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NETWORK TV NEWS AND THE CORPORATE STATE:
THE SUBORDINATE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE VIEWER-CITIZEN

by

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INTRODUCTION

GOALS AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

How one defines "news" will depend on one's purposes. In this study, "news" as it appears on TV will be treated in a way which diverges from most research on news media output. Essentially, we will analyze network TV news (hereafter to be referred to as either "TV news" or "network news") as a form of ideological discourse which is a part of our everyday environment. Its most significant attributes are to be found in its constant, recurring features, i.e., its structure, rather than in its day-to-day variability.

Given that we are treating TV news as a recurring discourse, our research approach will be to deal with this discourse as an autonomous text. As an autonomous text, we posit that TV news has meaning which exists independent of the events in the social world which it reports. This textual meaning of TV news discourse derives from its internal structure and coherence. Basically, this structure consists of two features: First, there is a delineation of events, people, and objects; this is the subject matter of the discourse. These events, people, and objects will be treated as particular instances of something larger and more inclusive, namely the world which TV news discourse creates. Secondly,

the structure fosters a way of knowing this world. That is, the textual structure of TV news discourse creates a relationship between itself and the viewer. Phrased a different way, we can say that as a form of recurring discourse, TV news establishes the parameters of a certain type of consciousness. This means that, by itself, this discourse structures, for the viewer, certain possibilities of social and self-awareness--that is, ways of knowing--and excludes other possibilities. The analysis attempts to probe the possibilities of viewer consciousness inherent within the structure of the discourse. Thus, we discuss the possible parameters of viewer subjectivity, not the social psychology of viewing.

TV news is produced (and consumed) under specific historical circumstances and has specific social interests behind it. The task of the analysis is to clarify the structure of TV news discourse--reveal the world of TV news and the way of knowing this world--and to interpret the discourse in the context of the present historical situation. The primary context of this interpretation will be the power relationships which are embodied in the contemporary state under advanced capitalism. There are thus a number of topics which, given our concerns, lie outside of the scope of the analysis. For example, issues of bias, objectivity, completeness, accuracy, i.e., all the traditional journalistic questions, are not of significance for this study. Moreover, the motivations of the news producers, and even the attitudes of viewers, also lie beyond

our present purposes.

Chapter One situates the TV news discourse in the context of the state. We sketch the state's commitment to the maintenance of the domination of monopoly capital. We also explore the political and economic dilemmas which ensue from this commitment, with particular attention to how these dilemmas are relevant in shaping the basic features of the public sphere. In this analysis, we attempt to demonstrate how the populace should behave politically, given the needs of the corporate state. What the state needs from the populace we term quiescent mass loyalty. This behavior would, among other things, permit the state to mobilize the populace in a stance of uncritical dependence while separating it from the centers of economic and political command.

If this is how the public should behave so not to intrude on the purposes of the corporate state--that is, if this type of awareness would be most congruent with the needs of the state--the empirical question then becomes, how does TV news promote the realization or the negation of this ideal? In a sense, our analysis attempts to describe what the result of "successful" TV news would look like; this is an idealization, which we conceptualize in Chapter Two, as "the viewer-citizen". The viewer-citizen is the mode of consciousness presupposed by, and inherent in, the language of TV news. The viewer-citizen is a member of the collectivity for which TV news is the communal organizer. The occurrence in the social world of pure viewer-citizens is, of course, tempered by factors of social history and biography. That is, there are other forces

which oppose this ideal; this we will take up in the final chapter. However, the viewer-citizen is a useful category to describe what the populace should look like according to the structure of TV news discourse.

The pure viewer-citizen, we will demonstrate, is in congruence with the state's need for quiescent mass loyalty. Totally successful TV news--the creation of pure viewer citizens--would therefore clearly serve certain social interests at the expense of others. Yet this commitment, albeit unintentional, is not an overtly manifest feature of TV news; hence, TV news must be understood as an ideological production. It is the refusal to acknowledge this partisanship, this class bias, which renders TV news ideological. Ideological success in the case of TV news would not necessarily mean that the public came to believe everything on TV news or that all "credibility gaps" had been eliminated. Rather, ideological success would mean that the viewing populace had been absorbed into this public speech with the social and self-awareness inherent in the structure of TV news discourse. That is to say, the viewing public would see the social world and their place in it, and talk about it and act upon it, in a manner compatible with the way of talking prevalent on TV news.

Within sociology, the type of analysis described here, the critique of ideology, derives from an intellectual heritage which includes Marx, Mannheim, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, among others. More recently, the critique of ideology has been associated with the hermeneu-

tic tradition.¹

Hermeneutics can be defined as the science of interpretation. Frequently, the object of interpretation is a text. The hermeneutic tradition posits that the meaning of a text cannot be located merely in the intentions of the author, but is also determined by the historical situation of the interpreter. Since meaning exceeds the author's intentions, the process of understanding is not just one of reproduction--i.e., reconstructing the author's meaning--it also involves production as well, that is, the generation of meaning by the analyst. This rejection of the traditional dualism between subject (i.e., reader or analyst) and object (i.e., the text) is apparent in all of the modern social science tendencies which reflect the hermeneutic tradition, such as ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, psychoanalysis, as well as the critique of ideology.

That interpretation is possible or necessary suggests the existence of some distinction between the initial appearance, or expression, of a text, and its underlying coherence or sense. The hermeneutic task, which addresses itself to this distinction, can take one of two basic approaches, as Ricoeur² points out. On the one hand, interpretation may generate meaning which essentially restores or elucidates the text. On the other hand, the interpretation may attempt to demystify the text: to reduce the illusion the text helps create in its historical context. This study expresses the second tendency; it seeks to make a critique

of TV news. By critique we mean an interpretive analysis which will reveal that the underlying coherence of the text points to or posits social relations which are fundamentally antagonistic or incompatible. The critique, in other words, tries to "reduce illusion", to demystify by illuminating contradictions.

While the programmatic statements on the goals of hermeneutic research are quite clear, the literature is much less explicit about the techniques of research. Some practitioners, such as Roland Barthes³, have attempted to systematize the research techniques, but with limited success. Others, like Horkheimer and Adorno,⁴ have resisted altogether to do so. To make such an attempt is clearly beyond the scope of this project, but it can be said that our basic approach draws something from both traditional content analysis and semiology, but is not identical with either.

The strength of content analysis for our purposes lies in its organization of themes within the text. Thus, the empirical chapters on TV news discourse (Chapters Three, Four, and Five) are organized along basic thematic lines. Content analysis, however, fails to locate the text in any social production or interest. Also, it fails to analyze the structure of texts; it is a literalist approach, with the ultimate empirical test pivoting on the relationship between the text and its referents in the social world. Semiology does include the analysis of structure, and it does emphasize the distinction between appearance

and something "deeper". This element is also incorporated into our analysis. Yet, the conceptual unit of semiology, the sign, gives no clue as to what is "deeper"; that remains somewhat arbitrary. To reduce the arbitrariness, and to locate the text in some self-conscious social interest, we try to demonstrate the links between certain ways of knowing--modes of social consciousness--with specific social interests and historical possibilities (Chapter One and Two). Thus, the techniques used here approach the text thematically, and analyze them structurally to reveal their inner coherence, with the analysis situated in the context of the pertinent social realities.

If hermeneutic interpretation is a production in its own right, and not just a reproduction, the possibility remains that the reader may not "see" the adequacy of our interpretation. Theoretically, our only recourse is still more interpretation. We cannot escape what Charles Taylor⁵ calls the "ultimate appeal to a common understanding...what we appeal to as our grounds for this reading can only be other readings." This is because the hermeneutic paradigm, reduced to its methodological foundation, is the dialogue, not the empirical observation.

The data are drawn from twelve CBS Evening News programs, selected randomly between March and May, 1976. CBS provided complete transcripts of the programs, excluding commercials and station breaks. We decided on network news instead of local news because network news programs tend to situate the viewer in relation to the national politi-

cal arena and the federal state. There are no doubt some differences between the news shows of the three networks, but we would argue that these differences are not significant in terms of the goals of this study. We treat network TV news discourse as a genre; the similarities between the shows of the three networks far outweigh the differences. The conclusions of this study would be identical, we feel, regardless of which network supplied the data.

We focus almost exclusively on the aural dimension of TV news (i.e., the text) in this study. This decision is motivated by practical limitations rather than theoretical commitments. A truly full analysis of TV news would certainly have to incorporate the visual dimension. In our view, the development and reproduction of consciousness in general, and ideology in particular, cannot be totally explained by the phenomenon of language. The visual dimension, with its images, icons, and pictorial symbols, is an integral element in this process, and, we suspect, may be becoming proportionately more important in the age of TV.

In addition,ⁱⁿ a full analysis of TV news the relationship between the aural and visual dimensions would have to be explored. While we may expect that these dimensions would largely reinforce each other, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that they may at times be in contradiction with each other. In fact, some writers⁶ argue that it is just this internal tension between spoken word and visual display which led TV news to inadvertently sway popular sentiment against

the Vietnam war.

However, while the TV set is indeed a visual apparatus, we would claim that in the ecology of TV viewing, the aural dimension still remains the most fundamental in this medium's capacity to convey meaning to its audience. Unlike the movies, TV does not fill the eye or discourage social interaction while viewing. TV is a didactic medium; it uses pictures to a considerable extent (though not exclusively) to demonstrate complementary instances of the spoken language. This is especially the case with TV news programs. A recent study of TV news in Britain⁷ found that the visuals could only be understood in terms of the journalistic narrative. The study points out that, "There are indications that in terms of comprehension, the audience gains little from visuals. They understand almost everything from hearing the script alone."⁸ We hope to make an analysis of the visual dimension of TV news and its relationship to the aural, sometime in the future.

NOTES

1. On hermeneutics, see Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971). For a concise statement, see Hans-George Gadamer, "The Historicity of Understanding," in Paul Connerton, ed., Critical Sociology (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1976). See also, Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning (Texas Christian University Press, 1976). For an overview of the critique of ideology, see Stuart Hall, "The Hinterland of Science: Ideology and the 'Sociology of Knowledge'," Cultural Studies 10 (1977).
2. Paul Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics: Restoration of Meaning or Reduction of Illusion?" in Connerton, op. cit.
3. Roland Barthes, Mythologies (N.Y.: Hill & Wang, 1972) pp. 109-159.
4. Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, The Dialectic of Enlightenment (N.Y.: Seabury Press, 1972). An excellent example of a text analysis as ideology critique is Adorno's study of newspaper astrology columns. See "The Stars Down to Earth," in Telos 19 (Spring, 1974).
5. Charles Taylor, "Hermeneutics and Politics," in Connerton, op. cit.
6. Cf. Todd Gitlin, "Spotlights and Shadows: Television and the Culture of Politics," College English 28:8 (April, 1977).
7. Glasgow Media Group, "Bad News," Theory and Society, Fall, 1976.
8. Ibid, p. 360.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CORPORATE STATE: CONTOURS OF A PERSPECTIVE

While the development of a comprehensive theory of the state is beyond our purposes here, it is important to present some perspective on the modern state as a context within which to understand the empirical study of TV news. In this chapter we will look at the fundamental structural problems of the state under advanced capitalism and the policy options it has at its disposal. Also, we will briefly examine the concept of the public sphere. Our understanding of the state and its relationship to private society as well as to the public sphere is grounded in a framework which emphasizes the changing and dynamic quality of these domains. Their characteristics, as well as the demarcations between them, are historically specific. Thus we use the concept of the state in preference to the term "government", in order to avoid the static view of a specific set of institutional structures which is inherent in the latter term.¹

Economic Malfunction and the Transformation of the State.

The best focal point on which to begin to grasp the changing nature and role of the state is its relationship to the economic domain. The economy of 19th century Europe and America proceeded, albeit imper-

fectly, along the lines of the then current ideology of laissez-faire, and the state's role was essentially in keeping with the governmental requisites of a market economy. Today's prevailing social order must be explained in profoundly different terms; the transformation over the last 100 years or so is often referred to as the evolution from competitive to monopoly capitalism.² Though such catch-phrases can readily lend themselves to sloganeering, the terms do point to fundamental changes in the economic system.

The trends since the last third of the 19th century which have characterized the shift away from the competitive market system are familiar: Concentration (the growth in size of corporations); centralization (the process of merger); conglomeration (the diversification of a firm's activities into a wide array of products and services); and more recently, internationalization of capital in the form of multinational conglomerates. Further, the technological innovations which have brought about staggering increases in productive capacity and distributive efficiency must be understood as central to these processes. These tendencies hold true for industrial corporations as well as the major financial institutions: Commercial and investment banks, insurance companies, and mutual and investment funds. In addition, the enormously complex interlockings between the industrial and financial communities constitutes a major dimension of monopoly capital today.

While these trends have been in progress for over a century, it must be pointed out that they have greatly accelerated in the period since

World War II; it is in the last three decades that many of the characteristics which we associate with the modern social order began to take form. Yet, though the tendency toward monopolization has accelerated in the post-War era, monopoly capital by itself does not account for the entire economy. Recent literature³ has begun to develop a three-sector model of the economy: the residual competitive sector, the dominant and innovative monopoly sector, and the public, or state sector, each employing, coincidentally, about one-third of the national labor force. It is the interaction between these sectors which defines the dynamics of the economy.

Despite an almost equal share of the work force, these three sectors are by no means equal partners in a balance of economic power. With its concentration of capital, its access to the technological frontiers and high-skilled labor, as well as its political impact on state policy formulation, the monopoly sector is the dynamic, innovative agent in modern society. It is here where the major share of profits are realized and where "economic growth" (as measured by such statistics as the GNP) is determined.

Since growth in the monopoly sector depends less on increased employment and proceeds instead through the application of ever-new technological innovation, there is a long term inclination to utilize less manpower. Growth thus implies the creation of surplus labor. Moreover, a second and even more crucial implication of growth is that the potential for producing goods and services expands faster than the

capacity for consumers to absorb them within the private economy, since capital accumulation necessitates keeping wages low and prices up. Thus, a chronic gap of this sort, i.e., a surplus productive capacity, means that in the long term profits begin to fall, resulting in slower rates of capital accumulation and economic expansion, in short, stagnation.

This boom-recession cyclical pattern was, of course, present during the laissez-faire market phase of capitalism, but its form is exacerbated under monopoly conditions. Under laissez-faire circumstances, the market mechanism was self-regulatory at least in the sense that boom periods, while they meant high prices, tended to bring with them higher wages and higher employment. During recessions, while wages and employment levels fell, so, generally, did prices to some extent. But under monopoly conditions, while economic concentration is not necessarily the sole cause of inflation and unemployment, these chronic tendencies are intensified simultaneously.

Inflation under monopoly conditions is anchored in the pricing mechanisms of the large firms. Their market power enables them to maintain prices and raise prices, passing on increased costs to consumers. Seldom are prices lowered; the self-adjusting mechanism of supply and demand has been bypassed to a great extent in the dynamics of the monopoly sector. The ability of large firms to resist pressures for lower prices exacerbates inflation. And without lower prices to take up the slack in periods of economic downturn, consumption demand drops, inventories build up,

production is cut back and unemployment escalates, adding to the long-term trend toward surplus labor caused by technical innovation in the monopoly sector. Hence the new beast "stagflation".

Obviously it is the more vulnerable competitive sector which feels the brunt of recession first, but as it continues the effects are felt across the entire economy.

Both sectors of the private economy turn to the state for help, though the prime beneficiary of state fiscal policy has always been the monopoly sector.⁴ However, the state's ability to assist here is limited; its own economic sector, like the competitive one, is greatly dependent on labor expansion for growth; consequently, production costs in both these sectors have been rapidly increasing, and technological innovation in the monopoly sector can only go so far in raising the labor-capital ratio across the entire economy. Within this economic context, the state increasingly has been forced to seek political solutions. In this process it has begun to dramatically alter its role.

In the 20th century, the state has been characterized by its close integration with the private monopoly sector, as many writers have pointed out.⁵ This tendency which has come to blur the distinction between "public" and "private" realms is not only essential to understanding the activities of the contemporary state, but indeed is its defining characteristic. As the economy has undergone short-term fluctuation and long-term transformation, so has the state been forced to act and react,

and, consequently, to alter its basic relationship to the social order. Thus, we deem it appropriate today to speak of the "corporate state" in order to depict this changed reality.

The expanding role of the state over the last decades has not left unaltered other power relationships in society; in particular, the dominance of the capitalist class has taken on a new character. While it might have been appropriate in former times to describe the capitalist class as a ruling class, this term, unless qualified, can be misleading if applied to the present situation.⁶

With the emergence of the national state and its bureaucratic apparatus came the appearance of an administrative elite to perform the functions of the state, and a political elite to shape the policy decisions of the state and receive citizen support for these policies. These groups, while not necessarily "classes" in the traditional sense, have become very powerful. For the maintenance of the present constellations of wealth and power, it is of the utmost importance for the dominant economic class--those who own and control the monopoly sector--to ensure the loyalty of these two elite groups. In other words, the dominant class is incapable of running the social machinery on a daily basis; these tasks are "delegated" to these two elite groups. The monopoly sector of the capitalist class, then, does not "rule" in the sense of issuing daily commands but retains its domination over social life via the administrative and political elites.

The central problem facing the dominant social class is thus not to obtain compliance to detailed orders but to ensure the cooperation, loyalty and responsiveness of these elite groups. In fact, the loyalty is not just to this class itself but also to the social system which makes possible the reproduction of these class relations. Given the historical realities of modern capitalism, this "indirect" rule, whereby the administrative and political elites routinely act in the interests of the dominant class without having to be given direct order to do so is the optimum arrangement. This also means, however, that the dominant class now is dependent on the cooperation of these elite groups for the protection of its vital interests,

It should also be pointed out, though, that what we have been describing here is a structural differentiation: the economic, political, and administrative domains are now organized and handled by institutionally distinct social grouping. Social power is to some extent diffused, though the basic perceptions of the dominant class are shared by the two elite groups and though there is considerable interlock on the personal and organizational level (e.g., "rotations of elites" between the Pentagon and big business and the ambiguous status--private or public--of important "think tanks"). This diffusion of power on the one hand does at times result in intra-class conflicts, yet for the most part this differentiation serves to mystify political realities: the relative autonomy of the state from the dominant class is exploited to create the appearance

of total autonomy, to validate the state's claims to represent the universal interests of all citizens. The concealment of this fact, that the dominant economic class requires and has active control of the state--that a structure of dominance exists between this class and the state--is a central feature of modern political reality.

Contradictions of the Corporate State.

With the increasing failures of the self-regulating dynamics of the free competitive market and the rise of powerful monopolies which translated chronic economic difficulties into a new form, the need for state intervention as a compensatory mechanism became more apparent. While historians can trace the outlines of the liberal corporate state back to the Progressive Era,⁷ the necessity for a genuinely activist state and for the ideological revamping of laissez-faire became widely recognized only during the Keynesian revolution of the 1930's and '40's.

This intervention has largely taken the form of fiscal and social policies which, on the one hand, strive to facilitate the accumulation of capital for the large corporations. On the other hand, state policies attempt to maintain social harmony and to minimally compensate for the social dislocations and problems which result from this accumulation process. This compensation is necessary to help maintain social order and prevent the erosion of popular support among those who suffer the more profound consequences of corporate domination. Such state activities can

be understood as the attempt to minimally "deliver the goods", which is crucial for the maintenance of legitimation.

These two basic functions of state activity, which for short can be called "accumulation" and "compensation,"⁸ place contradictory demands on the state. The tendency for the economy to stagnate, which derives from the problems of overproduction and results in inflation and unemployment, is essentially a consequence of capital accumulation. But the state must directly involve itself in activities (particularly fiscal policies), which foster private investment, especially in the monopoly sector. Yet aiding monopoly accumulation often conflicts with the need for social tranquility, and can potentially undercut acceptance of state activities.

State intervention in the economy and its policies in general, then, not only are class-biased, but contribute to social consequences which are highly problematic for the state. For example, the creation of a permanent underclass, high unemployment, inflation, the erosion of small businesses, the destruction of the physical environment and deteriorating social services are all potentially disruptive phenomena. Their origins may not be perceived by the public as anchored in class dynamics, and the state may not even be seen as a contributing factor (albeit a reluctant one). But the state is increasingly being understood as the sole social agent with the power and authority to redress these problems.

The dual functions of accumulation and compensation provide a frame-

work for understanding state policies in both the realm of spending and revenue raising. The accumulation function is expressed in those expenditures which help facilitate capital investment and profit-making by reducing labor costs, or more importantly, by augmenting the productivity efficiency of labor. Labor cost reductions via state expenditures include social security and unemployment compensation, which would otherwise have to be covered by higher wage demands if the state had not absorbed the costs involved. Augmenting labor's productive capacity can be achieved by a wide array of expenditures: transportation, physical settings of work places, and especially education and research. Such expenditures, in the form of subsidies or direct initiation by the state, are covered by the state by contribute to the productivity and efficiency of labor, and hence the accumulation of capital.

On the other hand, the compensation function is manifested in all the expenditures necessary to minimally deal with the social traumas stemming from accumulation and to maintain general social harmony. Spheres of expenditures include the police, prisons, the military, welfare and other social control institutions required to deal with a dissatisfied workforce and growing surplus population. Many expenditures actually must be seen as reflecting both the accumulation and compensation functions, most notably military defense outlays.

In raising the revenues for its expenditures, the state theoretically has three main choices. It can utilize the profits from its own enterprises; it can borrow funds from individuals and financial institu-

tions; and it can levy taxes. State enterprises, however, have ended up consisting largely of unprofitable but socially important services like mail and the railroads, which tend to worsen rather than improve state fiscal problems. Borrowing, especially through bonds, has its limits, particularly during inflationary periods when interest rates are high. This leaves taxes as the major revenue source.

Taxation has traditionally presented problems for the state since those groups best able to afford revenues are precisely those with the political power to ensure that their contributions are minimal. Thus, income from property is taxed at a much lower rate than income from labor; the large corporations often pay miniscule percentages while wage earners are taxed at much higher rates. Among income earners, those with very high incomes pay lower tax percentages than those with mid-range incomes. These facts in themselves must be constantly explained away or kept hidden, since they are a threat to state legitimacy.

The fiscal policies open to the state translate into juggling the polar demands to raise revenues and lower expenses, which result in a desperate shuttling back and forth between non-solutions. Military spending becomes open-ended; managed recessions to reduce wages, prices and interest rates can backfire into serious inflation; wage and price controls stimulate unemployment; reducing welfare costs can lead to social unrest; even the liberal alternative of social instead of military spending is to no real avail, since it generally fails to stimulate demand and

productivity gains are very difficult to realize.

Since long-term economic stability remains elusive, the state continues to engage in its policies of "crisis management". To do this, however, the state requires a minimal consensual climate. Discourse in the public sphere must somehow preserve the state's legitimation if it is to effectively carry out its policies.

Under the competitive market system, the legitimating rationale which provided a normative underpinning for conflict in the political arena was the ideology of equivalent exchange; the notion that labor, wages, goods and services were being exchanged for their true value assumed that it was the "invisible hand" of the market mechanism that was operative in determining not only value levels, but the basic patterns of economic relations. Politics, then, as the struggle over resources and the competition over societal goals and values, was carried out in the context of this apparently "natural" environment, the autonomous market. The foundations of economic relationships was understood as being external to the political system's realm of control.

This ideological framework fostered and solidified the basic normative postulates which we associate with Western liberal democratic society: that the basic source of governmental power derives from the civic consensus; the popular will is expressed through representative political institutions; political decision-makers are accountable to the people; that state administration is universalistic and neutral in regard to com-

peting interests; and that the individual has the freedom from dependence on the will of others and the freedom to enter into only those social relations which he/she chooses out of self-interest.

One of the most significant attributes of these norms is that their origins lie in socio-cultural institutions and processes external to the governmental system, i.e., in private society.⁹ They are in a sense "higher principles" which are not directly produced by the state itself. Any given regime would make normative appeals to these values in order to maintain popular acceptance of its authority, and to the extent that the political economy permitted, these goals were somewhat realizable in practice for some strata of the population. They were, of course, never fully implemented, since that would have presupposed the leveling of class privileges based on property ownership, but the point is that the ideological construct of the free market allowed for sufficient "play" in "trading off" some of these values against others in the course of political debate and policy formation, as specific situations demanded.

With the demise of a significant market economy and the need for an interventionist state to manage increasingly severe cyclical crises, the extent of free "play" and flexibility began to erode. This historical development is also a consequence of the increasing application of science and technology: with expanded productive capacity and efficiency, as well as growing inter-dependence and interlocking across industries and other social institutions as well, less and less could be left to chance, since

the consequences of erroneous decisions took on larger and larger dimensions. In cybernetic terms, entropy within the economy and political process increasingly needed to be eliminated; control, in the form of planning, began to typify activities of the corporate state.¹⁰

From this perspective, it becomes apparent that the liberal norms mentioned above are in fact dysfunctional if they are allowed to be fully applied in practice. Individual privatism, public subjectivism in political perception (as well as in the consumer realm) and true public participation in the political process all bring with them the elements of unpredictability and threat to the structure of domination. Moreover, many decisions made in the corporate industrial state require specialized skills and knowledge which cannot be permitted to become topics of popular debate. Thus, the state is put in the position of having to appeal, in a normative way, for citizen support, but the norms which it mobilizes, the values of liberal democracy, are functional impediments to its own logic. To realize these values in practice is politically undesirable. The strategic alternative for the corporate state is to uncouple, as far as possible, its decisions and activities from the process of political will formation of the public. This would render the variable of public sentiment a more predictable component of the factors with which the state must cope.

Legitimation as Quiescent Mass Loyalty.

Our analysis suggests that the corporate state must strive to evoke

acceptance of its structures and policies, and yet keep the populace from seriously intruding upon its activities in the political-economic realm. Thus, the corporate state must seek legitimation, but most do so by circumventing the two basic conditions traditionally associated with the legitimation process: genuine political participation and unconstrained normative discourse in the public sphere.

Within the framework of pluralist democratic theory, the process of legitimation has presupposed the political participation of the populace in the shaping of the consensus. The societal model of political pluralism, however, is greatly at odds with contemporary realities;¹¹ we have seen that the realization of pluralism would in fact be detrimental to the needs of the corporate state. Though the arenas of formal democracy have been expanded in the 20th century (and not without a great deal of struggle) particularly with the extension of universal adult suffrage, the major centers of power within the state and the economic realm have not accordingly become proportionately more responsive and accountable to popular will. The apparent contradiction between the democratic ethos and the requisites for a subordinate/dominant class structure under advanced capitalism has been partly resolved by the institutions of formal democracy, especially political parties, the legislative branch, and voting.¹² While these institutions are not without political consequence, it remains true that seemingly spectacular conflict (e.g., Watergate) can be played out in the public sphere with a minimum threat of serious change to the

dominant arrangements.

During most periods, the formal political arena absorbs the political activities of those strata of the population who feel that their interests are articulated by the existing political institutions. At the same time, there remains a sizable portion of the population which is not involved in the formal (or any other arena). While this fact is officially bemoaned, it remains doubtful that the existing configurations of wealth and power would survive a politicized population, even if such activity were largely restricted to the formal arenas. A wide, genuine democratic participation in the shaping of the political will would certainly be dysfunctional for the present system. Such participation would result in the transformation of many institutions which serve to maintain the existing system of domination.

