; James P. Leary, "Strategies and Stories from the Omaha Stockyards," Folklore Forum, 10-11 (1977-78), 29-41; Richard Marsh, "Lust and Disgust on the Job: Broadening Occupational Folklore," Folklore Forum, 10-11 (1977-78), 60-64; Robert S. McCarl, "Occupational Folklife: An Examination of the Expressive Aspects of Work Culture with Particular Reference to Fire Fighters," Diss. Memorial University of Newfoundland 1980, pp. 91-94; Catherine Swanson, "Joking at the Office," Folklore Forum, 10-11 (1977-78), 42-47; and J. M. Sykes, "Joking-Relationships in an Industrial Setting," American Anthropologist, 68 (1966), 188-193.

Huizinga as a cultural function which is a "regularly recurring relaxation."[15] Certainly this is the case here. Finally, Huizinga's concept of a "play community" applies directly to the reporters, for whom the sense of being a group apart is essential in solidifying the group. As Huizinga wrote:

> A play community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over. Of course, not every game of marbles or every bridge party leads to the founding of a club. But the feeling of being "apart together" in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its image beyond the duration of the individual game.[16]

This notion of "withdrawing from the world and rejecting the usual norms" is fiercely upheld by the reporters in their presentation of themselves as "cynical."[17]

As pointed out in the passage by Huizinga, play does have serious overtones. He wrote:

> The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid.... Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play.[18]

One area in which the two overlap is in the joking

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[15]Huizinga, p. 9.

[16]Huizinga, p. 12.

[17]For other works which apply Huizinga's concept of play to bars, see Sherri Cavan, Liquor License (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1966) and Julian Roebuck and Wolfgang Frese, The Rendezvous (New York: Free Press, 1976).

[18]Huizinga, p. 8.

relationship. Interaction between reporters as play allows them to test certain situations and to develop strategies for handling them when they occur in workaday life. The condoned behaviour in the bar, brought about primarily by the consumption of beer, frames it as a special place in which playing with social interactions teaches the participants how to react in encounters involved with their work. On this matter, Barbara Babcock has written:

> ... framed disorder in the form of aesthetic negation is "variability training", "rehearsal for those real situations in which it is vital for our survival to endure cognitive disorientation so that a real and significant problem may emerge."[19]

The joking relationship engaged in by the reporters, "giving someone a hard time," may seem harsh to those unused to it, but within the group it teaches them not only how to deal with hostility but also how to read through people. Thus, one reporter told a rookie reporter, "The main thing is, down there, is that -- if you can cope with us, you can cope with whatever the job's going to require."[20] The need for this training is apparent in his following statement, describing one of the demands of the job:

> What you find is that people try to sweet talk you and suck you into giving them a good write-up when they don't really

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[19] Barbara Babcock, "Introduction" to The Reversible World, ed. Barbara Babcock (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 20.

[20] January 1980, Fieldnotes.

> deserve it.... Well, you just don't give anybody a pat on the back when it's not necessary. A puff piece.[21]

The joking relationship and other interaction in the Ship Inn can thus be seen as training for the everyday demands of the job, which involves being able to see beyond people's words. Within the bar, this behaviour is sanctioned as "Players have access to roles denied them in real life ... and play them to the limit and sometimes beyond."[22] The metacommunicative device which frames the behaviour as "this is not to be taken entirely at face value" is the mood set by the play atmosphere.[23]

In The Mechanical Bride, Marshall McLuhan reprinted an advertisement from Time magazine which featured "an old fashioned reporter bursting from a saloon to cover some violent episode" and continued:

> He seethed with questions. Nothing was as it seemed, and he picked frantically at surface facts until the shell broke and the muck, or the treasure, underneath was exposed to his greedy mind.... He knew bishops and gunmen, politicians and pickpockets, and treated both with the same casual impertinence.... Sometimes he grew out of it. Sometimes he became a great columnist, a noted author or even an editor. But mostly he grew old at forty-five. And when he saw a new youngster

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[21] January 1980, Fieldnotes.

[22] Abrahams, Rituals in Culture, p. 37.

[23] For a more complete discussion of framing, see Richard Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance," American Anthropologist, 77 (1975), 290-311.

> in the City Room he figured the best thing he could do was to take him across the street and say to him, "Kid, what the hell are you doing here? Get out of it. It's a lousy business."[24]

The words of advice to the young reporter are similar to the words of one reporter I spoke with who answered the following when I asked why journalism schools were currently being flooded with applications:

> I don't know why. It's a rotten racket. I don't know what people think they're going to do.[25]

The comment reveals the ideal and subsequent source of much frustration: many reporters begin their careers thinking they can effect some social change through their writing. This, then, is the experience which is largely responsible for the cynical attitude which develops among reporters. As noted in chapter two, Lee Sigelman has written that American newspapermen "... reveal a morally conditioned 'public regardingness', a self-imposed obligation to watch over the 'public and the public's business'."[26] In reality, the reporter finds himself involved in a business which sometimes puts advertising interests well ahead of news interests. One witness appearing before the Kent Commission commented on this growing tendency when he

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[24] Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride (Boston: Beacon Press, 1951), p. 9.