The history of the last decade suggests that there may well be an "optimum" level of participation for the maintenance of the state in its present form. (We use "participation" here to refer largely to the official political arena, but not exclusively; a certain level of political activity outside those institutions are probably functional in preventing them from becoming too overtly moribund). The last decade has witnessed challenges to this range from both ends. In the middle and late 1960's, a participatory democratic fervor emerged among many sections of the population and articulated demands which the state could not meet. The lessons of this "excess of democracy" are clear; in an unusually candid analysis, a noted

conservative writer states:

. . .the effective operation of a democratic political system usually requires some measure of apathy and non-involvement on the part of some individuals and groups. . .In itself, this marginality on the part of some groups is inherently undemocratic, but it has also been one of the factors which has enabled democracy to function effectively.¹³

While "too much" democratic participation is a problem, and highlights the political limits of the system, in the present decade we begin to see the dilemmas of too little participation. We witness, at least temporarily, a withdrawal from even the official modes of political involvement, especially voting, by large segments of the population. Large-scale non-participation would make it hard for the state to claim it has popular support. At present, this withdrawal has not reached crisis proportions, but already deep concerns are being expressed over this trend.

In terms of normative discourse in the political arena, obviously the interests of the corporate state would be best served by keeping such speech to a minimum. The constriction of normative speech in the political arena over the last few decades has been accomplished by the tendency to ground political communication on the logic of instrumental rationality,¹⁴ rather than on norms.

Instrumental rationality is the mode of thinking which operates to guide human control over things and events in the physical world. Instrumental rationality is essentially based on technical rules, which can be or have been empirically validated. Simply put, instrumental rationality

reveals a concern with means, rather than ends. Norms, however, cannot be reduced to technical rules, nor can they be proven true or false. Norms emerge in social interaction; they are defined by reciprocal behavioral expectations. Normative speech expresses a willingness to negotiate values and goals.

The tendency for instrumental rationality to replace normative speech in the public media represents an attempt to depoliticize politics as a means of maintaining legitimation. In this process, the media tend to cast questions of antagonistic norms or goals as technical problems to be resolved by the instrumental utilization of administrative, scientific, or technological means. The media, in other words, reproduce a very circumscribed notation of what "politics" is. The range of issues which the system could allow to become topics of conflict and the spectrum of political positions on such issues, would have to be rather narrow. For example, the topics of "meaningful work" and "public control of the economy" would have to be kept from the political agenda. In fact, there is a whole inventory of social features which would have to remain either invisible or taken for granted. These features must not become politicized, that is, made a topic of concern over which opinion will seriously differ.

In general terms, "politics" in the public sphere must be delimited to domains which will not call into question the fact of class domination. This would be problematic not only for the dominant class but its adminis-

trative and political allies as well.

Thus, the corporate state strives to maintain legitimation by the delivery of material goods to the populace while minimizing political participation and normative discourse. The strategy of the corporate state vis a vis the populace is to maintain what we will call quiescent mass loyalty. This strategy should not necessarily be considered a self-conscious intentional plan, but rather a de facto label we apply to a pattern of responses the corporate state has displayed toward the populace. These responses, as we have seen, are motivated by the corporate state's attempts to deal with a whole array of chronic economic and political problems, which derive from the inherently contradictory nature of the system itself.

The maintenance of quiescent mass loyalty is, in our view, the main single precondition for the corporate state to play its interventionist role. Quiescent mass loyalty is a concept we use to capture the normal orientation which the majority of the population would have towards the corporate state if its interventionist options are to be maximized. We can say that a population which accords quiescent mass loyalty to the corporate state is a population characterized by:

- non-intrusion upon the power of capital to shape the basic contours of society;
- non-interference with the political and administrative activities of the state;
- moderate participation within the boundaries of the formal

political arenas;

--cooperative involvement in the economic sphere as a docile labor force and dependable consumers;

--acceptance of the prevailing social definitions in interpreting their experiences and defining their needs vis a vis the corporate state;

--lack of genuine political efficacy to challenge the basic power arrangements of society.

In short, quiescent mass loyalty would constitute successful domination of the corporate state over the populace.

This strategy for securing legitimation is not without its own potential contradictions. The attenuation of normative speech and the emphasis on instrumental rationality means that the ideal of quiescent mass loyalty becomes increasingly identified with the promise of goal attainment, removed from normative considerations. This suggests that the foundation of quiescent mass loyalty as a form of legitimation becomes collapsed to the "delivery of goods"--essentially consumer gratification in the realm of products and services.

Legitimation cannot be treated merely as a physical resource. While greatly dependent upon the "delivery of goods," legitimation refers to the collective state of mind--to the evaluative domain of social consciousness. Legitimation must ultimately be anchored in the process of normative choice-making. This process can only be realized through interactional

discourse, that is, by the establishment of shared expectations on the intersubjective level. The state, however, cannot administratively generate new norms and meanings on its own. Such cultural practices can only emerge in the domains of social interaction. Yet to continue to undermine existing norms could hypothetically create a dangerous situation for the state. It would be conceivable that if a minimum level of goods delivery and gratification were not met, and the normative foundation of its activities had been sufficiently eroded in the eyes of the public, that a legitimation crisis could ensue. This would be predicted on the fact that the state no longer had a "reserve" of higher principles beyond itself to which it could appeal for support.

At present there is a great deal of evidence to suggest high levels of political distrust of government and large corporations. Over the last ten years, the pollsters have not only been recording staggering drops in public confidence. Pollsters also note a trend in which people are far less likely to blame themselves when things go wrong; now people are more prone to blame major social institutions, particularly business and government, since that is where power is seen to lie. Whether this is always justified is not the point (certainly these institutions may be used as scapegoats in some cases). It does suggest that many people feel their control over their daily lives to be decreasing.

Yet, this research also indicates that these trends by no means signal a genuine legitimation crisis; as one survey indicates, citizens

are far from unanimous about just what the causes of the problem are. In one study, while about four-fifths of the families interview said the country was falling apart, an equal number reported that they personally were doing quite well.¹⁵ Perhaps most importantly, most still assumed that things will inevitably get better. Thus, while the economy is in its most severe downturn since the 1930's, and the populace has experienced a moral pummeling over Vietnam and Watergate, the state is not at present undergoing a major crisis of legitimacy, though its "reserves" may well be dwindling.

Only rarely in history has the question of state authority emerged and become articulated as a stark either-or alternative; there are degrees of "legitimation crises," and the question itself is imbedded in and mediated through the concrete political issues/crises of the day. Though the present situation is enormously troublesome for the state and the corporate sector, it is in a sense business as usual in terms of the maintenance of quiescent mass loyalty. The citizen's experience of not being a political subject who makes critical normative choices in questions of national political concern is routinized and reinforced on a daily basis. What the future situation will be we cannot predict with any certitude.

The Public Sphere, the State, and Network TV News.

The maintenance of dominant and subordinate relations in the social

order is accomplished by processes whereby, on the one hand "people in similar positions are separated from each other, [and] forced to compete instead of to cooperate." On the other hand, this expropriated power, which is potentially theirs, "returns to people as a higher authority, as something over which they are not expected to have any control."¹⁶

These processes are accomplished by "absorbing the common power that people possess as members of a dominated but majoritarian social class and ...using that power to rule them. . .for purposes alienated from the people themselves." This extraction from, and imposition of, political power on subordinate segments of the populace is facilitated by a vast array of social institutions which use a combination of coercion and public consent.

In the post-War Western industrial societies, this combination has taken the form of relatively small doses of overt repression. The prevalence of quiescent mass loyalty has meant that these regimes have not, for the most part, been faced with serious and sustained internal challenge to their existence. The institutions which contribute to the reproduction of quiescent mass loyalty are not longer just the various apparatus of the state, such as the school system. Over the last several decades, many institutions, originally situated outside the state, have come within its orbital domain of power. The quasi-integration of such institutions as the family, mass leisure and the media into the corporate state may at times create internal tensions and contradictory results.

Yet the fundamental tendency for such institutions to contribute to the dominant systems of emaning and values on which quiescnet mass loyalty is based is clearly evident. In particular, the importance of the domain of social life called the public sphere and the tendency for it to become assimilated within the corporate state cannot be overemphasized.

The distinction between private and public spheres of social life is a conceptualization which can be traced back at least to the time of the ancient Greeks. In the city state of ancient Greece, it was understood that there exists a qualitative difference between the social interaction which took place in such private domains as the home, family, and friendship and the public sphere. In the public sphere, people interacted as citizens, that is, as legal members of the city state. Discourse dealt with concerns of the public welfare--the common goal of the community of citizens. The public sphere, in short, was the domain of politics. (An important consideration in that situation was, of course, that only about one person in seven held the status of "citizen".)

Under feudalism, the distinction between public and private spheres was submerged, but began to reappear with the rise of the nation state and the development of the market economy. The growth of commerce necessitated a realm of authority beyond the manor and the village, as well as a host of new functions to sustain the viability of the new social unit defined by the state's political borders. "Society" was coming to be understood as a private sphere separate from the state. Yet it was

becoming apparent that this private sphere was integrally linked to the larger market and likewise was dependent upon the appropriate execution of policies by the state. A "public sphere"¹⁷ began to emerge, as private individuals saw the need to assemble as a public to confront the state.

Initially, the individuals thus assembled largely represented the interests of the rising mercantile class, but with the bourgeois revolutions, the concept of the public sphere was defined, at least in formal terms, to be the domain of all citizens (though universal suffrage had to wait until the 20th century). In practice, most of the public sphere of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was dominated by a relatively small segment of the population--committed intellectuals who strove for the implementation of universal constitutional rights and liberties. By the middle of the 19th century, with the public media of journalism themselves becoming an important terrain of capital investment, and the solidification of the constitutional state, the public sphere had changed. It was no longer a domain characterized by the committed polemical struggle of intellectuals against the state. Rather it had become a more generalized forum for a growing public. It also had become a domain dominated by commercial enterprises.

In this transformation, the contours of the modern public sphere came into focus. The public sphere emerged as an institution which stands between private society and the state; it is the domain in which

public opinion can be formed. The public sphere evolved in opposition to the absolutist state, and took on the function of conveying public sentiment to the state, as well as making the state's apparatus and decisions more visible. The opposition to the absolutist state could only have been carried out by the class strong enough to challenge it: the ascendant bourgeoisie. Only they were capable of demanding and securing constitutional guarantees based on rational legal principles. Moreover, only this class was in a position to expand and develop the channels of communication which constituted the public sphere.

The liberal concept of the public sphere was universalistic--it was to be equally accessible to everyone, not just property-owners--just like the status of "citizen" was to be a legal transcendence of such social distinctions. The problem lies not in the principles themselves, rather in the question of whether the principles were (and are) attainable under the historical realities of class inequality. For if the interests of a dominant class are to be maintained in the political processes of opinion formation and policy decision, and if the arena in which the formation and articulation of political will takes place is itself a vested interest of the dominant class, there exists an unavoidable contradiction.

Today, the public sphere is constituted by a variety of media. Political discourse proceeds on a daily basis on TV, on radio, in magazines, as well as in newspapers and at public gatherings. All these

institutions, to the extent they provide forums for political discourse, serve to create the public sphere. Since political discourse can reflect a plurality of political arenas, e.g., neighborhood, municipal, federal, we could speak of public spheres. For our purposes in this study, attention will be directed toward the public sphere which addresses itself to the policies of the national state, and which constitutes the individuals who participate or attend to such discourse as members of the national public.

The public sphere in which debate and opinion formation regarding policies of the national state take place is increasingly being defined by network TV news. As a link between the citizen and the formation of state policy, TV news has become central to constituting the private citizen as a member of the national public. TV news has become of prime importance in defining the national political landscape, as it is here more than through any other medium that the state and its claims to authority present themselves most directly, consistently, and immediately to most people. In the U.S., the three network news shows have a nightly audience of over 41 million viewers;¹⁸ this fact, considerable in itself, is underscored by other research which indicates that not only is TV trusted more than other news media but there seems to be a pattern in which TV is increasingly becoming the only source of national news for millions of citizens.¹⁹ Moreover, the audience composition for TV news is qualitatively different from that of the print media; in con-

trast to print, TV news exposure cuts across categories of educational level, income, occupation, age, racial and ethnic origins, and political preference, to an extent that its audience begins to approach a microcosm of the total population.²⁰

Broadcasting in the U.S. is largely under the control of private corporations. Though formally autonomous of the government, broadcasting, as a major monopoly which constitutes a significant part of the public sphere, must be understood as an integral element of the corporate state. The societal power of broadcasting is enormous; the fact it is a large invested economic interest almost pales in comparison to its definitional power and its role in the reproduction of quiescent mass loyalty. As Stuart Hall puts it:

. . .the media and the dominant institutions of communication and consciousness formation are themselves the primary source of attitudes and knowledge within which public opinion crystallizes, and the primary channels between hegemonic classes and the audience.²¹

Though broadcasting is involved in mediating the power of the state to the populace, Hall suggests that the relationship between broadcasting and the official centers of state power is actually a double bind. TV on the one hand belongs to and contributes to the reproduction of the system of domination; on the other hand, like the other news media, TV must strive to be a "watchdog" on the centers of power and to some degree must define its relationship to the state as an "adversary" one. To maintain its own credibility with its public, TV news must appear to be in tension with the state; the medium must be thought of as giving voice

to perspectives which do challenge the present situations. That is to say, the range of options to existing policies which are defined on TV news must be perceived as holding out real alternatives; they must be thought of as possibly making a difference if the political arena is not to be thought of as a mere sham. Further, the view of events and their implicit/explicit interpretations on TV news cannot be too much at odds with the meanings people acquire via their other daily experiences. Broadcasting is far from an airtight system.

The adversary dimension in the broadcasting/state relationship should not be underestimated; though the TV networks are an integral part of the power structure, conflicts of interest within this sphere can and do emerge. The open antagonisms of the Nixon era, especially in the context of Watergate, were unprecedented in the post-War era.²² However, even at their most severe moments, these conflicts between the media and the state never seriously called into question the continuation of the basic social structures as they now exist; the prevailing configurations of wealth and power, as well as the basic consensus of official politics, were never challenged.

Organizationally and on the personal level, the news media share with the state the prevailing perceptions of social reality. This shared consensual view underlies even the most spectacular battles between the news media and the state. The institutional alignments between them, not least of which is the closer cooperation between news

reporters and officials,²³ result in a common universe of meanings. However, these understandings are not perceived as of explicit points of view, they are rather treated as taken-for-granted assumption about reality. Direct censorship in the traditional sense, while still present, is far from the most significant procedure whereby TV news reproduces the dominant interpretations of the social order.

In fact, explanations as to why TV news looks the way it does are to be found on three basic levels.²⁴

First, there is the fundamental economic imperative of the commercial logic. Whatever else might be said about TV news, the undeniable reality is that news programs must attract and hold an audience in a competitive environment.

Secondly, there are the organizational factors which impinge on the production process and the production routines which have emerged to accomodate these factors.

And finally, there are the reality assumptions and definitions of professionalism which guide newspeople in their work.

This triad should not be perceived as totally harmonious; many decisions in the production process of news can be seen as compromises between the conflicting demands and pressures which emanate from these three levels. Despite such problems it is largely via these institutional realities and corresponding routines and definitions that TV news makes operative its shared interpretations with the state. And it is via

these realities rather than through conscious political manipulation by newspeople or censorship by the state, that TV news contributes to the reproduction of quiescent mass loyalty.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of this point, see Alan Wolfe, "New Directions in the Marxist Theory of Politics," Politics and Society, Winter 1974, p. 148. See also David Gold, et al., "Recent Developments in the Marxist Theories of the Capitalist State," in Monthly Review, October and November, 1975.
2. Cf. Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).
3. See especially James O'Connor, The Fiscal Crisis of the State (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).
4. For a concise survey of the class bias of federal expenditures, see Edward Greenberg, Serving the Few (New York: Wiley, 1974).
5. For example, O'Connor, op. cit.; Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, Monopoly Capital (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966); Seymour Melman, Pentagon Capitalism (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970); and Ernest Mandel, Late Capitalism (New York: Humanities Press, 1975). From a liberal perspective, John K. Galbraith reaches similar findings in The New Industrial State, 2nd ed., (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1971).
6. The following draws from Alvin Gouldner, The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology (New York: Seabury Press, 1976); and Fred Block, "The Ruling Class Does not Rule," Socialist Revolution, May-June 1977.
7. Cf. James Weinstein, The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).
8. O'Connor, op. cit., uses the terms "accumulation" and "legitimation", the latter referring to the consequences of state "compensation" activity. However, since we will devote a separate discussion to the question of legitimation, and since legitimation is dependent not just on state spending, we simply refer to "compensation" at this point in the text.
9. Jürgen Habermas develops this point in Legitimation Crisis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975).
10. Galbraith, op. cit., is helpful on this point.

11. Cf. Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society (New York: Basic Books, 1969) and Alan Wolfe, The Limits of Legitimacy (Forthcoming).
12. This point is made by Claus Offe in a number of articles. See his "Political Authority and Class Structure," International Journal of Sociology (Summer, 1972), and his "The Abolition of Market Control and the Problem of Legitimacy," parts I & II, Kapitalistate, 1 & 2 (1973).
13. Samuel Huntington, "The Democratic Distemper," The Public Interest (Fall, 1975), p. 37.
14. This concept of instrumental rationality is developed and explored in a number of works: Jürgen Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology'" in his Toward a Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); Hans Peter Dreitzel, "Social Science and Rationality," Politics and Society (Summer, 1972); Trent Schroyer, The Critique of Domination (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975); Alvin Gouldner, op. cit.
15. Daniel Yankelovitch, "The State of Ressentiment in America," Social Research (Winter, 1975).
16. Wolfe,
17. On the concept of the public sphere, see Gouldner, op. cit.; Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere," New German Critique (Fall, 1974); and Eberhard Knödler-Bunte, "The Proletarian Public Sphere and Political Organization," New German Critique (Winter, 1975).
18. Robert Bower, Television and the Public (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).
19. Ibid.
20. See Ben Bagdikian, The Information Machines (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), especially chapter 3, "The Audience for News".
21. Stuart Hall, "Media Power: The Double Bind," Journal of Communication (Autumn, 1974), p. 26.
22. See William Porter, Assault on the Media: The Nixon Years (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1976).
23. Cf. Leon Sigal, Reporters and Officials (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1973).

24. On the sociology of news production, see for example Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," American Journal of Sociology (January, 1972); Edward Jay Epstein, News From Nowhere (New York: Vintage, 1973); David Altheide, Creating Reality: How TV Distorts Events (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1974).

CHAPTER TWO

NEWS AND SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Viewer-Citizen Consciousness and Quiescent Mass Loyalty.

While our discussion of the corporate state provides a context within which to analyze TV news discourse, we still need to examine the relationship between viewer consciousness and the empirical reality of the text. Our premise is that the standard model of news media communication, which posits a "sender" who transports "information" through a "channel" to a "receiver" is inadequate for this task. Though this model can serve as a guide for some interesting research,¹ it ignores what we take to be the most vital dimension of TV news' role, namely the reproduction of social consciousness vis a vis the corporate state.

On the level of its material appearance, "news" is seemingly a "thing", an object which, in the case of TV, appears as a program, albeit fleetingly. This object is a commodity,² which means that it has a social history in a production process dominated by commercial logic. Examination of the social origins of the program will reveal specific relations of production, i.e., labor and capital, as well as social and technical divisions in the labor process. Such an analysis underscores that this object is not merely a static "thing" but is itself a mediator/constituent

of specific social relations. That is, the appearance or form which the object takes presupposes the existence of these relations.

Our concern in this study is not so much with the relations of production of TV news. Instead, we stress the mode of consciousness which emerges in what we might call the relations of consumption.

In expending attentional energy on the medium of TV, viewer consciousness is constituted by, and situated within, the domains of two major sets of social relations: the market (in the broadest sense of the term) and the public sphere. We would argue that under the commercial logic of U.S. TV, all programming situates the viewer within the domain of the market, though commercials do this most directly. With news and current affairs programming, the market does not vanish, but becomes superimposed on the domain of the public sphere. (This is of course at least suggestive of the present historical relationship between the market and the public sphere, which we discussed above. However, further examination of that development would take us too far afield of our immediate concerns).

If social relations are embodied and reflected in language, (even though they certainly exceed merely linguistic phenomena) then to be absorbed in the discourse of advertising situates the viewer in the social domain of mercantile relations. Likewise, to be engaged by news and public affairs programming, to attend to such discourse on TV, is to be constituted as a member of the public. In fact, the public sphere, in its present historical form, can be grasped by most people only through the news

media, which is tantamount to saying that the public sphere today exists largely through the news media, as we discussed in the previous chapter. The objects, people, events, and the entire universe of discourse which display this world are largely only knowable via the news. Without TV, this sense of being alive to a community of strangers, being situated in social relations beyond one's direct personal encounters, would not be possible.

That viewer consciousness is constituted as membership in the public sphere is borne out, say, by the fact that opinion questionnaires appear as intelligible and answerable. In other words, the capacity to respond to polls bespeaks of the absorption of consciousness into the public sphere. Without membership in the public sphere, opinion polls, which are grounded in the language of the public sphere, would appear meaningless.

The news media, then, create the possibility of a dual social existence and identity for the individual. Consciousness has been split between the domains of face to face spheres of private life and the domain of the mass mediated public sphere. This separation, this dual existence, is not per se a negative development. Rather, the critical moment enters upon examination of the nature of the discourse, and, by extension, the basic attributes of the consciousness made possible by the discourse in the contemporary public sphere.

The previous chapter sketched the institutional linkages between the state, the monopoly sector of the economy, and the public sphere.

That these have become virtually inseparable is indicative of the inadequacies of the liberal-pluralist interpretations of the contemporary situation. The corporate state does not seek genuine political participation and unconstrained political discussion from the populace, but rather, quiescent mass loyalty. The corporate state, while claiming to represent the universal interests of all citizens, actually functions in the interests of a particular class, namely capital.

Moreover we might add that the concept of citizen itself, as a social designation, is a mystification of concrete social circumstances. Citizenship implies membership in a universal community within the state, but this community is an illusory one because it assumes that which yet remains to be achieved: the elimination of class relationships. And the public sphere, as the primary domain of which mediates citizens' relationship to the state, can be said to be a domain of mystification to the extent that it does not provide articulation of these realities. As the form of the individual's relationship to the public sphere--and hence the state--is being transformed by historical and technological change, the social concretization of "citizen" is being altered.

While many institutions contribute to the maintenance of quiescent mass loyalty as we have said, each does so in its own way. In the case of TV news, we call the mode of consciousness which it reproduces the "viewer-citizen". This term attempts to grasp a historically new form of the individual's relationship to the corporate state as mediated by

TV news.

The category of viewer-citizen posits the dual social existence of the individual (as a private person and as a member of the public) in a critical way: the dimensions of subordination and domination, especially the class character, of the private person is not given expression in his/her social constitution as a viewer-citizen. To be a viewer-citizen is to be absorbed into the public sphere in an historically new manner and to have the class realities of ones private domains concealed in an historically new way. The viewer-citizen, then, is one of the forms of the mystification now embodied in the category of "citizen".³

Given that the corporate state seeks quiescent mass loyalty--to mobilize the populace to support its basic structures and activities while separating them from significant political and economic decision-making, and given that TV news is an integral part of the corporate state--we would suggest that viewer-citizen consciousness should be understood as fundamentally congruent with quiescent mass loyalty.

As an analytic category, viewer-citizen consciousness is thus in structural correspondence with the larger category of quiescent mass loyalty. This structural correspondence is the link between the macro-analysis of Chapter One and the micro-analysis of the TV news texts which follows in the next three chapters.

In the next section we will examine the concept of the viewer-citizen more closely. For now, we can briefly say that this mode of conscious-

ness is basically typified by an uncritical and unquestioning social awareness. Viewer-citizen consciousness is one which is devoid of a collective history; it cannot learn from its own past. Moreover, the viewer-citizen lacks a sense of significant efficacy in the socio-political world. It defines itself as dependent upon the perceived managers of the social order.

It must be underscored that the analytic category of "viewer-citizen" is an abstraction of the social consciousness embodied in TV news discourse. Thus, "pure" viewer-citizens would totally reflect the consciousness found within TV news.

Such a consciousness would be, according to the perspective developed in Chapter One, an instance of successful subordination of the populace to the needs of the corporate state. However, while we can empirically establish the attributes of the ideal viewer-citizen from an examination of TV news output, the extent of success is a different empirical question and lies beyond the scope of this study.

What remains then, is to empirically investigate the attributes of viewer-citizen consciousness in TV news discourse and to demonstrate the structural correspondence of this consciousness to quiescent mass loyalty. The next section will provide a point of reference for that investigation.

Reflective and Repressive Modes of Discourse.

The structure of TV news discourse determines the possible conscious-

ness which can emerge from it. In attempting to analyze these attributes, we make the initial distinction between the intensity and the mode of discourse.

The intensity of the TV news discourse is a conceptualization of the extent to which audience subjectivity is mobilized or demobilized--- the intensity with which the consciousness of the viewer is invited or distanced from engagement with the news. We anticipate that this dimension will vary within any news program.

Studies of the intensity of involvement have a long tradition; indeed the techniques of arousing and cooling public emotions were clearly set forth in the Rhetorics of the ancient Greeks. In our time, the manipulation of mass emotions via the mass media has been a major topic of research.⁴ Indeed, there exists an entire repertoire of strategies developed in marketing, entertainment and news. Within news and public affairs programs, many of these strategies seem to center on the question of dramatic tension. The intensity of involvement can be varied quite simply by adjusting certain elements which contribute to the dramatic progression. For example, personification lends itself to drama better than does abstract discourse. So on TV news, those items which show strong personification tend to structure a higher intensity of involvement than news items which are characterized by technical language and impersonal discourse. An interesting question then, is what domains appear on TV news and what tends to be the intensity of involvement generally struc-

tured toward these domains? In other words, in which areas of the social world is the viewer invited to become emotionally involved and in which areas is s/he distanced? Such questions are incorporated into the analysis of Chapter Four and Five.

Intensity by itself, however, suggests merely quantitative distinctions. We must augment the dimension of intensity with a qualitative one, which leads us to the mode of the discourse. The concept of the mode is theoretically much more ambitious. Any number of categories could be devised to highlight the differential aspects of the involvement with TV news. Here, though, we simply dichotomize the modes of discourse in terms of the quality of the social relationship between TV news and its audience. By means of this dichotomy we ask: is the discourse in a reflective or repressive mode?⁵ Casting the issue in such an either/or manner undeniably means a certain loss of nuance. On the other hand, this dichotomy helps us examine and focus on the basic logic at work.

In the mode of TV news involvement we find the essence of the viewer-citizen consciousness. We mentioned above that the viewer-citizen is at base characterized by an uncritical and unquestioning social awareness. The uncritical consciousness of the viewer-citizen derives from the repressive mode of TV news discourse. A critical consciousness--one which can entertain the potentiality of "otherness", one which is open and questioning--requires a grounding in reflective speech. Uncritical consciousness is not "false". Rather, it precludes the possibility of self-

transformation into a qualitatively different state.

Specifically, then, what is meant by reflective and repressive discourse? As an initial and very compressed formulation, we can say that reflective discourse means that the viewer is addressed by TV news in such a way which creates the possibility that s/he understands himself to be an active participant in the construction of the social world and that s/he is capable of learning from his/her own collective social past. That is, in a reflective discourse, the consciousness which emerges would be that of a social agent who utilizes news to understand himself as part of history; his praxis contributes to the making of history. Reflective news discourse would permit the viewer-citizen to learn from past social experiences in order to critically appraise the present from a practical standpoint. Reflective news discourse would address itself to the interplay between existing social consciousness and social activity in such a way as to make possible the transcendence of that consciousness, as well as the reformulation of the activity. Self-reflection, then, is the process by which human growth and change proceeds.

Non-reflective involvement treats the viewer as an object of history, who is acted upon, rather than as a subject who participates in creating the social world. Repressive discourse prevents or at least retards the reconstruction of consciousness, solidifying existing social awareness and excluding the possibility of alternatives. While the intensity of discourse may vary within a news program, we would expect the

mode to be a very stable attribute which would actually define the genre of TV news discourse.

The concept of reflective and unreflective modes of discourse is anchored in a view which takes society and the social self of the individual to be an ongoing process. Human beings create themselves and society through their activities and practices. The use of symbols, especially language, is the most specifically human activity in the process of self- and social-creation. It is in the interplay between social consciousness and social activity, mediated by symbols, where this self- and social-creation takes place.

From the standpoint of the individual, consciousness is a socially emergent process which takes place in social relations.⁶ The capacity to "see oneself" in social relations--for the self to become an object to its own subjectivity, is what distinguishes reflective from repressive consciousness. This reflexivity has been formulated in a variety of ways. In Hegelian terms, it means that consciousness can learn from itself. George Herbert Mead captures this process in his notion of the dialectic between the "I" and the "me". In Freud, there is a parallel construct with the id-ego-superego. In whatever terms one cares to cast the process, the basic importance of reflexivity is clear.

The blockage of reflection by repressive discourse locks consciousness within the social relations where the blockage takes place. The viewer-citizen is thus a blocked consciousness under the domination of the corporate state.

The consciousness of viewer-citizen is not to be equated with total passivity or non-involvement. On the level of quiescent mass loyalty, we saw that the corporate state needs to keep the political participation within restricted limits; it must distance the populace from crucial political mobilization and involvement (e.g., voting and consumption). On the analytic level of viewer-citizen, then, we would expect there to be sufficient intensity to engage attentional energy in the appropriate domains and to ensure a returning to TV news. The reproduction of viewer citizen consciousness must be continually reaccomplished.

In sum, while the intensity of TV news discourse may vary, our analysis suggests that the mode of the discourse will be clearly repressive. Within the corporate state, TV news is the site of reproduction of the historically new form of the uncritical consciousness of viewer-citizen. That this is indeed the case, and just how this consciousness is reproduced by TV news discourse, will be demonstrated in the following three chapters.

NOTES

1. Cf. Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure, The Unseeing Eye (New York: Putnam, 1976).
2. Some writers argue that in the political economy of broadcasting, the true commodity is the audience; it is the audience which is produced (by the programming process) and sold (to the advertisers). This line of reasoning is fruitful for highlighting certain social relationships, but is not useful for our purposes here since it tends to minimize the question of consciousness within the audience. See Dallas Smythe, "Communications: Blind Spot in Western Marxism," paper delivered at the West Coast Conference on Critical Communication Research, Stanford University, December 1975.
3. In the light of the historical merger of the public sphere and the market within the mass media, and the integration of both with the state, it may be more accurate to speak of the "viewer-citizen-consumer". This, however, would demand an empirical analysis of broader scope than can be encompassed within this study.
4. Cf. Murray Edelman, Politics as Symbolic Action (Chicago: Markham, 1971).
5. This distinction is derived from the tradition of critical sociology. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971). A useful work on the origins of this tradition is Trent Schroyer, The Critique of Domination (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975). From a slightly different perspective, similar themes are found in Pavlo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1970). Claus Mueller has applied this tradition to news media studies. See his "Notes on the Repression of Communicative Behavior" in Recent Sociology No. 2, ed. Hans-Peter Dreitzel (New York: Macmillan, 1970) as well as his more extensive The Politics of Communication (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). This latter work parallels some of our concerns in this study, but with a different methodology. Less firmly rooted in the tradition of critical sociology, but also very stimulating is Trevor Pateman, Language, Truth and Politics, published by Jean Stroud and Trevor Pateman, 24 Castle Crescent, Reading, Berkshire, U.K., 1975. He formulates an intriguing version of what he calls "repressive discourse" and "impossible discourse", which are not unrelated to our approach.

6. In American sociology, the work of George Herbert Mead is an important foundation for understanding the self as a process. See George Herbert Mead, On Social Psychology, ed. Anselm Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

CHAPTER THREE

TV NEWS DISCOURSE I: RHETORIC OF THE FORMAT

TV news is more than the stories themselves. The stories appear in the context of an entire program, and this program is characterized by a particular format. Moreover, as we will suggestively illustrate, this format is not merely a neutral package or simply the rational solution to the technical problem of conveying stories. The format has a rhetorical dimension, and what the format reveals (and by implication, conceals) about the social identity of news is of great significance for the viewer's relationship to it.

Power Displays and Reassurance

The CBS Evening News is preceded by a pure tone, which sounds just before the onset of the program. This signal, embedded in the welter of sound which precedes and follows it, constitutes a momentary stillness. In this context, the tone both purifies and demarcates; its clear ring stands in contrast to the auditory experience which came before it, and suggests a break or rupture with that experience. To hear this tone is to be "readied" for that which is about to begin.

The actual start of the program is in the form of an unseen voice,

who announces, "This is the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite." The voice is quite devoid of character, in contrast to, say, Cronkite's. It is a merely functional voice which by itself is not engaging; it is "pure voice", comparable to the pure tone.

But since the speaker is not visible and the voice is disembodied, the phenomenon marks the possibility of the distinction between seen and unseen. The voice's body exists, no doubt, but not in the sight of the viewer-citizen. This bifurcation between appearance and an unknown "beyond," not accessible to the viewer-citizen, never itself becomes a topic within the news program. Yet, as we shall see, the split pervades the entire program and therefore must be seen as a central element of the news/viewer-citizen relationship. What the viewer-citizen sees is not necessarily all there is; "news" makes decisions about what to reveal without making reference to the possibility of choice or the criteria involved.

While the voice is speaking, we also hear the chug-a-chug of wire services and the click-clack of typewriters. We see a TV studio, and people engaged with papers and electronic equipment. The viewer-citizen is witness to considerable display of productive resources and technical expertise. The urgency of the sounds of the machines stand in stark contrast to the stillness of the pure tone which was just heard. This is work being done here and it is apparently being done with considerable energy, as witnessed by the busy people and driving machinery. It is not a setting which invites an outsider to interrupt the activity. The in-

volvement is one of high intensity for the viewer-citizens; the product of these labors is about to be presented.

As this is happening, the screen fills with a schematic, angular representation of the globe--a line figure--which is superimposed over the studio scene. The implication of "global" is clear, but it may further be read as suggesting that the production here is global in scope, or that the "world" itself is a product of such work. The linear cross-hatchings on the rigid globe, evoking longitude and latitude, show that this is a world of technological precision, not one of artistic expression or poetic understanding.

But again, this points to the unseen beyond. What are the limits, boundaries of this "world" which is the news' terrain? How far can it expand? The news never reveals what in the world it does not or cannot bring the viewer-citizen. The news gives no clues about that which it chooses to exclude from the viewer-citizen, nor does it suggest what are the frontiers of its actual power. The viewer-citizen sees the tip of the iceberg. The news knows something about what dwells in the beyond, but this it does not share with the viewer-citizen.

In short, this is an awesome display of power. It is awesome precisely because its limits are not revealed. This is not formal political power, but rather the power of industry, which has command over technical production and specialized labor. The arena of this power is the world; there appears to be no restrictions on the domain of this power or the resources it can mobilize.

And who is the "self" that makes this revelation? One could say "CBS", but this does not illuminate the social origins of news to any great extent. "CBS" is merely a label, and only has meaning in relationship to "ABC" and "NBC"--three intramural competitors who vie for audience shares. The power displayed emanates from a form of life, not a label. What is revealed here is that form of life: industry and capital. No concrete Subject is displayed.

During the very few seconds which have elapsed since the start of the program, the camera has shifted from a long-angled view of the studio to a head-on shot which features the image of Walter Cronkite. He is moved to the center of the screen as the super-imposed globe zooms away and vanishes into the CBS logo, leaving us fixed on Cronkite's face. He then greets us with a "good evening" and begins to read the first news story.

There is now an immediate association between the news and a person who "brings" it to us. In the format of the program, every news story is either read or introduced by the anchorman; there is always a returning to this persona, a recurring "touching base" with this prime narrator. The reporters to whom the anchorman "turns us over" do not command equal stature within the organization which is displayed; moreover, viewer involvement with them is of a different sort than with the anchorman. This is apparent just from the sequencing of anchorman-reporter in the format.

The anchorman will read the shorter news stories in their entirety; for longer ones, he reads an introduction and then turns us over to the reporter who appears on video, and who in turn may introduce a visual accompaniment. The anchorman's introduction will vary in length, but it is always a structurally complete statement, giving a thematic overview. It is not, say, a fragment of a narration which is then picked up and completed by the reporter. Rather the anchorman makes a synoptic presentation, and then turns us over to the reporter, with such transitions as "...and Roger Mudd has the details," ". . .more on that from Morton Dean," ". . . Ed Rabel reports," and ". . .Nelson Benton has more on the story." The reporter then develops and elaborates upon the theme set by the anchorman, and then ends the story, giving his/her name and location. S/he never returns us to the anchorman who will give still more details. We only return to the anchorman for the start of the next story.

This division of labor is significant for the position in which it places the anchorman. The reporter becomes his researcher or reference librarian, a supplementary adjunct to his knowing, indicating the anchorman's superior epistemological status. In this technical substructure, for the anchorman to round out a reporter's story with still "more details" would be a violation of his status (and would alter our involvement with him). The anchorman resides in a position of accumulation; he commands the fruits of others' labors and transfers these fruits to the viewer, but embodied in his persona. The reporters' news becomes the anchorman's

news. Our involvement with the reporters is akin to interaction with a competent research librarian, and is suppressed in favor of involvement with the ceremonious Prime Subject, who appears as the head of the hierarchical organization.

The movement from the opening of the show to the anchorman-reporter sequencing constitutes a shift in the focus of viewer-citizen attention. The first few seconds displayed the power and impersonality of an organization engaged in work. The disembodied, characterless voice, the machinery, and the aura of technical expertise have now given way to an emphasis on a single person, who, by his voice and appearance, shows himself to be somebody in particular. The specific traits conveyed--age, wisdom, urbanity--exceed mere professional proficiency. These traits reveal a human subject clearly distinguished from impersonal functions in a production process.

If the standard platitudes of "objective news" were valid and the viewer were not indeed involved with the subjectivity of a predominant newscaster or anchorman, it seems that it should be quite feasible to have a different newsperson read each story. Such a format would begin to approximate "impersonal" news, or, in Epstein's¹ formulation, "news from nowhere"--a narration without a subject who narrates.

Such a format would command a very different viewer involvement. If each story were presented by a different newsperson, all of equal stature within the organization, the focus on a Prime Subject would be dispersed.

Such a shift would bespeak a pluralism of subjectivity; with this "marketplace" of Subjects, "truth" would have to be understood as residing in a collective subjectivity. Such a "democratization", stripping the news of a unifying subjectivity, would begin to force the viewer to locate the "meaning" of the news on his/her own. The "work" of "making sense" of the news would become transferred to the viewer.

In a sense, a format of "impersonal news" would be more in keeping with the initial impression of the news "organization" conveyed in the first few seconds. But as suggested, this impression also carries with it an aura of vast power. With only a few minor changes in format, this display could have become rather intimidating. For example, a technical display like the one at the opening of the show could have been carried over, with variations, to become the lead-in for each story. Thus, after the anchorman has made the transitional". . .and Roger Mudd has the details," some version of the introductory angular globe could reappear and zoom in to the particular locality of the reporter, accompanied by the appropriate audio. Such a feature would bespeak of reiteration of the power at news' disposal.

Instead, the shift away from the technological display, coming to rest with the presence of the anchorman, conveys an aura of reassurance. This signal of reassurance rests only in part on the anchorman's specific traits. The basic element of security lies in the fact that he is a person, in contrast to the machinery and functional impersonality which has

just receded into the background. Being a person implies that he has boundaries that the viewer can know, as opposed, for example, to the ethereal voice which announced the start of the program. If the sequence was reversed--if the anchorman appeared first, saying that this was CBS News, and then vanished, leaving us with an impersonal string of newscasters and/or unseen voices--this would constitute a rhetoric of abandonment. The suggestion would be that we viewers were now being left to the emotionally-devoid organization.

The telling of a story, then, requires a storyteller, and it is not insignificant who that storyteller is. Every story is somebody's story; the issue is the revelation/concealment of the subjectivity involved. On the TV news program, the movement from "an organization" to "a person" (anchorman) reveals this understanding, but of course without admitting to it. Our concept of news as we tacitly define it from our experience with news shows is in striking contrast to the formal definitions we may vocalize and the criteria we are prone to apply. The dependence on a central subjectivity--the "Prime Knower"--which the program structures and on which the viewer-citizen depends, indicate that any news is always somebody's news, personal news.

If viewer-citizen involvement comes to rest with the anchorman, the Prime Knower, what is displayed of this figure and what is the significance of his presence for viewer-citizen involvement with the news?

The anchorman appears as wise and urbane. Yet if the question were

asked (which it never is in the news), "What is required to be able to ascertain and report the events of the day?" it is obvious that merely being wise and urbane is insufficient. This Prime Knower is able to deploy the professional and technological resources of a vast global enterprise. He and they--the reporter and technical professionals--are very clearly in possession of exceptional competence. They can "cover the world" and are situated in the proximity of the display of technological power in a manner which markedly differentiates them from most other people. Also, they are in the social proximity of those who are defined as having political power. If this is what is required to learn about and report the day's events, then who among the viewer-citizens could handle the task?

While "news" requires a subjective origin and we are invited to trust the Subject, the rhetoric of the format is not merely one of a gracious invitation. It also conveys a sense of self-conscious power. Implicitly the viewer-citizen is told there is no alternative but to assume a position of dependence in relationship to this subject. The anchorman invites, while the organization admonishes. "News" is a subject, speaking to the viewer-citizen and it is also a part of enterprise, of capital. "News" is a product which emerges from a powerful organization characterized by technical expertise and the division of labor.

Network news is not simply a "report of the day's events;" the format is not just a rational solution to the task of dispensing information. The format reveals a world of social relations: global industrial power, the

command of technology and labor, a division between producers and consumers of "news", and perhaps most important, the prevalence of a unifying Subject. These features are all taken for granted aspects of the "world of TV news," yet they also define that world. Moreover, the viewer-citizen is a part of that world. That is, to be a viewer-citizen is, at least in part, to be absorbed by this display which situates the person in front of the screen in a relation of dependence.

The Anchorman as Safety Valve.

In the previous section, we contrasted viewer involvement with the anchorman with possible viewer involvement with the impersonal organization and with the reporters--the anchorman's subordinates. Here we will demonstrate that his presence is of enormous importance even with the news stories: the commanding subjectivity of the anchorman serves as a regulatory "safety valve" for viewer involvement with the actual content of the news stories themselves. The anchorman buffers viewer confrontation with news stories by absorbing involvement to himself. Let us see how this is done and what this means for our understanding of "viewer-citizen".

News stories, that is, the actual narrations, have a social history, including the processes by which they were learned and transformed into stories. Obviously, most of these accounts are part of a social world beyond the viewer's own realm of experience; i.e., the events and the public domain of discourse are not part of most people's face-to-face encounters. If the event is the Object of the narration (and of the narration/news-

caster's knowledge) the newscaster is the Subject who "knows" this knowledge. For the viewer, however, the Object of knowledge is the news narrator's subjectivity of the event, not the event itself, since narration separates from the full here and now of the lived experience of the event. To say this is merely to reiterate an obvious point: to be a viewer-citizen is to be mediated to the social world through the subjectivity of another. Yet this is only the first part of what is in essence a double separation for the viewer-citizen.

If a friend narrates an event to us, he, like the news narrator, mediates us to the event; we know of the event only through the friend's narration. But in talking with a friend, there are two important differences: first, as he narrates, we can stop, ask for clarification, and even inquire about the process by which the friend came to know the event. This is made possible by the two-way communication situation and also to some extent by our shared understanding of being friends. We can link the encounter with the narrative account with a subjective and evolving understanding of our friend. In other words, our own subjectivity is mobilized.

This relates to the second difference. As the friend speaks in the here and now (in response to our inquiries or in any situation) he reveals his own subjectivity, which is to say, we get to know him--how he thinks, feels, etc. We learn that our friend's subjectivity, like our own, has a history; it evolves in concrete experiences. Thus, our involve-

ment with a friend's narration is always conditioned by our own experience with that friend as a Subject, and by our experience of a shared history with that friend. We can grasp some sense of our friend's coming-to-knowledge of the event he is narrating because we know the person as a Subject.

By contrast, a narration by a stranger tends to minimize that possibility. We can only reside within the account, until the "strangeness" begins to pass and we know more about "what to make of" the narration and even at what points it might be appropriate to ask for clarification. News narration is like an account by an eternal stranger because while we tend to dwell within the narrator's subjectivity of the event, we never get to know the narrator's subjective experience of coming-to-knowledge of the event. The viewer is only familiar with the narrator. That is, the narrator is recognizable as somebody who knows. However, the narrator does not mobilize viewer-citizen involvement to reflect on his subjectivity. The news narration only refers to events (or at best to previous news narration): it does not refer to the history of its own learning. The news demonstrates knowledge, but not how learning takes place. Therefore, it never shows the viewer how s/he can learn from the subjectivity of news. The news never teaches the viewer-citizen the possibility of being a self-reflecting Subject within the relationship.

For the viewer, then, there is a double separation: from the event (and its history) and from the process by which the event is learned--

how it becomes the news narrator's knowledge. Involvement is with the narrator, but the news discourse does not convey the means by which this involvement vis a vis the Prime Subject could be in the reflective mode. The relationship is a static one, which does not hold out the suggestion that the viewer-citizen's role could evolve to something else.

This double separation of the viewer from the event and from the learning of the events, however, does not eliminate all potential sources of tension. News carries within its very structure a latent contradiction which is variously negotiated depending on context. On the one hand, the intervention of the unifying Subject means that he can "protect" the viewer from having to make sense of and/or confront these events. Yet it also means that there is an ever-present possibility that the news will appear to the viewer as just a reflection of the narrator's own experience or knowledge. That is, the news might be perceived as irrelevant to the viewer, since it "merely" reveals the anchorman's knowledge and excludes the viewer-citizen. This is the "so--what's it to me?" reponse which newsmen dread, if for no other reason than the commercial imperative of maximizing the size of the audience. The origin of this tension lies in the presentation of the social world as an object removed from the viewer's subjectivity and praxis. Let us examine this tension more closely.

The presentation of a news story without the anchorman's lead-in and without a reporter's narration--that is, an audio-visual record of the event directly to the viewer-citizen without the mediation of the

news, would rupture the existing news/viewer-citizen relationship. The oft-quoted old adage, "seeing is believing" may be true to a point, but this hypothetical version would raise the question of what to believe, i.e., the question of meaning. It could be argued that meaning would be lost precisely because the narrative structure would be unclear; like lived experience, such a presentation would convey no sense of beginning or ending. Without the elements of "storyness", it is hard to "make sense" of such data. But still more significantly, such a presentation without narration would force the viewer to switch the focus of his/her subjectivity from the news people to an approximation of a here-and-now encounter with the event itself. The newscaster would be by-passed; the margin of separation which narrative inserts between the fullness of here-and-now would shrink, and the viewer would be confronted with his/her own experience, rather than the news narrator's buffering presence.

While such an extreme instance is not likely, the experienced TV news consumer may recall occasionally seeing a "live" report which might approximate this. Sometimes, the coverage of such an event would have the camera focused on the action, and, unlike taped sequences where the narrator knows what is going to happen and how to make sense of it, the news person may be hesitant. The camera continues to pick up the action, the newsperson is disquietingly silent, as s/he is trying to formulate a description/explanation. The uncomfortable aura of that experience for the viewer stems from the shift involved as the viewer momentarily is

placed in the position of being the subject (knower) of the event. All of a sudden, the viewer is momentarily confronted with the responsibility of encountering the event, rather than the newsperson's subjectivity of the event. Encountering the event would demand the mobilization of the viewer's own subjectivity.

"Touching base" with the anchorman, then, may help to discharge any tension which may have built up even in the course of a news narration. Yet while the viewer is buffered from the world by the intervening newscaster, there is a danger at the other extreme. If insufficient presence of newscaster subjectivity is anxiety-producing, too much newscaster subjectivity (from the perspective of the viewer) could raise the question of relevancy of the news to the viewer.

The Impractical Inventory

The structure of the TV news program in its entirety consists of a sequence of news stories, most of which are short; this sequence is interrupted a number of times in the 30-minute time span by commercials and station announcements. The structure is one of "clutter", and has been characterized by critics as an expression of "fragmentation."² Within this fragmentation, each news story itself is thus "decontextualized"³. Our aim in this section is to explore this theme of the relationship between news stories and try to reveal what this means for the consciousness of the viewer-citizen.

Closer scrutiny of the data reveals there are in fact a number of different recognizable elements to the program. Within news stories, there are two basic categories, which we can call "items" and "epics". Items are the short news bulletins read entirely by the anchorman. They have no visual accompaniment, except the anchorman. Each program usually has about 10 items (the range was from 8 to 13) and their duration is usually between 10 and 30 seconds, though a very small number did begin to approach the length of a short epic--i.e., the anchorman read a story, without visual accompaniment, which lasted over a minute.

News epics are structurally different. They are introduced by the anchorman, who in turn makes a transition and a reporter appears. The reporter, moreover, may then serve as an introducer of a short video presentation, which may or may not have the reporter's voice over. Then the reporter reappears and gives a final short statement, ending with his name and location. On the 12 programs, the number of epics ranged from 3 to 9, averaging 7 per show. There were about 3 exceptions to this format in the 12 randomly selected programs: the anchorman would do a lead-in which went directly to a video, bypassing any reporter. These "short" epics were virtually of item length.

Further, there may be one news "commentary" (on 8 of the 12 programs). Also, in keeping with the American Bicentennial, 2 out of the 12 shows had a special "human interest--historical piece." These always appeared near the end of the program.

The sequencing of the news stories, after the start of the program is interrupted four times by commercials and announcements before the end of the final story; there is an additional grouping of commercials and announcements before the unseen voice is heard to say, "This has been the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite." Thus, there are a total of five sets of such non-news discourse between the introduction and the closing. And each such interruption contains from two to four distinct commercials or announcements.

The structure is indeed "fragmented"--there may be over 30 discrete units of discourse in the 30-minute time span, recalling that the epics, while each a complete unit, contribute greatly to the aura of fragmentation by the movement they contain in their internal structure. From the standpoint of the viewer-citizen, involvement becomes habituated to the dispersal and constant rupturing and refocusing of attentional energy. This mitigates against the development of some "overview"--i.e., the relationship of each story to some larger whole is blurred. This format also tends to preclude the emergence of relationships between stories. Blockage of the "total picture" of any situation has traditionally been a means by which control and domination are maintained, e.g., the generation of worker ignorance of the entire production process via the fragmentation of tasks has historically been a useful tactic for capital to maintain its control over labor power.⁴ But let us examine what this fragmentation accomplishes in terms of TV news discourse and how it is accom-

plished.

For most people, all forms of social knowledge--knowledge shared among some collectivity--provides a practical interest in the world; it is used for some activity. Social knowledge constitutes an active relationship to the social (and physical) environment. Further, all social knowledge is predicated upon some existant rules for its acquisition. These rules also may provide criteria for judging the legitimacy of claims to social knowledge: if the rules are perceived to have been violated--if the method is deemed spurious--the claim to legitimate knowledge might be challenged. Moreover, the rules themselves, like social knowledge itself, are largely tacit (taken for granted) and only become visible, that is, become a topic of discourse, when violated.⁵ An important feature regarding the rules for acquiring social knowledge is that they are by necessity incomplete (this also means they are obviously in historical flux, since they are therefore amenable to change). All rules about the acquisition and legitimacy of social knowledge have a "surrounding fringe" ("outer horizon") which must be filled in by particular actors in keeping with the practical interests at hand. Thus, rules require work (activity) in their application. Without this dialectic of "completing" the rules--this active involvement, they would have no meaning. This reciprocal and dynamic dimension to rules is an expression of the interaction between consciousness and activity. The work of completing the rules, of "ad-libbing" in the application of existant rules for social knowledge is a

manifestation of the negotiation of norms in reflective speech.

In attending to TV news, the involvement of the viewer-citizen can be analyzed from the standpoint of doing the "completion" of the tacit rules of social knowledge which the discourse manifests. This is merely another way of expressing that the viewer-citizen "makes sense" of the news and thereby is a member of this community of discourse. In the context of the apparent fragmentation we referred to above, what does this actually mean for the consciousness of the viewer-citizen?

Let us consider the following sequence of discourse from a news program, selected at random. It appears somewhere in the middle of the show, i.e., this sequence does not begin or end the program:

CRONKITE: On a stormy night on Lake Superior last November the ore-carrier Edmund Fitzgerald and her crew of twenty-nine vanished. Coast Guard searches were in vain. But the Coast Guard returned today to the area where it believed the ship went down and lowered an unmanned submarine equipped with television cameras. From a depth of five hundred and thirty feet, the pictures confirmed the Fitzgerald's fate: The ship split in two and rests on the bottom of the lake, her stern upside down. Now the Coast Guard hopes the pictures will help solve the mystery of the Fitzgerald's sinking.

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

CRONKITE: An administration spokesman asked Congress today to lift the newly imposed court ban on a method of tuna fishing that kills thousands of porpoises annually. Gary Widman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality said the ban could lead American tuna fishermen to register under foreign flags and, thus, in the future ignore more moderate regulations aimed at saving the porpoises.

The Florida Game Commission voted today to allow commercial trapping of alligators in areas--quote--"where there are serious conflicts between alligators and people." Commission director E.O. Frye said

there's been an explosive growth in the alligator population in many urban areas, and he said they're eating dogs and cats and there's been a growing number of attacks on people. Trapping can't begin, though, until the federal government declares the Florida 'gators not an endangered species. (May 21, 1976)

In this sequence, the anchorman reads a news item, there is an interruption in news discourse for commercials, the anchorman returns and reads two more news items. Each news item records an event; each event is a discrete topic of discourse (identifiable by the rupture each new beginning posits with that which preceded it). Each commercial (they are not included here--the two are subsumed under the rubric of "ANNOUNCEMENTS") is also a topic, but does not record events. They try to persuade to action. Involvement here rests within each topic. This sequence as a whole constitutes an inventory of topics, but involvement is not directed to the sequence as a totality; involvement is with a sequence of particulars.