[25] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[26] Lee Sigelman, "Reporting the News: An Organisational Analysis," American Journal of Sociology, 79 (1973), 133.

stated that we should now call the material newspapers are printed on "adprint" rather than newsprint.[27]

The Kent Commission was quoted in chapter two as noting that the newspaper performs two central purposes which pull it in opposite directions: "To earn a profit and to perform a public service."[28] Reporters claim that it was the lack of attention paid to the "public service" responsibility of the Evening Telegram which drove some of them to unionize. The discrepancies between the ideal of the job and its actual everyday practices account largely for the dissatisfaction with journalism. Naturally, this dissatisfaction was particularly high during the strike. Consequently, the strike afforded an excellent opportunity to discover what it is reporters think they should be doing, albeit in an idealized form.

When I asked one reporter if the topic of responsible journalism ever came up, he replied:

> Reporters talk about little else. Heavens -- such things have been the subject of conversation over so many beers. What we should be doing as journalists and why we aren't. No -- come to think of it -- we don't often talk about why we aren't. Too discouraging. Nobody thinks we should be covering Rotary Luncheons --

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[27]Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, Transcripts, p. 121. Another source of frustration, although not present in the Evening Telegram case, lies in the particular political slant a publisher may have. See Evelyn Waugh, Scoop: A Novel About Journalists (London: Chapman and Hall, 1948), for an excellent parody of this tendency.

[28]Canada, Royal Commission on Newspapers, p. 171.

> except on occasion when they have somebody worthwhile in there to speak. In fact -- that's mostly what we talk about -- what we shouldn't be doing. Most of the stuff that's done for the Evening Telegram, in fact. There's very little worthwhile work ever done at the Evening Telegram since Thomson took over. Few worthwhile people have ever stayed there any length of time.[29]

The speaker's correction of himself, insisting that it was in fact "too discouraging" to talk about what they should be doing, is indicative of the frustrations felt towards their job and certainly one of the reasons behind the reporters' cynical attitude.

Interaction in the bar also takes the form of exchanging occupational narratives. Although the reporters have essentially the same job, they do not necessarily meet during the day, as they come and go on various assignments. In recapitulating the day's events, reporters both share with and learn from each other. One reporter told me that he felt reporters "talked shop" more than any other occupational group.[30]

Jack Santino has pointed out that: "Occupational narratives provide insight into and an index of the specific challenges and problems that arise in a job."[31] This is similar to Siegfried Neumann's point that the "themes

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[29] Interview, 4 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[30] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[31] Jack Santino, "Characteristics of Occupational Narratives," Western Folklore, 37 (1978), 212.

of an occupation (its daily concerns, crises, and humorous events), are reflected in the narrative accounts told by its practitioners."[32] Beyond the entertainment value these discussions may have for those involved, the relating of other reporters' challenges and problems introduces the listener to a wide range of possible experiences. This type of situation was described by Richard Bauman in his discussion of the nature of the talk held at the evening gatherings at the La Have Island general store. Like the reporters, the fishermen experienced many of the challenges of their jobs alone:

> The islanders lived a life full of strong external forces and risks, from the natural to the supernatural world. Many of these, as noted, were confronted alone but were constantly discussed with others at the general store. The sessions at the store thus constituted a forum in which wisdom could be shared and safe, proper and productive reactions to situations and forces that any member of the group might potentially encounter could be shared.... From this perspective the telling of yarns in group sessions may be seen as a kind of adaptive mechanism, making available to all the benefits of individual wisdom borne of experience.[33]

By sharing the experience through narrative, the reporters relive the experience in order to learn from it and thus the exchange goes beyond entertainment.

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[32]As quoted by Robert S. McCarl in "Jump Story: An Examination of an Occupational Experience Narrative," Folklore Forum, 11 (1978), 1.

[33]Richard Bauman, "The La Have Island General Store," Journal of American Folklore, 85 (1972), 337.

When I asked one reporter what he thought about journalism schools, he replied:

> Journalism training is a waste of time. You can't teach someone to be a journalist, you know. If someone can't -- is incapable of expressing themselves in a language, spending two years in a course is not going to help. And you know -- how do you learn about journalism? What I've picked up, I've picked up over a beer, for the most part.[34]

The learning aspect of occupational narratives has been stressed by Robert McCarl. In his article, "Jump Story: An Examination of an Occupational Narrative," McCarl cites Wayland Hand's suggestion that it is the most dangerous situations in mining that have been molded into legends, thus stressing the informational aspect of this sharing of experience. McCarl found that many work narratives are "... almost pedantic in their use of descriptive terminology and jargon to impart a lesson to a highly receptive audience."[35] One must conclude that in this particular occupation as well, what happens after work is just as informative as what happens during work.