Our concern here is directed to the rules for social knowledge which are displayed by a sequence such as this, and to those that remain concealed. In the tension between this disclosure and concealment we find clues as to the nature of TV news discourse and its implications for the viewer-citizen.

If this sequence, like the TV news program in its entirety, is an inventory of events-as-topics, it suggests that a basic rule which this demonstrates might be that knowledge about the social world, or, rather, the social world itself, is to be dealt with as an inventory of events-as-

topics. Thus, one could postulate that social knowledge which violates this rule would be deemed spurious, or at least be perceived as problematic, if it appeared in the domain of news. For example, a summary statement which situated the events of the day in an historical context would probably be perceived as a violation of what "news" is supposed to be.

But the pragmatic dimension of acquiring this form of knowledge must rest in the capacity to distinguish events from their setting--i.e., the criteria which would separate "figure" from "ground". The practical interest in being able to come to this knowledge requires rules for this procedure. Moreover, the practical interest would minimally also demand rules for making sense of the events in relationship to each other (priorities) and in relationship to the setting from which they are distinguished.

Thus, returning to the news discourse segment, we can say that these three stories, like all news stories, empirically demonstrate their inclusion (by their presence), they have a length or duration and are located in a sequence. If the discourse revealed some clues for the rules which determine these three factors, the viewer-citizen might have the key to the pragmatics of acquiring and using the social knowledge of "news". This, however, turns out not to be the case.

If the viewer-citizen attempts to do indexing,⁶ that is, formulate the "etcetera's" to which the inclusion of the three items point, the list becomes enormous. To only begin, the rules may conceivably have some-

thing to do with the topics of: the Great Lakes, ore carriers, ships, water, fishing, tuna, ecology, submarines, the political economy of fishing, reptiles, uncontrolled nature, state commissions, trapping, the federal government. . .One cannot stick an "etc." on this list for the very reason that the indexing is so broad. In other words, the closure of categories is so very slight--perhaps "ecology problems (#2 and #3) and the failure of technology (#1) are import" is the best one can do. There seems to be no practical rule to be discerned which could speak to the procedures for including any of these events. Each topic is an instance of a virtually infinite variety; in this sequence, news as social knowledge is characterized by an incessant inventory which does not reveal the grounds for distinguishing the topic from the taken for granted setting.

What this suggests is that each event is presented in the context of some unknowable relationship to the social whole. Since the indexing made possible by this discourse is so grand in scope (it can go on and on) it obliterates the possibility that any practical rule-making can emerge for the viewer-citizen. The deployment of such discourse mitigates against the "ad-libbing"/"completion" which provides the semantic space necessary for the viewer-citizen to make his/her own interpretation (rule completion). Without this element, the reflexivity of consciousness is inhibited.

If the rules of inclusion are obscured, the relative significance of the items amongst themselves could potentially be gleaned from their respective length and sequence. But here again we do not get very far,

except to note that these three stories are items as opposed to epics. Comparison of topics between the two categories of news stories did not reveal any particular differences. These three items are pretty much the same length. For all practical purposes, the topics appearing as items and epics in the programs as a whole do not display a discernable difference in their clustering of concerns, except that major political figures, e.g., the President and Congressmen, tended to appear more often in epics. Epics, however, permit the topic to be treated in a different way; epics lend themselves to dramatization much better, as we will discuss later.

In terms of the sequencing of these three stories, there is no particular rule-making visible here; the three items appear as randomly ordered elements of an inventory. The total lack of transition between the stories--i.e., the lack of reference to the previous (or any previous) story as well as a future one again give no hint as to rules for weighing their importance for practical concerns.

This is not to say that there never appears any thematic continuity among news stories. Yet, the question remains, what is the practical dimension of this social knowledge? Even if thematic links reveal and reaffirm, say, that for news-as-social knowledge, the actions of high officials are important, what is the practical import? Passive recognition cannot lead to active self-reflection if no sense of the practical application of such knowledge (i.e., rules) is conveyed.

Let us consider the openings of the epics and items of an entire TV

news broadcast, in the sequence in which they appeared:

ANNOUNCER: This is the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite.

1. CRONKITE: Good evening. Two more encouraging reports on the economy today. . .(introduction to an epic)
2. CRONKITE: On Wall Street, the good news on the economy. . .apparently was outweighed by another hike in the prime interest rate. . .(item)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3. CRONKITE: President Ford has made the improving economic conditions a keystone in his election campaign. . .(epic)
4. CRONKITE: The President also commented today on the sex scandal involving Dem. Congressman Wayne Hayes. . .(epic)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

5. CRONKITE: As the primaries are coming to a close, Hubert Humphrey, shadow candidate of Campaign '76. . .(epic)
6. CRONKITE: The possibility of a Humphrey challenge is just one more rivalry for Carter, who's contesting Jerry Brown in California. . .(epic)
7. CRONKITE: In Sacramento, Jerry Brown had this to say about the Democratic convention turning from what he called a faltering Carter candidacy. . .(item/very short epic)
8. CRONKITE: The Humphrey drive is most obvious in New Jersey. . .(epic)
9. CRONKITE: The California Highway Patrol said today a fault in the brake system was the probable cause of that bus crash two weeks ago. . .(item)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

10. CRONKITE: Secretary of State Kissinger will meet later this month with South African Prime Minister John Vorster. . .(item)
11. CRONKITE: Syrian regular army troops inside Lebanon have broken leftist sieges. . .(epic)

12. CRONKITE: In a Mexico City suburb today, the police. . .(item)
13. CRONKITE: An Air Manila plane chartered by an American construction company crashed. . .(item)
14. CRONKITE: That Soviet jetliner missing with 46 persons. . .(item)
15. CRONKITE: France says it has decided with Britain, not to build any more Concorde supersonic planes. . .(item)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

16. CRONKITE: Spokesmen for former President Nixon today called those 22 alleged love letters Mr. Nixon reportedly wrote to a beautiful married European woman a hoax. . .(item)
17. CRONKITE: Three members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars post from Fraser, Michigan, met in Paris today with officials of the North Vietnamese embassy. . .(item)
18. CRONKITE: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission explained today why it called a security alert last weekend. . .(item)
19. CRONKITE: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold a closed door hearing Tuesday on the continuing problem of Soviet microwave radiation beamed at the U.S. embassy in Moscow . . .(epic)

CRONKITE: And that's the way it is, Friday, June 4th, 1976.
This is Walter Cronkite, CBS News. Good night.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNOUNCER: This has been the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite.

Taken as a whole, this sequence of stories provides an inventory which could go on and on--there is no sense of sufficiency suggested; that is, there is no clue as to how many such stories would be required for any practical purposes. The inventory could go on and on and only the time limit seemingly intervenes to cut short the flow of stories. Con-

ceivably, if the news program were extended to an hour, the effect of the discourse would be unaltered, assuming the format would remain the same: the world is only knowable as an infinite inventory. Since this social knowledge never approaches completion from the standpoint of utilizing it in social situations, it points to no particular domain of practice.

In terms of the relationship between stories, there are thematic links and a progression, or movement from the beginning--however, there is no real "end", except perhaps that there is a "return" to a topic which could be indexed as "activities of the federal government--officials or bureaucracies," which seems to link the initial stories.

More specifically, "the economy" is the thematic topic in the first three stories. "President Ford" in #3 and #4, and Hubert Humphrey in #5, 6, 7, and 8. After this range is widened, we find a few linking themes later, such as "airplanes" (#13, 14, 15), "foreign" (#10-15) and "federal bureaucracy" (#18, 19). This progression suggests a clustering of themes at the start, which then move in a myriad of directions. The clustering at the beginning of topics about governmental activities suggests their superior importance over those which come later. But given that "the economy", "The President", "Hubert Humphrey," "airplanes", "bus crash", "Nixon's alleged love letters", "The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's security alert," "Secretary of State Kissinger," "the VFW" and so on could all be the core of topics which are imbedded in events represses the possibilities for grasping the rules of inclusion.

In short, this discourse describes a world by presenting social knowledge in such a way that no efficacy is implied for the viewer-citizen. These topics point to events, and hence to a world, in which the viewer-citizen as a Subject is irrelevant; s/he does not participate in creating this world, and the knowledge about this world provides no handle for any practical purposes in that world.

We might also mention another feature of the sequence. The density of the comparatively narrow theme-indexing of the first eight stories in which some aspect of federal officialdom is the topic is dispersed by what begins to approach "infinite indexing" in the next nine stories. Also, six of the first eight were epics; in #9-17, only one is an epic while all the others are items. In other words, the rapidity of sequencing topics is thus increased in the course of the program, which suggests a progression of diminishing involvement intensity.

Until now, we have not mentioned the commercials and other interruptions, which are transcribed as "Announcements". While TV commercials warrant (and have received) separate studies, it is worth just mentioning here the juxtaposition of the news discourse and advertising discourse. Ads in the course of the news program can be classified into two distinct groups: those which essentially present the merits of a particular corporation as the topic, and those in which there are at least some degree of advocacy for the consumption of a product of a service. This latter group, by far the majority, is usually grouped in two's or three's

at each interruption designated as "Announcements". The juxtaposition with news is illuminating. This advertising discourse, regardless of any other considerations (e.g., normative ones) offers some social knowledge which can be readily utilized in concrete instances: namely, consumption. This discourse, in contrast to the news discourse, offers practical inferences. In this way, ads can be seen as "breaks" or "rests", from the news. Advertising provides a practical "antidote" to the viewer-citizen's irrelevance to the world of news.

While the anchorman conveys a greeting at the start of the program, and a farewell at the end, he does not make reference to his absence during the commercials. He might say that an advertisement is coming up, nor after he returns upon the completion of the commercial sequence, does he comment upon the interruption. He makes no mention of what took place in that domain. He ignores this experience which the viewer-citizen has just undergone. This suggests that such practical discourse is "not his department." The viewer-citizen is habituated to not expect such talk from the anchorman; he remains aloof from the viewer-citizen's domain of efficacy.

The format of the impractical inventory of news means that the viewer-citizen is intermittently in the process of starting to focus attentional energy. The event-orientation, the emphasis on discrete occurrences structures an incessant sequence of beginnings in the half-hour program. For each such beginning, the knowledge gleaned from any preceding news

story is largely irrelevant. This suggests, as we have indicated above, that TV news essentially does not refer to the viewer-citizen's previous experience with expenditures of attentional energy on TV news. With no reference to the viewer-citizen's own lived history as a social member, we see that self-reflection is blocked and the viewer-citizen is rendered irrelevant to the world of events on TV news. However, the sequence of beginnings also means that membership in the community of viewer-citizens is quite accessible.

The beginning of each news story highlights the event from the other events (and non-events). The event may be some deviation from "the normal", or, more commonly, may depict some instance of that normalcy, i.e., what some writers have called "routine news".⁷ But each beginning is virtually universally accessible. There are no pre-requisites; no prior special knowledge is needed. The viewer-citizen is addressed as a member of this community of discourse. A member does not need to learn anything in order to carry out the functions of membership. There are no introductions or initiations for new members in TV news discourse. Membership in this community can begin with any news program and any news story.

But what are the functions of membership in this community: We have seen that there are no demands placed for practical knowledge, except to attend to news stories. All that is required of the viewer-citizen is to linguistically follow the news stories. The only practical instance of viewer-citizen activity lies, again, in the ability to follow the discourse.

This constitutes membership. Following the news stories, not being excluded at each new beginning, is largely facilitated by the event orientation: decontextualization permits each story to stand on its own. No larger framework of knowledge is involved. Thus, each story, as an event devoid of a larger context, recapitulates the viewer-citizen into a position of zero-knowledge. The viewer-citizen remains with TV news, and returns to it, with the same consciousness with which s/he attended the last time. The discourse disinvites reflection. Membership in the community of viewer-citizens teaches dependence--the need to be taught by an external agent.

NOTES

1. Edward Jay Epstein, News From Nowhere (New York: Vintage, 1973).
2. Herbert Schiller, The Mind Managers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) pp. 24-27.
3. Alvin W. Gouldner, The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 105-106. An illuminating case study which demonstrates the significance of fragmentation and decontextualization is found in David Morley, "Industrial Conflict and the Mass Media," Sociological Review, May, 1976.
4. Harry Braverman demonstrates this clearly in his Labor and Monopoly Capital (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).
5. This discussion is developed in George Fischer and Helen Margaret McClure, "The Problem of Ideology" (New York: City University of New York--Graduate Center, unpublished mimeo, 1975).
6. The concept of indexing, as a practical activity, derives from Harold Garfinkle, Studies in Ethnomethodology (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967).
7. See Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as Purposeful Behavior," American Sociological Review, February, 1974.

CHAPTER FOUR

TV NEWS DISCOURSE II:

THE WORLD AS A TECHNICAL PROBLEM

In this chapter, we describe the fundamental dynamic of the world created by TV news discourse and analyze its essential features. Basically, TV news depicts a mythic interplay between Nature (which encompasses the economy), officials and the technology they have at their disposal (though technology is at times associated with private enterprise), and the public. This interplay excludes the viewer-citizen as an actor, and places him/her in a position of uncritical dependence on the technical expertise of officialdom. The authority of expertise, however, is not without its own problems.

The Challenge of Nature.

In order to survive, any society must solve the fundamental questions of its material existence and well-being--food, clothing, shelter, health, and so on. Society, in other words, must come to terms with its natural environment. The manner in which this is done--the historical forms of social organization for such tasks and the technology the society has at its disposal--will define to a great extent the social relations

and culture which prevail in that society. How does TV news present man's relationship with Nature and what meaning does it convey?

In its simplest manifestations, Nature appears routinely as an extra-societal force which "acts up" on occasion and causes problems for society, as in this item:

Minot, North Dakota, got a half inch of rain today, and that hampered efforts to build up the eroding dikes along the raging Souris River. The river's now expected to crest on Sunday. (April 4, 1976)

This item merely records an instance of the timeless struggle between man and nature. Its social implications are quite minimal: in such situations, all there is to be done is "wait it out", until Nature returns to its normal, peaceful condition. The item is a reminder of Nature's potential fury.

In terms of involvement, the item is quite flat; the intensity of attentional energy elicited is low. However, consider the following epic:

CRONKITE: A storm in the Gulf of Mexico last night sank an oil rig, and thirty-five men scrambled for their lives. They climbed into two big enclosed fiberglass capsules that were the rig's lifesaving equipment, but thirteen men died when one of the capsules became flooded. Tony Sargent reports.

TONY SARGENT: Today the aircraft carrier Lexington searched for bodies and survivors where last night sixty-mile-an-hour winds churning heavy seas sank the men's drill rig.

They entered survival capsules designed to float free of the sinking rig, but one capsule flipped over. Some of the men in the flooded capsule swam to safety, but the thirteen victims were trapped inside. All men in a second capsule survived. A total of twenty-two made it.

HENRY SELDON: We had three tugs on us. One built the line; the other tug

lost an engine; and we only had one good tug on us. And we couldn't--That couldn't get close to us.

QUESTION: What time should you have gotten off that rig?

SELDON: Yesterday morning. Yesterday anytime we should have been off it. [Indistinct] And yesterday--And the--And the barge-master--Last night, as late as eight o'clock at night, when the pipes burst loose on the deck below us, the barge captain says, "Send a couple of men down there and see if they can't straighten the pipes up."

SARGENT: The bodies of the thirteen victims were moved by helicopter from the aircraft carrier that retrieved their capsule to the naval air station in Corpus Christi.

Some of the body bags were bloodied from the violence of last night's storm.

The Coast Guard investigation is underway.

--Tony Sargent, CBS News, Corpus Christi, Texas.
(April 16, 1976)

This epic is rich in detail and dramatic excitement, a classic "man against nature" story. While there is suggestion of human error--the reference to misjudgment as to when the rig should have been evacuated--the dramatic power lies in the awesome power of Nature which is displayed. The next-to-last line, "Some of the body bags were bloodied from the violence of last night's storm" affirms the respect due Nature. The final line, "The Coast Guard investigation is underway," appears as a tag-ending, an afterthought. No mention had been made at all in the story prior to this line about an investigation. Yet it is the Coast Guard investigation, as opposed to a Coast Guard investigation. This use of the definitive

article suggests an "of courseness" to the fact that the Coast Guard will investigate. It reveals an understanding of proper procedure in such circumstances. This ending introduces the realm of officialdom, and leaves the viewer-citizen with the understanding that the situation is now in the hands of the appropriate authorities. The viewer-citizen, again, need do nothing but rest assured of this fact. This routine display of officialdom, however, does not detract from the aura of Nature's powers. It only indicates the means by which those powers are to be dealt with: The appropriate authorities.

That the conflict between man and nature is still with us is not news; nor is it any surprise to find that officialdom has specialized functions for dealing with situations which pertain to this conflict. Rather, a point of significance emerges on the question of which phenomena in the social world are attributable to the forces of Nature and which are the outcome of History--i.e., social relations and human decision-making. While we would not argue that this distinction is always clear in any given instance, it is certainly worth considering that some features of the social world are implicitly defined as being in the realm of human freedom and others are treated as facts of Nature. This question is highlighted by the following item:

Another kind of population increase--the growing number of poor in the world's cities--is the subject of a U.N. World Conference that opened today in Vancouver, British Columbia. U.N. urban experts predict that in the next 25 years, urban areas that already hold 700 million persons will have to absorb another 1.8 billion, most of them poor and unskilled. (May 31, 1976)

The question of the poor in the world's cities is presented here as a demographic one. The focus is on the quantitative distinction between the present numbers and those projected for the next 25 years (from 700 million to an additional 1.8 billion), and the qualitative aspect of the increase ("most of them poor and unskilled"). This movement takes the form of an impersonal and even extra-societal forces: "urban areas...will have to absorb. . ." Here we have Nature as understood through demographics. Still more impressive, is the association of this movement with the qualitative description; that the majority will be poor and unskilled seems to be also a fact of Nature--an unalterable reality to which the social world must adjust.

Such a depiction of urban decay and poverty, of course, ignores the fact that these phenomena are largely the consequences of social arrangements and forces. To say this is not to imply the existence of any easy solutions. We are only suggesting that to reify a phenomenon--to attribute to Nature that which is the product of History (society)--alters the sense of potential efficacy with which one attends the phenomenon. That which appears or is treated as a manifestation of Nature will simply be perceived to be less amenable to alteration via social activity. Neglecting or concealing the social origins of any situation tends to abstract it from the realm of a possibly different social future. It is less likely to become a topic of critical reflection.

Further, the item situates the phenomenon in the hands of experts.

That "the growing number of poor in the world's cities" is the subject of a U.N. conference and urban experts is true, but it is also the daily subject of the urban poor themselves. This is reasonably ignored precisely because urban poverty is presented as a fact of Nature. To understand Nature --to measure it, control it, and mediate society with it, requires the expertise of specialists. Only those with the appropriate scientific and technical knowledge are capable of dealing with such tasks. Thus, the item succeeds in placing the question of urban poverty in the sphere of Nature. This makes it a topic for specialists, not for the urban poor or the viewer-citizen in general. And finally, the relationship which emerges for the viewer-citizen concerning this topic can only take one form: dependence on the expertise of specialists.

The treatment of social phenomena as the movement of Nature, and the depiction of scientific measurement and/or technological manipulation as the appropriate response, is quite typical of TV news discourse:

The FBI said today that serious crime was up 4% in the first three months of the year, but compared with the same period last year crimes of violence were down 7%. The biggest decrease in the violent category was murder, down 11%. (June 17, 1976).

This item abstracts "crime" as some aspect of the social world, and places it in the domain of Nature. Dealing with crime is thus an activity beyond the practical understanding of the viewer-citizen; the need for experts to intercede is evoked by this language. Crime appears as something which happens; it goes up or down. It is a motion, which

is divorced from human action and social settings. This barometric presentation precludes any invitation to socially situate crime. This separation from practical understanding means that "crime" is a social domain for which no viewer-citizen efficacy is implied--no suggestion is offered as to what this may mean in terms of his/her own activities. As this barometer goes down it is understood that "things are better;" as it goes up, the reading is a negative one. What follows from such a reading is only the understanding that there will, in all probability, be more readings like this one in the future.

A negative reading, in the short item format of this type would not be a very dramatic presentation. The abstractness of the statistical report and the terseness of the text make for low involvement. Likewise, the positive trend, which the final sentence depicts, does not lead to exhilaration. The minimal fear or relief conveyed in a story like this is balanced against the reference to the FBI--its presence suggests an aura of control. (If this was an epic which generated high involvement, more "FBI presence" might be required to offset fear.)

There are three essential accomplishments in this unobtrusive item. First, the item depicts the social phenomenon of "crime" as a quantitative feature of Nature which goes up and down, extracting it from its qualitative social origins. Secondly, it underscores the need to measure this phenomenon and, by implication, control it (low readings are good). Finally, it reminds the viewer-citizen that these phenomena are the domain

of the FBI. It is they who measure and control crime. Nothing further is required of the viewer-citizen, nor is anything further suggested. No efficacy is held out for the viewer-citizen.

This approach is very common. The following item further illustrates the pattern:

The government today released results of its first attempt to measure heroin use, and it said heroin addiction is now a national problem. It estimate four hundred thousand people use the drug every day. The survey made these conclusions: Heroin use among women is swiftly approaching the rate for me; whites are becoming addicted almost as frequently as blacks; and heroin trade has spread to medium-size cities across the nation, no longer confined to the large eastern cities. (March 16, 1976)

Again, there is the deployment of the scientific method to deal with social reality. Heroin use is a "social problem"; Social problems are measured and recorded--by officialdom. The language to describe what people are doing with heroin is instructive: Heroin use is "swiftly approaching. . . ;" it has "spread", and is "no longer confined." The use of heroin takes on the aspects of an external force, rather than a pattern of social activity. The movement of this Nature is measured and recorded. Not insignificantly, it is the government which does this. It is they who must bring it under control--that is, make the statistics go down. Heroin use is a problem for the government in this item, rather than for the people who are addicted and/or the victims of drug-related crime. This item, as well as the previous one, read as departmental reports at a business meeting. "Crime" and "heroin use" become bureaucratized categories, each

dealt with by the appropriate departmental spokesperson. Each item is divorced from the viewer-citizen's experience (except the possibility that the viewer-citizen might be or become a victim), and as a result, from any action on his/her part. The items both reinforce the stance of dependence on the respective "department" which deals with this external feature of the environment.

Thus, Nature emerges as the major force in the world; society must live within its vicissitudes. At times Nature is a primitive, raging beast, causing havoc. Other times it is merely a movement held accountable for certain facts of social life. That Nature is the prime movement in the world evokes a need for a shaman/expert to intercede on behalf of the populace. A hierarchy emerges; while all people are subject to Nature's fluctuations, there are some capable to some degree of intervention. These are the scientific and technical experts, firmly located within the social ranks of officialdom. Their capacity to measure, record, and to some degree, control Nature situates the rest of the populace, the public, in a relationship of dependence upon them.

The Nature of the Economy

The presentation of the economy on TV news essentially depicts instances of the movement of Nature. This treatment is most obvious in the stock report:

The Dow-Jones Industrial average pushed up nine-and-three-quarters points today. Volume on the New York Stock Exchange was twenty-

five million, six hundred thousand shares. The average price per share climbed twenty cents on the New York exchange, five cents on the American. (March 2, 1976)

This is technical talk; it describes a change and presents that change with attention to numerical precision. The change described is devoid of human intervention. Movement is attributed to impersonal nouns: "average" and "prices," which "pushed up" and "climbed." This narrative describes Nature, not History. The technical talk conveys the difficulty in knowing and controlling this Nature, and hence, once again, the need for specialists to mediate society's relationship to it. It is understood that social well-being is related to fluctuations of this Nature; in fact, one could say that social well-being is dealt with largely as a quantitative dimension in TV news. An item such as this reiterates viewer-citizen dependence upon those who are better able to unlock the secrets of this Nature and impose human will upon it.

This item is much like a weather report. It is devoid of features which would foster high involvement. It does not raise any problems, it solves no mysteries. Like the weather report, it describes a change and holds out the expectation that tomorrow there will be another report such as this. But unlike a weather report, there are no inferences here. A weather report might at least suggest how one should be dressed, whether one should alter one's plans for the weekend, if one need take an umbrella, and so on. The ups and downs described here offer no such practical handles to grasp. In a sense, the ups and downs here are within the range of

normal fluctuation--the lack of dramatic intensity signified that this item merely is a display of the normal social order. If all is well with the social order, there will be some movement on the stock market, nothing too extreme. That indeed is the case: Thus the item says, "Things are as they should be." Again, this means the viewer-citizen is to continue as usual, to wait for further reports.

Let us briefly examine another instance of this:

The recovery in homebuilding faltered last month after that exceptional surge in February. Housing starts were down eight percent from February's million-and-a-half annual rate, and the number of building permits issued during the month was essentially unchanged. (April 16, 1976)

While this item does not name the group or institution for whom this information is a demonstration of expertise, it again quantifies social well-being--(the assumption is that building houses is always good). That the recovery has faltered implies a negative development, but the item is over before any intense involvement can emerge. The change recorded is not a dramatic movement. Essentially the change is within acceptable limits, since nothing further is made of it. But more importantly, this item, as the others, posits a Nature external to human intervention, at least as far as the viewer-citizen is concerned. (Expertise could potentially have a role to play here.) The viewer-citizen can only observe it; the item does not offer understanding or action in this domain.

A significant feature of these two items is that the locus of concern which they express lies with the aggregate. The interest in summary

quantification, i.e., statistics, prevails over any interest in concrete people who, say, might not have been able to obtain a "building permit" or simply need decent housing. Thus, while the item seemingly describes a relevant aspect of the environment as it relates to "the public", there is no one member of the public for whom this item is a description of lived experience. The viewer-citizen, then, is cut off from identifying with or expressing the experience of this "public."

The "public", and the "economy", become elements of a spectacle which is external to lived experience. The following epic nicely illustrates this:

WALTER CRONKITE: Good evening.

Two more encouraging reports on the economy today: wholesale prices rose only three tenths of one percent last month, and that's less than half the rate of April; and unemployment dropped from seven-point-five percent to seven-point-three. More from Neil Strawser.

NEIL STRAWSER: A net of one-hundred-eighty-thousand persons came off the unemployment rolls last month--almost all adult women, finding jobs in service industries and government. Unemployment thus fell below seven million for the first time in a year and a half. And with three-hundred thousand new jobs added, total employment hit another record high.

If we regard unemployment as the hole in a doughnut, it has resumed shrinking after two months of no change. The eating part of the doughnut continues to grow--employment now up more than three-and-a-half million over the recession low. Unemployment hit its peak a year ago, when it reached eight-point-nine percent two months after employment had begun to recover. The two parts of the doughnut do not always shrink or grow at the same pace but the general course since a year ago May has been one of improvement; until now, the jobless rate stands at seven-point-three percent and total employment at eighty-seven-point-seven million.

The picture now is of an economy expanding moderately and, apparently, at a moderate inflation cost.

The three-tenths of a percent rise in wholesale prices in May somewhat calmed the alarm set off by the big eight-tenths jump in April. Last month, farm prices increased only a seventh as much, and the key industrial index rose very little. The overall May increase would translate into an annual inflation rate of a little over four percent.

Said Democratic Senator William Proxmire of the two reports: unadulterated good news.

--Neil Strawser, CBS News, Washington. (June 4, 1976)

As presented here, the economy is a reflection of Nature's movement; it is not a social or political economy. The interest which the epic reveals in recording and tabulating statistics, again treating economic phenomena in the aggregate, denies the possibility of concern with any particular instance. The economy is a Nature which has essentially been transformed into a spectacle. The record-keeping celebrates this spectacle; the viewer-citizen is invited to share in the knowledge of those who monitor and acclaim the spectacle, but not to reflect on his/her relationship to it as an active Subject.

The spectacle absorbs interest to itself but points nowhere; it reveals no praxis. It is a self-congratulatory tautology. Thus, the display of gross changes in prices demonstrates no interest in how well the "public" as living human beings can afford to buy what they need. Likewise, presentations of unemployment statistics abstracts the phenomenon

from lived experience of the public. Unemployment, idle labor power, is treated as a factor of the spectacle, on par with other such factors as price levels and inflation. This totally removes labor from its historical relationship with capital, as well as from its lived experience in the social world.

The interest in labor is expressed as the number of cases of unemployed and employed. As a case moves from the category of unemployed to employed, it ceases to be of interest. In other words, such features as the quality, purpose, meaning and equity of labor cannot be given expression in terms of the spectacle. They would violate the spectacle because such topics are potentially conducive to self-reflection.

It is interesting to note that this particular epic, which presents the economy-as-Nature-as-spectacle, contains a pedagogic thrust. The discussion of "the hole in the doughnut" exceeds pure narration--"story-ness"--it lies in the realm of theoretic discourse. This model is applicable to all future discussions on unemployment; it is not limited to just the particular events reported in this epic. And the model itself? While it can be readily stated that the doughnut metaphor is a pictorial device which is easily remembered, it explains nothing. The imagery of "eating part" and "hole" of the doughnut describes a movement in a graphic way, yet makes no attempt to account for this movement. In other words, this device may aid the viewer-citizen to comprehend the verbal information presented here (or in future reports), but it does not assist the

viewer-citizen to reflect on unemployment except as an instance of unexplained movement within the abstract category of "the economy". Moreover, if unemployment is the hole, the analogy structures a disposition for viewer-citizen acceptance of something less than full employment. A doughnut, by definition, must have a hole. Full employment would mean no hole, (as the "eating part" became universal) rendering the doughnut model obsolete.

While most stories on the economy reinforce its spectacle quality, some are a bit more explicit in conveying moral lessons to the viewer-citizen:

CRONKITE: Last month, prices of gasoline continued to drop, helping to erase those memories of the embargo and soaring prices at the pump. A major beneficiary of all this has been the auto industry, as Chris Kelley reports.

THOMAS MURPHY [Chairman, General Motors Corp.]: In 1974, the auto industry's decline dramatized the economy's downturn, and now we are pacing its recovery.

CHRIS KELLEY: For General Motors, the recovery has been sweet. So far this year, sales are up forty-four percent over last year. That's more than twice the sales gain of GM's competitors combined. And for these stockholders, it means a special dividend of fifty cents a share next month in addition to the regular sixty-cent dividend.

What the auto industry's current sales figures show is renewed buyer demand for big cars. Dealers are finding they can hardly keep the larger models on showroom floors, they're selling that well. The only real concession buyers seem to be making is a marked movement toward the plush, well-appointed, intermediate car, and the hottest of them right now is the Oldsmobile Cutlass. Since January, more than two-hundred-seven thousand Cutlasses have been made, and that doesn't satisfy customer demand for them and the full-sized cars.

EARL HORN [Oldsmobile dealer]: In the past few months, the larger car sales have increased tremendously, and it's--the demand has far outweighed the supply--this case right now. Conversely, the smaller compacts and sub-compacts--the sales have slowed down on them.

KELLEY: No one seems to be worried these days about getting gas or what it may cost them in the future. Already there are warning signs. Consumption is up ten percent over last year, and the bicentennial highway boom is still ahead. Oil industry experts like Herbert Hugo predict gas shortages this summer and are worried.

HERBERT HUGO [Senior editor, Platt's Oilgram]: Well, for this summer, for instance, we're going to have some gasoline shortage, I'm afraid, if John Doe out there continues driving like there was no tomorrow. Well, he shows no concern over the gasoline situation. He's using ten-percent more gasoline right now than he was using a year ago this time. So, we're going to run into some spot shortages of gasoline.

KELLEY: Some auto plants such as this one already are re-tooling and rehiring to handle larger cars. After all, that's what the public is buying. All the public needs now is a ready source of cheap gasoline, and none is currently in sight.

--Chris Kelley, CBS News, Detroit. (May 21, 1976)

It is noteworthy that here is a clear reference to the public. As consumers, they have a role with social responsibilities. It is not merely the pursuit of private satisfaction. And how does s/he fare? The oil industry expert denigrates consumers for their lack of social vision; they drive "like there was no tomorrow"--suggesting childish giddiness or at best a reckless lack of self-restraint. By contrast, industry here appears as a bastion of social responsibility and sobriety, doing its best to satisfy buyer demand while cautioning against excess indulgence. Clear-

ly it is industry's word which commands respect here. Expertise can exert some influence over Nature, but it certainly cannot control hordes of irresponsible consumers; to them it can only throw up its hands in despair.

An important perspective of the economy which emerges here is a notion that can be expressed as: "we're all in this together and we all have a role to play." While this is indeed true to a large degree, the point is that this vision totally excludes the idea of any conflicts of interest within the economy: i.e., it suggests that we all benefit or lose together, rather than that the benefit of some may depend on the deprivation of others. In short, the story structures a false unity.

Expertise has now been embodied in the persona of the large corporation. The message is clear: the whole society is subject to Nature's flux, but in this situation, the viewer-citizen must keep his faith in the guardians of economic stability. While everyone was troubled by the embargo (clearly a disruptive form of intervention into the economy; an act of villainy) the generals in this war feel that things are improving. If economics is only a struggle with Nature, carried out by a society of unity, then it follows that command should lie with those best suited to execute the strategy. The public should fall in behind them.

An important variation of the mythic interplay between Nature-officials-public is found in news stories where economic Nature appears as a positive, **constructive force**. In such cases, the task of technology is not to contain it, but rather to turn it loose. Within these mythic

dramas, Nature takes the form of omnipotent-but-benevolent capital, which merges with a triumphant technology. The public is virtually reduced to scenery in such displays, as this epic illustrates:

CRONKITE: While the debate goes on over nuclear power, the search for conventional energy resources continues, and it's having a big effect on a small Texas town, as David Dick tells us.

DAVID DICK: Pearsall, about fifty miles south of San Antonio, used to be just another quiet, little Texas cowtown, also living on potatoes and peanuts and watermelons and billy-goats.

Nothing very exciting ever happened here until recently it was obvious to just about everybody: Pearsall had suddenly become a boom town--new oil and gas discoveries so big, some say, the Pearsall field could rival the Permian basin of west Texas, one of the richest in the nation. Other estimates are more conservative, but so far, in the main exploration area, drillers have not hit any dry holes.

Oil field service companies have moved in, buying up sites for permanent multi-million-dollar facilities on the outer edge of Pearsall. The city is extending water lines. Construction has begun to meet a serious housing shortage. In the planning stage is the construction of new truck routes to by-pass Main Street, where traffic used to be no problem. The two-man police force will be increased to six. Until now, crime had been virtually no problem; the future is less certain.

City officials wonder how they'll handle it if, as expected, Pearsall's present population of fifty-five hundred doubles or triples.

MARTIN GARCIA [City manager]: We're bracing up for it, and we're going to try to take advantage of it. We still don't want to lose our agricultural base, so we're going to have to have some kind of a compromise and accomodate both types of industries.

DICK: The key to the boom is new technology--improved pressuring of the oil field, fracking, releasing up to one-hundred barrels a day compared with only ten before.

More than two hundred wells have been drilled recently in

the billy-goat pastures and the watermelon fields and the cattle lands surrounding Pearsall, the new boom town of south Texas.

---David Dick, CBS News, Pearsall. (May 31, 1976)

This epic presents the drama of social transformation--from a "before" to a new "after" as a result of an agent of change. This agent is a "boom". "Boom" is a term which points to a whole cluster of social activities and consequences, and serves to unite them as a single phenomenon. Boom is generally associated with "growth", "economic progress", "development" and similar concepts. In the boom process, however, as in any social transformation, there is also the other side of the coin: that which is brushed aside or unalterably reconstituted, not without some sense of loss. This, too, emerges in the epic, as we will show.

The social phenomenon of the boom is presented here as the result of the technical mastery of Nature. Once the technical expertise was able to unlock or unleash this Nature in Pearsall and channel it appropriately, the concomitant social consequences set in motion follow with an almost mechanical inevitability. "You can't stop progress." The boom is not so much caused by Nature as by the success of mastering Nature. However, the ensuing social dynamic is virtually a part of that Nature--the epic does not suggest in any way that things could have been any other way. The drama is not centered on the issue of whether or not the transformation will occur, rather the point of the epic is to capture the excitement of the process itself.

The pre-boom social reality is captured in the early part of the reporter's narrative: Pearsall was "just another quiet little Texas cow town. . ." the "just" underscoring its lack of distinction or its normalcy. The every-dayness of life in Pearsall is portrayed in the passage "also living on potatoes and peanuts and watermelons and billy-goats." These references have strong pastoral imagery--they point to a form of life which is essentially static. The repeated use of "and" between each of the elements listed signifies an incompleteness--if commas were substituted for the first two "ands", the impression would be that the list was exhaustive. The incompleteness invites further indexing; the repeated conjunctions create a repetition to which it is easy to fill in more cases. The repetition itself signified an unchanging social esitance. The indexing elicited adds nothing; it affirms more of the same. Whatever would be added to "potatotes--peanuts--watermelons--billy-goats" would only affirm the imagery: a rural, and even "hokey" way of life.

This setting is the backgrop for the new social force of the boom. The anchorman had stated at the outset, ". . .the search for conventional energy resources continues." A quest is in progress, which is juxtaposed to the placid Texas town. The onset of the boom is not merely an economic matter, a quantitative feature. The epic points to a cultural transformation as well. In contrast to the repetitive inventory which signifies static ruralness, comes a sequence of clipped, tight sentences, carrying considerable information. The language like the form of life it signifies

is efficient as it records the changes in progress: oil companies have moved in; they are building "permanent" (they are here to stay) "multi-million dollar facilities" (they are here in a big way). Water lines are being extended, new truck routes built, and the police force is being expanded from two to six (a touch of quaintness).

The "problems" this creates are typical: more traffic is expected and the potential for crime is referred to. To not expect it would reflect one's "hokeyness". Also a growing population will need to be dealt with. The city manager is quoted as saying that they don't want to lose their agriculture; they will have to reach a compromise--the best of both worlds.

Then comes a reiteration: "The key to the boom is new technology." A few technical terms are used: "improved pressuring of the oil field" and "fracking" can release "up to one hundred barrels a day compared with only ten before." In the face of this force, there is no resistance. The epic catalogs the changes via the drama of accomodation in everyday life. The city manager says, "We're bracing up for it." There is no question of if (normative), only how (technical-competence).

Pearsall is reduced to an object acted upon; the lesson is clear. Adjustment to the imperatives of the boom (and perhaps, by extension, any other manifestation of "economic processes") is the only alternative, and this alternative holds out the promise of more than a quantitatively better social existence. The final sentence of the epic, "More than 200 wells have

been drilled recently in the billy-goat pastures and the watermelon fields and the cattle lands surrounding Pearsall, the new boom town of south Texas," suggests a cultural redemption as well. This second inventory of ruralness, now with the addition of the oil wells, affirms that the town has finally been rescued from its rural sleep and brought into the modern world. This is the promise of technology, coupled with the power of capital.

In the news stories we have looked at so far, the public is often only present by implication. The public becomes essentially an object acted upon by the forces of Nature and the intervention of officialdom and technology. Only small glimmerings of praxis by the public have been suggested, such as being prudent gasoline consumers.

The playing out of these dramas in TV news creates a tension for the viewer-citizen. On the one hand, the viewer-citizen is invited to partake of this Olympian vision offered by TV news--to share in the comprehension of this view of the world, which deals in aggregates and continually sets new records as it reveals an ongoing spectacle. Yet, on the other hand, the viewer-citizen can only be addressed as an instance of the social category of "the public." The viewer-citizen is not socially situated in the lofty proximity of the news; s/he does not reside in the social circumstance which permits her/him to act in the world defined by network TV news. S/he can only be part of the public.

But "the public", in TV news, is an abstraction, a collective entity totally divorced from concrete social circumstances, history, lived

experience, and even locale. "The public" is a faceless feature of a spectacle, devoid of social identity. In this representation, the crucial distinction between a public and private sphere is collapsed, since no one private person (the viewer) lives everyday life like "the public" on TV news. Everyday life, on TV news, is not populated by living individuals, only a collective abstraction. Thus, the viewer-citizen is cut off from even the minimal practical activity which "the public" depicts. TV news discourse structures an unbridgable gap between the viewer-citizen and practical activity in the world which it portrays.

The significance of this gap should not be overlooked. What we have arrived at here is the same question brought out in another way in the last chapter by the role of the anchorman-as-buffer. This is the question of the relevance of TV news discourse to the audience.

We saw that in terms of the format, the anchorman may buffer audience involvement with the news, yet this potentially could mean that news appears as his knowledge and is really only meaningful to him not to the audience. This could be problematic for the reproduction of viewer-citizen consciousness.

Likewise, in the context of the dramatic triad within the news stories (Nature--officials--public) the viewer-citizen can really only be treated as a member of the public, yet the public has almost no role to play in these dramas. This frail identification between viewer-citizen and public again raises the problem of relevance, for it undermines the

obviousness of who is being addressed by TV news and why.

Omnipresent Officialdom.

We have seen that officials are the only clearly active social category depicted on TV news. It is officialdom who intervenes to administer Nature, via the exclusive monopoly it has over expertise. There are other social agents who intervene--at times this becomes interference--which we will examine in the next chapter. For now we wish to make note of the extent of official activity, that is, the domains which it encompasses.

Officialdom does not merely intervene in external Nature, but uses its expertise to manage the social world as well. In essence, officialdom, in its many institutional embodiments, emerges as the dominant actor in the social world. Let us look at some examples.

CRONKITE: President Ford asked Congress today for three-hundred-and-twenty-two- million dollars for more Minuteman missiles and for an improved, bigger warhead for that missile. In making the request, Mr. Ford linked it to the slow pace of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with Russia. (April 26, 1976).

At midnight tonight, such familiar names as the Penn Central Railroad, the Erie-Lackawanna, and the Reading will be erased forever. In all, seven of the nation's financially-troubled railroads will be merged into the Consolidated Rail Corporation--or ConRail--a private company backed by more than two-billion dollars of government money. The new railroad will operate over twenty-thousand miles of track, stretching from the East Coast to the Missouri River. (March 31, 1976)

In both of these news stories, some institution of officialdom engages in an activity which affirms its managerial role toward society. Each story involves the spending of large sums of money, and the decision to spend rests entirely within officialdom; there are no "outsiders" in

either case. Also, both stories are typical of "official managerial activities" stories: terse narrations with low intensity of involvement. The lack of drama within the stories--that there is no conflict or controversy--merely implies a routine-ness in the activity itself. These stories simply display "officialdom-as-societal manager" doing what it normally does. Spending large sums of money is part of its normal intervention.

The first item situates governmental spending in the context of the arms race with Russia and the need for "an improved, bigger warhead" on a missile. The President "linked" this request to the slow pace of the SALT talks story totally avoids what the consequences of the spending might be on employment, prices, wages, and so on; the spending is a managerial response to a military question. This separation insulates the issue within the realm of expertise and does not invite reflection on what it may mean for the viewer-citizen.

The second story begins with "familiar names" like the Penn Central and ends with details of the new rail system, which will operate "over 20,000 miles of track." The merger of seven railroads, the creation of a new private company, ConRail, and the state's backing of over 2 billion dollars become details of official activity which invite no normative reflection: the decision is not presented as a political one which potentially had other alternatives.

The Senate passed a bill today to continue, but to make broad changes in, the food stamp program. One major change would limit food stamps to households with incomes below the official poverty level, that is, four-hundred-and-fifty-eight dollars

a month for a non-farm family of four. The bill, opposed by the White House, now goes to the House. (April 8, 1976)

Here the Senate, an institution of officialdom, is depicted in a very non-dramatic way as going about its business of passing bills. The stamp program is a part of its arena of involvement, and this arena has consequences for the material realities of a segment of the populace. That the Senate voted "to continue, but to make broad changes in, the food stamp program" suggests that there existed the possibility that the Senate could even have voted to discontinue it if it so chose. In other words, this simply displays the administrative power of officialdom to shape significant parameters of everyday life.

Further, the item suggests that poverty is a feature of the social world, the definition of which is defined by experts. It is their definition not the social experience of this condition which prevails here. Poverty is isolated as a distinct managerial problem for officials. In other words, officialdom expropriates a lived social experience and reformulates it as a domain of its administrative involvement. The people in poverty are thus rendered as abstract objects. Moreover, the definition of poverty is cast in quantitative terms--fine-honed to the exact dollar--making poverty a neat administrative category which can be dealt with through fiscal allocation. The existence of poverty is not, then, a topic for viewer-citizen reflection, but an arena for official activity.

That the bill is "opposed by the White House" and "now goes to the House" indicates that there is not yet a final position; officials are

not of one mind. But more importantly, in terms of the news item, it leaves the viewer-citizen anticipating that action in the future on this topic will come from officialdom. The viewer-citizen is alerted to the processes going on among officials regarding the problem of poverty. The next move will come from the officials, which means the viewer-citizen is situated once more in a position of dependence.

The Senate has virtually killed chances of passage this term of a bill that would establish no-fault auto insurance nationwide. By a vote of forty-nine to forty-five, the legislation was sent back to committee. Opponents of the bill argued that the issue should be decided on a state-by-state basis without federal interference. (March 31, 1976)

Again we see a display of official activity which has impact on the contours of everyday life. The focus is on what officials are doing, not, say, what experiences auto owners have with insurance. Also, there is once more the implicit suggestion that any further action on this topic will emanate from officialdom. An interesting aspect of such items is their lack of drama, which fosters low intensity of involvement. The viewer-citizen is not invited to react much at all, only to offer minimal attentional energy. Thus, the story itself conveys an aura of routineness: this is but an instance of business as usual.

The final sentence invokes an intriguing concept: "federal interference." This could potentially become a topic of critical reflection: when and where is governmental activity to be regarded as "interference"? Yet, not insignificantly, it is from within the government ("opponents of

the bill") where the concept originates and where the definition will be decided. Once again, nothing is asked of the viewer-citizen.

The Justice Department filed housing discrimination suits today against four national trade associations of real estate appraisers and mortgage lenders with thousands of affiliated firms throughout the country. The suits charge the appraisers have automatically downgraded property values in white neighborhoods that become integrated. And, the suits contend, the mortgage lenders have followed up by using the low appraisals to limit the size of housing loans. The firms had no immediate reaction to those charges. (April 16, 1976)

This item deals with property values and racial integration of neighborhoods, which are topics of concern for many people. The reference to the Justice Department in connection with real estate appraisers and mortgage lenders simply reiterates that it is officialdom which handles such problems. There is no suggestion that the viewer-citizen could reflect upon his/her own situation in the context of the problem, nor is there any indication that the viewer-citizen might do anything on his/her own, e.g., citizen's legal action or community organizing. The viewer-citizen is totally separated from any practice in this domain and again is reminded of the government's capacity to deal with social difficulties.

Ten months ago, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare said it would stop trying to handle individual complaints about discrimination. The idea, HEW said, was to concentrate on patterns of discrimination and to cut down on a growing backlog of complaints. Well, today HEW Secretary David Mathews abandoned the plan, citing overwhelmingly negative public reaction to it. Mathews said that new approaches will be sought, but he said the policy in the future will be to try to resolve every complaint. (March 16, 1976)

Here it is discrimination which is a topic for official administrative activity. The attention in the story is not on discrimination as

a lived experience, but on some difficulties in its bureaucratic management. Nothing is learned about the reality of discrimination, only that it is a problem which gives rise to "complaints" that are dealt with by HEW. The real problem which is acted upon here is the "backlog of complaints," yet even that difficulty is not really explored. Instead, reference is made to the alternative bureaucratic strategy ("to concentrate on patterns of discrimination," i.e., to study the phenomenon, not to deal with it) and to the obstacle to implementing that alternative--"overwhelmingly negative public reaction." The story ends with the promise of a search for new approaches but also a return to the original policy. All the action here is within officialdom. The reference to public reaction could have been developed to make this item an exception to the others: the story might have suggested how citizens could affect the policies of a governmental bureaucracy. This would provide a learning for transcending viewer-citizen consciousness. But such is not the case; "public reaction" remains an abstraction with no specificity. The public does not learn from its own past experience in this item. Again, the viewer-citizen is invited to do nothing, not even to question. The story concludes with an expression of intention for more state activity in the future.

Some stories depict the government as the origin of society's legal framework:

The Supreme Court ruled today that it is fundamentally unfair and unconstitutional to warn a suspect that he may remain silent and then use that silence against him in court. The 6-to-3 decision

said that cross-examining a defendant about why he remains silent violates his right to due process. (June 17, 1976)

Here again there is nothing for the viewer-citizen to reflect upon or do; the news item merely serves to remind the viewer-citizen of this particular manifestation of officialdom which has importance in shaping social reality.

In other stories, officialdom is presented as the society policeman. Here it assumes the "cop" function in its task of managing the social order:

U.S. Customs agents said today they made their biggest cocaine haul in history--more than \$38 million worth in Tampa, Florida. The Customs Service said an agent surprised six to eight men unloading 170 pounds of pure cocaine from a Colombian banana boat at the Tampa docks. The smugglers fled, dropping the bags of cocaine as they ran. (June 17, 1976)

The threat, problem, or obstacle to the social order can vary; no matter, there exists the appropriate state institution to deal with it:

A General Accounting Office study released today says lax security around many government computer processing centers makes them vulnerable to terrorism, vandalism, and natural disasters. Senator Abraham Ribicoff ordered a Senate staff investigation into ways to better protect computer storage of social security tax, and other important records. (May 10, 1976)

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission explained today why it called a security alert last weekend at all 58 nuclear power plants in the country. It said it had received intelligence reports that two groups, not identified by the agency, might try to take over one or more plants. The alert remains in effect through next Tuesday, the day California voters vote on tougher rules and laws for safety standards for nuclear plants. (June 4, 1976)

The topics which are touched upon here--food stamps, auto insurance rates, discrimination in real estate, the safety of government computer

centers, and so on--are merely a few of what could, in their own way, become an infinite inventory. It would be difficult to imagine social domains which would not come under some institutional sphere of officialdom. Hence, its power, as an omnipresent societal manager, is underscored.

In these items, there is virtually no suggestion of the need for viewer-citizen thought or practical involvement. Each item simply displays officialdom exercising its routine functions. Any one instance is of little significance. The importance of these displays lies in their cumulative reiteration of the "normal"; namely, the range of the activities and the power of officialdom are such that its decisions have consequences for virtually all domains of the viewer-citizen's everyday life. Yet the viewer-citizen is virtually irrelevant to the decision-making process. In other words, everyday life becomes cast in terms of official decision-making; everyday life of the viewer-citizen is dependent upon--even made possible by--the activities of officialdom.

The Fragile Authority of Expertise

The capacity of officialdom to intervene in Nature and society is grounded in its command of technical and administrative expertise. It is this expertise on which the authority of officialdom largely rests. Technical and administrative expertise reflects the pragmatic application of science, which virtually has become the only legitimate way of knowing the world in the context of public discourse. Science, in other words, is the prevailing criterion for judging truth claims in the public sphere.

If some particular knowledge or the methods used to arrive at it are revealed to be "unscientific", its legitimacy would be cast into doubt. However, if there are blunders in the application of technical or administrative knowledge, this per se does not undermine the status of knowledge. It merely points to human incompetence!

CRONKITE: A Congressional study said today that in the first year following the end of the draft, forty-one-thousand men and women were recruited into the armed forces who did not qualify. They had to be discharged early, with a cost to the taxpayers of about seventy-million dollars in 1974. The study said the main problem was that recruiters were pressured to meet monthly quotas. The Pentagon said it's going to change that quota system now. (March 24, 1976)

An item such as this serves to remind the viewer-citizen that incompetence is something that will always be a part of the social world. While incompetence may be an inherent human foible, the terseness of the item and the total lack of personification suggest that incompetence is a mundane feature and of minimal interest. The lack of personification implies that the incompetence in the item is indeed impersonal, that is, it derives from bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is not an aspect of the world which is celebrated in TV news--it is closer in appearance to a necessary evil. While officials may reside within this unfortunate setting of bureaucracy, they do so as commanding figures--with their expertise. The routine work of bureaucracies is carried out by functionaries, in this case, "recruiters." Functionaries are distinct from officials, and are hierarchically situated beneath them. Functionaries merely carry out tasks; officials make decisions. They have authority.

The routine deference accorded to scientific and technical experts is illustrated in the following item:

In Geneva today, a meeting of international flu experts urged worldwide preparations for possible swine flu epidemics next winter. The Geneva experts said inoculation supplies may run short in some countries, and they urged other emergency measures, including the stock-piling of antibiotics. (April 8, 1976)

The legitimacy of this group of people is unquestioned in the story. That they call for an international mobilization is not made problematic in any way. The point we raise here is not the scientific validity of the grounds for fearing an epidemic, nor the proposals they suggest. Rather, our concern is to simply demonstrate the taken-for-granted status which such expertise carries and the congruent role of the viewer-citizen in the face of it.

This next epic illustrates not only deference, but also glorification of technology and those who control it:

CRONKITE: The B-52 strategic bomber is thirty years old, and the Air Force maintains it should be replaced by a new, long-range, supersonic bomber, the B-1. Opponents argue that missiles have made bombers obsolete and have tried to block the B-1's development. But today the House rejected another effort to delay funds for the new bomber's production.

Testing now is going on at Edwards Air Force Base in California, where on a test flight yesterday, the B-1 hit its best speed yet--twelve-hundred-and-fifty-five miles an hour, almost twice the speed of sound. Harold Dow reports.

HAROLD DOW: Former astronaut Thomas Stafford was flying in a Chase plane as the B-1 bomber achieved its fastest speed to date. Major General Stafford, now the commander of the Edwards Air Force Base Flight Test Center, described that historic flight.

THOMAS STAFFORD [voice only]: Well, we were flying formation with the B-1. It was the first time it'd ever been out in this region as we continued to expand it. And we rolled the Pacific Ocean at forty-six-, forty-seven-thousand feet and had this beautiful cloud deck underneath us, and the way that plane looked up against the [indistinct] of the sky was just beautiful. And it accelerated right on out there. And we went approximately two-to three-hundred miles an hour faster than we'd ever been before with the plane.