As the above discussion indicates, the Ship Inn already played an essential part in the reporters' daily lives. During the strike, the bar's role as a meeting place became even more essential. The discussion of narratives in chapter three, which dealt with the

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[34] Interview, 1 December 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[35] McCarl, "Jump Story," p. 8.

formation of the union, has already pointed out how the exchange of narratives in the bar allowed the reporters to develop a strategy with which to deal with the publisher when he called them up to his office. During the strike itself, the Ship Inn acted as an unofficial headquarters where other strikers could always be found. One reporter stated:

> During the strike, we were -- I used to go over there practically every day. It was our semi-official headquarters. Anybody who couldn't find you would probably call the Ship and you'd probably be there.[36]

Another reporter stated that there was "A body of people that was definitely always down there."[37] The reporters went down to the bar directly after the strike vote was taken and were to be found there very soon after the strike was settled. It was a place where they knew the others would be and where they could unwind. One reporter, explaining what had happened to him during the September twelfth demonstration, ended the narrative in the following way:

> They brought me down to the lock up, threw me in the lock up, myself and another reporter. We were there for about three and a half hours and then we went down to the Ship Inn.[38]

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[36] Interview, 21 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[37] Interview, 24 November 1979, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[38] Interview, 10 August 1980, Fieldnotes.

Another reporter explained why they went to the Ship Inn so much more during the strike:

> You needed to talk about it. After eight hours -- of course, the shifts were only four hours, but then you went back and the reporters dug up some stories. The girls did some layout and the fellows down in the presses were doing their routes, delivering the paper -- that kind of thing. So there was always this constant urge to talk about it -- to get it out of your system, to just let go -- in hopes that you could just go home that night and just flick on the t.v. and go mindless.[39]

The need to exchange information with others in the group, already well established, became intensified during the strike. For some, the Ship Inn was where they received the final details of how they would return to work:

> The day that we settled I just couldn't believe it -- it was all over in five minutes. I could not believe that after three months of everything we had gone through, that it was all over. So I went back to the Ship Inn and I had two quick beers and I went to the bathroom and I just threw up. Really, really devastated me that it was all over just like that, so fast. And that we had gotten practically nothing. And what made it even worse was that Gerry Ennis came back to the Ship Inn after and was giving us the lowdown on when we'd return to work and that kind of thing and one thing or another.[40]

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[39] Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

[40] Interview, 25 February 1981, MUNFLA # 81-611.

For the speaker, the biggest defeat was that, after all they had been through during the strike, they were still immediately at the publisher's beck and call once the strike ended.

Because of the importance of talk to this group after work, for entertainment and education as well as play, the need to continue this kind of exchange became intensified during the strike. Therefore, the bar became a semi-official headquarters for strikers and allowed them to release some of the tensions produced by being on strike.

CONCLUSION

The interviews conducted with seven reporters about the 1979 strike at the St. John's Evening Telegram revealed a number of occupational attitudes. Not only did their accounts provide impressions of the strike itself in their experiences on the picket line and putting out a strike paper, the accounts revealed how these reporters felt about the Thomson Organisation which owns the Evening Telegram, how they went about forming the union in newsroom, how they felt about their own work, and the importance of the talk which goes on in their regular bar. Chapter two studied the use of anecdotes by members of the Canadian press in satirising newspaper tycoon Roy Thomson. These anecdotes employed the usual principle of allowing Thomson to apparently reveal and incriminate himself through his own words. Narratives told about their work by reporters were found to concentrate on examples of the incompetence and misunderstanding of the profession of journalism exhibited by owners and publishers. A brief discussion of the nature of Canadian newspapers as they have developed in a pattern of family ownership provided insights into the special position this type of ownership creates for people who work for those papers. In

justifying the strike to me, the reporters relied heavily on the negative aspects of a perceived paternalism as well as on the loss of the community-service emphasis which they felt had taken place at the Evening Telegram since its sale to the Thomson Organisation in 1970.

Chapter three gave further evidence of how the reporters justified the strike in their descriptions of the problems involved in the formation of the union. The analysis of strategies developed through narratives exchanged in their regular bar indicates the importance of the bar as a meeting place to this occupation.

Chapter four dealt with the picket line and as such it represents the reporters' interpretations of the strike itself. By applying theories of ritual and rites de passage to their impressions of their behaviour on the line, the reasons for the ambiguity they felt toward their position became clear. The chapter described the changing conception of the picket line in relation to the strikers' experiences with those people who continued to cross their line as well as with those people who came to the line in a show of support.

Chapter five dealt with reporters' comments on the bar they regularly frequent and the importance it plays in their work lives in terms of the talk which goes on there. These discussions are important not only as talk and education, but also because the reporters indulge

in a type of play and joking which allows them to test situations which they may encounter on their jobs. Because this is where they talk about their jobs with others in the same or similar occupations, this chapter deals largely with reporters' ideals of their profession as the ideals clash with the everyday practices of the job. The bar came into discussion during the interviews because during the strike it acted as a semi-official headquarters.

The oral history approach taken in this thesis combined with an approach derived from occupational folklore allowed for the discovery not only of the strikers' interpretations of the actual historical event, the 1979 strike, but for a more complete understanding of the occupational group itself. The two approaches can determine the attitudes, frustrations and ideals present before the strike which were in fact partially responsible for the event. And by studying the union, the picket line, and the bar, one can conclude that, in this occupation, what happens outside of work is still essential to understanding conceptions of that occupation as held by those who do the job.

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