QUESTIONER: Now, were you flying in the B-1 bomber itself or were you in the chase plane?

STAFFORD [as before]: I was flying the chase F-111.

QUESTIONER: Ah hah.

STAFFORD [as before]: I was flying right on the wing. That was the chase F-111.

QUESTIONER: And what does all this mean in regards to the Air Force?

STAFFORD [as before]: Well, it means that the plane is--it's the most successful flight test program we have had yet on an airplane.

DOW: The B-1 is being developed by the Air Force to modernize its strategic bomber force. Officials hope to achieve even faster speeds in the future.

--Harold Dow, CBS News, Los Angeles. (April 8, 1976)

The anchorman's introduction sets the theme: the old and obsolete (B-52) is to be replaced by the new and the better--the "long-range, supersonic" (B-1). Notice that the second sentence of the introduction refers to the "if" question--if it should be built. Though the opposition seemingly even anchored their argument on technical reasoning--that missiles have made the bomber obsolete, this is not examined. The next sentence briskly closes the issue--". . .the House rejected another effort to delay

funds. . ." and we swiftly move on to explore some of the technical attributes of this proposed bomber.

That the exact speed achieved in a test flight is provided--1255 miles per hour--"almost twice the speed of sound"--indicates an interest totally separate from any practical concerns of the viewer-citizen. Indeed, the reporter's segment which follows can best be described as a celebration of this advanced equipment--an ode to the achievements of technology. The statement by Major General Stafford borders on the poetic. Such speech, "the sky was just beautiful" is atypical for a military commander. The viewer-citizen is invited to watch the celebration of this technology and to acquiesce to any social changes which may follow from its use. And finally, these changes are depicted as uncontestable; they have the momentum of Nature. They are not portrayed as emanating from the conscious decision-making of social groups with specific social interests. The technological promise is universal. It benefits all citizens, not just those who initiate the changes.

However, things don't always go as planned when technology is applied; man's control of Nature is at times less than perfect:

The Postal Service is installing automated mail-handling machinery to speed up delivery of big packages. Well, it's not always working out that way. In Chicago, there's a pile-up of almost four million parcels, mostly books, which the new machinery has torn up so badly, neither senders nor receivers can be identified. So the articles will be auctioned off. The Postal Service said it's asking bulk mailers, especially book publishers, to use stronger wrapping materials that can stand up to the automated handling system.
(March 11, 1976)

A not-too-serious technical problem is displayed here. Interestingly enough, this almost anecdotal story does provide the possibility of efficacy: it asks bulk mailers to use stronger wrapping materials. While the viewer-citizen is not likely to be a "bulk mailer", the story conveys the idea of what concrete steps could be taken to ameliorate the situation. On the whole, this item simply suggests that our machinery does not work perfectly; it reminds the viewer-citizen that the technological promise is not always easy to keep.

This next item affirms the wonderful world that can be built by technology, but again points to the problems involved in order to achieve it:

The first section of Washington's subway system was shown off to newsmen today and begins service Monday. The four-point-six mile section opens three-and-a-half years behind schedule. The full hundred mile system won't be completed until 1982. The projected cost is four-and-a-half billion dollars. That's a billion more than the original estimate. The fare will be forty cents, except during rush hour--fifty-five cents then. (March 24, 1976)

That the 4.6 mile section opens 3-1/2 years behind schedule reminds the viewer-citizen (via quantitative specificity) that predictions are not infallible; shaping the physical environment in keeping with human will is at times difficult. That the projected cost is 4-1/2 billion dollars is simply a display of an impressively large figure; there is no way of knowing how much 4.6 miles of subway should cost. Revealing that this is a billion more than the original estimate, however, adds some perspective. The effect is essentially to routinize the low credibility of original predictions. The problem is one of the application and administration of

technology; somebody goofed. But the consequences of the error are not serious. An inconvenience is pointed to: time and money. But this inconvenience appears largely to be a problem for the people involved in administering the construction. For the viewer-citizen, it merely suggests that the promises had to be delayed.

The final sentence is a definite shift in focus. Here there is a very specific link to everyday life. The enormous sums of billions of dollars gives way to money which the viewer-citizen can see in his/her hand-- 40 and 55 cents for the fare. There is a separation between the recounting of the problems of construction and the fare: is the fare in any way dependent on the time and money overruns? This is not presented. In fact, the origin of the fare rate is totally ignored; it is simply decreed, without suggesting that it should in any way be a topic of reflection. For that matter, just who built the subway section is not clear--where do the funds come from? The item essentially describes an element of the environment and provides the information of how the viewer-citizen must deal with it--in this case, to pay the appropriate fare. The item precludes the possibility of reflection upon what is indeed "appropriate".

If problems in the application of technology reiterate the difficulty of mastering Nature, they generally do not make problematic the legitimacy of scientific expertise per se. This is because the foundations of science's claim to the truth are not called into question, merely individual or institutional competence in translating scientific truth into

practical technology or administration. However, "scientific controversy" on a particular issues does raise this problem. Such controversy is often dealt with in considerable detail in TV news epics. From the standpoint of the newspeople, the "both sides of the argument" achieves journalistic "balance" and "impartiality". For the viewer-citizen, it raises a major problem. Consider the following epic:

SCHIEFFER: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission went before Congress today with five-and-a-half pounds of printed testimony to bolster its argument that nuclear power plants are safe. Nelson Benton has more on the story.

NELSON BENTON: The current nuclear safety investigation was triggered by the resignations of four engineers in industry and government. Three of them quit their jobs with a GE facility in California, saying they felt nuclear plants were no longer safe. GE officials told Congress the engineers' concerns have been or are being resolved, that GE is making nuclear risks vanishingly small.

Concerns about safety caused a fourth engineer, Robert Pollard, to leave his job with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, a government agency which licenses nuclear plants. Today was the commission's turn before the congressional investigation, headed by Senator John Pastore.

SEN. JOHN PASTORE [Chairman, Joint Atomic Energy Committee]: We don't have Mr. Pollard on trial. The question here is safety. Certain allegations have been made. Now we're hearing the agency that has the mandatory responsibility under the law to assure the public's confidence that these reactors are safe.

BENTON: Commission chairman William Anders told the committee if nuclear plants were operating unsafely, NRC would shut them down.

WILLIAM ANDERS [Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission]: Nuclear power, and whether or not it will provide a major energy option of the future, is really a decision that the people will make. It is not the NRC or the Congress or the President

that decides whether there will be a nuclear reactor some-time, someplace. And I submit that even the question of "How safe is safe enough?" is a public decision.

BENTON: The Joint Atomic Energy Committee hears next from expert advisory groups on nuclear power and then determines whether nuclear rules should be tightened up.

--Nelson Benton, CBS News, Washington. (March 2, 1976)

The big question here is the possibility of a nuclear mishap: are the nuclear power plants safe? The issue is seemingly being taken care of within the bureaucratic confines of officialdom. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, with its 5-1/2 pounds of testimony (suggesting literal and figurative "weight") is before Congress, later further specified as the Joint Atomic Energy Commission. The NRC is arguing that the plants are safe: this "investigation" was "triggered" by the resignation of experts in industry as well as government, including one engineer from NRC. Senator Pastore says little but to underscore that the NRC must assure the public of the plants' safety.

The NRC chairman is paraphrased as saying that the NRC would shut down unsafe plants. However, Anders, the chairman, virtually contradicts the reporter. Instead of affirming the NRC's expertise, Anders instead throws the ball to the public. He says it's "a decision the people will make. . . a public decision." He denies that it is "the NRC or the Congress or the President that decides."

The reporter, seemingly oblivious to this, says that the JAEC will hear from still more experts, and "then determines whether nuclear rules

should be tightened up."

The dramatic presentation here, with several people speaking, and an either-or issue, creates a high involvement news epic. Yet, the normal dis-invitation to reflection is eroded. The epic goes to considerable lengths to shatter the normal dependence on science. In fact, especially with Anders' exhortation, the viewer-citizen has been invited to reflect on the issue. Usually such questions remain in the realm of insular scientific discourse, but this epic brings science out into the domain of normative discourse. It is very disquieting, because the truth claims of science have been dealt a blow here: which experts know more--the ones who quit or those who claim the nuclear power plants are safe? Both groups can't be right. "Science" is split. What are the criteria on which the decision is to be made? Anders enjoins the public to decide; this is jarring for the viewer-citizen. If the experts do not know, how should s/he? What this suggests is that there has been a return to politics. If the issue cannot be decided by scientific truth, it must be resolved by the outcome of competing interests. This opens the possibility that if such is the case here, could it not be true for other issues? What happens to the truth claims of science?

A variation of the problem appears in the next epic:

CRONKITE: A new controversy has developed over the safety of children's sleepwear. The issue used to be clothes that caught fire. Now it's a chemical used to prevent that fire risk. Jim McManus reports.

JIM McMANUS: Tougher federal standards for flame-retardant fabrics sent

the man-made fabric industry to a chemical called Tris. Now, a Columbia University study, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, shows that Tris causes gene changes in laboratory bacteria. Many scientists believe that such evidence suggests a possibility of cancer risk.

Even though Tris can be absorbed through the skin, it should be emphasized that no scientist contacted by CBS News sees any immediate danger to persons wearing Tris-treated clothing.

But Dr. Robert Harris, of the Environmental Defense Fund, has petitioned the Consumer Product Safety Commission to protect the public, primarily because an estimated forty-five million children may be wearing Tris-treated sleepwear. Dr. Harris wants special labels on such clothing and a mandatory chemical testing program to be done by Tris manufacturers.

DR. ROBERT HARRIS [Environmental Defense Fund]: Studies at two universities, Columbia and the University of California, both have confirmed that Tris is a mutagen. They have used a test system which is being used as a screening test for cancer-causing potential, so that if a compound appears or shows to be mutagenic--to cause gene mutations--in this test system, then there's a very, very strong likelihood that it is a cancer-causing chemical, probably greater than ninety percent chance.

McMANUS: Dr. Harris said the clothing labels should warn that the garments should be laundered three times before wearing, to reduce Tris absorption through the skin, plus stringent pre-testing of chemical additives.

Meanwhile, the National Cancer Institute reportedly a year from now will complete a cancer study on Tris, and the consumer agency says it sees no risk based on available scientific evidence. Michigan Chemical Company of Chicago, the major Tris manufacturer, said research so far is too preliminary to draw any conclusions.

---Jim McManus, CBS News, Washington. (March 24, 1976)

The "new controversy" here derives from man's own technology. The

technological promise, as it solves old problems, creates new ones and the need for still more solutions.

After the anchorman's introduction, the reporter presents the controversial chemical Tris: some scientists suggest that Tris could be a cancer risk.

As if to calm any emerging anxiety, the reporter abruptly shifts his narrative to say that there is no "immediate danger to persons wearing Tris-treated clothing." Yet, the next sentence begins with "But," to indicate a contrast or conflict. This conjunction says "on the other hand. . ." Thus, the worst immediate fears have been quelled but not dismissed. A "doctor" who is a part of the "Environmental Defense Fund", has petitioned "The Consumer Product Safety Commission"--an expert from one bureaucracy contacts another bureaucracy--enjoining them to protect the public. As he speaks, in the next sequence, he uses the technical language of a specialist ("mutogen", "statistical probability") to restate that Tris is very likely a cancer-causing substance.

What to do? Dr. Harris suggests labels in Tris-treated clothing should direct the owners to wash them three times before using. No indication is given as to whether this is actually sufficient to eliminate the danger.

The image of a man-made technological nightmare serves to dampen the optimism of the technocratic solutions for the problems of social well-being. Perhaps more important, an epic such as this undermines the certitude of science as a legitimate grounding for policy decisions. Nor-

mative choice is elicited. The consciousness of the viewer-citizen, instead of being totally subordinate to the authority of expertise, is shifted to one of reflection. Opening up that possibility increases the chance of unforeseen viewer-citizen compatibility with the strategy of instrumental rationality and the maintenance of quiescent mass loyalty.

Consider, finally, this excerpt from an epic:

RICHARD WAGNER: Santa Nofray [?], California--looking down the core of a nuclear reactor, that silent, violent world where atoms collide to produce power; the core, also, of a far-reaching debate: Is nuclear energy a benevolent giant--

DR. PAUL LORENZINI [nuclear engineer]: We desperately need nuclear power to relieve us from our dependence on foreign oil.

WAGNER: --or a Frankenstein's monster?

DAVID PESONEN* [Chairman, "Yes on 15"]: What you're weighing is the chance that you're going to wipe out agriculture in California and wipe out a major city in this state.

WAGNER: Godsend or nuclear nightmare--the argument is being put to the voters of California. . .

WAGNER: It amounts to a highly complex scientific, political, and economic issue, but it seems to boil down to: Just how safe is safe? That's a question even nuclear engineers can disagree on but which California's voters will have to decide on June 8th. Both sides agree the result will be a landmark in the development of nuclear power in the United States.

---Richard Wagner, CBS News, Los Angeles.

* [Identified as Dr. Paul Pesonen on 6:30 show.] (May 10, 1976)

If the viewer-citizen is successfully socialized to make such decisions, could there be a return to the dependence on the authority of

expertise which the state requires for its technocratic strategy? Could the legitimacy of science be reasserted to its former status? While such a development may not be likely, this type of journalistic controversy certainly contributes to the erosion of the subordinate consciousness of the viewer-citizen. In fact, the "impartiality" of the news in such matters appears to be a major "crack in the monolith" which actually does elicit some degree of self-reflection.

CHAPTER FIVE

TV NEWS DISCOURSE III:

THE SOCIAL ORDER OF INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY

We have seen thus far that in the world defined by TV news, Nature is the prime movement. Particularly in its embodiment as the economy, Nature is a gargantuan spectacle under whose vicissitudes all of society must live. Yet, it is amenable to some degree of intervention by the expertise of officialdom. This intervention consists of all the technical and administrative activity which officialdom undertakes to maintain the normalcy of the social order.

In the course of this intervention, the public becomes subordinate to both Nature and officials. Officialdom strives to manage Nature, and to maintain such features of the social order as the optimal circulation of capital and the public's domains of consumption and convenience. Success in this social order is defined largely in quantitative terms; there is virtually no qualitative or normative vision. Also, there is no awareness of history in this social order, only an ongoing tabulation of aggregated achievements. Record-keeping has replaced reflection. The underlying logic of this social order within TV news discourse is that of instrumental rationality. In this chapter we examine some manifestations of this social order of instrumental rationality.

Officialdom's Proper Rules and Procedures

In the course of its normal activities of managing and fine-tuning the social world, officialdom will frequently encounter problems, violations and obstacles of various sorts which derive from human behavior, including from within the domain of officialdom itself. We have seen that administering such conflicts is actually part of officialdom's routine activities. In TV news discourse, news stories which display officialdom's handling of various forms of social conflict are common. The stories depict or imply a setting which can best be called bureaucratic; it is within this setting that officialdom resides and carries out its functions. This bureaucratic setting is not one of bumbling functionaries or mismanagement. It is one of supreme social power, quite inaccessible to the viewer-citizen. The rationality of the setting, and of officialdom's activities, is conveyed through a display of the importance of rules and procedures which are followed. The rules and procedures give witness to, indeed, embody, this rationality, and tend to displace normative concerns. The epic below is a typical example of this pattern:

CRONKITE: The big drug companies use outside research firms to check safety of new products. Today federal health authorities denounced some research and drug firms for alleged misrepresentations in test results, and they said a grand jury ought to investigate one big drug company--G Searle. The issue came up at a Senate hearing, and Hal Walker reports.

HAL WALKER: The Food and Drug Administration has now found major deficiencies in the animal testing procedures of Biometric Testing, Incorporated, in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. The FDA is considering possible legal action.

In the case of Searle Pharmaceutical in Skokie, Illinois, the FDA has charged deliberate falsification of the results of its drug tests on animals and trying to hide the fact that some of its tested drugs might be poisonous. The FDA has called for a grand jury investigation.

DR. ALEXANDER SCHMIDT [FDA Commissioner]: We have noted that Searle has not submitted all the facts of experiments to FDA, retaining unto itself the unpermitted option of filtering, interpreting, and not submitting information which we would consider material to the safety evaluation of that product.

WALKER: A spokesman for Biometric Testing appeared before the subcommittee but would not comment on the FDA charges.

The Searle Company issued a statement saying it was inappropriate for the FDA to call for grand jury action in the political environment of the Senate hearing room. . .
(April 8, 1976)

The actors and setting are totally encapsulated within officialdom's bureaucratic domain. Officialdom here is represented by the FDA, "federal health authorities," in the context of a "senate hearing." The problem or violation discussed here is referred to as "alleged misrepresentation," "major deficiencies in . . . procedures," "deliberate falsification," "trying to hide the fact. . . drugs may be poisonous," "not submitted all the facts," "unpermitted option," and "not submitting information." The language points to wrong-doing, but in a manner which does not mobilize a great deal of involvement. The discourse is not impassioned or strident; it is the cool, formal speech of administration. The ethical dimensions of the wrong-doing are overshadowed by references to violations of procedures. This concern prevails over any other.

The problem being dealt with here is an alleged falsification of research findings on new drug products by testing firms. Deep within the epic the reporter states, "some of its tested drugs might be poisonous." It would seem that this could potentially be a problem for the people taking the drugs. i.e., the public. But no drugs are named, nor is any mention made of the consequences of the poison or how to treat it; the item is completely without any efficacy for the viewer-citizen. The focus is not on the fact that the public may be exposed to poisonous drugs but rather on the activities of officialdom.

And what are these activities? The story mentions that officials "denounced some research and drug firms;" "they said a grand jury ought to investigate;" and they are "considering possible legal action:" While the "denounced" does suggest a normative evaluation, the other activities are a list of future bureaucratic procedures, which are guided by rules and procedures.

The drug companies and testing firms are clearly the bad guys, but the story presents their wrong-doing as the impersonal transgressions of faceless institutions. The lack of personification discourages the mobilization of normative involvement; the institutional response by officialdom thus is seemingly appropriate. And institutional responses are carried out by rules and procedures, not by normative interaction and discussion. Instrumental rationality prevails over normative involvement.

For the viewer-citizen, this state of affairs serves to reaffirm

his/her relationship of uncritical dependence on the power and expertise of officials. S/he has not even been asked to reflect on the fact that s/he may be a victim of poisonous drugs due to the corruption of these companies.

The following item is another glimpse into bureaucratic officialdom's adherence to rules and procedures at the expense of normative concern:

The House Rules Committee has voted unanimously to send to the full House the resolution giving the Ethics Committee subpoena power in its investigation involving CBS News Correspondent Daniel Schorr. There was no indication, however, whether Schorr would be called to testify about his role in the release of the House Intelligence Committee report. (March 2, 1976)

The flow of action here records the interplay of impersonal committees and the House. The focal point of concern resides with these processes, rather than the question they deal with, namely the appropriateness of a news correspondent's release of the House Intelligence Committee report. The appropriateness appears to be ultimately a question for the Ethics Committee; the act itself is one with normative dimensions. But the story does not let this leak out to the viewer-citizen. The viewer-citizen is not invited to question the ethical appropriateness of releasing the report.

The impersonality of the Committees in this story not only discourages emotional involvement, but also serves to convey the impression of an impartial and objective quasi-scientific exercise, an "investigation." The resolution, the assumed upcoming vote in the full House, and

in particular, the investigation of the Ethics Committee, all appear as correct procedures to follow in a personally disinterested attempt to unravel the truth of the ethical questions involved.

The stage for the future has been set. If Schorr were to be called to testify, it is because an impartial investigation warrants it, not because some Congressman would like to get him. This aura is reinforced by the use of the passive voice. "If Schorr would be called" as opposed to "if they decide to call Schorr." The entire affair is walled off from any outside interference. The officials have the next move, and the viewer-citizen can only wait for their initiative.

The display of procedures and rules, as well as the exclusive capacity to generate good reasons for its activities, tends to place officialdom's activities beyond the realm of viewer-citizen questioning. This confinement of conflict within officialdom can be seen as a buffer which allows for references to seemingly large and important confrontations but in a manner which renders viewer-citizen thought or action irrelevant. This is a significant attribute of TV news discourse, because this bureaucratic buffering often insulates questions which are potentially quite volatile:

After spending more than two years and a million dollars, the Justice Department has dropped anti-trust suits against the nation's two largest tire manufacturers because of lack of evidence. The suits had charged Goodyear and Firestone with illegally lowering prices to try to drive smaller competitors out of business.
(March 2, 1976)

This terse and impersonal item accomplishes a number of things. In a

story of low intensity involvement, the viewer-citizen is given a glimpse of conflict between government and big business. The quantification of time and money expended by the Justice Department is a rational accounting of its efforts. Since it is now "more than two years and a million dollars" later, it seems appropriate to call it quits. Officialdom really tried its best; that Goodyear and Firestone illegally lowered prices (a formal violation) led the government to file an anti-trust suit (the proper official procedure). That the suit is now dropped "because of lack of evidence" provides a good reason which the text does not permit to be disputed.

While displaying the large scale efforts of the Justice Department on behalf of small businesses, and an explanation for the termination of these efforts, the item also avoids two questions which are basically political in nature. Depicting Goodyear and Firestone as "the nation's two largest tire manufacturers" structures a continuum of companies ranging from small to large. This totally ignore the qualitative distinction between large monopolistic corporations and smaller companies of the competitive sector. The fundamental political question of the domination of the economy by monopolies is kept from view.

Also, that Goodyear and Firestone were trying "to drive smaller competitors out of business" situates the issue between corporations; this neglects the consequences of such activities on the public. That it is the public, as consumers, who would be the long-term victims of this mono-

polization does not become a point for the viewer-citizen to reflect upon.

The bureaucratic buffer is not impermeable, however. The following epic, unusually long, is situated totally within officialdom, as the previous stories were. Yet its capacity to mobilize uncritical dependence is problematic:

WALTER CRONKITE: Good evening.

The Senate Intelligence Committee has issued the most detailed report of CIA operations ever disclosed publicly. But, yielding to the Administration's plea for secrecy, the committee voted to let the full Senate decide whether to tell what America's spying costs. More from Jed Duvall.

JED DUVALL: The six-hundred page report that was handed to reporters today reviews thirty years of U.S. intelligence operations, electronics and drug experiments, makes some officials angry about what it reveals, and angers others over what it leaves out.

Some new disclosures--

--Pointing to a need for espionage and counter-espionage services, the report says there are at least four-hundred Soviet agents in the U.S

--On covert operations overseas, the report quotes a CIA station chief as saying: "any aspiring politician almost automatically would come to the CIA to see if we could help get him elected. . .they were wards of the United States. . ."

--Operations in Chile--thirty-three of them from 1963 to '74, twenty-five of them done without congressional consultation.

--The CIA gave a hundred-seventy-thousand dollars in 1974, a like amount the next year, to an unnamed Vietnamese institution to help manipulate opinion in the U.S. and in the Congress to support the war. The gifts back-

fired as the publications created still more controversy.

--The agency published or helped favored writers to publish more than a thousand books in the '50s and '60s, two-hundred-fifty others since 1967. The titles and authors have not been revealed.

Indeed, the report itself was purged of much of the detail about the CIA's connections with professors, university administrators, students, and other efforts to influence opinion at home and abroad.

Another major item missing from the report: the annual budget, estimated in the billions--in the middle of a blank space, simply the word, "deleted". The committee voted today, six to five, to send the budget issue to the full Senate.

Of all the recommendations in the report, one of them will cause the main fight in the Senate: that covert actions should be more strictly defined and should get prior approval of a committee yet to be created. Chairman Frank Church will lead the fight for that key element.

SEN. FRANK CHURCH [Chairman, Senate Intelligence Committee]: When we imitate the Russians in our dealings with foreign people by resorting, as we so often have done in the past, to blackmail, bribery, false propaganda, abduction, conspiracy to murder--that [sic] we demean ourselves and betray our own principles.

DUVALL: Two senators--Goldwater of Arizona and Tower of Texas--did not sign the report. Baker of Tennessee signed by has many of the same reservations as the others: that its release could endanger national security; and that the recommendations represent overreaction. Three Democrats --Mondale of Minnesota, Hart of Michigan, and Hart of Colorado--complained that too much has been edited out to protect the intelligence agencies.

There are other complaints. CBS News learned that many staff members are disgruntled at the report's limitations, claiming that the committee only looked where the agencies allowed it to. Some staffers said Chairman Church, seeking to wind up the task to run for President, caved

in to intelligence community pressures to weaken the report.

--Jed Duvall, CBS News, Washington. (April 26, 1976)

[ANNOUNCEMENTS]

The immediate focus of the conflict is within officialdom itself-- the Senate (including the personification of Sen. Church), the administration, and the CIA. There is a dramatic build-up of the impending fight in the Senate; officials are angry and polarized. The detail, the urgency conveyed by the new record set by this "most detailed report of CIA operations ever disclosed publicly," and the personification make this a story of high intensity involvement.

Yet, behind this immediate drama of officials in conflict is the basic question of secrecy and national security vs. the free flow of important information to the public. This drama is only alluded to by implication, but the primary conflict between officials is predicated upon this question. Moreover, it is this lurking problem which is the key to understanding why this epic is not as successful as other stories we have looked at in mobilizing an unreflective viewer-citizen. The anchorman refers to "the Administration's plea for secrecy." Secrecy will have import on the public; it is the public, by implication, who will experience the consequences of this decision, not just some other institution of officialdom. Recent history has shown that this is not a trivial question (e.g., Vietnam, Watergate).

But of still greater significance in terms of viewer-citizen reflec-

tion is that the issue lies beyond the domain covered by proper rules. That the issue will be fought over in the Senate, that the Administration is pleading, indicates that there are no existing procedures to handle it. Thus, the criteria for settling the question must be located within the domain of political choices. Normative decision, not the neutral application of impersonal rules, will settle the matter. This is an opening which, while not strongly inviting, may at least jar the viewer-citizen. Making decisions for which there are no prior set rules and procedures increases the chance that power holders may appear to be serving their own interests. This is because such decisions are problematic topics--they are not routine--and may require some explanation and justification.

We see here a potential contradiction. On the one hand, the need for maintaining viewer-citizen attention to the news necessitates some stories of high intensity involvement with detail, drama, and the appearance of some concrete consequences for the lived experiences of the public. (A news show consisting only of items could not compete with the other networks; it would not hold the attentional energy of the viewer-citizen.) Yet, on the other hand, this tendency of intense involvement begins to move toward the possibility of inviting viewer-citizen questioning.

The instrumental rationality of officialdom's activities does not make good drama. Yet good drama, which centers on the display of human choice-making, i.e., subjectivity, increases the potential for reflection. Choices seemingly grounded in self-conscious social interests (i.e., norms) are difficult to justify via instrumental rationality. The ration-

ale of the objective, functional means is displaced by the revelation of awareness of subjective, normative goals.

This dilemma recalls the problem generated by making scientific claims the point of a pro and con journalistic treatment. This tended to undermine the certitude of a unified scientific truth, on which the authority of expertise is grounded. In both cases, the imperatives of journalistic format are potentially at odds with the maintenance of subordinate viewer-citizen consciousness.

Irrationality and Interference

If the social order is predicated upon the instrumental intervention of officials, and the non-obstruction of all others, it follows that irrationality is a concrete threat to the social order. Also, interference, by inappropriate forces, while not necessarily a direct threat or a total lapse of rationality, takes on the character of troublesome obstructionism.

ROGER MUDD: In Washington, a new study by the Treasury Dept. has concluded that breaking up the nation's big oil companies would have a negative impact on the U.S. economy, including higher consumer prices and more dependence on foreign energy sources. The study said oil prices and supplies are determined primarily by the OPEC countries, not by the major oil companies. The officials said the study was made in response to proposed legislation to require the big oil companies to end their control of supplies from the well to the gas tank. (June 17, 1976)

In this item, a "new study" by officialdom provides unchallengable good reasons for the maintenance of its present policies toward the large oil

monopolies. This presentation translates a political question into the familiar formulation of an issue for technical experts who are situated within closed bureaucracies. But there is more. The reference to OPEC countries is an allusion to meddlesome interference in a rational social order which is apparently global in scope. Their obstructionism is clearly a nuisance to the smooth functioning of the social order.

Interference is a challenge which has to be dealt with by the appropriate response, as this excerpt from an epic makes clear:

SCHIEFFER: Secretary of State Kissinger vowed today [that] the United States will not hesitate to confront Soviet adventurism wherever it occurs. Later, the State Department announced postponement of three U.S.-Soviet joint commission meetings. More on that from Bernard Kalb.

BERNARD KALB: The U.S. decision not to do business as usual with the Russians is based on their massive shipments of military equipment to Angola. It comes after weeks of warnings by Kissinger that the policy of detente could be affected by such Soviet activity and represents the first known retaliatory moves by Washington to penalize Moscow for their Angolan involvement.

The three commissions are not regarded as high priority. They deal with housing, commerce, and energy. And the State Department emphasized that these penalties--to use the official word--did not apply to such major areas as the sale of U.S. grain to Russia or negotiations on strategic weapons. . .(March 16, 1976)

Kissinger's vow is a display of firm intentionality. "Adventurism" smacks of an irresponsible self-indulgence. The Soviets apparently do not understand the rational manner in which the social order is to be dealt with. Consequently, they will have to be "penalized," in the hope

that they learn their lesson. While the penalty itself is not severe, it is the mode of response by U.S. officialdom--invoking a penalty--which reveals the appropriate stance toward reckless meddling by outsiders.

If such interference can be dealt with by diplomatic penalties, it suggests that the transgressors are situated at least within the outer limits of mutual social understanding. True irrationality, as it appears on TV news, seems to emanate from an extra-human source. It is virtually a manifestation of a raging unleashed Nature:

MUDD: More than 50 people have been reported killed during two days of rioting near Johannesburg, South Africa. We have a report from Robin Wright.

ROBIN WRIGHT: South Africa's worst racial disorder in 16 years still appears to be out of control as angry mobs roam the streets of Soweto, the black township outside Johannesburg. During the second day of violence, post offices, homes, hospitals and government buildings have been set on fire. Twenty-two buses and hundreds of cars have been destroyed.

Police roadblocks prevent all whites from entering the area, but reporters on the outskirts can hear sporadic firing. Demonstrators are fighting back with rocks, shovels, pick axes, knives and iron bars.

Rioting spread tonight through the sprawling township, inhabited by over one million blacks. The demonstration now appears to cover broader racial issues that just the language dispute that sparked yesterday's outbreak.

---Robin Wright, for CBS News, Johannesburg. (June 17, 1976)

The report presents the riots as a morbidly fascinating spectacle. The riots have set a new record for the past 16 years; the effects are itemized and even tabulated (" . . .22 buses"). The "violence"--an expres-

sion of irrationality--has claimed "post offices, homes, hospitals, and government buildings;" all of these casualties are strong symbols of the rationality of the social order. The drama pivots on the irrational outburst which threatens the social order. The dramatic movement of the story invokes the need to return to normalcy--a reassertion of "control."

The rioting itself is presented as an act outside of history. It is virtually devoid of human subjectivity and becomes a manifestation of a force from beyond the brink of understandable human responses. There are no real references to social circumstances to justify this act. The final sentence refers to "issues" and a "dispute". But the implication is that surely such differences can be discussed in a reasonable fashion. If not, this underscores the total illegitimacy of the act--it is senseless.

While the story manages to avoid any reference to the systematic oppression of racism, its major accomplishment is to portray rioting as ultimately a random act. Such acts may appear at any time, and hence are an ever-present potential threat. Like the movements of Nature which evoke the need for experts to intervene, this type of threat evokes the need for a strong police/military function to protect the social order. Again, the viewer-citizen is cast in a relationship of dependence, in this case, on the power of coercive institutions.

A final aspect of which we must take note is that in the presentation of rioting as illegitimate and senseless, totally beyond the realm of rational human behavior, the viewer-citizen is prevented from

becoming aware of desperation as a motivating force behind human actions. This not only prevents the viewer-citizen from empathizing with such actors as these rioters, but also mitigates against an understanding that this may be a sentiment within him/herself which may have validity. Any glimmer of it within his/her own consciousness could then be taken as a deficiency or even be a source of anxiety--thus furthering the dependence on those who can stamp out such demons.

While each instance of "irrational violence" appears as random, TV news discourse creates a pattern of the phenomenon; it is typically an attribute of terrorists, guerrillas, insurgents, radicals, and criminals. Two items will clearly illustrate this:

CRONKITE: In a Mexico City suburb today, the police were lined up for morning roll call outside their station house. Four cars filled with leftist terrorists came screaming down the street. The terrorists opened fire with machine guns, then surged inside the station house. When it was over, six policemen were dead, four wounded. The terrorists got away. (June 4, 1976)

SCHIEFFER: Israel was having more problems today with Arab unrest along the occupied West Bank of the Jordan River. In East Jerusalem, riot police clashed with hundreds of Arab demonstrators protesting Israeli rule. No injuries were reported. Yesterday, Israeli officials imposed a twenty-four hour curfew on the West Bank town of Ramallah following a month of rioting. (March 16, 1976)

In the first item, "leftist terrorists came screaming down the street. . . opened fire. . .surged inside the station house." An act of senseless violence, which intruded upon the normal order of events ("morning roll call"). The attack comes out of nowhere, with no reason other than that

the perpetrators are "leftist terrorists." That they get away indicates that irrational violence is not easily controlled

The key to the second item is the phrase "Arab unrest." The ethnic identity apparently is an explanation of the phenomenon. The imposition of a 24 hour curfew is an reasonable thing to do given "a month of rioting". "Arab unrest" here is a force within Nature, which requires strong measures to counteract it. "Arab unrest" does not follow proper rules and procedures; it is irrational. Hence, firm reactions to it are acceptable and reasonable.

Cooperative Capital, Unreasonable Labor

Within the social order of instrumental rationality, capital and labor--the large corporations and the workforce--each has a role to play. The large corporations have appeared, as we will recall, as pillars of sobriety and social responsibility, as well as possessors of technical competence. Labor has not been very manifest; indeed, in eV news, labor takes the form of an abstract aggregate factor of the economic system. Rarely does it take on the character of a Subject acting in the social world. When it does, it is most often in the context of strikes or other types of conflicts. Thus, the very presence of labor as an actor in the social order may signal a negative aura. The treatment of labor conflicts suggests a great deal about the respective locations of the capital and labor in the social order. The following epic is a virtual morality play in this regard:

CRONKITE: A new survey of state unemployment rates shows a wide disparity in the number of jobs available across the nation. . .In one of those, New York, there's one community with a unique attack on the problem, as Mitchell Krauss reports.

MITCHELL KRAUSS: Jamestown, New York--population, forty-thousand--a city with all the outward signs of the economic slump that's left the Northeast with a ten-and-a-half percent unemployment rate, two points above the U.S. average.

When the textile industry abandoned their old mills along the river and moved south after World War Two, Jamestown attracted furniture manufacturing. But by the '60s, that, too, began pulling out and heading south. In 1971, the bottom fell out, when Art Metal Company, which had built the largest factory in New York State since the war, went out of business and laid off seven-hundred workers.

Jamestown had one other problem. With eighty percent of the city's work force unionized, it had a fifty-year history of bitter labor relations--wildcat strikes and lockouts. It was known as a bad labor town.

But much of that's changed, due mainly to a unique experiment in labor-management cooperation.

MAN [addressing group]: If you could design a company from scratch, what would that organization look like?

KRAUSS: From that time when both sides wouldn't even be seen together, labor and management are now meeting opening on a regular basis. This communication has produced ideas on how to avoid layoffs and how to keep plants open. For management, it's meant higher productivity, and for labor, better working conditions. [. . .]

KRAUSS: The labor-management committee is composed of twenty-five companies and ten unions. What about that old fear that the unions are getting too cozy with management?

JOSEPH MASON [machinists union]: If keeping jobs is wrong, then, you know, what we're doing is wrong.

KRAUSS: The Jamestown success story is spreading. After sitting idle for three years, that million-square-foot plant is

gearing up again, this time to produce diesel engines. The Cummins Company promises fifteen hundred new jobs. Though the city still has major problems--unemployment went up in the last two months, there is a new confidence among Jamestown workers that the labor-management committee is at least buying them time.

---Mitchell Krauss, CBS News, Jamestown, N.Y.
(April 16, 1976)

The anchorman introduces the theme, unemployment, and a novel way for dealing with it. The reporter then gives a survey of past developments in the community of Jamestown to indicate the kinds of problems it has had to face. The inventory ends with a final topic, whose importance is indicated by its mini-introduction, "Jamestown had one other problem." The problem is "a fifty year history of bitter labor relations . . ." Interestingly enough, that phrase is immediately preceded by "With eighty percent of the city's work force unionized. . .," suggesting that the existence of unions were at least a contributing factor to the bitter labor relations. Without the presence of the unions, it may be assumed that there would have been less disruptive interference in the economy. The reporter notes two categories of bad labor relations; "wild-cat strikes and lockouts." Then the final judgment regarding Jamestown's past: "It was known as a bad labor town."

In the past, then, labor had crossed over from being an abstract factor or pliable element in the economic system, and had intruded on the purposes of capital. It had interfered; by expressing its subjec-

tivity, labor had violated the rationality of capital's activities within the movements.

Yet "much of that's changed;" the reporter implies that such problems can be handled. The vehicle is "a unique experiment in labor-management relations." The reporter makes reference to "that time when both sides wouldn't even be seen together," which conveys that such militancy is woefully out of date, *passee*. That "labor and management are now meeting openly" indicates also that an old taboo has been relegated to a thing of the past. "This communication has produced ideas on how to avoid layoffs and how to keep plants open." Here we have the essence of the lesson: that reasoned discussion of differences brings results. Meeting "on a regular basis" is the best approach to settling differences. And the results? "For management it's meant higher productivity," [labor is not the beneficiary of its higher productivity] and labor gets "better working conditions." Thus, cooperation through discussion benefits all by maximizing the conditions conducive to the free play of instrumental rationality.

Toward the end of the epic, the reporter reiterates the modernity of the approach. "What about the old fear that the unions are getting too cozy with management?" This dismisses such concerns as antiquated. A worker then affirms the position with a touch of irony to undercut criticism. The epic concludes by stating that "there is a new confidence among Jamestown workers." This is not total redemption--problems will remain, but the point has been hammered home: for labor, rational

cooperation with management "is at least buying them time."

When labor is uncooperative, when it disrupts and interferes, the consequences are most undesirable:

And New York City's bracing for a transit strike tomorrow morning. That strike is threatened despite a court injunction unless negotiators work out a new contract by midnight for thirty-seven-thousand transit employees. The latest word is that prospects for settlement look bleak. More than five million persons depend on New York's subways and buses. Because of the city's continuing fiscal crisis, officials contend there's no money for wage increases. (March 31, 1976)

The initial sentence locates the interest of the item: that New York City is "bracing" itself for a strike demonstrates that the concern here lies with the effects on the city, not with the causes or reasons for the strike. The strike may occur "despite a court injunction," meaning that the rules of officialdom may be violated. This potential violation, however, pales in comparison to the major point of reporting the story: "more than five million persons depend on New York's subways and buses." This not only avoids discussion about the normative questions involved in the labor dispute, but mobilizes viewer-citizen indignation. A domain of convenience, a service, may be obstructed; it is this interference in the smooth functioning of the social order which provides the coherence of the item. Labor is castigated for threatening to create an inconvenience. The final sentence underscores the "we're all in this together" syndrome. The "city's continuing fiscal crisis" is a current fact of Nature to which we must all adjust. To not do so borders on unreasonableness; it obstructs the maximization of instrumental rationality.

This pattern is illustrated again in this item:

In San Francisco, the public transit system came to a stop today, leaving four-hundred-and-fifty thousand persons without their cable cars, buses, and street cars. The shutdown created massive traffic jams as thousands turned to their cars. The transit workers walked out in sympathy with city craftsmen--carpenters, plumbers, and so on--who struck in protest against salary limits approved by the voters last fall. The Longshoremen's Union shut down the port of San Francisco in support of those city workers. (March 31, 1976)

The inconvenience again is underscored. In this item, however, there is the added dimension of expression of sympathy and support by some workers for the conflict of other workers. Such solidarity does not emerge here as an affirmative stance, grounded in an understanding of the nature of labor conflict. In fact, it bespeaks emotionalism--temperamental workers rushing off their jobs. Again, we find an indictment against the strikers for violating rules--"salary limits approved by voters." In short, labor militancy is not a subjectivity with which the viewer-citizen is invited to sympathize, much less share in as a way of reflecting upon his/her own work situation.

We discussed above how bureaucratic buffering can deflect deeper probing into corporate wrong-doing. Corporate transgressions can be treated in a manner which still manages to convey the cooperative stance and rationality of the corporation in question:

CRONKITE: Lockheed Aircraft Corporation says it will comply with a Senate subpoena demanding the names of foreign government officials said to be involved in a multi-million dollar payoff scandal. Among the countries linked to that scandal are Japan, Italy, and the Netherlands. (April 8, 1976)

The action recorded here is Lockheed's willingness to comply with officialdom's request. A "Senate subpoena demanding the names" is a stern gesture; officialdom is forceful. Lockheed does not look good in this story, but there is no dwelling upon its misdeeds. The "scandal" itself is not a topic here. The item ends with a list of countries "linked to that scandal," and reflection on Lockheed's responsibility has been undercut. It should be added that the entire treatment here is not that of a "crime" story; it is a display of officialdom's activities and the rationality of corporate cooperation.

Corporate misdeeds are a domain of officialdom's activities, but rarely do stories of such misdeeds become an intense drama of government versus big business. Officialdom appears strong and competent in its role of public protector, but when the violations stem from the corporate sector, they generally do not take on the aura of real threats to the social order:

President Ford has named Commerce Secretary Elliot Richardson to head a cabinet-level task force to look into overseas payoffs by U.S. firms. President Ford said some of this may be corrupt practices by the corporations and some may be extortion abroad. Mr. Ford said the purpose of the task force is not to punish American corporations, but to establish an enforceable policy for dealing with the problem. (March 31, 1976)

Corporate corruption is a "problem"; it is to be dealt with by "a cabinet-level task force" who will try "to establish an enforceable policy." Questions of accountability have been usurped by a search to find appropriate bureaucratic procedures. Blame is distributed to "extortion abroad"

as well as the firms themselves. Again, concern with procedure obstructs exposure of larger normative issues.

Voting: Consumer Choice as Political Freedom.

The domain of electoral campaigns and voting is of considerable significance within TV news discourse. Such coverage serves to suggest (and to remind, given its periodic appearance) that despite any evidence to the contrary, it is the will of the public which is ultimately in charge of the social order. Officials may exercise vast powers, but the voting implies that they must submit themselves to public evaluation on a regular basis. The unique feature about election coverage is the manifest mobilization of the public which is displayed and encouraged. This mobilization is under control, however; the invitation to choose between candidates is prevented from spilling over on deeper questions. This containment is accomplished by the manner in which the entire process is depicted. Campaigning and voting is a process which takes place in a narrowly circumscribed marketplace. Its initial appearance is one of calculated gamesmanship and rational choicemaking. Yet lurking beneath the surface is an intriguing, and ultimately flattering (to the public) element of irrationality: the mystique of voter preference.

Let us examine a typical campaign story:

CRONKITE: [Well,] as the political situation firms up in Massachusetts, the serious maneuvering for position is beginning on the Democratic side, and Ed Bradley tells us what's going on.

ED BRADLEY: Even before the votes are counted here in Massachusetts, political operatives in the McGovern wing of the Democratic party are planning ways to get Birch Bayh to drop out of this campaign in favor of Morris Udall.

Informed sources told CBS News there was a meeting today between Senator Bayh and a representative of the McGovern wing of the party. However, that meeting was denied by sources in the Bayh camp.

Senator Bayh reportedly is leaning towards dropping out of this race if he is trounced here in Massachusetts by Morris Udall.

The problem now is each side's interpretation of just what is a [indistinct] defeat. What the McGovern people feel is a trouncing differs from the view of the Bayh camp. Supporters of Bayh and Udall have already scheduled a meeting for Saturday.

Everyone involved says this is not an effort aimed at stopping Jimmy Carter, but one of the participants to the meeting said that the sudden emergence of Carter has greatly heightened the sense of urgency.

---Ed Bradley, CBS News, Boston.

CRONKITE: We'll have more on the Massachusetts and Vermont primaries later in this broadcast. (March 2, 1976)

From the standpoint of campaigning officials, dramatic conflict exists on two levels. On the one hand, it is evident that the competition between the different officials is of importance here. The story records maneuverings, strategies, option considerations, and other instances of calculated gamesmanship. In fact, it is the game itself, as played by these particular participants, on which the story centers. While this epic does not dwell on each individual to any extent, it is clear that the names, the personalities, are important. The potential candidates are

struggling among themselves ("serious maneuvering").

On the other hand, the gamesmanship displayed here involves attracting the public and/or delegates to vote for them. That drama, unstated but understood in this story, centers on moving the public. Winning and losing in the campaign hinge on the ability to obtain a sufficient number of votes.

Thus, candidates appear as commodities who compete amongst themselves to be the most salable to the public. Each candidate desires to be "bought" by the voters. To be bought here means that the public, as a subject in the world, has exercised free will and choice. Yet the need to attract voters via the explicit use of instrumental rationality, collapses each member of the voting public into a "vote"--an object to be accumulated by the candidate. The relevance of this double drama is that discussion of voting can shift between these two ways of referring to the public. The first way situates the public as the primal force. In the second type of reference, the actions of the officials command the attention, with the public being incorporated as a thing-like element. The emergence of the public as a historical actor is readily curtailed.

The active choice-making by the public, the manifestations of its subjectivity, is not an entirely predictable affair. In fact, a contest emerges in some news stories, which pits the expertise of social analysts against the wily or fickle choice patterns of the public. To demonstrate perfect knowledge of the public by officialdom would be blatantly unset-

ting; it would smack of a negation of all conceptions of freedom. The public must not appear as totally malleable by expertise. Thus, expressions of humility appear, as in this excerpt from an epic:

CRONKITE: Roger Mudd has taken a look beyond the bare numbers of the North Carolina primary, and here is his report.

ROGER MUDD: There's nothing like a good political upset to demonstrate how little the politicians and the media really understand about the voters and how much they listen to and believe each other. Twenty-four hours ago, nobody around here was predicting a Reagan victory--nobody, not even Reagan. But today there are a hundred reasons and explanations for how he did it. . . (March 24, 1976)

The mind of the public is an elusive entity, not easily cornered. The suggestion is that of one-upsmanship; the public holds out the final mystery over expert officials.

The public is not a totally homogeneous collectivity in TV news.

There are differences which are stressed:

CRONKITE: Oregon's another state holding a primary Tuesday, and it's getting a lot of attention from candidates of both parties, as Richard Threlkeld reports.

[Sound of helicopter in flight, continuing under Threlkeld's voice]

RICHARD THRELKELD: How can you figure out a state that makes its living cutting down trees, then insists on hiring a helicopter to haul them out, just so it won't mess up the rest of the forest? That's Oregon. For the last generation, all sorts of Presidential politicians have tried and failed to figure Oregon out.

Half of Oregon's two-and-a-third-million people live in and mostly live off the carpet of green forest that covers the state. The other half live in and around Portland. Except that they're almost all white, folks in Oregon are statistically pretty much like the rest

of us. But you can't trust statistics here.

Oregonians used to vote straight Republican. Now they vote Democratic, except when they vote Republican. They're conservative, but they've pioneered some of the most progressive reforms in this country. They're mavericks, who don't respond to media campaign blitzes. They expect any politician who thinks he's good enough to run for President to come out here and talk to them face to face, and he'd better talk straight.

In a way, this whole Presidential primary madness is all Oregon's fault. Oregon invented the political primary back around the turn of the century, and politicians have been paying attention to Oregon ever since 1944, when Thomas E. Dewey upset Harold Stassen here and went on to win the Republican nomination. Neither President Ford nor Ronald Reagan wants to become another Harold Stassen, so they'll both be here. The President needs Oregon to break the Reagan armlock on the west. Reagan needs Oregon to stay credible in California. . .
(May 21, 1976)

The people of Oregon are a mystery, a challenge to official expertise-- "all sorts of Presidential politicians have tried and failed to figure Oregon out." Being an Oregonian suggests that one has a unique essence, a quality with a mystique which expresses some form of Nature. The collectivity of Oregonians is defined by the geographic boundaries of statehood; this apparently creates some communal characteristic which prevails over other social factors such as class, income, occupation, or ethnic identity. This form of categorizing the public succeeds in avoiding many obvious uncomfortable social differences in the world. By proclaiming this mystique, this artificial communal grouping, the public is flattered as possessors of unfathomable traits. However, no practical information

is offered as to how a member of the public can actively attain such mysterious qualities. The distinction of being an Oregonian is not one grounded in any particular social practices; it is exclusively a quality of Nature.

The self-selling of candidates, and the accumulation of votes are initial elements of this marketplace. But a more fundamental characteristic of this marketplace is to be found in the emphasis on mercantile rationality which pervades TV news discourse on voting:

CRONKITE: The CBS News-New York Times poll of Massachusetts voters after they left their precincts not only gave an indication of how they voted but why, and Roger Mudd has those findings. Roger?

ROBER MUDD: Walter, according to the poll tonight, it is Arizona Congressman Morris Udall who is finishing strongly among Massachusetts' liberal Democrats. The sample from the poll is not complete tonight because the vote was light. This trend could shift. But among those twenty-eight percent who classed themselves as liberals today, thirty-nine percent said they had voted for Udall, twenty percent for Fred Harris, ten percent for Jimmy Carter and George Wallace. Birch Bayh, who had hoped to outpull Udall, apparently has been unable to score effectively with the liberals or the moderates.

Among conservatives and moderates--and that totals about forty-five--forty-nine percent of the vote in Massachusetts, George Wallace and Henry Jackson are running within a few points of one another--Wallace with fifty-one percent, Jackson with forty-seven.

Former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter is finishing in the middle with the conservatives, the liberals, and the moderates.

Among the Democratic leaders today, Udall scored very well with the voters for his honesty, his competence, and

his consistency; Jackson, for his competence; Wallace, for his consistency.

According to the polls, Democratic voters today selected jobs, the power of big business, and balancing the budget as their top three issues. But for Republican voters in Massachusetts, there was just one major issue, and that was balancing the budget. Running a weak second and third were transferring federal domestic programs to the states and defense spending.

Neither President Ford nor Ronald Reagan campaigned in Massachusetts, but Republican voters of all persuasions, according to the polls, gave President Ford big majorities. Even the conservative Republicans went for Mr. Ford--sixty-two, thirty-three. And on every personal characteristic--honesty, competence, consistency, and leadership--President Ford outscored Reagan. In addition, a lopsided 96% of Massachusetts Republicans in the poll think President Ford would be more likely to win in November.

Walter? (March 2, 1976)

The language demonstrates technical expertise--such monitoring requires expertise--but it also demonstrates a way of approaching the world which is essentially that of market transactions. The story reads like an extended stock report; it reveals the concerns of a consumer mentality. To enter and participate in the marketplace requires the frame of mind of a tabular analyst. Counting, the use of statistics, measuring--this is the way this domain is approached and made intelligible.

Entering the marketplace means a concern with commodities, but not with their use value--i.e., the social purposes which they could serve. Rather, interest lies in their exchange value, their market worth for trading. The use value of the tabulated facts in this story--i.e.,

the social purposes served by the information gathered by the CBS poll-- is lost. The emphasis is on the exchange value: consumer evaluation is indicative of the market-ability of the candidates as well as the candidates' capacity to accumulate votes. Invitation to normative questioning and political reflection by the viewer citizen is circumvented.

There are some other features of the story worth noting. The anchor-man says the reporter will tell "how they voted and why," not "why they voted and how." Yet the why (and why not) of voting itself seems to be a latent question. The voting was "light".. Why? No answer. Who are the non-voters? A profile of the "disaffiliated," expressed in class-related categories could perhaps invite critical social reflection. The very fact that the voting was light could equally be the major finding of the poll story: non-voters could even have been the majority, so why not focus the story on them? The "But" which begins Mudd's fourth sentence sounds as if it is saying, "To change the subject. . ."

The reporter says the light trend "could shift:" It could equally have been expressed, "More people may choose to vote." This reformulation would highlight that to vote or not to vote could be a very deliberate decision. That a "trend could shift" underplays the possibility of voter subjectivity on this choice. Also, it would be equally logical to say, "There is a real danger this trend could continue or even intensify" (the glass thus being half empty instead of half full). If we combine both possibilities, the text could read, "there is a great chance that even more

people will continue to choose not to vote." Such a formulation would tend to encourage inappropriate voter behavior. . .

Why did people vote as they did? A clue seems to be in the self-classed labels of the voters and the relationship of these labels to the "personal characteristics" of the candidates. The items suggest correlations which structure voting patterns.

Political labels of Democrat, Republican, liberal, moderate, and conservative are used in the story to categorize people, to make distinctions. To choose one's own label appears as an instance of political freedom. Again, there are other ways to categorize the public which could point to socially imposed differences, i.e., systematic structural inequality. This line of discourse is avoided. One cannot "choose" one's basic class position with the same ease one can choose to be a liberal or a Republican. Apparently, people differ significantly only in their opinions.

Let us look at the labels. What do they signify? They signify that the bearer embodies "liberalness", etc. How is this quality manifested in social practice? By the choice one makes in voting. Why do some people vote for liberal candidates? Because they themselves are "liberal". The tautology arises precisely because there is no History on either side of the dichotomy. Also, outside the context of voting, the label appears to have little practical import.

Without any sense of the social origins of voter political labels and candidate choices, political expression becomes collapsed into the

affirmation of a quality, devoid of social grounding. Choice becomes pure subjectivity (arbitrariness, irrationality) a la selecting between chocolate or vanilla ice cream. This again underscores the theme that political freedom is equivalent to unhampered consumer choice. But there are some patterns to choices, e.g., being "liberal" meant one had a good chance of favoring Udall. Such linkages, however, take on the quality of attraction between particular essences; that they are a part of an ongoing historical process is downplayed. Even to merely suggest why different categories of people are feeling different kinds of pressures and thus might be responding differently would help to historically ground the choice-making. But that would also involve underscoring the reality of the *imposition of significant social differentiation.*

Voters answering the questionnaire can rank a candidate's qualities. Qualities thus have a numeric dimension; certain amounts of specific essences will "outpull" others. Again, the tautology: certain essences attract other essences. But it is not a perfectly closed situation; it does not have chemical certainty. Since the voter exercises freedom of choice, s/he is deemed/flattered to be somewhat unpredictable. Nature is not perfectly knowable.

The disjunction of the social origins of the votes and their professed political identifications is highlighted in the reference to Carter, "finishing in the middle of conservatives, liberals and moderates." The political position of the candidate fades away. Thus it is possible for

one man to appeal to all political tendencies. This avoids the question: what are the politics of such a candidate? Or, what is the significance of the labels if one person can appeal to the entire spectrum? This potential contradiction is resolved by the view that suggests that political choice is based on the attraction of voter and candidate essences. Political choice does not emerge from interpretations of the socio-political world based on lived experience.

The importance of campaign coverage is that "the public" at last appears as a social agent with some power. They can vote some officials in and out of office. However, there is a delicate balance in this presentation: the public is at once a subject who acts (by making choices in voting) and an object acted upon (by the campaign strategies of officials). Permitting the viewer-citizen to identify with a public which is capable of transforming society by the voting process would not be in keeping with quiescent mass loyalty. It might raise expectations and lead to "excesses of democracy," as we explained in Chapter One.

At the same time, to stress that voting patterns are largely the result of instrumental manipulation may evoke cynicism and lower the level of participation.

Thus, political campaigns and the voting process must appear as spectacles of moderation. Carefully gauged excitement must prevail for the reproduction of viewer-citizen consciousness. The strategies and plans of the candidates and the rationality of the mercantile approach must

temper the mystery and suspense of voter preference. The public must respond to pre-determined choices, not initiate their own.

An irony emerges here. In the process of revealing campaign strategies and pointing to the instrumental rationality behind officials' actions and statements, that is, in showing how the public is acted upon, network news disrupts the locus of viewer-citizen dependence. In essence, TV creates an ambivalence: does viewer-citizen dependence rest with officialdom, or with TV news itself?

The Ambivalence of TV News

In Chapter Three we discussed how news, especially in the persona of the anchorman, reveals itself to be a Subject in the world, and how the format structures a relationship of dependence between news and the viewer-citizen. In this chapter, and in the previous one, we have focused on the world which TV news discourse creates and how viewer-citizen dependence is mobilized toward the power and expertise of officialdom. Now we return to this presence of news-as-Subject. The focus here is not the anchorman himself, but rather news' institutional relationship to officialdom. The dramatic triad of Nature-officials-public must be enlarged to include news, for news does reveal itself to be an actor in the world it presents to the audience. The duality of viewer-citizen dependence--on both officials and news-as-Subject, is an important feature of the discourse.

This ambivalence, at times perhaps even a tension, is most apparent

in stories about election campaigning. News has access to officials. News can take the viewer-citizen "behind the scenes". News can even explain the actions and motives of officials, which can at times border on "debunking." But even stories which do not explicitly debunk officials can give indication that viewer-citizen dependence not only has a dual focus, but that news may even on occasion command the greater share of this dependence.

Let us look at an epic excerpt:

CRONKITE: President Ford had expected--indeed, predicted--another victory in North Carolina. And he was surprised but not pessimistic when he didn't get it. Phil Jones reports.

PHIL JONES: North Carolina was still fresh on the President's mind when he greeted some Texas Republican party leaders in the Rose Garden.

PRESIDENT FORD: There have been some Wednesday mornings that have been happier recently than this one.

JONES: However, Mr. Ford offered no reasons or excuses for his loss to Reagan.

FORD: We knew it would be a close race. We expected to win. We didn't. And I might say that in politics, it's never good to come in second.

JONES: Mr. Ford was optimistic about the next three primaries. He said Wisconsin would be close but he expects to win. There is no Reagan opposition in New York and Pennsylvania.

The President took this opportunity to do a little early campaigning for the May 1st Texas primary by announcing to these Texas Republicans that their senator, John Tower, will be the Ford floor manager at the August nominating convention. . . (March 24, 1976)

The anchorman's lead-in alerts the viewer-citizen that Ford's state of

mind is a salient topic, and that the news knows a few things about it. After the lead-in, the reporter, Phil Jones, and President Gerald Ford almost take turns addressing the viewer-citizen. But unlike the acknowledgments sometimes present between anchorman and reporter, there is no social interaction expressed between Jones and Ford. There is no ". . .and back to you, Gerry." "Thank you, Phil. . ." This is an abrupt shifting between the two men speaking; the subjectivity who does this shifting is the news, not Ford.

Listening to Jones cannot be equated with listening to Ford; Ford's speaking is the "event" of the report; Jones's talk is an explanation of that event. Ford is structurally removed from a here-and-now encounter with the viewer-citizen by the intervening subjectivity of the news. Yet Jones's talk does more than merely mediate Ford, it also structures an element of irony toward him from the perspective of the viewer-citizen. Ford speaks, but the viewer-citizen has already been "briefed" or filled in on what's on Ford's mind. Being forearmed with this knowledge permits the viewer-citizen this irony. As Ford speaks, there is no suggestion that he knows that the viewer-citizen has been briefed. The viewer-citizen knows something about Ford, but Ford is not aware that this is known.

When Ford says, "There have been some Wednesday mornings that have been happier recently than this one," the viewer-citizen does not prepare him/herself for more clarification by, for example, asking "How so?"

Rather, the viewer is in a position to respond with "Yes, because Jones just told us that North Carolina is still fresh in your mind." The consequence is that Ford is virtually an appendage, an added detail to the narration.

Jones describes Ford's state of mind, and Ford confirms what Jones said. Jones leads, Ford follows. This structure of irony puts the viewer in a position of dependency on the newsman. The newsman makes sense of the politician's speech, thereby doing work for the viewer. Still more significantly, through the newsman, the viewer can experience a "one upmanship" stance against the official. Without the newsman, this would not be possible for the viewer-citizen.

That the news may at times reveal itself to be in a superior position of knowing than officialdom does not present an immediate rupture in the social order of instrumental rationality. The dual location of viewer-citizen dependence is basically not problematic. In fact, the feelings of one upmanship may serve as an illusory substitute for a genuine critical stance--a surrogate sense of efficacy to soften the contours of the viewer-citizen's relationship of dependence to officialdom. To participate in irony against officials is flattering and not unrelated to the mystique of voter choice-making.

For the long-term, however, we might speculate that this dual dependence could drive a wedge within the consciousness of the viewer-citizen, splitting it into two poles. Potentially, this could mean a contin-

ued dependence on TV news (to reveal the plots hatched by officialdom) coupled with a generalized skepticism toward officialdom. Such skepticism is not to be confused with critical reflection. Rather, it would merely constitute a habituation of consciousness to always expect the worst. That is, such skepticism would be unreflective in a negative stance, rather in a positive one.

In this chapter we have seen how the various expressions of instrumental rationality have inhibited the reflection of the viewer-citizen. Bureaucratic rules and procedures, "reasoned" discourse and "cooperative" attitudes, and the logic of the marketplace, all serve to foster an uncritical dependence in the viewer-citizen. If the news claims viewer-citizen dependence as well, this only means that the social order of rationality also includes that dimension of rationality which news expresses, namely, the rationality of enterprise, as we discussed in Chapter Three. The subordination of the viewer-citizen is consolidated.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS: THE LIMITS OF TV NEWS

The previous three chapters have probed the basic attributes of viewer-citizen consciousness. These we summarize very briefly in the first section of this chapter.

We have also seen that the process of reproducing this consciousness is not without some difficulty. There are internal tensions within TV news discourse which can make viewer-citizen consciousness problematic at times. These internal tensions are discussed in the second section.

In the third section we sketch the external dilemmas the corporate state faces in the reproduction of viewer-citizen consciousness. These are found on the macro level of quiescent mass loyalty itself, as well as on the micro level of the actual social situation of TV news viewing.

The fourth and final section presents some preliminary speculation as to how, and under what circumstances, TV news might foster a critical, reflective consciousness in its audience.

The Viewer-Citizen: A Synopsis

Under the present historical circumstances, the corporate state is plagued by contradictory political and economic tensions. To maximize its freedom to intervene where and when it deems necessary, the corporate

state seeks quiescent mass loyalty from the populace.

Within the public sphere, network TV news contributes to the maintenance of quiescent mass loyalty. It does this by deploying a repressive mode of discourse; the consciousness which this discourse makes possible is the idealized category which we call the viewer-citizen. This consciousness is in structural correspondence with quiescent mass loyalty. The basic attributes of viewer-citizen consciousness can be summarized as follows:

1. It is readily accessible. TV news discourse sets up virtually no prerequisites for membership in the community of viewer-citizens. Membership can begin with any program and indeed any news story, since viewer-citizen consciousness is not predicated upon past experience or prior knowledge. The only pre-condition is minimal linguistic familiarity with the public sphere.
2. Viewer-citizen consciousness is non-reflective. It has no awareness of a collective past, and thus cannot learn from its own experience. The expropriation of time and attentional energy of the viewing audience results in a no-growth social and self-awareness.
3. As a corollary to its non-reflective quality, the consciousness of the viewer-citizen is devoid of efficacy. In the world created by TV news discourse, the mythic drama of interaction between Nature, officialdom, and the public provides virtually no

handle for social praxis, with the minimal exception of voting and consumption. The viewer-citizen is essentially irrelevant to the events portrayed; the world of TV news is not made the viewer-citizen. Not only does the viewer-citizen reside outside of History, but also, in the world of TV news, there really is no History.

4. As a consequence, the viewer-citizen is a subordinate consciousness. The focus of this subordination is three-fold: the news itself, Nature, and officialdom.

The viewer-citizen is subordinate to the news to the extent to which the news appears as a social actor. Within the program's format, the news organization reveals a vast social and technical power; the boundaries of this power are unknowable to the viewer-citizen. The anchorman's Olympian presence, despite its reassuring aura, marks a position of overwhelmingly superior epistemological status vis a vis the viewer-citizen.

Within the mythic dramas of TV news, the viewer is subordinate to the fluctuations of Nature, which includes the domain of economics. The presentation of a world without History, in which the public must live under the vicissitudes of Nature, evokes the need for technical and managerial expertise to intervene and attempt to control it. This expertise is embodied in officialdom, to whom the viewer-citizen is situated in a relation of total dependence.

The subordinate consciousness of the viewer-citizen, which is devoid of efficacy and reflection, and is readily accessible via TV news, is quite congruent with quiescent mass loyalty.

The reproduction of viewer-citizen consciousness can only be understood as an instance of successful ideological domination of the populace by the corporate state.

Internal Dilemmas of Viewer-Citizen Consciousness.

TV news discourse does not reproduce the viewer-citizen in a totally unproblematic manner. The tensions we have come upon in our study can be grouped under two main categories: maintaining involvement and suppressing critical reflection toward officialdom.

The problem of maintaining involvement is an expression of the underlying irrelevance of TV news to the day to day practical existence of the audience. The viewer-citizen is not invited to reflect on whose knowledge does news represent; whose experience does it depict; what does one do with this knowledge; or even whose world is it which is being depicted. Yet these questions cannot be totally excluded; their lurking presence raises the issue of why bother watching.

We saw, for example, that the use of the anchorman in the format could buffer viewer-citizen involvement with the news events by absorbing the involvement to himself. Yet this created a double separation for the audience: from the actual history of the event and from the history

of the coming-to-knowledge about the event. The result is that news appears merely as the newsman's knowledge, since the viewer-citizen never shares in the process of coming-to-knowledge.

Another illustration of news' underlying irrelevance is, of course, its lack of practical import. While access to the community of viewer-citizens is virtually effortless, this accessibility stands in contrast to the meaning of this community. News as a form of social knowledge takes the form of an infinite inventory of stories which allows neither mastery of the rules for generating this knowledge nor clues as to what to do with it. The possibility that the audience could question the status of news and the lack of efficacy which it offers, cannot be eradicated. Viewer-citizen consciousness cannot be totally taken for granted on this point.

In general terms, we can say that the problem of maintaining involvement is largely resolved by the skillful construction of the format. The format permits the deployment of a discourse which is not only repressive, but also incessant. The chief characteristic of the infinite inventory of news stories is its aura of the routine; even the spectacle of "world's records" being set by the economy and other manifestations of Nature, become routinized. Yet the incessantness never approaches boredom.

Suppressing critical reflection towards officials is an extension of the problem of maintaining involvement. Officialdom is the central focus of viewer-citizen subordination and dependence within the news stories. Normally, there seems to be little difficulty in closing off

viewer-citizen reflection toward officialdom and structuring a relationship of subordination. However, we have found at least three types of news stories which hold the possibility of awakening critical reflection toward officialdom.

One type is the story which raises a serious issue for which there are no existing rules or procedures to deal with it. Especially if officials are strongly divided on the question, this lack of appropriate, established means for dealing with it can become problematic. This is because the process of rule-making and procedure-establishing then becomes a topic of official political contest. This development tends to erode the seemingly neutral stance of administrative process: bureaucratic rules and procedures are not merely expressions of instrumental rationality for solving problems. They are also the product of social interests and normative choices.

A parallel type of news story, and perhaps still more dramatic in its consequences, sets up a "balanced", pro-con presentation of competing claims by experts. In these stories, reflection may be elicited because it is obvious that both representatives of expertise cannot be right, and, moreover, they represent competing social interest. A good portion of officialdom's claim to authority rests on its command of scientific knowledge and technical expertise, and the understanding that "science" is not only neutral but also the final arbiter of all truth claims. For "science" to be used by both sides of an issue where social interests are

at stake may evoke a reflective insight which could suggest that either there are no neutral and external positions from which to view reality, or, even if such knowledge is possible, it is basically politics which decides issues of social conflict anyway. In either case, normative reflection may emerge, threatening the strategy of instrumental rationality.

The third type of news story which may fail to fully suppress critical reflection towards officialdom is the election campaign story which explicitly discusses officials' campaign strategy. While such stories may tend to debunk or even demystify the activities of officials, their real significance lies in the contradiction in which they place the viewer-citizen. The viewer-citizen is invited to make a choice between candidates, to exercise free will, yet at the same time these news stories can serve to demonstrate how the candidates manipulate him/her in making the choice. The viewer-citizen becomes both an object to be moved and a subject who acts in the world.

It is particularly this ^{third} kind of story which illuminate the dual focus of viewer-citizen subordination and dependence--on both officialdom and the news. For the most part, the two overlap, but in these stories, as well as other kinds of "behind the scenes" stories, the focus may become separated. The news appears to reside in ^a social position of knowledge which is superior to officialdom. Officialdom is collapsed to an object of the news' knowledge. Officialdom may make blunders, even reveal human foibles, but not so the news, especially the anchorman. The

news is above all that.

However, it must be said that while viewer-citizen dependence may occasionally shift from officialdom to the news, and while reflection toward officialdom may occasionally emerge, viewer-citizen consciousness is not shattered, as long as it is news itself which becomes the temporary prevailing focus of subordination. The news, we must recall, is an integral element of the corporate state.

The significance of these dilemmas within viewer-citizen consciousness should not be exaggerated. By themselves, these internal tensions are at present not too serious; if they were to be perceived as major problems there is little reason to doubt that the news discourse could be modified accordingly. Their importance, however, becomes more apparent if these modest openings or cracks within the discourse are understood in relation to the external factors which may impede the reproduction of viewer-citizen consciousness.

News Watching as a Free Space: Quiescence vs. Loyalty

The external obstacles to the reproduction of viewer-citizen consciousness derive from both the macro level of the contradictions of the corporate state and the micro level of the lived experience of the TV news watcher.

In Chapter One we discussed the basic difficulties inherent in the corporate state's strategy of quiescent mass loyalty and the logic of instrumental rationality on which it rests. To justify its activities,

the corporate state is in a position where it must either appeal to liberal democratic norms which it cannot allow to become genuinely operative, or make use of instrumental rationality as a way of by-passing normative discourse altogether. While the latter option has increasingly been the trend, both alternatives have the effect of eroding the reserves of normative support available to the corporate state. Legitimation, in other words, becomes increasingly reduced to the instrumental question of delivering goods and services; the state cannot on its own administratively generate and interject norms into the culture.

Over the last decades, loyalty to the corporate state has had little normative revitalization. It has been steadily reduced toward the level of a beneficent mercenary relationship. While quiescence may remain constant in the absence of alternative political movements, continued economic decline could serve to further separate loyalty from quiescence within the populace. The development of such a wedge is potentially unstable; how it would resolve itself cannot be anticipated without knowing the contingent social and political factors.

What is clear, however, is that the limitations of the strategy of quiescent mass loyalty not only feed into, and derive from, the general contradictions of the corporate state, but also impinge specifically upon the reproduction of viewer-citizen consciousness. Thus, it is on the micro level of TV news watching that these general contradictions intersect with the internal dilemmas of viewer-citizen consciousness, as well as

with the lived experiences of the TV news watcher.

Essentially, the drive to render consciousness as a viewer-citizen is opposed by the needs and experiences derived from other domains of social interaction. This lived history is brought to the TV news viewing situation by the viewer, and it is at base contradictory with the consciousness of viewer-citizen. This is not to say that this contradiction is automatically a topic for any individual, or that it has now emerged to the fore of consciousness. Rather, this suggests that the objective existence of this contradiction between private needs and experience, and the role of viewer-citizen in the public sphere, is potentially recognizable in the process of viewing TV news. This is to say that the time and place of TV news viewing always remain a site for the struggle over consciousness and the definitions of the social world.

The lived experiences of the private individual provide the foundation for questioning the definitions fostered by TV news. The immediate possibility of the response, "Well, maybe the economy is getting better, but my life isn't," holds out the larger potentiality to use this observation as a critique of TV news. The non-fulfillment of private needs can become evidence of the system's inadequacies, rather than of individual failure, which is treated as a mere "exception to the rule." The realization that one is not an embodiment of the abstract "public" depicted on the news, can be the basis of an awareness that challenges the validity of permitting the exceptions in the first place.

The point toward which we are moving here is that the act of viewing is not under social control. It remains a "free space" which can permit the emergence of alternative or oppositional practices or meaning systems.¹ However, the generation of alternative ways of defining the social world, the politics of definition, is a social process. The extent to which TV news viewing is actively done with other people--talked about, argued, discussed--is the extent to which this possibility is kept alive. The social isolation of the viewing situation increases the tendency toward pure viewer-citizen.

This orientation is admittedly a defensive posture in terms of a political response to TV news. Yet given the present situation, in the absence of strong alternative political movements, such a stance is certainly appropriate. This is not to encourage withdrawal from other forms of resistance or even offensive strategies, only to indicate the importance of trying to counter the ongoing ideological onslaught of the corporate state.

Toward a Reflective TV News Discourse.

It is imperative for those committed to a more egalitarian and humane society to seriously consider what the outlines of a liberatory strategy toward TV might look like. By now, most social observers of all persuasions accept the political importance of TV. Yet the formulation of practices toward TV which have a positive and active dimension to them is difficult,

given the centralization of production. Most of the populace is only in a position to be consumers, and it is difficult to develop practices around consumption which are not solely ones of avoidance ("don't watch TV") or defensive ("if you do watch, keep in mind the following things. . .").

Encouraging resistance at the site of viewing is important, particularly at a time when oppositional political movements and cultural practices are not on the offensive. For the long range, however, we must at least try to clarify our thinking regarding the possibilities of TV. Practices in concrete situations must be guided by vision as well as immediate necessity.

A starting point for discussion of the possibilities of alternative uses of TV is to be found in a basic theoretic distinction: we differentiate between the nature of the medium, as a form of technology, and the social relations which determine its use in a particular society.² We refer here to relations of ownership, control, production, access, and so on. In other words, possibilities inherent within the technology should not be confused with the present social purposes which the medium serves.

This starting point adds some clarity, yet it also underscores the enormity of the task. The social relations which define the use of TV are at bottom the relations of subordination and domination which characterize the society as a whole.³ Thus, calls for "participatory" use of TV, in isolation from any concern with the larger question of the redistribution of power--i.e., the transformation of the corporate state--are

ultimately expressions of the naivité of liberalism or self-conscious attempts at cooptation by the dominant power groups.⁴ An instructive case study which demonstrates the tenacity of the social relationships which determine media output is the case of Finland.⁵ In the mid-'60's, a policy within Finnish broadcasting was initiated to encourage more active political participation of the TV news viewing audience. Essentially a liberal reform which resulted in modest tampering with the form and content of broadcast news, this policy led to vehement response by a power structure who saw the threatening implications. The policy was halted.

Enzensberger,⁶ in a much debated article, used the distinction between the technology and its social relations to argue that since there was no technical contradiction between sender and receiver, the thrust of liberatory media politics should be to try to transform everyone into a "sender." The emergence of potentially "participatory" media technologies in the post-War era (cassettes, cable TV, CB radio, and so on) gave him encouragement in this direction. In his view, radical media politics could be carried out by avoiding direct confrontation with the question of the fundamental social relations.

Writing a few years later, Enzensberger⁷ revises this position somewhat. Now, for a radical media politics, "a strategic retrenchment seems inevitable."⁸ The centralization of much of the new technology into the hands of the large corporations, the lack of material support for the budding "alternative media" groups, the decline of a politicized counter-culture

and other problems, explain the change in analysis.

Yet there is a deeper problem to the approach which Enzensberger proposed originally, as some critics have pointed out.⁹ Enzensberger feels that it is crucial to end the social isolation of the individual as part of the political strategy. However, we would stress that this organizational endeavor must not take place just around the media. What Enzensberger does not emphasize are the limitations of emancipatory consciousness inherent within the technologies of the mass media.

Any discussion of the nature or potential of TV as a technology can only be tentative. Its nature can only be truly known in social practice, and social circumstances have only allowed glimmerings of its potential. With this caveat, our position here is that even under conditions of ideal social relations, TV has severe limits on how far it can aid in ending social isolation. A repressive or alienating tendency lingers. The medium of TV, and indeed all the other mass media as well, can never permit the full realization of intersubjectivity between people. Social interaction through mass media of any sort--i.e., the separation of full face-to-face encounters by any technology--places limitations on the reflective and critical consciousness which is possible. The dialectic of consciousness and activity is constricted if it is left only in the hands of a mass medium. This dialectic is certainly constricted by social realities as well, yet the face-to-face situation holds out a liberatory potential which cannot be rivaled by TV technology. Thus, we saw in Chapter

Three that while the viewer can gain familiarity with the anchorman, this familiarity can never approach the intersubjective understanding possible with a friend.

The basic problem is that technically mediate communication can never wholly leave the domain of cybernetic control, regardless of the social intentions. To be a "sender" (or "manipulator", to use Enzensberger's term) posits an orientation which can never fully exclude instrumental rationality. This, we will recall, is the type of logic which, when applied to people, treats them as objects to be moved, denying the subjectivity of both "sender" and "receiver". Instrumental rationality is the foundation of repressive discourse; intersubjectivity remains thwarted. We are suggesting, as the critics of Enzensberger point out, that the form of a message does impose a bias on the content. The medium is not totally the message, as McLuhan would have it, but the tendency is there.

This is not to argue for the destruction of TV technology. Neither does it suggest that the public sphere which uses it must, by definition, be repressive. Rather it means that a concern for the liberatory uses of TV must take seriously the task of discovering these limitations in concrete terms. Only in this way can an emancipatory vision and strategy come into view.

A non-repressive public sphere¹⁰ must give expression to the collective needs and experiences of the populace. TV news has a role to play

in this, but not in its present form. Nor can the TV medium itself, given its limitations, be allowed to be the dominant vehicle of this public sphere.

TV news discourse, assuming its production was at least to some extent in the hands of those committed to social transformation, would have to invite critical reflection. The structure of the discourse and the events portrayed would have to include the viewer as a contributor to the creation of the social world being depicted in the discourse. The class interests of the producers and consumers of TV news would have to be at least compatible, if not identical. The needs and experiences, as well as the possibilities for concrete practices by the viewer, must not be treated as irrelevant by the news discourse.

To achieve this, TV news discourse would have to maintain the practical connection between the individual, the local arena of his/her activities, and the larger social order. The experience of need on any of these three levels--individual, local, societal--must not be handled as an exception or deviation from an otherwise acceptable social order, but as an indication of lingering inadequacies. Accounts of aggregate phenomena in the social world would have to be tempered by attention to particular instances of non-fulfillment of social needs. Each individual or local need would have to appear as a societal need.

The present social system, as well as the structure of TV news discourse, excludes this element. Social needs are not a significant

structural feature of TV news discourse; they are systematically avoided. Moreover, in the presentation of aggregate phenomena, exceptional cases only serve to confirm the rule proven by the aggregate. Exceptions become topics of isolated curiosity, and hence, insignificant. They do not become a force for organizing social activities. They have no status as a reflection of the social system, only as a deviation from it. The viewer suffers in silence. His or her unfulfilled needs are a personal problem; they are not articulated as an expression of social deficiency.

The imperative to give expression to collective needs, experiences, and possible social action, would serve as a guide for organizing the public sphere. Technical, geographic, and above all, social factors would have to be weighed to maximize its capacity for self-reflection. This could only emerge through trial and error--through practical experiences. It is in this context where the role, and form, of TV news would have to be defined, with attention to its limitations. The public sphere would have to be created by overlapping networks of institutions, which are both face-to-face in character as well as technically mediated.

Finally, we end with a reiteration of a point made at the start. The context of our analysis of TV news discourse was the situation of the state under advanced capitalism. It is this framework which must also guide any political discussion or activity aimed at the news media. In fact, a fully developed theory of the corporate state would have to include a theory of the news media. Immediate social and political cir-

cumstances do not justify excessive optimism for reflective discourse.

But one must not overlook the fact that for the corporate state, as well as for those who would transform it, the present always remains precarious.

NOTES

1. On the political significance of cultural practices and meanings, see Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," New Left Review, November-December 1973.
2. This point is made by Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," New Left Review, November-December 1970.
3. Cf. Richard Bunce, Television in the Corporate Interest (New York: Praeger, 1976).
4. Cf. Brian Groombridge, Television and the People (New York: Penguin, 1972), as an expression of the former tendency.
5. Kaarle Nordenstreng, ed., Informational Mass Communication (Helsinki: Tammi Publishers, 1973).
6. Enzensberger, op. cit.
7. Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, "Media and the Politics of Liberation," in The New Television, edited by Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1977).
8. Ibid., p. 261.
9. Jean Baudrillard, Pour une critique de l'economie politique du signe (Paris: Gallimard, 1972). The critique of Enzensberger (and McLuhan) appears in the chapter "Requiem Pour les Media." See also the discussion of Enzensberger which appears as a conference summary in Barbara Bick, Culture and Politics: Notes from a Conference (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1976).
10. We draw in part here from Eberhardt Knödler-Bunte, "The Proletarian Public Sphere and Political Organization," New German Critique, Winter, 1975.

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